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# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



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## Los Angeles — Racism and Revolution



by Sy Landy and Matthew Richardson

The conviction at a federal trial in April of two of the Los Angeles cops who brutally beat Rodney King was a partial victory for all working people and the oppressed. It would never have happened without the uprising that exploded in L.A. after all the cops were exonerated in the first trial in Simi Valley.

The revised verdict was won because the ruling class was frightened of further Black-led urban upheavals, kindled by increasing mass misery and ignited by further racist outrages. As Henry Cisneros, Bill Clinton's Secretary of Housing, told the Police Foundation in Washington earlier this year:

**The white-hot intensity of Los Angeles was the combustion of smoldering embers waiting to ignite. Like piles of dry wood with red-hot coals underneath, scores of cities can ignite.**

True enough, but the main lesson to be learned is the opposite of what the ruling class is now saying: that the racist

"justice" system works. On the contrary, the April convictions prove the need for mass struggle if working people are to defend what is left of the gains of the past, much less win anything new.

Given the deepening crisis of U.S. capitalism, explosions are inevitable. But future victories are hardly assured. As the ominous events surrounding the second trial of the L.A. cops foretell, mass action needs to become consciously organized and consciously revolutionary. Otherwise the just struggle of the oppressed and exploited will be drowned in blood.

### POLICE TERROR NOT OVER

The two convictions amounted to only a semi-victory. While Officer Powell delivered most of the blows to King and Sergeant Koon ordered the beating and is openly racist, they were found guilty only of using "excessive force" against their victim and will get away with minor punishment. The

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# Revolutionaries and the New World Disorder

U.S. imperialism is badly floundering in its effort to reconstruct the collapsing capitalist world order.

The Supreme Court's decision that the U.S. government has the right to seize Haitian refugees on the high seas and return them to terror and deprivation at home has outraged millions. No clearer statement of the Clinton administration's hypocrisy and the system's inherent racism could be made.

Likewise, the bombing raids on Mogadishu by the U.S. military have exposed as a fraud the United Nations occupation of Somalia under the guise of humanitarianism ("Operation Restore Hope"). It also reveals imperialism's inability to find local warlords to serve as its pawns without incurring the wrath of the masses.

In ex-Yugoslavia, U.S. policy remains that of forceful handwringing and intense brow-furrowing over the crimes of the reactionary Serbian and Croatian regimes. Bush and Clinton have always meant to set up Serbia as the region's stabilizing power, and all their maneuvers, especially the continuing arms embargo against the besieged Bosnians, are aimed toward this end. The murderous "ethnic cleansing" is to be deplored but otherwise tolerated. (Of course, the blockade of trade with Serbia harms only the masses and does not stop the massacres.) Revolutionaries demand: End the embargoes of Bosnia and Serbia!

It is not just the U.S. In Germany, there have been hundreds of deadly attacks on foreign workers, including the five recent murders in Solingen, encouraged by the government's anti-immigrant policy. As a COFI (Communist Organization for the Fourth International) statement put it:

**Capitalism everywhere is pursuing the same racist and national chauvinist course. . . . Increasing attempts are being made by the bourgeoisie to whip up prejudice against immigrants as the numbers of unemployed grow.**

**Revolutionary workers in all countries must declare their solidarity with the . . . justified rage of Germany's super-exploited Turkish and Kurdish immigrants marching and fighting their way through the streets of Germany. The heart of every decent class fighter around the world goes out to these workers in their demand for justice.**

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Within the U.S., working-class frustration with the Clintonites' continuation of the Reagan/Bush austerity attacks is beginning to boil over. Miami has already seen a small riot, an echo of the Los Angeles conflagration of last year. And every incident triggers more anger.

In New York in June, for example, the LRP's City University fraction intervened significantly at a public hearing held by the Board of Higher Education on the Chancellor's revised "consolidation" report. (See PR 43 for our analysis.) Despite the summer vacation, over 100 students and faculty showed up to protest the racist, class-biased plan to shut down needed programs. Many students, especially Blacks and Latinos, expressed their aspiration for a future based on public higher education and warned the Board of the mass unrest that might erupt if all hope is denied.

Two LRP speakers linked the plan to the bourgeoisie's scheme for two-tier education, whereby most CUNY's working-class students would be trained for jobs as "routine producers" needing little education in the liberal arts. Our call for an "organized Los Angeles" was widely cheered and echoed. Our exposure of the Board as lackeys of the capitalist class drew blood: when one trustee complained, students rose to denounce him; their protest almost brought the hearing to an end. This was an example where a revolutionary intervention by the vanguard cohered the feelings of larger numbers and helped advance working-class consciousness.

The U.S. working class is both seething and cautious, given its precarious economic condition. It is searching for ways to express its rage and to mobilize itself to defend against the capitalist assault. In they acts, our fellow workers show little confidence in capitalism. But in the mass they are only beginning to become conscious of their hostility to it as a system. For now, they blame "life," the politicians and the bosses rather than capitalism itself.

Workers are frustrated, not calm — the "calm" before the storm. Inevitably there will be a mass explosion in this country, like those already detonating abroad. Mass action often begets class consciousness, beginning with an awareness of working-class power. Then, all things become possible.

To this end the LRP has been reorganizing itself to meet the coming challenge. We are fighting to re-create the crucial instrument for the victory of our class, the proletarian revolutionary party. This work is the essential task for every communist. It cannot be postponed.

The day is over for the Stalinist, Social Democratic and pseudo-Trotskyist intelligentsia — along with its socialist masquerade and its betrayal of the working class. A new day is dawning in which the workers will take back their Marxist program from their condescending saviors and re-create the authentic communist party and international. That is the key to ending the world capitalist disorder. ●

## Proletarian Revolution

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# Cops, Pals and Other Worms in the Big Apple

As New York enters the summer electoral season with a decaying economy, rising unemployment and an increasingly angry working class, the politicians are playing their usual games of racial and ethnic musical chairs. And the left is finding new ways to join in the accompanying chorus.

David Dinkins, the city's first Black mayor, is up for reelection against the opponent he beat four years ago, Republican Rudolph Giuliani. But the city is in worse shape than last time, and with the sheen worn off Dinkins' "gorgeous mosaic," the outcome of the race is by no means certain.

Giuliani is counting on conservative white voters, but this time he is also battling for liberal votes. He quietly endorses gay rights and abortion rights. He has formed a "fusion" ticket with Democrats Herman Badillo and Susan Alter to attract Latino and moderate Jewish voters. And he is carefully playing the race card, blaming Dinkins for holding back the cops in the Crown Heights riot two summers ago, calling it a "pogrom" against Jews. Giuliani hopes to win white voters who will accept racism in coated, not yet naked, form.

Badillo, running for City Comptroller, is (like Dinkins) a liberal fraud generously funded by Wall Street financiers. His campaign role is to twist the knife between Blacks and Latinos. For example, he made headlines as the sole City University trustee to vote against the new president of City College. Whatever her deficiencies, this vote was simply an opportunist maneuver that helped the racist tabloids smear yet another Black.

## FROM WARD HEALER TO WALL STREET HEALER

Dinkins, who was elected as the "healer" who could soothe New York's racial tensions after eight years under the neo-conservative Ed Koch, is now running on a record of having done absolutely nothing for his labor and minority bases. For Marxists, Dinkins' role was easy enough to foresee. We wrote after his primary victory over Koch:

Given his moderate record and minimal promises, the overwhelming likelihood is that Dinkins will accomplish no more than any other capitalist politician. Indeed, taking office at a time when the capitalist ruling class is demanding intensified austerity for the masses, his role will be to carry out that policy. The people who danced at Koch's defeat will have little to celebrate in Dinkins. (*Proletarian Revolution* No. 35.)

Our prediction didn't come out of the blue. Dinkins had been an undistinguished clubhouse politician. He and his friends made clear that his role was to serve Wall Street by appearing to serve the masses. Felix Rohatyn, the financier who designed the "rescue" of New York City in the 1970's that slashed public services and stole workers' pension funds to back the city's debt, put it this way:

On balance, people in the business community think that reduced tension has to be the highest priority, that it's impossible to govern with any requirement for sacrifice unless the people who are going to be asked to sacrifice feel they are being treated fairly. (*New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1989.)

Who better to ask for sacrifice than a Black, social democratic "friend of labor" with support from "leftists"? Dinkins told Rohatyn & Co. that he could handle the municipal unions and all who depended on vital public services:

"Don't worry, they'll take it from me."

And he dished it out to Wall Street's order, perfectly playing the part of Koch with a human face. To sum up the record of Dinkins' years in office, we turn to a commentator who normally supports "progressive" Democrats like Jesse Jackson and even (quarter-heartedly) endorsed Bill Clinton:

Despite bursts of progressive rhetoric, his administration has been one of budgetary austerity — with the exception of a big cops and jails program . . . The militarization of city life caused New York State's chief fiscal monitor . . .



Crown Heights 1991: Lying pals whitewash cops, blame Blacks.

to question (gingerly) the supposedly liberal administration's spending priorities . . . Dinkins' environmental record is worse than that of his predecessor, the vile neo-conservative Ed Koch. . . . His administration is entirely controlled by the Wall Street-real estate axis that has dominated city politics for decades. (Doug Henwood, *Left Business Observer*, April 26.)

And as we go to press, Dinkins and the Democratic-dominated City Council agreed on a new city budget, which the *New York Times* summed up this way:

In general, Mr. Dinkins and Council leaders chose to protect the status quo as much as possible. Instead of reducing funds for the Police Department, for instance, they trimmed programs for teen-agers, seniors, students, the homeless and the sick. (June 13.)

Some champion of the oppressed.

## FROM RIOTS TO POLICE RIOT

Moreover, a public official who serves Wall Street — and whose job therefore is to make sure the working class is divided — can be no genuine healer. Dinkins' orientation, particularly his cop-coddling, has led him time after time to capitulate to the law-and-order mongers who blame Blacks and Latinos for all the evils of life in New York.

Take the Crown Heights riot. The streets of this largely Black neighborhood exploded in the summer of 1991, when a car driven by a Hasidic Jew in the police-escorted entourage of the Hasidic chief rabbi hit two Black children, killing one of them, Gavin Cato. In the riot, a Hasidic student, Yankel Rosenbaum, was stabbed to death. (See PR 40.)

Dinkins condemned the anti-Jewish attack that led to the stabbing of Rosenbaum. But he said nothing critical of the cops who escorted the car that killed Gavin Cato, or of

their failure to arrest the driver. He let the capitalist media get away with the claim that the riot was the work of Black anti-Semitism alone, not its decisive causes, cop violence and racism toward Blacks.

Then take the outburst in Washington Heights, a Dominican neighborhood, in 1992. Michael O'Keefe, the cop whose killing of Kiko Garcia triggered the explosion, was exonerated by a grand jury. (PR 42.) Dinkins had visited the Garcia family to express his condolences. But after the grand jury report was released and Garcia condemned in the press as a petty drug dealer, Dinkins abandoned all sympathy and allowed the mini-riot to be depicted as the dealers' revenge. He put Washington Heights under virtual martial law to prevent any protest against the freeing of O'Keefe without trial.

Shortly afterward, thousands of cops at a rally addressed by Giuliani stormed City Hall and the Brooklyn Bridge — a rampage encouraged by O'Keefe's exoneration. The cops were outraged by Dinkins' tiny gestures toward his Black and Latino base. Armed beer-swilling rioters brandished placards with racist lampoons of Dinkins and called the mayor and Black bystanders "nigger." Dinkins reacted with angry words but no action. No arrests were made; afterwards, a few of the 10,000 cops present were suspended.

During Dinkins' tenure, the rash of police beatings and killings of Blacks and Latinos has continued; the latest was the death of Johnny Cromartie in police custody in a hospital in May. Dinkins has never reacted with the outrage and action these cases deserve. His police chief, Raymond Kelly, theoretically neutral in the political campaign, praises the mayor warmly for hiring so many new cops.

Dinkins has hardly been a spokesman for the oppressed, as his racist detractors claim. He has protected and strengthened the cops and allowed them to run riot, despite the very visible evidence of racism and injustice they have provided. Being Black, he can never satisfy them, but he sure has tried.

#### LEFT NEVER LEARNS

Despite this dismal record, the radical left still largely backs Dinkins. In 1989, after Dinkins beat Koch in the Democratic primary, the now-defunct *Guardian* enthused, "It's hard to remember a more palpable sense that an election will really make a difference." (PR 35.) No prediction could have been more wrong, but at least then Dinkins had no mayoral record to expose him. Now there isn't even that excuse.

This year's flytrap is the New Party, a leftist scheme for entrapping growing numbers fed up with the Democrats but who still think a vote for Dinkins is a vote against racism.

The idea is to ride Dinkins' coattails and help put him over the top, thereby making the New Party an overnight success.

New Party leaders are working with the Majority Coalition headed by Dennis Rivera, president of Local 1199 and darling of the left. Rivera, who serves on the executive board of the New York Democratic Party, has been a major backer of Dinkins and Governor Mario Cuomo. He promotes the Majority Coalition as a lever for labor and minority leaders to use for deals with the Democrats.

Given his long-term ties to the Communist Party, Rivera is no stranger to the inside-outside strategy. And with Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition (which he also chairs) tied up "keeping Clinton honest," Rivera is turning to the New Party for additional leverage. Their joint "New Coalition Party" has issued a glossy red, white and blue brochure announcing its intention to get on the ballot. But it offers no program beyond an empty slogan, "The People . . . Yes!"

#### DINKINS AS LESSER EVIL?

Getting people to vote for Dinkins isn't easy. A draft statement by the post-CP Committees of Correspondence admits the mayor has done "precious little" for his mass constituency but concludes that "a defeat for David Dinkins would be a setback for all progressive forces and struggles in this city, wiping out many gains won over the years." But the same holds true for a Dinkins victory. And spreading illusions in Dinkins helps delay and divert mass struggles.

The anti-Dinkins forces include groups like Solidarity, which has a friendly ongoing debate over electoral strategy with the CoC. Solidarity counterposes "independent political action," by which it means pressuring left labor bureaucrats like Rivera and Tony Mazzocchi to make a clean break with the Democrats. (See p. 13.) So with Dinkins rooted in Wall Street's pocket and Rivera & Co. hopelessly tugging to pull one foot out, Solidarity and the rest of the labor party left are hopelessly tugging at the Riveras. The centrists can't break with the bureaucrats who can't break with the Democrats.

At a time when the crises of jobs, wages, housing, education and health care are devastating the working class of the city, here comes a chunk of the "left" buying a share of Dinkins' Harlem-plus-Wall Street "coalition." When a left worthy of the name would devote its efforts to unite working people for the coming class battles, these types are participating in the divide-and-rule tactics. That so many pseudo-leftists are playing electoral games like run-of-the-mill bourgeois politics is nothing short of a crime.●

## The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles

*A Proletarian Revolution Pamphlet by Sy Landy*

These articles, reprinted from the press of the League for the Revolutionary Party, are concerned with the aspirations and actions of Black people as they have interacted with the electoral process. They analyze political campaigns spanning the decade 1983-1992, ranging over politicians from Harold Washington and Louis Farrakhan to Bill Clinton, with special attention to Jesse Jackson. They detail the role of the Democratic Party in absorbing and derailing struggles for equality and justice.

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# Los Angeles

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other two cops on trial, Wind and Briseño, also assaulted King and joined in the cover-up before the videotape of the beating was made public. Yet they were declared innocent.

The message of the trial was that Rodney King deserved a beating but the cops went too far — and got caught on tape. The reign of police terror over every ghetto and barrio will continue. In fact it will worsen.

For months before the L.A. verdict, the capitalist class prepared for military rule in Los Angeles in case of another whitewash like that in Simi Valley last year. The National Guard practiced occupying the working-class ghettos and barrios. Tanks and armored personnel carriers were moved in, and barbed wire-enclosed "staging areas" were established for mass arrests. A rally to defend the "L.A. Four" (accused of battering truck driver Reginald Denny during the riot) was attacked by cops who shot rubber bullets into the crowd and beat up demonstrators.

Police chief Willie Williams said: "We want people to be able to come out, turn, blink and see an LAPD officer." On the day of the verdict, 7000 cops saturated Los Angeles. Previously, on February 17, 600 National Guardsmen occupied South Central L.A. to "test their ability to control a civil insurrection." The message was ominous: the ruling class is ready to use military might to crush mass struggles — not just any immediate outbreak but also future upheavals.

The episode reveals the true role of the police and National Guard, the fists of the capitalist state. While the state's function is supposed to be to "serve and protect the people," it really serves the ruling class and protects the bosses' interests from the working class. The more that workers see the truth about U.S. society and its exploitation, enforced by racial oppression, the more the cops will be called on to defend capitalism with mass violence.

## CAPITALIST INJUSTICE

The Simi Valley not-guilty verdict had evoked two different reactions. On the one hand there was mass revulsion at a blatant injustice. On the other, the ruling class was upset that its system's routine viciousness had been starkly revealed. Indeed, it is not just Los Angeles:

**A nationwide study by Gannett News Service last year showed that cops accused of brutality get promoted more often than punished. Gannett studied 100 cases in which victims were awarded at least \$100,000 because of police brutality between 1986 and 1991. . . . Only five the 185 brutal cops lost their jobs. Contrast that to the 19 who . . . either were promoted or got better law enforcement jobs elsewhere. (Emerge magazine, May 1993.)**

Ever since the riot, the rulers of the country have been developing a strategy to stabilize their control over the cities.

For one thing, they are trying to put their democratic mask back on. This cover-up began with the defeat of George Bush, who had uttered not a word about the obvious injustice of the first verdict. He responded to the uprising by calling it "the brutality of a mob, pure and simple," and sent in troops to crush the upheaval.

Bush's racist response made a significant section of the bourgeoisie worry that he was adding fuel to the fire. That's why then-candidate Bill Clinton warned:

**It is obvious that lurking beneath that verdict there is this**

**huge, gaping feeling that the system is broke and unresponsive and unfair.**

That is, for Clinton the problem was not that the system is fundamentally racist but that it had been exposed as such — and that masses of working people, particularly Blacks, were mad as hell. Clinton's solution was that the *perception* of "justice" in this country had to be changed. And that's what the bourgeoisie wanted.

## CAPITALISM AND VIOLENCE

While they must defend their power and profits with racism and violence, the capitalists cannot permit naked state terror today: they still need to hide it beneath democratic appearances. The bourgeoisie feels, for the moment, that teaching the vast army of impoverished Black workers and unemployed a bloody lesson in repression will only be possi-



ble when the state can appear to be just and anti-racist.

So, in the name of "justice," the ruling class had to oust L.A.'s openly racist police chief Daryl Gates in favor of a Black cop, Williams. And it had to encourage a retrial of the cops who beat Rodney King. There was no alternative but to make temporary concessions to the "lawless mobs."

One risk in these concessions was giving the ghettos and barrios too much of a sense of mass power. Another was the danger of demoralizing the bourgeoisie's mercenaries, the cops. By their very function, the police departments of the U.S. are rife with racist fear and loathing of those imprisoned in the wage-slave pens called the "inner cities." If the Simi Valley verdict had been totally reversed, cops would be less willing to risk life and limb keeping the masses down.

The government's course was not dictated by weighing a simple balance of potential Black upheavals against cop demoralization. Given the huge reservoir of mixed but real anti-racist feeling among ordinary working people of all

colors, mass anger over outright racist brutality had to be taken into account; the ruling class hasn't forgotten the huge outcry over the videotaped beating of Rodney King.

It wasn't a conspiracy with a bought and paid-for jury. But the jury members knew that public opinion demanded a more believable verdict than the Simi Valley decision. Above all, like everyone else in Los Angeles, they were subjected to pressures to avoid a new explosion on the one hand — and to not overreact against the “forces of law and order” on the other. Hence the split decision.

To get a conviction, the rulers had their Justice Department once again violate the principle of no double jeopardy, which supposedly forbids the retrial of anyone found not guilty. This breach will be used against working-class and Black militants in the future. As well, the use of Briseño's videotaped testimony from the first trial was unprecedented; it would never have been allowed if not for the need for convictions.

### THE REAL L.A. UPRISING

There is another, more devious, side to the cover-up of the racism behind the L.A. riot. Politicians, pundits and police have all striven to depict the government not only as democratic and anti-racist but also as a resolute defender of the safety of “the people” — mainly whites (but also Latinos and Asians) from incorrigibly murderous Blacks.

But the explosion wasn't an act of brutes and gangs. Nor was it Black versus white. In fact, both news reports and police records indicate that the majority of rioters were Hispanic, not Black. The uprising was a class protest, a demonstration of *working-class rage*. Most of the violence was aimed against commercial property, not people or homes. Clearly identified Black-owned stores were ravaged, along with white- and Asian-owned enterprises.

Black, Latino and white workers, employed and unemployed, especially youth, all joined in: “Looters of all races owned the streets, storefronts and malls. Blond kids loaded their Volkswagens with stereo gear . . .” (*Newsweek*, May 11, 1992.) The *Wall Street Journal* (May 1, 1992) called the rebellion “a multiracial free-for-all.” Feliciano Mendoza, a Chicano school teacher in Los Angeles, pointed out, “It was an economic riot, not a race riot.” (*New York Times*, April 16, 1993.) And a Black capitalist noted that “These riots have been as much about class as about race.” (*Business Week*, May 18, 1992.) Even an official in Bush's Justice Department, Wayne Budd, saw that “problems of class, not race, constituted most of the tensions that led to the riots.” (*New York Times*, May 23, 1992.)

Nevertheless, the bourgeois propaganda line on Los An-

geles runs something like this: the state, despite the crude and brutal behavior of a handful of cops, has done its best to provide justice for all, including minorities. Nevertheless, Black gangsters and criminals took advantage of a breakdown in law and order to burn everything in sight, steal anything not nailed down, despoil hard-working Korean merchants and kill white people. According to this line, the real problem in L.A. was not the cops but the riot, the sort of thing the cops were perhaps overzealously trying to prevent.

The popular mystery novelist Walter Mosley pointed to serious questions about the media treatment of the event:

**Is it, as the media make it seem, that a whole army of dark-skinned, unemployed, basically lawless people go out like army ants to pluck the shelves bare, decimating everything in their path? Are they all brutes, hell-bent on destruction of all that is law-abiding and good?**

**Some people, I think, would answer yes to all of these questions. That's what it looks like on TV and in the papers. These people want a police force that is actually an army. They line up to buy guns and ammo. They shrink in fear when in the presence of black Americans.** (*New York Newsday*, April 20, 1993.)

A concrete manifestation of this campaign is the case of the L.A. Four. There were 55 deaths during the riot and 2400 injured; most of the killing and maiming came at the hands of the police. Yet the assault on Reginald Denny has been singled out and publicized because it was an example of a probably unprovoked attack by Blacks against a white worker. Even this case doesn't fully fit the plan, since Denny was rescued from his attackers by Blacks. But this point has been submerged so that the case could be used to smear the entire L.A. upheaval as anti-white.

The ruling class will “balance” the conviction of the two cops in the Rodney King case by throwing the book at Denny's attackers in order to defame the whole uprising. Pretending to have established justice for Blacks in the retrial, they will then get their own “justice” against the masses.

### ANTI-BLACK PROPAGANDA

The government cannot yet murder citizens *en masse* without claiming the mantle of righteousness. Even the federal cover-up and media blitz over the all-too naked massacre of religious cultists in Waco provoked considerable discontent and questioning.

“Sophisticated” opinion today blames racism and national chauvinism on the “ignorance” of the masses. Similarly, “ethnic cleansing” abroad is blamed on “ancient hostilities” — the irrational prejudices of ordinary people. But the truth is very different: mixed consciousness is the general rule. Contrary to the elitists, there is a huge difference between the biases of “Joe Sixpack” and a fascist skinhead. Most workers do not flaunt their prejudices and in daily practice want to see fairness triumph and justice done.

However, as capitalism's profound economic crisis reasserts itself, the system inevitably pits one group against another, each seeking its “fair share.” The rulers increasingly whip up racial and ethnic hostilities to maintain their control. But it isn't easy.

The “racist Black riot” propaganda barrage is projected openly and grossly by reactionaries and more subtly by liberals. It is designed to divide and conquer, to turn hostility towards oppression against Blacks rather than against the police and the state. In the face of inevitable “civil disorders” generated by capitalism, public opinion — especially white working-class opinion — must be conditioned to see rioting Blacks as the problem, not the social and economic condi-

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tions which beset the entire working class.

The non-Black masses are being led to believe that Blacks are getting an unfair edge in the job market and are taking unjust advantage of government outlays at a time when taxes on working people are extortionate. The line is that it is Blacks who are racist — anti-white, anti-Korean, anti-Semitic, etc. — when others only demand racial fairness.

### GHETTO UPRISINGS THEN AND NOW

It is striking that the ruling class has conceded nothing to the L.A. explosion besides the two convictions. Nothing has been done to alleviate the urban crisis. Clinton is trying to extinguish the inferno of rage with a few drops of water; the crisis of the profit system can't afford anything more.

The last great Black-led upheavals, the ghetto rebellions of the 1960's, sent similar shivers of fear down the spine of the bourgeoisie. Back then, capitalism was in its postwar economic boom, and profits were high. The bosses could afford to concede real though limited reforms to the Black masses in the hope of buying off their middle-class leaders and controlling the struggle. Illusions in the "American dream" were sustained by removing overt legal barriers and by instituting doubled-edged programs like "affirmative action" and "community control."

But today capitalism is facing a crisis, which on the world scale is already deeper than the depression of the 1930's. Unable to afford real reforms, its agenda is to take back what was won in the past. So the promises the politicians and corporations made in the wake of the riot to pour billions into rebuilding L.A. (through job opportunities, education and housing) were just empty words — barely a dollar has been spent on the ghettos and barrios.

When Clinton took office, he violated his campaign rhetoric and continued the Reagan-Bush attack on the working class. He demanded "sacrifice," higher taxes on workers, less social spending — and he began his plan to put another 100,000 cops on city streets.

In the 1960's, an alphabet soup of welfare programs and community institutions was set up in the ghettos. Funds pumped in by government and private bourgeois foundations built a lattice-work of bureaucracy. Through their control of the bread-and-circuses programs, the bureaucrats assumed the mantle of "community leaders" while acting as lieutenants for the capitalist class.

### PRO-CAPITALIST MISLEADERS

In the hands of such "leaders" the ghetto revolt was turned to the dead-end of electoralism: passive voting for the Democratic Party. But as the economic crisis deepened, the material basis for reformist illusions evaporated, and with it has gone much of the power of the Black and Latino "leaders" to sell capitalism to their working-class constituents.

For example, TV coverage of the retrial verdict showed Jesse Jackson's response. He was delighted, not because justice had been done, but because the verdict would allow the Democrats to keep pushing the lie that oppressed people can win through the system. All the housebroken leaders thanked heaven that enough had been done to avert riots. Today, less and less able to even deliver the illusion of goods, they live only by prayers.

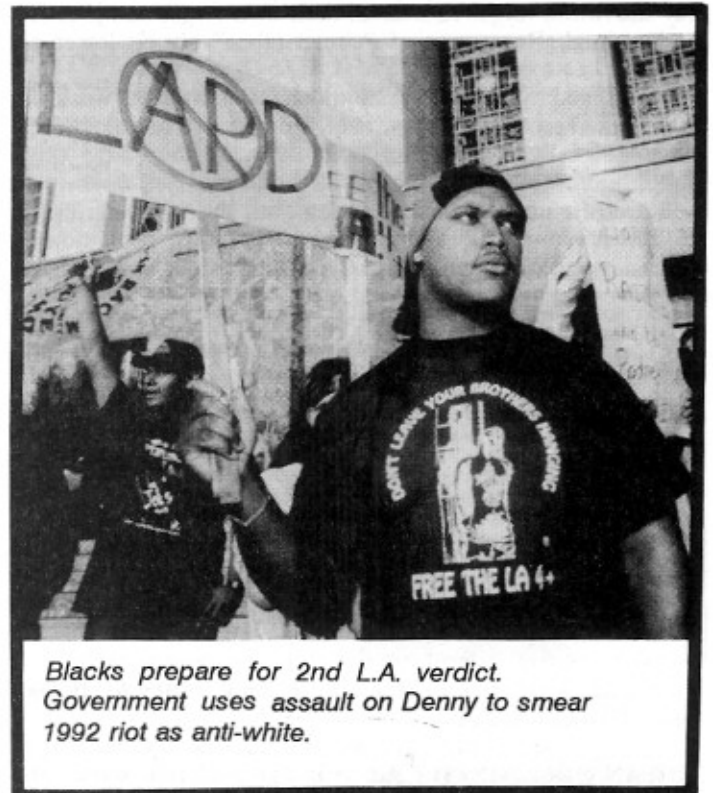
In the wake of the retrial verdict, bourgeois pundits showered praise on the Black and Latino leaders for their role in restraining the youth and helping to prevent rioting. But as Joe Hicks, the Los Angeles chief of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, commented:

**There is an incredible lack of respect for Black elected**

**officials. They are considered symbols of the white power system. They are impotent and unable to deliver the goods for Blacks. They get absolutely no respect.**

Indeed, the uprising rejected legality and dreams of reforming the system: it blamed the system and those who say there is no alternative. The youth who give their "leaders" no respect are right. They are following in the tradition of Malcolm X, who told the truth: "these so-called Negro leaders are nothing but modern-day Uncle Toms."

If the Black middle-class integrationist leaders have proved bankrupt when masses go into motion, so have the parallel middle-class nationalists. The nationalists evoke



*Blacks prepare for 2nd L.A. verdict. Government uses assault on Denny to smear 1992 riot as anti-white.*

responsive chords among many Black people the more the illusion of integration under capitalism shreds. Their calls for Black institutions strike a real need among masses who are deeply suspicious of whites in general.

But the social impotence and conservatism of the nationalist leaders, like the integrationists, was revealed by their abdication during the riots. For despite their militant rhetoric, the nationalists represent only another attempt to accommodate to capitalism. They hope for an independent Black economy and culture within a pluralist American capitalism. This is a pipedream: capitalism will never accept racial equality even for would-be capitalists.

No wonder the most militant nationalist, Malcolm X, broke with nationalism near the end of his life in order to advance the struggle. Still rejecting integrationism, he moved toward internationalism. (See PR 43.)

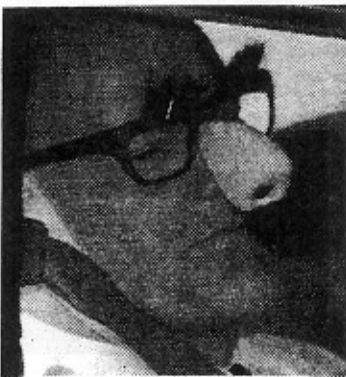
### THE NIGHTMARE OF RACE AND CLASS OPPRESSION

Thirty years ago, when Martin Luther King was touting his version of the "American dream," Malcolm replied: "I don't see an American dream. I see an American nightmare." This year, with former L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley talking about a "Los Angeles renaissance," all we see in the urban areas of the U.S. is the Dark Ages.

Today, three decades after Malcolm's death, life is still a nightmare for many Black people and is getting worse. While a minority has made it into the middle class, American society fundamentally rejects Black people, spitting them out into the ghettos and prisons. And like the rest of the less well-off middle class in the U.S., the Blacks who thought they had pulled ahead for good are increasingly aware that the rungs of the social ladder are cracking beneath their feet.

The racist oppression of Blacks is the granite foundation of American capitalism. To rule over the whole working class, it divides it racially, setting white against Black, U.S. against immigrant Blacks, Blacks and Latinos against each other, etc. When white workers accept the bosses' right to pay starvation wages to Blacks, their own wages and jobs are undermined. Reservoirs of "cheap labor" always lower all wages.

The intertwining of racial and class oppression works in the other direction too, however. For people of color, each time their anger at racism boils over, it flows into their discontent over their economic plight. Non-Black workers as well are offended by blatant racism, but they are angriest at their own economic conditions. Most working people do not yet recognize the racially based nature of their common ex-



*Convicted cop Sgt. Koon wears Groucho Marx mask to court. Still looks like racist pig.*

ploitation. That consciousness can only come to flower through common action.

#### **FOR AN ORGANIZED L.A.!**

Mainstream political observers assert that American workers, although fearful of economic perils, are quiescent. Most don't even vote, much less join unions or go out on strike. Certainly they are not revolutionary. But Marxists understand that surface appearances often belie reality. Workers who do vote are hostile to the capitalist politicians and expect little. Unions are rightfully viewed with profound suspicion, given their track record. In sum, workers of all colors are not apathetic but enormously explosive. But they do not know at the moment how to explode.

The uprising was a mighty demonstration of the fact that the masses are not just objects to be manipulated for their own good. The self-serving tale told by condescending saviors that the masses don't fight for themselves was given the lie. But most working people are reluctant to riot again. Although the L.A. explosion saw several significant actions against police and state institutions, both organized and unorganized, many participants recognized the limits of the riots in their disorganized character.

The disorganization gave too much leeway to be exploited by gangs and hoodlums, whose leaders — despite recent pledges of unity against the common enemy — prey upon the community, not the capitalists. The two most critical factors, however, are 1) that while riots may exact revenge on a few cops and local shop-owners, they do not target the real

enemy, the big capitalists and their state power; and 2) that they are fated to meet up with a vastly more coordinated, mobilized and dangerous military response.

*But that means that riots must be transcended, not repudiated. Mass action must become organized class action if it is to succeed.* The working class can be a mighty force if it is united in struggle, capable of stopping industry, transport and even the government in its tracks. The best way to mobilize the entire working class is with a general strike.

And just like in L.A., where the outbursts of anger by Blacks immediately won to their side Latino and even white workers, Blacks will have to lead in the fight for a general strike. The most oppressed strata of the working class, Blacks are also its most militant and aggressive fighters. Interracial working class unity will only be forged when Black workers lead mass actions like a general strike.

Many workers respond enthusiastically to the idea of a general strike, but they usually note that the union leaders will never allow such a strike. They are right. It is not by accident that the unions have shrivelled in Los Angeles, but even there the workers of the aerospace, longshore and city workers' unions have the potential to rally behind them the unemployed and unorganized layers of the working class. In New York, for example, the municipal, transit and hospital workers could stop the city in a day.

The problem is the pro-capitalist union leaders who sabotage the workers' struggles because they know that the workers threaten the capitalist system they want to preserve. That's why they did nothing to protest the first Rodney King verdict. It may well be that less well organized workers will have to ignite the coming explosions before the better organized battalions of the class detonate.

#### **REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS**

The L.A. riot was a scream of anger against the whole rotten system, its vile laws and its twin poles of Rodeo Drive opulence and South Central devastation. It was a demand for a new society, a real way out — not the bullshit offered by current leaders.

A new leadership that stands for the mobilization of the whole working class in a struggle for its class interests is desperately needed. None of the present leaders can point to an alternative to capitalism. When Clinton says that workers have to sacrifice to save the system, they all agree. And when the bosses say that whatever the verdict from the retrial, there could be no repeat of last year's riots, these leaders unite to try to stop any mass protest.

The defense of the most fundamental rights of working people is a threat to the capitalist system. That's why it took a mass upheaval simply to get two brutal racists convicted. For the masses to get anything from capitalism, they have to threaten the system's very existence.

That's why the working class's struggle needs a revolutionary leadership. Only revolutionaries who have no stake in preserving the capitalist system are prepared to lead the workers' struggle to victory — *by any means necessary!* Only authentic communists will fight all the way for a general strike that would threaten the bosses' rule, because only they stand for the rule of the working class.

The League for the Revolutionary Party owes its origin to the massive riots, general strikes and revolts which swept the world in the late 1960's and early 1970's, not the least of which were the American ghetto revolts. Today, the L.A. uprising enables to develop our understanding further.

It is a travesty to call on the unions at this point to lead the struggle, as many leftists do. In the minds of militant



Black workers, that would mean subordinating their struggle to the whip of the current labor leadership. In the '60's, the attempt to enforce such a subordination led to the Black Power revolt. Today, when the influence of the labor leaders is enormously reduced and their willingness to betray has been written in blood, the idea of the unions taking the lead is not just wrong but absurd. Recent efforts of the Latino drywallers in Los Angeles to gain union support showed clearly the unwillingness of the union bureaucrats to ally with people of color in particular or with militants in general.

#### FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

The fight to build a general strike must be linked to the struggle to build the revolutionary proletarian party. It will be built by advanced workers themselves, not condescending middle-class intellectuals and "organizers." It is necessary and inevitable that Black and Hispanic workers be in the forefront of the struggle, out of proportion to their numbers in the country as a whole.

One crucial arena where revolutionaries must fight for the general strike is *inside* the unions. Small as they are in L.A. and elsewhere, they still dominate vital industries. But they are not the only battleground for the working class. Leftists once used slogans like "Labor must take the lead" and the call for a labor party in order to expose workers' illusions in union misleaders. Now such slogans are endlessly replayed by a decadent left in front of workers who know that labor leaders are quite content with racism, exploitation and keeping the lid on. Such a political line exposes only the *left's* illusions.

Communist methodology insists that socialist revolution is our strategy. The use of more limited slogans at any particular time is tactical, based on the need of revolutionary workers to enter into a dialogue with the rest of our class. We have to explain what the objective situation demands if our class is to defend its interests and advance its goals.

But contrary to radical, rationalist intellectuals, a dialogue isn't a lecture. It involves world and self-activity — class motion and action. Unless the ranks are in motion against the union leadership, actively putting forward an alternative to the bureaucrats, workers will not see the necessary demands as the program of an alternative but as foolish utopian requests to the present tops. Contrary to the middle-class would-be saviors, "dialogue" means hearing what the masses say — once again, not just in words but also in their deeds.

#### WORKING-CLASS DEFENSE

Imagine the difference if a revolutionary working-class party had been on the scene during the L.A. riot. Through the leadership of revolutionary workers, the mass explosions would have been given organization, shape and power by an industrial general strike. Media propaganda about anti-white aims would have been blown away, and the real goals would have been articulated: ending racial injustice and winning jobs and income for all through victorious class struggle.

Capitalism's "solutions" — preferential hiring, affirmative action and the like — have proved useless for the mass of Black workers. U.S. capitalism, inherently racist, will never allow full employment at decent wages. It will never abandon discrimination in reality despite its legal facade. The only way Blacks can secure decent jobs is through *full* employment — a demand only achievable under a revolutionary workers' state. Such a program would obviously give Blacks the ability to attract Latino and white workers, who also face

the desperate conditions of decaying capitalism. A revolutionary leadership at the helm of future uprisings would also act as a counterweight to the hooligan elements who play into the hands of the enemy and betray the workers by racial assaults on whites and others.

With a revolutionary party, the power of the masses would have been mobilized and organized against the ruling class's organized forces. The cops and National Guard would have been met by a working-class militia; the killing and maiming by them could have been averted. Revolutionary communist workers experienced in today's struggles and aware of past tactics that have been successfully used by workers' defense organizations could help transform the present balance of power in the cities.

#### MALCOLM X ON BLACK DEFENSE

The need for Black defense guards has often been expressed. Some decades ago the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X especially, called for such a body, and this was a source of great attraction. But neither the nationalist nor the integrationist middle-class leaders will ever organize forces to confront the police power of the state. As Malcolm X observed when he was a Muslim leader:

**It could be heard increasingly in the Negro communities: "Those Muslims talk tough, but they never do anything unless somebody bothers Muslims." I moved around outsiders more than most other Muslim officials. I felt the very real potentiality that, considering the mercurial moods of the \*black masses, this labeling of Muslims as "talk only" could see us, powerful as we were, one day suddenly separated from the Negroes' front-line struggle.**

Only revolutionaries stand for Black self-defense. We recognize that because of the brutal racism of American capitalism and the failure of the reformist misleaders of the working class to really fight racism and the system causing it, Black workers see self-defense as a task for their race.

But working-class revolutionaries regard a Black defense force as a stepping stone to an interracial class defense force. A brutal clubbing of three Irish immigrants by Yonkers, New York cops in 1991 led their lawyer to comment:

**It shows that findings of police brutality are not just a black-white position, but something everyone has to take very seriously. (New York Times, May 7, 1993.)**

This incident is only an indicator of what the whole working class faces as capitalism's crisis heightens pressure on the police to keep working people down.

Just as capitalism's organization of production forces the working class to organize, the system by its very nature will make clear its essential brutality toward all wage earners, irrespective of color. Thus, as Marx observed, capitalism creates its own gravedigger, the united proletariat. Once white workers prove their ability to solidarize with their Black and Latino brothers and sisters in action against the common enemy, the need for separate defense organizations will recede. But the proof must be in practice, not just words.

There can be no end to racist oppression, poverty and exploitation as long as capitalism remains. Once it recognizes its strength, the working class will move from defense to an offense against its exploiters and oppressors and their state. It has the potential to establish a classless society that produces for human need, not profit. Capitalism cannot be reformed: workers' power will only be established by the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class. Drawing the lessons of the Los Angeles uprising is a fundamental step toward this end. ●

# Clinton's Health Care Fraud

by Eric Nacar

After decades of bitter resistance, the ruling class of the U.S. has reluctantly accepted the need for some kind of national health-care system. But this is not because they have become warm and caring about working people who face the constant threat of financial devastation resulting from crippling illness and inadequate medical care. For them changes are necessary to control costs and keep profits from falling.

The bosses resent that keeping us barely healthy enough to keep working takes almost 15 percent of the Gross National Product, much more than in other industrial countries. Despite occasional handwringing about the plight of 40 million uninsured, their real complaint is that workers' health benefits are *too high*. And that governs what the Clinton administration has in store for us:

**Americans can expect reduced medical services as a result of any effort to bring health-care costs under control, the director of the Congressional Budget Office told a House subcommittee today. The official, Robert D. Reischauer, sought to dispel what he called misconceptions about health-care costs. . . . "Cost controls are likely to be more painful than many envision, requiring consumers to accept some real limits on the quality or quantity of medical care." (New York Times, March 3.)**

Moreover, complaints about high costs might make you believe the corporations are opposed to the high administrative costs, profits, managerial and physician incomes and other wasteful expenses that make up about a third of health spending in the U.S. today. (Since 1970 the number of health-care workers has more than doubled, but there are 700 percent more administrative personnel.) Not at all: the plans pushed by big business would do little to control these problems. Minimal medicine for the masses is their solution.

## 'REFORM' PLANS DRIVEN BY CRISIS

In the past, workers' struggles have won such gains as employer-paid health insurance, federal-run Medicare for retirees and state-run Medicaid for many unemployed and poor people. But the capitalist system has been in economic crisis for two decades. The capitalists want to reduce their payments in taxes and contributions for money-gobbling benefits like health care.

But bosses can't just slash workers' health insurance with impunity — although some, especially non-union firms, have done so, and many have cut retirees' benefits. Workers have fought for health care more than for any other benefit — from West Virginia coal miners to New York telephone workers (a long strike in 1990 that cost the bosses a lot of production and gained them health costs no lower than before), to the 13,000 New Jersey and New York supermarket workers this May. Such struggles convinced big capitalists that they couldn't significantly cut back health-care costs one firm at a time. So with much grumbling, they have turned to the federal government.

Much of the bosses' incentive comes from international competition. In other industrial countries with state-run health plans, individual firms do not pay directly for the health benefits of their own workers. Here they do, adding a big surcharge to labor costs. So, generally speaking, big business favors health care reform, and small businesses (many of which offer minimal or no health plans) oppose it.

The economic crisis, however, sharpens working people's

need for a decent health-care system. And many Americans are fed up with politics as usual, as the Los Angeles explosion and the Perot campaign last year both indicated. Thus the capitalists and their politicians, especially the Democratic Party, are trying to damp down a potential flashpoint by advancing phony health-care reform. But given the momentary success of the labor bureaucracy in containing the mass working-class movement, the capitalist campaign for national health care is not a move for reform but rather one more attack on the working class's standard of living.

## POPULIST RHETORIC, ELITIST PLANNING

Asserting his dedication to health-care reform, President Clinton took a populist tone in his inaugural address:

**Powerful people maneuver for position . . . forgetting those people whose toil and sweat sends us here and pays our way. Let us resolve to reform our politics so that power and privilege no longer shout down the voice of the people.**

With much fanfare, Clinton assigned his wife to draw up specific health-care proposals, and she has echoed his tone:

**We have to be willing to take on every special interest group. . . . The status quo exists because there are people who benefit from it. . . . Talk to your friends and neighbors about what you see every day in terms of price gouging, cost shifting and unconscionable profiteering. (New York Times, May 27.)**

The Clintons' aim was to try to convince the mass of people that genuine improvements are under way — and to signal their intention to maintain control over any changes for the capitalist class. But despite their demagogic denunciations of power, privilege and profits, the real planning has taken place in secret meetings of power brokers whose identities were revealed only under pressure.

Much of Hillary Clinton's brain trust comes from the Jackson Hole Group (named after a posh Wyoming resort) of insurance company executives and the lawyers, economists and professors who front for them. (The mass media agree that such experts — unlike, say, workers — are not members of any dreaded special interest group.) This gang of thieves devised the "managed competition" scheme discussed below.

The brain trust has held some public hearings and other staged spectacles to garner mass approval. The hand-picked witnesses at the hearings have mainly been the same professors, hospital administrators, industrialists and doctors — plus some union bureaucrats and an occasional working-class "health-care consumer" for decoration.

But despite all the preparations, the massive health-care reform initially scheduled to cap Clinton's first 100 days in office, was postponed to mid-May, then to mid-June and now to July or even September. The contradiction between popular hopes and capitalist plans has yet to be worked out for public consumption.

The likely outcome can be predicted by looking at Clinton's program of "shared sacrifice." Hints about large tax increases for the "middle class" to pay for national health care show what the Clintons are softening us up for. On the table are proposals for increases in tobacco and alcohol taxes, which would fall most heavily on workers and the poor (who are driven to legal poisons by life under capitalism.) The proposed energy tax is also regressive, since gas, oil and electricity take a bigger chunk of income from workers than from the wealthy. Also in the rumor mill are taxes on health

benefits that go beyond a federally proposed minimum, as if such hard-won gains were income in our pockets. And as Congress prepares Clinton's austerity budget, Medicare and Medicaid have already been slashed by \$70 billion.

Further evidence of what's in store comes from the 20-year old employer-paid insurance system in Hawaii. Here 95 percent of residents are covered, the most in any state. But according to a survey, half of all businesses have held down wage increases and a third have laid off workers or hired part-timers in order to cut health costs. As always, it is the workers who foot the bill.

Then there is the medical rationing program adopted in Oregon. In this plan, some diseases are not to be covered

(Bourgeois commentators agree that only the strongest insurance companies would survive.) A *New England Journal of Medicine* editorial warned of the "formidable expense and administrative problems involved in establishing the necessary regulatory agencies and creating the many new managed care groups that would be required."

Managed competition is in fact a scheme for the government to rationalize the cartelization of health care by a handful of insurance companies — a classic example of what Lenin called state monopoly capitalism. Staunch adherents of free enterprise are, of course, its biggest fans: they claim that competition will keep costs down. So, of course, will the "management" part: restricting patients to HMO's and deny-

*New York: Amalgamated Clothing Workers union leads rally for national health insurance.*



because of the expense, including long-term disabling conditions. The Bush administration sued to stop the Oregon plan because it violated the Americans with Disabilities Act. The "pro-people" Clintons have withdrawn the lawsuit.

#### SCHEMES WITH VARIATIONS

The debate so far in the media has limited the options to those which would preserve the massive waste and blood-sucking of the private insurance and pharmaceutical companies. An undercurrent of uneasiness about the possibility of working-class unrest figures in their calculations because of the many health-care related strikes in the past decade. The bourgeois drive thus has a certain pre-emptive character. There are two main messages for working people: don't fight for decent health care, and don't get your hopes up too high.

The bourgeoisie is restricting the choices to two main schemes with variations — "managed competition" and "play or pay." The former would be administered by "health-care alliances" like insurance companies, which would band together to shop for doctors, hospitals and health maintenance organizations (HMO's) that offer the rock-bottom cheapest care based on a minimum (that's for sure!) set of benefits set by the government. This minimum would be paid for by deductions and taxes from workers and contributions from employers (equivalent to deferred wages). Anyone who can afford better could purchase supplementary benefits.

The bourgeois mainstream considers managed competition the most practical and least onerous option — for them. It would not just preserve but strengthen and consolidate the private insurance industry so hated by the working class.

ing payment for claims deemed unjustified.

This plan would be a nightmare for the working class. We would be forced into HMO's and "participating physician" plans with a lower level of benefits and less choice of doctors and facilities than most covered workers now have. If you've ever had problems getting "non-standard" procedures or "above-limits" doctor visits approved or paid for, wait till you get dumped into this scheme. And if the Jackson Hole version wins out, people who can't afford insurance now will get no guarantee of coverage in the future.

Managed competition is hell on hospital workers too. In California, where elements of this scheme have been operating for a decade, hospital bosses cut costs by "adjusting" staff levels up or down, depending on daily patient counts.

The "play or pay" plans preferred by some liberal politicians and union bureaucrats differ from managed competition more in flavor than in substance. Managed competition emphasizes who gets paid (the "health-care buying organizations," i.e., big insurance companies); play or pay emphasizes who pays — supposedly the employers — and who is covered — theoretically everybody. The two programs are quite compatible, since both depend on private insurers and on a guiding (not a controlling or owning) role for the state.

Pay or play means the government would require all employers to provide a minimum level of benefits. Otherwise they would have to pay special taxes into a pool to provide benefits for all those not covered. On top of this, all employed workers and employers would be taxed to cover the unemployed. This would not necessarily require the enrollment of the whole population in buying organizations; it also

leaves open the possibility of continued government coverage of unemployed people in Medicaid. The payroll tax is also a device for setting employed workers against the unemployed.

In case workers' expectations rise and they start to fight again, some labor leaders and politicians have a third alternative: a Canadian-style "single payer" program providing public insurance for private care.

### CANADA'S SYSTEM WON BY WORKERS

The Canadian system embodied serious gains. It was won province by province and finally on a federal scale in the 1960's and '70's. It was legislated by the New Democratic Party (Canada's social-democratic labor party), Liberal provincial governments and a Liberal national government — at the height of the post-war prosperity bubble.

This universal health-care plan was enacted during a period of heightened (and in Québec, unprecedented) class struggle. It is now made out, in the hindsight of middle-class reformists and left-leaning union bureaucrats, to have been a purely electoral victory. Or so they tell the workers.

Though fundamentally a reform won by the working class, Canadian "single-payer" universal health insurance contains significant concessions to the bourgeoisie. First, it is financed by a payroll tax on employers, which they hold back from wages. Second, doctors in private practice are paid by the patient ("fee for service") instead of receiving a salary. Third, the national government sets a health-care budget for each province which the provincial government then further doles out to doctors and hospitals; any expenditure above the limit requires special permission.

The Canadian government, unable to prevent the reform, attempted to control "runaway health-care spending" so that the bosses wouldn't have to pay too much. Now the prosperity of the '60's and early '70's has vanished. With a deepening economic crisis hitting Canada even harder than the U.S., this requires rolling back workers' gains. Ottawa is moving with trepidation to cut back benefits. Still, the level of health care in Canada leaves the U.S. far in the dust.

To retain their gains, Canadian workers must fight the New Democrats. Since the NDP took over the Ontario government a few years ago, they introduced co-payments for many previously free medical services. They have broken a Toronto transit strike, prosecuted and jailed striking postal union leaders, and forced government workers to accept a pitiful 1 percent raise while slashing thousands of public service jobs. They serve as Canadian capitalism's first line of defense against the working class and all those oppressed by the bourgeoisie.

### REFORMISM NO ANSWER

U.S. workers hear no hint of any of these problems from the reformist left in this country, which, with or without quibbles, hails the Canadian system. They say or imply that we can win universal health care through electoral means, though some allow that "grass-roots organizing" or even mass action may be necessary.

Most now say that to win Canadian-style health care we should work in the Democratic Party. But when the class struggle heats up, when workers strike massively against concessions and for decent health care, this crew will stagger into position in front of the fighting workers, raising the pale pink banner of the Canadian New Democrats.

"If we want good health care like in Canada," they will cry, "strikes are not a great idea; the real way forward is to build our own labor party, sit back and wait for the next election." But for one thing, all the leading members of Congress

get hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes (formally called campaign funds) from insurance lobbyists. In addition, the NDP (and its British and Australian counterparts) show that a labor party in the U.S. would now be an enemy of the working class; we need a *revolutionary* workers' party.

On the other hand, right-wing union bureaucrats and most liberal politicians argue that the Canadian system is "impractical" for the U.S. — in plain words, that play or pay is the best workers can get *without struggle*. They are joined by some "progressive" unionists, like Dennis Rivera of the hospital workers, who don't want to fight for something Clinton is against. They all fear that a real fight would put the working class in opposition to the Democratic Party and to electoral politics generally. As well, the bureaucrats hope to preserve the many insurance operations run by their unions that provide them, their families and buddies with plush jobs.

### HEALTH CARE: A WORKING-CLASS ISSUE

What sort of health-care program should the working class fight for? Our program must start from the understanding that the crisis in health care is inseparable from the general crisis of capitalism, which is increasing poverty, homelessness and outright starvation even in the world's wealthiest country. A program that meets the needs of the working class must be counterposed to programs in the interests of the insurance companies, hospitals and the large capitalist corporations — who want "reforms" that reduce services and raise costs for the workers.

Health care is above all a working-class issue. Capitalism runs industry with little regard to the health of workers. Unsafe job conditions due to speedup and productivity drives are the norm. In addition, capitalism runs society with little regard to the environment and the health of the population. From the depletion of the ozone layer to the pollution of the air and rivers, capitalism creates conditions detrimental to good health. Only when the working class takes power can the unsafe, anti-environmental practices be ended.

Poverty is a powerful indicator of health under capitalism. It is no surprise that the health of Black people in the U.S. is significantly worse than that of whites, given the higher rates of poverty among Blacks. About one-third of Blacks live below the official poverty line (\$12,000 yearly income for a family of four), in contrast to about one-eighth of whites.

The relation between the degree of poverty and illness is striking. A Washington, D.C. study found that 50 percent of Black men living in the projects suffered from hypertension, compared to 20 percent of all Black men in the city. Among Black women in D.C., while 7 percent in the city were diabetic, the figure rose to 25 percent in the projects.

Black men are three times more likely to have AIDS than white men, and 50 percent more likely to die of a heart attack. Black babies have 70 percent less of a chance of reaching four years of age than do white babies. Even a man living in poverty-ridden Bangladesh has a better chance of reaching age 65 than a man living in Harlem.

### NO SOLUTION UNDER CAPITALISM

Clearly health conditions reflect the anti-working class and inevitably racist character of capitalism. Diseases and illnesses ravage poor neighborhoods. While the rate of AIDS infection among middle-class gay men has declined, in poor areas it is increasing in epidemic proportions. Tuberculosis, an early industrial disease bred and spread by unsanitary, overcrowded conditions, is making a comeback in Black and Latino communities.

The fact that the crisis of health care is the crisis of the

capitalist system was confirmed recently by a dialogue between two of the U.S.'s foremost experts on medical policy and economics (in the April issue of the *Cornell University Medical College Alumni Quarterly*).

First, here is Dr. Arnold S. Relman, editor of one of the country's most prominent medical publications, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, replying to a question about collapsing health care for the poor:

**The way to address that problem is to rid the system as much as possible of waste, redundancy, unnecessary overhead, unneeded services, profiteering, fraud and defensive medicine. I believe that a conservative estimate of what we could save in a well designed system is 25 percent of what we are spending now for personal health care. With that money, which would be about \$200 million, we could take care of all the poor and underserved and provide long-term care, too.**

Relman's optimistic reform program was answered by Prof. Eli Ginzberg of Columbia University:

**My question is, who is going to do all of this . . . who is going to make the world any different? Dr. Relman doesn't want government to manage this new world, and I'm sympathetic to that. He doesn't like the for-profit structures, and I don't either. But nothing I know about organized medicine suggests it might be capable of the managerial reorganization, decision making and financing that would be required. And I'm totally unimpressed with the ability of the insurance industry to bring this off.**

Ginzberg is right: no capitalistic force is going to do all of this. The possibility that never occurs to either bourgeois expert is the working class.

#### **FREE QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL**

The health-care issue proves the case for socialist revolution. Capitalism by nature creates a health-care crisis where the interests of the workers and the capitalists are diametrically opposed. For the working class, the health crisis means the deadly lack of affordable quality health care. For the capitalists, it means avoiding paying for the problems of their system — lowering benefits for workers while preserving privileges for the wealthy.

In contrast with capitalism, a workers' state would provide free, quality health care for all. Workers would rule and make decisions in our own interest. Our society would finally be able to overcome scarcity and create a society of abundance free of class, racial and sexual oppression. It would regard the workers themselves as the most precious productive resource. It would understand that raising the material and cultural level of the working class is critical for developing the productive forces to benefit all.

The revolutionary workers' program calls for the creation

of a national health care system planned and operated in the interests of the workers. Unlike the capitalist "reform" proposals, a working-class program means the expropriation of the insurance companies, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies, and the establishment of a government-owned national hospital and clinic organization, free to all for all medical treatments needed. A nationally planned health care system would expand facilities and treatment and make the best use of available resources and technology.

Under capitalism, increased spending on health care is a burden, a drain on capitalist profits. Under a workers' state, increased spending on health care would be a gain for all of society. While a workers' state would be initially confronted with the need to manage limited resources, the gains from raising the quality of health care would be enormous and would "save" a great deal in the long run.

Preventive medicine under capitalism is a contradiction in terms. A workers' state, by providing jobs and decent incomes for all, would immediately begin to raise the standard of living. A higher living standard and better medical care would fight the spread of infectious diseases like TB whose social and economic costs are devastating; medical care *after* illness strikes is many times more costly. In a world which already has the technological potential to afford a decent life for all, capitalism inflicts a totally unnecessary and criminal barbarism on humanity.

A significant factor in health care is the oppression of women and children. Under capitalism, women work double-duty — in the factory or office and then at home — a situation harmful to women and their children. A workers' state which socialized child care and treated children as the responsibility of all would end much neglect and abuse that results in illness and disease.

In sum, capitalism is dangerous to our health. And many workers are sick of capitalism. The problem is we don't have the revolutionary leadership, the revolutionary party, to lead the struggle for the our right not just for decent health care but for decent health.

How can we fight for the socialist alternative to capitalist misery? Above all, we must win revolutionary-minded workers to understand that the central task is to build the revolutionary party. Workers can be won to socialism only by a conscious leadership that connects the day-to-day struggles against capitalism to the necessity for socialist revolution.

As the reality of health-care "reform" hits home, we can expect a rise in working-class struggle for decent health care. Revolutionaries will have greater opportunities to intervene and pose the working-class alternative — free, quality health care for all! And, above all, to tell the workers the truth that it is attainable only by socialist revolution. ●

## **Labor Reformists Sing 'New' Notes**

by Bob Wolfe

Over 1100 trade unionists and leftists attended the 7th Labor Notes conference outside of Detroit on April 23-25. Dedicated to the theme of "Solidarity and Democracy," the affair was another step by the Solidarity group (members of which founded Labor Notes magazine) and other "socialists" to crystallize a left reformist layer in the union movement.

The conference advanced Labor Notes/Solidarity as a player in the stagnant labor circles of today. It also revealed the weaknesses that can prevent the left reformists and

pseudo-revolutionary centrists from capturing and derailing the coming genuine working-class upsurge if a revolutionary leadership is built in time.

#### **SOLIDARITY'S CONTRADICTION**

Even the pride and joy of Solidarity, Teamsters For a Democratic Union (TDU), which helped capture the Teamster presidency for Ron Carey last year, holds only a fragile foothold in the unions. In its own terms, TDU has built a democratic reform movement in Teamsters but not a radical

## Independent Political Austerity

A featured speaker at the Labor Notes conference was Bernie Sanders, "independent" congressman from Vermont and a self-styled socialist. Sanders said:

**I know the Congress does not have a good name with you, and it *should* not have a good name with you. Have no faith that it will do the right thing.**

Sure enough, a few weeks later Sanders cast a key vote for Bill Clinton's tax and budget bill when it narrowly passed the House of Representatives.

Among other things, Clinton's bill raises taxes on social security benefits for retired couples earning more than a lofty \$32,000, cuts Medicare and Medicaid payments by \$68 billion and slashes wage increases for government workers. Its token increases in taxes on corporations (1 percent!) will be easily evaded.

Bill's bill is part of his austerity package aimed at

As Kweisi Mfune, head of the Congressional Black Caucus, complained when Clinton agreed with conservative senators to slash Medicare and Medicaid further, the original deal had already cut key provisions to the bare bone. Of course, like Sanders, he and the rest of the Caucus had voted *for* this austerity bill.

A genuine socialist — a revolutionary — would have fought against such a measure and used the Congressional pulpit to expose Clinton's phony populism and subservience to big business. Sanders and his fellow "socialists," Democrats Dellums of California and Owens of New York, have proved again they are agents of capital, not the working class. Inside or outside the Democratic Party, reformism stinks.

Labor Notes, Solidarity and all the "progressives" who cheer Sanders & Co. today will have to answer to the

one. Its growth does not represent a mass radicalization that stimulates workers to challenge capitalism. On the contrary, TDU has failed to break out of the conservative straitjacket of the labor bureaucracy.

Indeed, the "victory" of the leftists in building TDU was based on their ability to adapt politically to government intervention and backward trade-unionist consciousness. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 41.) This explains why Solidarity helps restrain other leftists who try to push further. Solidarity's leading TDU honcho, Ken Paff, makes no apologies for adapting to backwardness. At the conference, he and other TDU leaders opposed efforts to "radicalize" TDU by raising even so mild a question as a labor party.

This brings up an interesting contradiction. While virtually every speaker who discussed labor's role in politics attacked the Democratic Party, the home of labor reformism, the much celebrated TDU sidesteps any fight for an alternative to the Democrats. Though Solidarity and other centrists have been long-time advocates of "independent political action" by labor, in the one union where they have real influence they use it to *undermine* such action.

This contradiction does not bother the Solidarity leaders. Paff runs TDU as a separate fiefdom. He sees TDU's success as a product of its narrow outlook. The labor party for him is not a Teamster question since it is political; workers aren't ready for it right now. While it is fine to discuss such things at Labor Notes conferences, he and his centrist colleagues in TDU are not interested in rocking *their* boat.

### OLD GARBAGE IN NEW PARTY

If anything, the success of TDU as a crucial factor in the election of Ron Carey has propelled Solidarity to move rightward on the labor party question. Thus Solidarity seems to be playing with both Tony Mazzocchi's creation, Labor Party Advocates, and the recently formed New Party. While the LPA pushes for a labor party at a tortoise pace, the New Party is running ahead with an inside-outside strategy toward the Democrats. It wants to run independently in local elections *and* make electoral deals with Democratic candidates.

While a number of centrists at the Detroit meeting denounced the New Party for capitulating to the Democrats, Solidarity adopted a neutral stance. The final panel featured

Elaine Bernard, a prominent New Party supporter, and Bob Wages, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union and a leading LPA backer. Given Carey's recent switch from the Republicans to the Democrats and their lack of interest in helping to radicalize the Teamsters, TDU's leaders may find the New Party's inside-outside approach more useful than calling for a labor party.

Actually, LPA and the New Party complement each other. They share a pragmatic, reformist approach and orient to many of the same elements. Whereas LPA directly focuses on the unions, the New Party pushes community/labor alliances and appeals to various sectoralist groups (environmentalists, consumer advocates, women's groups, gays and lesbians, etc.).

On the surface, the leaders of LPA and the New Party insist they are not in competition with each other. Some New Party supporters pose their activity as a step towards building a labor party in the future. Since the LPA does not consider itself to be a political organization, let alone a labor party, the New Party serves to fill a void in terms of what to do electorally *now*.

The New Party appeals to "progressive" bureaucrats by allowing them to build a left reputation while continuing to wheel and deal with the Democrats. LPA plays the same role and also serves to put pressure on the Democrats. But LPA's more cautious approach means it can't meet the needs of aspiring power brokers who need to cut their deals now and can't wait for future developments.

Mazzocchi has given his blessing to LPAers who want to join the New Party, which works as a safety valve for him. Those who criticize the LPA for its failure to run candidates can do so by joining the New Party. Besides, many people in LPA, including some with union posts, share the New Party's inside-outside strategy, seeing it as less threatening to the pro-Democratic labor officials. (Of course, Mazzocchi and LPA bend over backwards to reassure the bureaucrats that they are no threat.)

In New York, the New Party is planning to set up a third-party ballot line to support David Dinkins, the Democratic mayor, for re-election. The opportunist New Partyists are not restrained by the fact that Dinkins has used his populist credentials to carry out Wall Street's austerity

program. (See this issue's article on the New York election.)

A leading progressive bureaucrat, Jan Pierce, vice president of the Communications Workers in New York, sees the New Party as a means to build a mass constituency that can push the Democrats to the left:

**The point is, we can bring out the greatness of Clinton or Cuomo or Dinkins if we have a progressive movement in this country. Hillary Rodham Clinton would love to see a million people on the Mall demanding health care reform to put some backbone into the House and Senate.** (*New York Newsday*, May 18.)

That is, Pierce proposes to pressure these marvelous Democrats by posing the threat of an independent party. Bureaucrats like Pierce will sometimes criticize the Democrats but are not at all prepared to make a clean break. Their power still depends on their ties to the system, not on their ability to lead class struggles. At every opportunity they run from the task of mass mobilization and turn to electoralism as the solution.

### LPA 'LEFT' VS. NEW PARTY

Class collaboration and wheeling and dealing is accepted as practical politics by Mazzocchi and the LPA. It is also condoned by the participants at the Labor Notes conference. Nevertheless, the left fringe of LPA, groups like the self-styled "Trotskyists" in Socialist Organizer and Socialist Action, expressed outrage at the New Party's openly class collaborationist politics.

Nevertheless, the centrists are unable to argue against the logic of the LPA right wing and the New Party. They plead with Mazzocchi to let LPA run independent candidates, but the New Party has beaten them to the punch. They are desperately trying to head off the consolidation of the New Party as the third party: if it draws in "progressive" bureaucrats it would undercut the LPA.

A good example of the depths the left has sunk to is the Labor Party Organizing Network, the brainchild of Socialist Organizer. A large part of the April issue of their paper, *The Organizer*, is devoted to attacks on the New Party. In one article, Scott Cooper refers to a New Party statement that compares the organization to the Canadian New Democratic Party (NDP):

**If only it were true. The NDP, for all its programmatic deficiencies, made a fundamental break with the two major parties of the Canadian bosses: the Liberals and the Conservatives (the equivalent of the Democrats and Republicans in the United States). Only after this break could the NDP lay claim to being an independent party — a labor party based on the Canadian trade unions, not just another party organized in the interest of the ruling class.**

"If only it were true" — if only we had an NDP. Canadian workers are indeed fortunate not to have to choose between capitalist parties that slit their throats with cutbacks and layoffs — they have a labor party to do it in their name!

### NOT THE TROTSKYIST METHOD

If only centrists like Socialist Organizer would have the political decency not to credit Trotsky for their pursuit of a reformist labor party! Trotsky's labor party tactic in the 1930's was an attempt to help a mass working-class upsurge reach revolutionary conclusions. He hoped to show the need for a revolutionary party by going through the labor party struggle with militant left-moving workers. (See *PR* 40.)

Trotsky's approach had nothing in common with telling workers to build a reformist party as a step forward. The

NDP is not a genuine break with capitalist politics; on the contrary, its aim is to *prevent* such a break. Its true role is counterrevolutionary. It is a roadblock to workers moving toward classwide action. But lacking a revolutionary perspective, the centrists argue that a reformist labor party would necessarily be a qualitative gain for the working class.

The left labor party advocates argue that a third party not based on the unions will be class collaborationist and will sell out the struggle. What they do not say is that a reformist party based on the unions will also sell out, as such parties have done for decades in Australia, Canada and Britain. And as Sandy Pope of the New Party responded to LPAers who accused her organization of supporting sellouts, the bureaucrats sell out the workers every day. When they run a labor party, the only difference is that occasionally they use state office to do the same thing.

As usual, the centrists are contradicted by their own stagist "logic." By conceding that the revolutionary party is not on the agenda today and that a reformist labor party is a necessary stage, they invite the argument that even a labor party is not yet on the agenda. Therefore running candidates who make deals with Democrats is the necessary stage toward a third party. That is, once you buy into the stagist approach, it is hard to draw the line at being outside the Democratic Party.

Given that for the moment the bureaucrats have prevented a real mass workers' struggle, the call for a break with the Democrats does not necessarily pose opposition to capitalism. It is a call for an organizational break without a clear political break from reformism. Thus without a genuine class movement, all third party schemes — New Party, Labor Party or whatever — inevitably serve as pressure tactics on the Democrats, not as an independent working-class alternative. The New Partyists accept this class collaborationist logic and forge ahead into electoral politics, while the "socialist" left in LPA can only grind their teeth and yell "foul."

### REFORMIST REGROUPMENT

Since the New Deal, reformism has developed largely through the Democratic Party. As the Democrats move further to the right, a left fringe outside the Democratic Party (but still tied to it) has grown. Clinton's growing failures point to the inability of the ruling class to provide even modest reforms. After years of concessions and other attacks, workers are no longer enthusiastic about "friends" in the White House, especially ones who deliver nothing.

The Labor Notes conference and the New Party project reflect a process of political reshuffling among the reformists and centrist groups. With the downfall of Stalinism and the Communist Parties, many issues dividing the non-revolutionary left have disappeared. In the U.S. there is a growing tendency for DSA, the Committees of Correspondence and centrists like Solidarity to move closer.

In the past, a chief stumbling block has been the attitude toward the Democrats. In the Jesse Jackson campaigns of 1984 and 1988, some centrists softened their opposition to working with Democrats. Now the New Party is bridging the gap between reformists with open ties to the Democrats and centrists who prefer to stay outside the Democratic Party.

Combatting reformism in the working class is not a job for the centrist tendencies that hide their reformist practice behind occasional revolutionary rhetoric. They too must be defeated. Only by freeing itself from all forms of bourgeois consciousness can the working class create a genuine revolutionary party. ●

# Clinton and Gay Rights: the Big Lie

by Evelyn Kaye

*Proletarian Revolution* warned last year that Bill Clinton would betray the gay rights struggle, no matter what he promised or how cravenly the gay and lesbian leadership was willing to support him. These predictions derived from our understanding that the bourgeois program Clinton and the Democrats stand for requires escalating attacks on working and oppressed people. And we were right: both Clinton and the middle-class gay leadership have acted true to form.

## APRIL MARCH FOR CLINTON

Take the April 25 gay and lesbian rights march in Washington. Originally planned as a protest against Republican anti-gay attacks, it became instead a warm, fuzzy blanket to cover for the Democrats, a gentle reminder to Clinton to keep his promise to lift the military ban on gays. The gay and lesbian leadership not only pushed the military issue over all others, suppressing many vital questions. It used the "let us serve our country" line to push the lie that gays can make it safely into the mainstream of U.S. capitalist society.

Pulling off the pro-Clinton bash wasn't easy. The month before, Clinton had openly considered the possibility of segregating gays in the military. As Donna Minkowitz reported, prominent gay leaders cautioned the White House that "the march would be an anti-Clinton protest unless the president showed more support for lifting the military ban." (*Village Voice*, April 27.)

But Clinton's support for gay rights has gone down, not up. He not only refused to appear at the rally — he high-tailed it out of town, sending a clear message: keep your distance. The leadership had to work overtime that day to drown out the real Clinton with excuses about his "dilemma." Clinton's statement to the march was read by California Democratic representative Nancy Pelosi, who added:

**Everyone would like the President to be at the event, but that's one day, and the measure of his approval should be whether in the long run he honors his commitment.**

Of course, the long run will never come for the middle-class Clinton advocates.

At the rally, the pro-Clinton spirit dominated the festivities, allowing the suppression of radical demands and the truth. Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, championed NOW's pro-lesbian position in 1971, the very time when lesbians were being purged from the organization in New York and elsewhere. A national NAACP leader spoke as if that organization had always been the biggest advocates of gay rights, too polite to discuss the fact that major NAACP chapters were vehemently opposed to endorsing the demonstration.

## KEY GAY ISSUES SUPPRESSED

One of the more outrageous cover-ups was the introduction of New York's spineless Mayor Dinkins as "the mayor who recently marched with the gay and lesbian contingent in the St. Patrick's Day parade." This was the very parade that had excluded gays and lesbians, thanks in good measure to Dinkins' sellout; moreover, Dinkins did not participate in the gay and lesbian counter-march. (The mayor subsequently showed his true principles by marching in the Salute to Israel parade, although it likewise had banned a gay and lesbian synagogue from participating as such.)

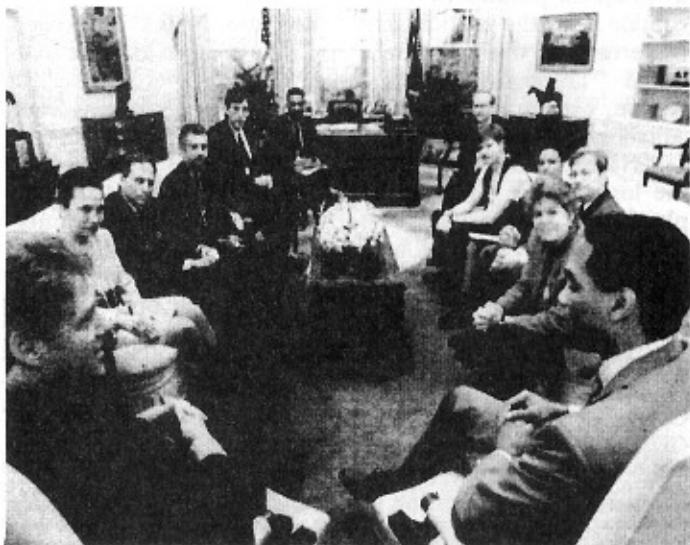
Only one platform speaker, from ACT UP, was allowed to oppose the military ban and the prerogative of U.S. imperialism to rule the world. Her solution, "ban the

military," is a utopian impossibility under capitalism. But it came as a refreshing change of pace from the super-patriotic plabum spewed over the crowd throughout the event.

The emphasis on the military ban has distracted attention from Clinton's sellouts on other gay issues. He broke his pledge to lift the prohibition against HIV-positive immigrants. And his campaign promise of innovative support for AIDS funding and research is tied to supporting this ban in the bill now in Congress. He has also stalled appointing a special AIDS "czar."

As Minkowitz noted, the eminently respectable Campaign for Military Service received hundreds of thousands of dollars in pledges within days of its founding. In contrast:

**The effort to repel the Colorado-style anti-gay ballot measures introduced in 10 more states has attracted scant support from the movement's major donors. The right has made a major push to get its operatives on school boards, neighborhood councils and Republican state committees. But the gay movement's new financial backers have yet to notice.**



*Gay and lesbian sellout leaders covered for Clinton, despite Willie the Weasel's betrayal.*

Under its bourgeois and middle-class leaders, the gay movement rejects mass struggle against the rising tide of gay-baiting and violence in favor of seeking respectability in capitalist circles. Even the radical pacifist ACT UP now acts as a pressure group on Clinton (whom it worked hard to elect), not as an anti-capitalist or even anti-Democratic Party force.

The mild pressure sure hasn't worked. On the day of the Washington rally, Clinton spoke to the press in Boston, expressing sympathy less for gays or anyone else than for his own political plight:

**A lot of people think that I did a terrible political thing, and I know I paid a terrible political price for saying that I thought the time had come to end the categorical ban on gays and lesbians serving out military service, and that they should not be subject to further discrimination in Governmental employment.**

He went on to diminish the rights of gays in the military while allegedly defending them:

**This is not about embracing anybody's life style. This is a question of whether if somebody is willing to live by the strict code of military conduct, if somebody is willing to**



**die for their country, should they have the right to do it? I think they should.**

It is bad enough that the only gay "right" Clinton recognizes is the right to die for imperialism. But the already compromised promises of April were forgotten once his July 15 deadline for lifting the military ban neared. Now Clinton demands that gays and lesbians serve a country that won't speak their name: he accepts a variant of the "don't ask, don't tell" formula prohibiting gays and lesbians from expressing their sexual identity.

Suppression of gay and lesbian identity is a reactionary act against an oppressed group, denying their right to exist. Yet the impetus for Clinton's latest capitulation came from Barney Frank, an openly gay Democratic congressman. The bourgeoisie always finds respectable spokesmen for oppressed groups willing to sell out to defend capitalism.

#### FROM POWER BLOC TO NWROC

While never rooted in the working class, the gay liberation movement, born in the 1960's on the shoulders of the Black and women's liberation movements, nevertheless represented a radical vision of sexual and human liberation. It was the Stonewall Rebellion, the riots after the Harvey Milk verdict in San Francisco and other street fights and mass struggles that won whatever gains the movement can claim.

Today's gay and lesbian power brokers — like Clinton's pal David Mixner and Torie Osborn of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force — have nothing in common with the ranks of gays and lesbians inspired by these mass actions. They are in league with gay rights millionaires like Hollywood mogul David Geffen of the Campaign for Military Service, who counts among his best friends Felix Rohatyn, the architect of austerity programs in New York City.

There are small radical groups who oppose the Democrats but see themselves as the left wing of the current leadership. The mainstream leaders work overtime, along with the media, to pretend that they just don't exist. One such group is the National Women's Rights Organizing Committee (NWROC), led by the pseudo-Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers League.

NWROC's line in the April demonstration was to pose demands on the bourgeois and middle-class leaders to break with Clinton and form a radical movement. In context, such demands could only heighten illusions that such a thing was possible for the current leadership. Instead, revolutionaries need to state something very simple and true: the gay leadership's class position and pro-capitalist politics make such a break impossible. (See PR 42 for a critique of NWROC's similar approach to the bourgeois women's groups.)

The task of revolutionaries is to convince militant gays and lesbians to break with what poses as "gay politics," which is purely pro-capitalist. Only a revolutionary proletarian party can genuinely stand for gay liberation. But the development of revolutionary consciousness is not a task of gays and lesbians alone as an isolated sector of the vanguard, as NWROC would have it. Given social reality in the U.S., if the layer of revolutionary workers, including gay and lesbian communists, does not bring home to the working-class movement as a whole the sinister nature of the attacks on gays, we are all doomed.

#### 'FAMILY VALUES' AND THE RIGHT-WING ATTACK

The present strategy of the far right foreshadows the future strategy of capitalism as a whole. The path has been clearly chosen, and attacking gays and lesbians comes in the forefront. They form one of the weakest sectors of society,

highly vulnerable to scapegoating. That is because gays and lesbians in the working class are generally not able to come out and organize collectively, for fear of losing their jobs and family support. (This in turn makes it even easier for middle-class gays to pretend that they represent all gays.)

Right wingers have seen that they could use the Catholic church to organize Latina and other oppressed women against gays. More and more petty-bourgeois and working-



*Gay marchers target N.Y. Cardinal O'Connor, moral adviser to gay-bashing punks and hoodlums.*

class women, because of the bleak futures they see for themselves and their children, seek refuge in religion and anti-gay scapegoating. They are looking for an all-around answer to the terrors of life in decaying capitalist society. They do not respond to lectures about tolerance and fairness from better-off pro-bourgeois gay and feminist activists who, while genuinely denied democratic rights in this society, have no idea of what working-class life is like.

Anti-gay attacks have thus been able to ride on a right-wing populism of class instincts gone astray; the right also campaigns against bilingual education, against fundamental rights for women, for cracking down on immigrants and for cutting back social programs like Medicare. The "progressive" leaders are blind to the problem. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, for example, held a three-hour "Fight the Right" meeting during the D.C. weekend in which they refused to discuss at all the growth of anti-gay organizing among people of color.

The battle over the "Rainbow Curriculum" in New York (see our previous issue) extended to the spring election of local school boards, which was widely posed as a referendum on gays, sex and religion. Gay "progressives," generally well-off and white, appealed for votes on the grounds that they represent no challenge to the family, religion or society.

However, "family values" do not contribute to the liberation of gays or anyone else. The theme has been adopted by all sections of the ruling class because it is a perfect manipulative weapon against a working class not yet conscious of what "family" under capitalism really means. "Family" is in fact an *anti-working class* ideology: it stands for the subordination of women in the home and their devaluation at work. It is a basic institution for dividing the working class. Like racism, it keeps the working class fighting within itself rather than against oppression and exploitation.

As popular dissatisfaction with the social crisis mounts, what better way to prop up family ideology than a deepening

of the attacks on gays and lesbians? Let's go back to the good old days, the line runs, when the country was prosperous, families were stable and we could hope for a safer world for our children. The problem is seen as alien, elite, decadent gays and lesbians — threats to us and especially our children because of perversions that deviate from stable family life. In fact, however, more than half the kids in public school come from single-parent homes, and the majority of kids with gay or lesbian parents in New York are Black or Latino. (And it's those who frown on sex, homosexual or heterosexual, who have been perverted.)

The reality is that capitalism destroys family life. Women are drawn into the work force, away from household duties. Public education and rapidly changing culture put children, especially teenagers, more in sync with their peers than with parents who appear to be living in the past. Today specifically, the economic crisis drives families apart. Poverty is the highest single predictor for divorce; unemployment is the highest single indicator that a young male will not marry a pregnant girlfriend.

But despite capitalism's tendency to break up the family, the system needs to buttress this institution to maintain the sexual division of labor that benefits it in so many ways. (See PR 34.) The family must again be made to seem the "natural" way of things. From this follows the notion that gays and

lesbians are unnatural since they don't reproduce; but these days many sex/love relationships are not centered around children, so the myth of gay unnaturalness has to be reinforced. Hence the attacks on gays and lesbians as child molesters and the like. There would be no organic basis for such crap were it not for the need to strengthen the family to maintain the oppression of women.

The rightward turn of some oppressed white, Black, and especially Latina women makes it obvious that the right is gaining by default. The growth of reaction stems not from clever organizing but from the decay of capitalist society that drives masses to desperation. What is lacking is a revolutionary pole to counter both right-wing populism and the mainstream churches and parties who aid the right.

The answer is a revolutionary party made up of the best leaders of the whole working class. We need a party that will combat church and state, not through lecturing about "tolerance" and "diversity" as the progressives do but by exposing bourgeois family ideology as a tool of oppression.

Anti-gay notions, a particularly virulent form of backward consciousness, will not be overcome in the whole working class overnight. But if a revolutionary leadership doesn't prepare itself now and begin to gather the necessary forces, the working class will be unable to win its fight against the system altogether. ●

## SWP Comes Out — as Anti-Gay!

The Socialist Workers' Party, long known for its history of buttering up liberals, has now moved to break with liberalism — on the defense of gays from right-wing attacks.

In New York City, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition and Pat Buchanan's American Cause gave heavy support to local reactionaries in a vitriolic homophobic campaign against the "Rainbow Curriculum." The SWP's paper, the *Militant*, seems to be dead set against these types:

**Buchanan's moves are part of his long-term effort to recruit cadres to an incipient fascist movement . . . The rightists attack women's rights, use deeply ingrained social prejudices against gays, and promote reactionary obscurantism on basic questions like sex education as part of a broader assault by the U.S. rulers on the rights and social gains of working people. (June 7.)**

Liberalism is no answer, the *Militant* correctly points out. But in doing so it borrows amply from the rightists' social prejudices and reactionary obscurantism:

**Those who attempt to answer the right wing by defending the Rainbow curriculum put more wind in the sails of the reactionary campaign against public education. Fernandez and other liberals who champion this curriculum attempt to use the classroom not to teach facts, including on sex education, but to impose their particular views of certain lifestyles.**

What views? What lifestyles? Gays and lesbians are being attacked as perverts, child molesters and every unspeakable thing through such language. The *Militant* spells out one of the alleged horrors:

**A pamphlet distributed under Fernandez's chancellorship, for example, which encourages condom use, recommends . . . "For anal intercourse, lube up the receptive partner's anus (asshole) . . . Do it! (Have fun!)"**

The *Militant* comments:

**Such explanations that focus on "fun" things youth should "try out" have nothing to do with sex education.**

**Sure. And the SWP's negative focus on anal intercourse**

has nothing to do with gays, either. Their lesson amounts to: stick to the birds and bees, and tell kids that sex should be boring, not fun, and above all heterosexual.

If this line sounds familiar, there is a side in the Rainbow Curriculum battle that opposes condom use and sexual activity of any kind among teenagers — God forbid anal sex. It is the very same "incipient fascist movement" that would like, in passing, to abolish abortion and see homosexuals wiped off the face of the earth.

Trying to sound super-proletarian, the *Militant* asks us to oppose the liberals' program as much as that of the right:

**The drive by liberal social "experts" and politicians for so-called multicultural education is no more an advance for working people than Buchanan's attempt to return to teaching the "Ten Commandments" or "our Anglo-American heritage." These liberals perpetuate nonscientific, classless views and try to impose them on students.**

So they do, but instead of outlining a revolutionary criticism of the so-called multicultural curriculum, the SWP capitulates to the rightist "family values" campaign. Sex is one of the few joys working-class youth have left. The uncompromising fight for gay and women's rights is certainly part of the proletarian program.

Seeing some working people lined up by the right wing, the *Militant* has rushed to adapt to rightist ideology, not "facts." In contrast, communist workers give no political endorsement to the Rainbow Curriculum or its liberal advocates, but when the lines are drawn we do not remain neutral in battles with homophobic racists.

Once the SWP, buried in the middle-class student movement, enthusiastically tail-ended liberal politicians. But with the collapse of their permanent student radicalization perspective, they threw their collegians into industry. Now tailing backward consciousness among workers, they mouth the lines of the sellout labor bureaucrats, including macho sneers at gays. Their divorce from middle-class liberalism simply means they've found other misleaders to embrace.

## WRP vs. LRP, Part 2:

# Marxism and the Class Nature of the Ex-USSR

This article is the second part of a reply to Geoff Pilling's review of our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory*, by Walter Daum. (The first part appeared in PR 42.) Despite Pilling's promise to print our reply in *The International*, the journal of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, which he edits and where he published his review, this has not happened and we have no expectation that it will.

When Pilling, a leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party of Britain, wrote his review, the WRP/WIRFI considered the Soviet Union to be a degenerated workers' state. By the time of our reply in the Spring of 1992, this was no longer true. The WIRFI had adopted, with some fanfare, the position, impossible for a Marxist, that the ex-USSR was neither a workers' nor a bourgeois state. But then the WRP reconsidered again, relabeling the USSR a workers' state.

This year, as we go to press with Part 2, the WRP seems to have changed its mind again. According to Pilling's review

of an article by Balasz Nagy (*Workers Press*, May 22, 1993), "Nagy argues that what now exist in Eastern Europe are bourgeois states, but bourgeois states of a specific, concrete kind." Pilling does not bother to tell his readers when or how this class transformation took place.

Nor does Pilling say what the "specific, concrete kind" of capitalist states the Stalinist states have become, except to say they are weak, which hardly takes a brilliant analysis at this point. Our book, and the articles leading up to it, identified the concrete weakness of Stalinism as the result of its counterrevolution that failed to wipe out all the gains of the Soviet proletarian revolution.

The first part of our reply dealt with the nature of the Stalinist counterrevolution, the existence of value within a workers' state and the significance of nationalized property in defining a workers' state. This part considers Stalinist imperialism, the possibility of statified capitalism, and the methodology of the WRP and other centrists.

### IMPERIALISM AND EXPLOITATION

Pilling is especially exercised by our conclusion that the Soviet Union was an imperialist power. We reached this position very carefully. We examined Lenin's analysis of imperialism at the beginning of the century, notably his famous five-point definition, and observed that some of those points — chiefly the drive to export capital — were absent in the case of the USSR. Indicating the differences, we compared Stalinist imperialism to the Czarist imperialism of the old Russian Empire, noting that Czarist Russia did not export capital and yet was a crucial component of the imperialism of its day.

We summed up as follows:

**The USSR is imperialist despite the lack of capital export as a decisive feature: it functions as a vital section of world imperialism, and it is an autonomous center of capital accumulation with an internal drive to dominate other countries for economic purposes. It is different from the traditional imperialist powers because of the**

**peculiar nature of that drive, resulting from its specific history as a destroyed workers' state. Its imperialism is essentially defensive, aimed at maintaining its position as a great power with the ability to bargain for economic concessions from the West rather than aggressively seeking to contend for Western holdings. Soviet imperialism plays a key role in accounting for the continuity of imperialism as a whole to the present day. (p. 276.)**

Pilling replies by lecturing about Lenin's theory of imperialism, as if that is new to us. He tells us of the importance of capital export, a fact that our book discusses in depth and connects with precision to the laws of capitalist development discovered by Marx (pp. 90-94). He then argues that the analogy to Czarist Russia is invalid because Russia, despite its lack of capital export, was a crucial link in pre-1914 imperialism as an importer of capital. Then he admits that "today there is just this need for a backward Russia to import capital" — which shows the parallel between today's



Warsaw 1993: Walesa's cops confront workers. Polish governments change, capitalist state remains.

backward Russia and the Czars and thereby wrecks his whole argument against us.

Pilling's insistence that "imperialism" can mean nothing other than the structure Lenin outlined three-quarters of a century ago is crass formalism. The world changes; indeed, the specific history under discussion — the Bolshevik revolution, the triumph of Stalinism — had an immense impact on the methods of imperialism. Take a recent development, the USSR's acquiescence in Bush's war against Iraq. Our analysis of Soviet imperialism makes it fully comprehensible, since the USSR desperately needs Western capital and technology. The WRP, in contrast, has no way of probing beneath the surface. All it sees is evil policies by evil Stalinists.

In citing our "not inaccurate" catalog of Stalinism's postwar imperialist methods — pillaging, unequal trade relations, forced establishment of joint-stock companies (an odd choice of term for a non-capitalist relationship, by the way) — Pilling does make one useful point:

**They are surely expressions of the fact that the exploitation of eastern Europe by the Soviet Union was not the exploitation associated with the highest stage of capitalist development.**

Here he is absolutely right, but again it's our case he proves! We subtitled a whole section of our book "The Imperialism of Backwardness," explaining in detail just how the Stalinist USSR behaved. Pilling, by the way, acknowledges that there is "exploitation" in the Soviet domination of East Europe. If he took Marxist terms seriously, he would know that exploitation means the appropriation of surplus value by one ruling class at the expense of others. Marxists have called such a relation "imperialism" for most of this century.

Having made the terminological leap, Pilling now has the obligation to tell his readers what he means. Isn't exploitation a relation between an exploiting class and an exploited one? Therefore, which Soviet class is doing the exploiting? Surely not the workers. Perhaps there's another class in the USSR, one that exploits the Soviet workers as well as their class comrades over the borders? If it's not a capitalist class, is there some other form of exploitation taking place?

Subsequent to Pilling's review, the WRP printed documents of its affiliated Moscow group, the Socialist Workers Union. These comrades are evidently influenced by the orthodoxist position, since they call for a "political revolution against the parasitic bureaucracy" of the USSR. But they also condemn "the logic of a system based on the exploitation of workers." (*Workers Press*, June 8, 1991.) This means exploitation not just of foreign countries but of Soviet workers themselves. The WRP made no comment, critical or otherwise, about this point, surprising though it is for people who mock the very idea of exploitation in the USSR.

#### 'A STRANGE FORM OF CAPITALISM'

Pilling turns again to his misguided mocking tone to refute the idea (Engels' and Trotsky's first, remember) that a capitalist system can rest on nationalized property.

**What sort of "capitalism" is it when the "capitalists" have no entitlement in law to "their" property? . . . And what sort of capitalism is it that prohibits the owners of capital from moving their property from one sector of the economy to another in search of higher rates of profit? Indeed how can an average rate of profit be established without just such a movement of capital? This is indeed a strange "variety" of capitalism, one that beggars the imagination!**

True enough, Stalinism is a strange form of capitalism. Marx noted that any social system such as capitalism can

show "infinite variations and gradations . . . which can be grasped by analyzing these empirically given circumstances." (*Capital*, Vol. III, Chapter 47, section 2.)

We attempted to show exactly that. We emphasized Stalinism's "strangeness," above all its inherent weakness deriving from the proletarian remnants usurped by the counterrevolution. Our book offers a concrete analysis of Stalinism, its economy and ruling class — linked at every stage to Marxist theory. That is what led us to predict its downfall — over fifteen years ago, when everyone else on the left treated it as the wave of the future. That is how we could anticipate the tendency toward bourgeoisification of statified capitalism, while Tony Cliff and others were asserting that state capitalism was the ideal form and inevitable future of capitalism.

In our book we analyzed the Stalinist ruling class at length (Chapter 5, Section 3; especially pp. 235-7). In comparing the ruling bureaucracy with the traditional bourgeoisie, we wrote:

**As a ruling class, the bureaucracy reflects the split between ownership of capital and its managerial function. . . . Marx already observed that "the capitalist exists in a dual form — juridically and economically" when the receiver of interest or dividends becomes functionally separate from the manager, who may get only a salary for his labor. The Western manager or bureaucrat is removed from ownership but remains part of the capitalist class. Likewise the Eastern bureaucrat, except that it is the bureaucracy as a whole that owns the state property.**

Pilling has every right to disagree with our analysis — but not to pretend that we don't have one. On the other hand, it sure looks like *he* doesn't have one. We'd like to see anything that he or his co-thinkers have written that explains the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy — its exploitation of the producers, its drive to expand the productive forces and the barriers it erects to the success of that drive, its reluctance to defend the nationalized property it supposedly depends on.

Now look at the wisecrack in the passage last cited from Pilling about the average rate of profit. You can't even have an average rate of profit, he says, unless capital is able to migrate from one sphere to another. This is an old argument, typically used to "prove" that Marx's economic critique is outdated because monopolies prevent the free flow of capital. Baran and Sweezy, for example, assert that Marx's theory is irrelevant to modern-day capitalism, among other reasons, because "the Marxian analysis of capitalism still rests in the final analysis on the assumption of a competitive economy."

Pilling overlooks the distinction between the formation of an average rate of profit and the actual equalization of all profit rates to that average. The average number of children per family, for example, can be equal to 2.35, but no actual family has fractional children. Still, the average exists.

As for methodology, Marx explained that all his laws are "laws of tendency" — that is, they operate over time and point to general conclusions without reaching the precision of a mathematical formula. Thus, capitalism never achieves an average rate of profit, as Pilling would like. Marx notes that "Under capitalist production, the general law acts as the prevailing tendency only in a very complicated and approximate manner, as a never ascertainable average of ceaseless fluctuations." (*Capital*, Vol. III, Chapter 9.) Under Stalinism, the average rate of profit, perceived or not, restricts the possible rate of expansion. Indeed, the plummeting growth rates in the USSR and East Europe confirm Marx's law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall — a point developed in detail in our book and ignored by Pilling. With a little

attention to Marx, it turns out that Pilling's "strange variety of capitalism" is not as strange as he thinks.

## STALINISM AND FASCISM

Pilling also mocks our contention that the Stalinist counterrevolution ended in fascism. Some fascism, he retorts, with full employment and slack work discipline. He forgets that Nazi Germany also had full employment. Police discipline over the workers can substitute, temporarily and inadequately, for economic compulsion. By the way, fascist capitalism didn't look any more like Pilling's normative model of capitalism than Stalinism did.

Trotsky understood the connection. But Pilling cites Trotsky in an effort to refute us:

**The evolution of the Soviet state therefore proceeds in complete contradiction to the principles of the Bolshevik program. . . . Should the process continue in this direction, it must inevitably lead to the rebirth of classes, the liquidation of planned economy, and the restoration of capitalist property. The state regime will in that case inevitably become fascist. (*Writings 1937-38*, p. 128.)**

This is in fact what happened. Classes were reborn in the 1930's, the planned economy eroded (as the WRP once seemed to understand), and private capitalist property, which has existed all along, is now coming into its own. Moreover, the Stalinist regime following the counterrevolution was as harsh as any fascist one. We quoted the above passage in our book and then went on to deepen the analysis on the basis of Trotsky's own work:

**In his analysis of German fascism, however, Trotsky had pointed out that fascism cannot maintain forever the iron-fisted movement that brings it to power, the counterrevolutionary mobilization that smashes the proletariat and forges a monolithic unity out of the ruling class. Before long the class struggle must re-emerge, and different sectors of capital will reassert their competing claims. He applied parallel reasoning to Stalinism. (p. 239.)**

Indeed, the Stalinist regimes softened, especially after Stalin's death. Their economies weakened, and ultimately

collapsed. Trotsky's prediction came true, and our analysis has been confirmed. At that time the WRP and all the other deformed workers' state believers were trumpeting the relative progressiveness of Stalinism from Budapest to Beijing. Now Pilling & Co. let us in on the secret: the counterrevolution is finally on its way.

## THE WRP'S METHOD

The WRP prides itself on its understanding of Marxist method. Pilling devotes many columns of his review to lecturing us on dialectics, with quotations from Marx and Engels galore. But it's all empty posturing. He cites Engels, for example, saying that "Political economy is . . . essentially a historical science. It deals with material which is historical, that is, constantly changing." Very true. Yet how then has Stalinism managed, for the WRP, to have stayed unchanged for half a century — until now, when suddenly it threatens to vanish from the face of the earth? How has imperialism remained unchanged, not having been affected in the least by the Soviet revolution or by Stalinism? Trotsky tried to teach these people the dialectical method, unavailingly.

Pilling lectures us not to ignore fundamental questions:

**Those who see the bureaucracy as a fully-formed class society have to spell out the world-historical role of such a society and its ruling class. They must also tell us what its internal dynamics are, what such dynamics are giving rise to, and will give rise to. Either this, or they must renounce all claims to historical materialism.**

And:

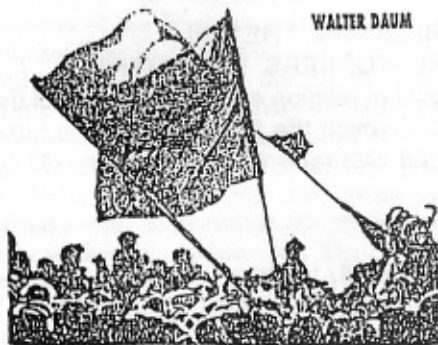
**The protagonists of such ideas are obliged to tell us in what sense this new form of class society, state capitalism, was progressive, that is, in what sense it emerged in response to the development of the productive forces.**

If that's what he wants to know, he hasn't read the book. We stated clearly that Stalinist capitalism is *not* a new form of class society and is *not* progressive (p. 10 and throughout); we detailed its internal dynamics at length (Chapter 5); we predicted long ago the outcome of those dynamics, namely, its devolution towards traditional capitalism (pp. 240-42) and a realignment of imperialist blocs (pp. 284-88). The entire

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book is devoted to spelling out the role of Stalinist society and its ruling class. In contrast, what do Pilling and his party have to say on these questions?

Our book refutes every pseudo-Trotskyist theorist of Stalinism, but we were unable to tackle the theorists of the WRP — because their tendency, in over fifty years since Trotsky's death, has never developed such a theory! Any dialectician knows that a theory undeveloped is a theory denied. The WRP has had no explanation, historical or economic, of the "deformed workers' states"; it has had no insight at any time into their future. At the moment, although it insists that capitalist restoration is on the agenda, it has no way of recognizing when this momentous change will have happened. For a party that insistently repeats (Pilling is no exception) that Stalinism is the main destructive force in the modern world, to have no analysis of its laws of motion is to admit methodological bankruptcy.

One example: the absorption of East Germany. This conquest by West Germany, and the fact that Eastern workers acquiesced in it, was a defeat for the working class: not only a loss of hard-won gains from the pseudo-socialist Stalinist regime, but a significant strengthening of a major imperialist power. The WRP seemed to welcome the *anschluss*, calling it a "poisoned chalice for the ruling class." (Bob Archer, in *Workers Press*, Dec. 20, 1990.) By that logic any ruling-class victory is "fundamentally" a defeat. The WRP's reasoning is not clear, but it seems to be that anything that hurts Stalinism has to be good for the workers. The evil empire again.

Given the WRP's pathetic record on Stalinism, Pilling's attempt to dismiss our work as "sterile" and "bourgeois" is beneath contempt. So is another outright distortion: He accuses us of wanting to throw out the "old Marxism":

**The "old Marxism" was dead: the task was to establish a "new Marxism," as the book says at its very end. So the book, like many others, declares that the Fourth International proved inadequate to the tasks of the epoch. . . . The theoretical conceptions of the International — that this was the epoch of capitalism's death agony, that 1917 was the opening of the world revolution, and that capitalism survived only because of the betrayals of Stalinism — were incapable of understanding the dynamics of the epoch, in Daum's view.**

This is false from start to finish. On each of the three "theoretical conceptions" we said exactly the opposite: specifically on pages 270, 99, and 243, and implicitly throughout the book. The Fourth International as an organization did prove inadequate, as we show in detail in the book (Chapter 7). But its founding principles remain fundamental for understanding the epoch and guiding the working class to victory. Our slogan is "Re-Create the Fourth International," as Pilling well knows.

But that isn't even the worst. What we actually wrote about Marxism at the very end of the book was this:

**The masses of the East are going through fundamental transformations in their lives and world views. As 'The Internationale' proclaims, the Earth is rising on new foundations. Human creativity is being reborn in the factories and mines, the squares and streets of the East. The producers will be soon forced to battle their new rulers. Before long they will also create the leadership they need — an internationalist vanguard party dedicated to authentic communism. Theirs will be the new battle-cry of our epoch: "The old "Marxism" is dead! Long live Marxism!" (p. 376.)**

The book urged reviving *Marxism*, not some "new Marxism"; we said not that the "old Marxism" but the "old

'Marxism'" — that is, Stalinism — was dead. Pilling's version is a total distortion.

#### WHAT IS THE WRP'S THEORY?

Such a method declares political bankruptcy. Pilling's task was to deflate our book and with it our theory, but he had no alternative to challenge it with. Yes, his party had its "deformed workers' state" formula, but his comrade Slaughter questions it, another leading theorist, George Lormin, doubts it (see *PR* 38), and even the stalwart Pilling accepts the notion of Stalinist exploitation — which refutes it.

All this suggests that the WRP really has as its underlying understanding some sort of "third-system" theory: the notion that the Stalinist and post-Stalinist states are neither capitalist nor proletarian. There have been many such theories in the past; our book catalogs many and describes a few. None has succeeded in discovering new laws of motion that govern the Stalinist system. Indeed, they all define the system negatively: by what the system isn't rather than what it is. That explains the nature of Pilling's review: potshots and pontifications instead of a serious comparison and contrast with his own party's position.

The real issue, the big picture, goes undiscussed in Pilling's review. Whether the USSR is a workers' or a capitalist state depends on the answers to a few major questions. Does the state institution ultimately defend the workers' interests and their gains, or does it undermine and destroy them? Does the ruling bureaucracy strive to overcome the laws of capitalism (Pilling's words) or to accommodate to them, to enforce them? Will a revolutionary working-class struggle be able to take over and reform *this* state, or will it have to smash it and create its own? That the answers are not obvious to Pilling — and likewise the significance of the answers — shows that he is blinded by the inflexible norms he continues to operate under.

Pilling doesn't even mention the name "workers' state," in his article, much less argue for it. He calls the USSR a

## REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

The current issue is an intensive study of the activities of the Trotskyist movement during the Bolivian revolution of 1952. It includes articles by Pierre Broué, Guillermo Lora, Liborio Justo, José Villa and others.

The next issue will deal with Trotskyism in South Africa. It is being assembled under the guidance of the noted South African revolutionary and scholar, Baruch Hirson.

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“state after a proletarian revolution” and a “new society . . . progressive in comparison with capitalism.” But never a “workers’ state.” In essence our book predicted this too:

**The major theories of the Soviet system all reduce . . . to one category: a third system neither capitalist nor socialist. Moreover, they postulate a mode of production that does not generate capitalism’s laws of motion or any other . . . . Therefore there can be no inherent reason for its stagnation and breakdown, no fundamental class conflict. The system-wide crisis can only be caused by bad planning or oppression. (pp. 19-20.)**

Pilling’s shyness about calling social systems by name is perfectly understandable. Having mocked us for our “strange form of capitalism,” he would then have to explain his strange form of workers’ state: it lacks working-class power and attacks, not defends, the workers’ remaining gains. Such a reluctance to state, much less defend, one’s own position has no place in Marxist work. The crowning irony is that Pilling reminds us that “Marxism . . . demands a ‘concrete analysis of concrete situations’.” It does indeed. The WRP’s articles are precisely counterexamples that prove the rule.

We challenge Pilling again. If the Marxist method depends on concrete analyses of how a system works, how can you even claim to be Marxist? In fact, in the absence of a serious study of its laws of motion, to insist that your understanding of Stalinism is correct amounts to a defense not of Marxism but of impressionism and pragmatism.

Why does Pilling dare to say only what the system wasn’t and not what it was? It’s not hard to see. Stalinism was indeed an unusual form of capitalism — but it was far less strange than the notion of “deformed workers’ states,” where the working class *never* held power and was *crushed* in the process of forming ‘its own’ states (in the 1940’s). One would think that such a notion, which violates common intelligence as well as the most elementary teachings of Marxism, would require some explanation. But the WRP has nothing to say on the subject. What a shamefaced “defense of Marxism”!

Indeed, the workers’ state theory has collapsed along with Stalinism. The revolutions of 1989 proved three decisive facts. One, the workers hated the states that were supposedly theirs, even to the extent that many of them were, for a time, willing to risk the horrors of unemployment and inflation in order to get rid of it. Events have since taught them that bourgeoisification is no answer, but the workers still want no more of these so-called workers’ states.

Second, it is now clear beyond all doubt that the Stalinist states were not progressive with respect to capitalism. Their industry, agriculture and transport were far below current standards. Once-modern plants had been allowed to deteriorate. Environmental conditions were horrendous. The gains the workers had wrenched from the regimes in jobs, health care, education, etc., were deteriorating beyond imagination. Even the Stalinists’ vaunted “planning,” the supposed link to socialism, was a myth. They could not advance the productive forces beyond the barriers capitalism erects in its epoch of decay. The Stalinist states were not transitional to socialism. *Therefore they were not workers’ states.*

Third is the peaceful transformation from bureaucratic to bourgeois rule that we have already cited. In the past few years the ruling bureaucrats have proved themselves perfectly capable of switching hats, from bureaucratic manager one day to owner the next. This confirms that the bureaucratic caste was in reality part not of the proletariat but of the capitalist class. A state that can transform itself into a bourgeois state peacefully and gradually, without heavy resistance from its rulers, can only have been capitalist to begin with.

The WRP’s lack of a theory is highlighted by the Workers International’s statement on the Soviet coup and counter-coup. (*The International*, No. 7.) As a result of the putsch’s failure, it claims, the USSR’s state apparatus is no longer an instrument for defending nationalized property. Hence the USSR “in this sense” is no longer a workers’ state.

But this assertion leads to a tremendous problem. If true, then humanity suffered a massive defeat in the counter-coup — since a workers’ state, however degenerated, is still a historic achievement that must be defended. But the WI and the WRP not only did not defend the coup, and with it the last remnants of the “workers’ state”; on the contrary, they consciously, proudly (and we would say correctly) opposed it. Shamefaced defensism again. What is the point of a “theory” that cannot tell you which side you’re on at the moment of counterrevolution?

Further, the WI statement goes on, the USSR is not yet capitalist. (Nor is East Europe, including East Germany — contrary, it seems, to Pilling in his review.) As if anticipating the obvious objections from Marxists, the statement adds that pasting on “fixed labels” like the class nature of a state is the method of “normative sociology.”

Really? That’s a funny name for the method of Trotsky, who reacted with shock when two followers, James Burnham and Joseph Carter, argued that the USSR in 1937 was “Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State.” To say so was “a new attempt at revising the class theory of the state,” an echo of the “lamentable experience of the old revisionists.” (*Writings 1937-38*, p. 61.) All that needs to be added about the WI’s similar attempt is that its revisionism is not new.

If the WI and WRP took their theory seriously, they would either defend the state in which capitalist relations have not yet been re-established — or else reject a view that places them on the wrong side of the class line. Instead they call the class nature of the state indeterminate. That idea was invented by the Spartacists to account for East Europe in the 1940’s, when the popular front regimes became “deformed workers’ states” without a workers’ revolution. The Spartacists, along with some mildly left Shachtmanites in the U.S., embraced a similar view with regard to Nicaragua under the Sandinistas. This is pure centrism, blaming your own vacillation on the supposed indeterminacy of class rule.

One final point. It is not just the WRP but all the workers’ state theorists who are at a loss to account for the momentous changes in East Europe. From our standpoint it is clear what happened. Mass revolutions — in which workers were decisive — overthrew tyranny in 1989, setting up more or less democratic interludes. In a similar situation after the February revolution of 1917, the Russian working class chose a revolutionary leadership and completed the political revolution with a social revolution; the capitalist state, autocratic or “democratic,” was replaced by a workers’ state. In contrast, in partial revolutions where the working class lacked communist leadership (Portugal 1974, Iran 1979, for example), the democratic interludes were ended by reactionary reversals. Likewise in East Europe.

From the workers’ state position the events are incomprehensible. It seems that the working classes helped overthrow not only Stalinism but the “workers’ states” as well! This makes nonsense of all theory. No concrete analysis of concrete situations is possible when everything solid you stand for has turned into air.

Pilling’s world-view has collapsed, and he has turned with spite on the alternative that not only shows the way forward but also exposes in the process the lies and illusions he and his comrades have been living on for decades. ●



## South Africa

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Hani's death sent shock waves through the ruling classes of the world, provoking a rare moment of honesty from the bourgeois media. Blather about the death of apartheid and the birth of democracy in South Africa temporarily gave way to the truth; they described negotiations as the only alternative to violent revolution. Hani and the ANC were characterized not as militant leaders of the people but as the only ones who could clamp down on militancy.

### RULERS MOURN THEIR MAN

For example, the *New York Times* put it this way:

**With his credentials as the anti-apartheid guerrilla leader and his charismatic appeal to angry young blacks, Mr. Hani gave the Congress credibility among its most disaffected constituents. (April 11.)**

The *Financial Times* of London explained Hani's unique talents in offering its condolences:

**Mr. Hani was the undisputed leader of the township youth, of the unemployed and angry youth. No other ANC leader could so easily make compromise seem like triumph, could argue for peace as a form of struggle; in short, could guarantee to deliver the radical youth behind a negotiated settlement. This is what makes Hani's death such a great tragedy. (April 13.)**

South African journalist Anthony Hazlitt Heard described Hani as "a crucial cog in the peace machinery":

**Hani was the person most suited to taming the excesses of the masses, particularly the impoverished and embittered youth. And he did this with a gusto and sincerity that surprised many of his opponents. He had made the quantum leap from fostering class revolution to all-around stability. (Los Angeles Times, April 13.)**

The "excesses" that Hani tamed with such gusto were nothing but the demands for the immediate end to apartheid and real democracy: majority rule. Maintaining "all-around stability" means fighting any struggle which threatens to become independent of the negotiations.

### BLACK WORKERS REJECT NEGOTIATIONS

How much more difficult the ANC's task of subordinating the Black masses to the negotiations will be was confirmed by the working class's response to the assassination. To many, the killing of their most radical leader was the last straw. In response to news of the assassination, spontaneous demonstrations broke out across South Africa. Thousands ran through the centers of Cape Town and other cities chanting "No more peace! No more talks!" Demonstrators blocked a highway with burning barricades and gathered outside de Klerk's house chanting "No Peace. War! War!"

The mood was expressed by Thabo Morudu, quoted in the *Washington Post* (April 18):

**When Mandela was released, we thought things would get better overnight. Since then it's been delay, delay, delay — three years of delay. And now they're murdering our leaders. The only answer is insurrection.**

Ironically, in protesting Hani's murder the militants were launching a struggle which Hani himself would have done all he could to derail. True to his spirit, the ANC appealed for calm while announcing a series of protests and strikes. This was a cynical maneuver to dissipate the anger of the masses

and align them with the negotiations. As senior ANC spokesman Tokyo Sexwale explained: "The marches and the stayaway were necessary in order to allow a safety valve for the angry youth." (*Socialist Review*, May 1993.)

But the danger the ANC faces in such "safety valves" is they can whet the appetites of Blacks for mass struggle against the regime. In a striking understatement, South Africa's *Weekly Mail* commented that "moderates had a tough time selling the idea of peace and negotiations to their followers." Having earlier claimed that there was "not a ripple" of concern among Blacks about the ANC's negotiations strategy (*New York Times*, January 18), Nelson Mandela and other ANC officials were now confronted by a tidal wave of opposition.

ANC leader Thabo Mbeki was booed down at a rally in Boksburg, near where Hani was killed. In a desperate attempt to assert authority over the rally, an ANC speaker declared at the close of the rally, "We must now start to do



things the African way — obey our leaders, obey our elders.” But many in the audience turned their backs on him and left. They sang songs of the disbanded ANC guerrilla army and chanted “Down with de Klerk! Down with the police! Down with capitalism!” (*Socialist Review*, May 1993.)

At a rally of 25,000 in Soweto, Nelson Mandela was at first greeted with modest disrespect from many in the crowd:

**As the black leader plodded through an appeal for non-violence, promising “certain positive developments” that might ensue from Mr. Hani’s death, many young listeners muttered impatiently. Several times he stopped to demand order.** (*New York Times*, April 15.)

But Mandela’s next comments enraged the audience:

**We have to work with people we don’t like. We don’t like the National Party but I’m prepared to work with de Klerk to build a new South Africa.**

“We hate him! We hate him!” many screamed. The majority of the crowd booed and jeered Mandela’s words. Thousands then marched to the local police station to demonstrate against the apartheid state; they were turned back by cops’ gunfire that killed four people, including the general secretary of the Soweto ANC branch.

After several rallies which attracted hundreds of thousands, there were two general strikes to protest Hani’s death, the biggest in South Africa’s history. Millions of workers struck, with close to 100 percent support in the major cities.

#### HANI KEY TO ANC DECEPTION

Before Hani’s killing, the ANC had proved extremely flexible in subordinating the Black masses to the negotiations. To handle the inevitable disaffection, the ANC leadership embodied within itself both a government-in-waiting and a future opposition.

The ANC presented Mandela as a godlike statesman who could never be criticized. He was the public face of the negotiations and concerned himself with preparing for the South African presidency. Other top officials like Cyril Ramaphosa and Thabo Mbeki had the task of convincing the South African and international ruling classes that the ANC would act responsibly when in government. Their favored form of public appearance has been press conferences for the world media, not mass rallies of ANC supporters.

To handle the radicalized masses, SACP and ANC Youth League leaders adapted to their anger and desire to break from the negotiations — while always remaining loyal to the ANC. They mouthed militant criticisms of the ANC’s compromises, occasionally called for the overthrow of the government, and even threatened to break from the ANC if the compromises went too far — only to warn that nobody should break from the ANC yet.

In the past, when ANC “radicals” ran left to head off mass radicalization, they were under tremendous pressure to show an alternative leadership to the capitulatory ANC. They could point to Hani as an ANC leader who was prepared to compromise and still favored negotiations, but who would supposedly guarantee that the compromises didn’t go too far.

But with Hani dead and no one else qualified to play his role, adaptation to the masses’ disaffection only encouraged radicalization. Thus, amid the explosions of rage that followed Hani’s killing, ANC radicals sought to deflect unrest by calling for mass uprisings and by condemning compromises that looked too blatant.

At the Soweto demonstration where Mandela was booed, Paseka Motloung, a South African Students Congress regional officer, declared:

**We had [the massacre at] Boipatong, and Mandela said we**

**should be restrained in response. We now have this, and he will say we should be restrained. We are tired of being restrained.**

The crowd cheered enthusiastically. The largest ovations came for speakers who called on the masses to make the townships ungovernable, force the apartheid councils from power and “make the Boers pay for this atrocity.” ANC Natal leader and National Executive member Harry Gwala called for the ANC to withdraw from negotiations in protest at Hani’s killing.

The radicals were attempting to function as before, as safety valves for the release of built-up mass anger. They tried to give a reason for militant Blacks to continue to support the ANC in the negotiations just when they had lost all faith in reforming apartheid.

But this time their role led them to the precipice — a break from the ANC and negotiations. Their “opposition” to the ANC’s capitulations could no longer win the masses to the loyal opposition of a Hani. Instead, it pointed them in the direction they were already rapidly moving: away from negotiations. Thus the ANC threatened to split at the seams.

To cover for the absence of Hani, Mandela himself had to use militant rhetoric to dampen the incendiary effects of the radicals’ criticisms. At Hani’s funeral on April 19, in words described by the *New York Times* as “calibrated to annex the anger of Mr. Hani’s most militant followers without inflaming it,” Mandela declared:

**We want peace, but we are not pacifists. We are all militants. We are all radicals.** (April 20.)

Condemning the de Klerk government as “illegal, unrepresentative, corrupt and unfit to govern,” he even implied he was ready to overthrow de Klerk if necessary:

**We warn all those who seek to impose endless negotiations that any further delay will . . . place on the agenda the need for change by other means.** (*New York Newsday*, April 20.)

But in posing as a radical, Mandela ran the risk of adding fuel to the masses’ fire. So while the ANC, the SACP and the union federation COSATU declared May a month of mass struggle to force elections, Mandela rushed through a new deal with de Klerk to hold elections “not later than April 1994” — before any mass protests could be held. The centerpiece of the deal was the ANC’s commitment to form a coalition government with the National Party, regardless of the election results. In sum, to put on a militant face, Mandela had to move closer to de Klerk’s capitalist state power.

#### HISTORIC SELLOUT

According to the agreement, the elections, in which Blacks will be allowed to vote for the first time, will create a 400-person assembly. All parties receiving at least 5 percent of the vote will get seats in proportion to their percentage. The assembly will function as an interim parliament for at least five years and be given the task of writing a new “post-apartheid” constitution.

However, any party reaching the 5 percent level will be guaranteed a seat on the supreme decision-making body, the cabinet. Any major decisions by the assembly will be subject to a veto by the cabinet, and assembly decisions on unspecified “certain issues” will have to win the approval of two-thirds of the cabinet to be enacted.

Cutting through the legal crap, this means that once the votes for parties of the white minority and the apartheid apparatus are added together, the white rulers will have an effective veto power over any threatening legislation. The Black masses’ fundamental demand for “one person, one

vote" will be denied in favor of their leaders' sharing power with the Nationalists. The ANC now refers to "one person, one vote" as a principle, not an inalienable right.

Mandela has tried to deny that the agreement means power sharing, but as ANC and SACP leader Jeremy Cronin commented:

**If we are honest, we have not got what we wanted. Even if the ANC gets 96 percent of the vote in the election — there will still be power sharing.** (*Socialist Review*, May.)

The ANC's sellout runs even deeper than denying the



Johannesburg: Union workers march for nationalization. De Klerk, Mandela and capitalists defend private exploitation.

democratic right of "one person, one vote." It has now not only rejected every major demand of its own program, the Freedom Charter, but has in effect promised to leave intact every fundamental structure of apartheid.

#### DEMOCRACY AND EXPLOITATION

The demand for democracy was never a moral question for the Black masses. On the contrary, they understood that to put an end to their brutal exploitation and poverty, they would have to hold political power: democracy was a means to an end. The anti-apartheid struggle of the powerful Black working class naturally raised the demand for the seizure of the mines, factories and land from the ruling class and for the economy to be "turned upside-down" — restructured in the interests of the majority.

The ANC adapted to this demand in the Freedom Charter. Affirming that "the people shall govern," the Charter declares that "the people shall share in the country's wealth" and promises that the "mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry" would all be nationalized by an ANC government.

But now that it is preparing to rule, the ANC is reassuring the capitalists of South Africa and the world that it will defend their property and profits from the masses. As Mandela recently assured a meeting of British businessmen:

**We have issued an investment code which provides that there will be no expropriation of property or investment. Foreign investors will be able to repatriate dividends and profits.** (*Workers Press*, May 15.)

In place of its earlier promise to nationalize the industries of the racist exploiters, the ANC now considers the privatization of state-run industry an option — a policy that can only mean more unemployment for Black workers.

Indeed, not only is the ANC now defending the bosses' right to exploit the Black working class; it is also promising to inflict austerity upon the workers to increase profits. Its union leaders are pushing for a social contract with South Africa's capitalists, parallel to the proposed ANC/Nationalist interim government, to set wages and working conditions.

Throughout the negotiations, the union leaders have been reaching agreements with the bosses that prefigure their planned social contract. These agreements have clamped down on wage demands (leading often to wage cuts), allowed the firing of hundreds of thousands of workers and raised profits in the factories and mines. Workers who have tried to break from these agreements and fight for better wages and conditions have had their struggles isolated and defeated by the ANC-SACP union bureaucrats.

Cronin slipped in another hint of honesty in discussing what Black workers can expect "after apartheid": "Realistically, the prospects of substantial economic change in South Africa are not great." (*Workers Power*, May 1993.)

The cold truth is that the ANC is assuring the white capitalist rulers of South Africa that when in government it will not act in the popular interest. The power of the mine lords and Johannesburg bankers, resting on the brutal super-exploitation of the Black masses, will remain untouched.

As Cosmos Desmond wrote in South Africa's *New Nation*, provoking a furious reaction from the ANC and SACP:

**The NP/ANC proposal for a government of national unity is a guarantee of continued white rule, not only until 1994 but for the foreseeable future. . . .**

The ANC appears to have acted on the principle, "If you can't beat them, join them." . . . If the losers of the election are to share in the exercise of power, why bother about having an election in the first place? It will simply be a sop to people who have never had the right to vote. . . . Blacks can have the titles and the gold braid, but F.W. de Klerk's hand will still be firmly on the tiller.

It is surely pathetic when a liberation movement is reduced to scrabbling for some crumbs of power with one hand, while clinging to the shirt tails of the oppressor with the other. . . . (December 11, 1992.)

#### ANC TO GOVERN APARTHEID

The full scope of the ANC's sellout was hinted at by Nelson Mandela earlier this year. He said:

**When we win an election, we don't then gain power. We merely hold political office. To gain power means that we should have control of the civil service, of the South African police, of the South African Defense Force, of business.** (*New York Times*, January 18.)

While Mandela promises that the ANC will eventually win real power, it has agreed in the negotiations not to make inroads into any of the keys to power that he cited.

That the ANC will defend the control of big business by the white capitalists is already clear. So too, the apartheid cops and army will remain unchanged; the ANC has suspended the operation of its armed forces and is preparing to dissolve them into the existing forces. And as for the civil service, a bastion of white racism created by the apartheid state to sustain the privilege of the white middle class and "manage" the Black masses, the ANC has promised to not undermine its privileges so as to not antagonize the whites.

Mandela's message is clear: when the ANC takes its place in a new government with de Klerk's National Party, there will be no fundamental change in the relation of forces. The ANC's sharing the government will not mark the social revolution the Black masses hope for. The real power will

remain in the hands of those who have held it since the turn of the century: the white capitalists. While all parties will try to make the ANC look like the dominant member, the white politicians will have the final say on all important decisions. In essence, the ANC will govern over a reformed apartheid.

To revolutionaries, the outcome of these three years of negotiations between Mandela and de Klerk is no surprise. While practically all quarters were declaring the imminent death of apartheid back in 1989, we sounded the alarm:

**The pending negotiations are a real danger for the working class. . . . It is impossible to predict the exact pace of events in South Africa. All indications suggest that the negotiations will be a long, drawn-out affair. In all likelihood the ANC will accept a deal far short of black majority rule. It may get some sort of "one person, one vote" formula, but that would come with qualifications that guarantee a white veto over any government that emerges. (Proletarian Revolution No. 37.)**

Moreover, we have repeatedly warned that the negotiations were not only a dead end for the liberation struggle but in fact a weapon aimed against the Black masses, designed by the apartheid rulers to save their fragile rule.

### RULING CLASS IN CRISIS

The 1980's saw the South African ruling class confronted by a deep crisis. The collapse of the Stalinist state-run capitalist economies of East Europe and Russia marked the start of an historic crisis for capitalism everywhere. With an economy resting predominantly on the export of mineral resources and relying on imports for its technology and machinery, South Africa has been particularly exposed to the deepening crisis of the world economy. Profits for all sectors have fallen by double figures for the last three years, and the economy has shrunk by some 3.5 percent over the same period.

Meanwhile, internally the capitalists faced a mounting challenge from the Black working class, which had launched its greatest wave of struggle: general strikes rocked the country, huge trade unions were built and revolutionary ideas grew in popularity.

The only way South African capital can re-establish profitability is by smashing the working class's resistance and drastically deepening its exploitation. But the struggles of the mid-'80's taught the rulers that they were too weak to defeat the Black masses. While they were able to temporarily stabilize the situation by breaking individual strikes and assassinating individual leaders, they could not smash the unions and crush the general strikes.

It became clear to the ruling class that before it could act decisively against the Black masses, it had to weaken them. By conceding a subordinated and controlled degree of political power to the ANC, the rulers aim to use it to discipline the masses, put a stop to strikes and demonstrations and disarm them. This is the counterrevolutionary essence of the negotiations: the attempt by the apartheid rulers to create an effective alliance between themselves and the ANC leaders *against* the Black masses!

So far the strategy has worked. The ANC has suspended its armed struggle, strikes are at their lowest number in years and the ANC has enforced the disarming of the Black working class. Militant Black workers who want to strike out in struggle against the rulers have had their struggles sabotaged and isolated by the ANC. They have been left defenseless in the face of victimization and attacks from their bosses as well as the armed force of Inkatha thugs, police and white fascist bands. (See our reports in PR 40 and 42.)

In their negotiations strategy, the apartheid rulers' have waged a civil war against the most combative sections of the Black working class and poor. Backing attacks by the tribalist Inkatha organization (and to a much lesser extent by white fascists), and carrying out attacks with its own army and police, apartheid's rulers have launched a reign of terror on the Black working class, matching the workers' struggles with armed violence to beat the most militant workers into submission.

### THE ROAD TO COUNTERREVOLUTION

To this point, dealing with the ANC has worked ideally for the South African ruling class. Three years of negotiations have left the Black working class demoralized, confused and in retreat.

But no matter how many concessions the ANC manages to wring from the Black masses, they will not be enough to satisfy crisis-ridden South African capitalism. The bosses will demand more and more concessions. But these concessions will not be able to keep pace with the deepening capitalist crisis. The bosses will inevitably find that the attack on the working class that they need cannot be delivered through the ANC and the trade unions.

South Africa's bosses can only restore their profits and compete on the world market by driving down wages to the below-subsistence level of apartheid's heyday, reinstating the arduously long workdays of the past and drastically intensifying the pace of work. Such attacks require smashing all organizations of the oppressed, particularly the unions,

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and physically exterminating the most militant Black workers.

As the capitalists' crisis intensifies and their alliance with the ANC proves unable to deliver the necessary attacks, and as the negotiations-plus-"government of national unity" strategy weakens the fighting capacity of the masses, the bosses will increasingly think that more radical solutions are both necessary and possible. This is the inescapable logic of the negotiations: preparation by South Africa's rulers to smash the Black masses in a bloody racist counterrevolution.

Already, a significant sector of the ruling class is conscious that the negotiations are a preparation for such decisive struggles. Ronnie Bethlehem, an economic consultant to Johannesburg Consolidated Investments, says there are two poles of thought in the National Party. The "pragmatists" are committed to a negotiated settlement, while the "strategists and racial ideologues" believe the Black masses remain "an enemy to be destroyed":

**What differentiates the latter is only a matter of degree. Strategists will use the negotiation process to first weaken before crushing the other [the Black masses] . . . [while] ideologists remain committed to crushing [them] directly through a deliberate use of force. (Business Day, November 28, 1990.)**

Bethlehem overestimates the degree to which the bosses' representatives are conscious of the negotiations as preparations to crush the masses: the leading sections of National Party clearly see a permanent role for the ANC. But his comments show that there is a considerable degree of counterrevolutionary consciousness among the ruling class.

#### FASCISTS PREPARE

Meanwhile, the number of armed and trained fascists is growing. The Afrikaner Resistance Movement, responsible for killing Chris Hani, claims some 10,000 members organized in semi-independent terrorist cells. The mass audience in the white middle class that fascism appeals to was shown in the results of the whites-only referendum of last year: one million voted against ending apartheid, while many more grudgingly voted for negotiations, seeing no immediate hope of defeating the Black masses. Fascism also has a strong following in the police and army.

A recent development in the growing organization of the far right is the newly formed "Committee of Generals." Consisting of five former army and police heads, the committee seeks to unite the far-right and fascist organizations as well as white unions and farmers' bodies in a battle to retain apartheid. For the moment, its aims are modest: the suspension of the negotiations and the creation of an Afrikaner homeland in a section of South Africa. But as its numbers grow and as the ruling class loses faith in its alliance with the ANC, the fascists will turn to crushing the Black masses and asserting white supremacy over all of South Africa.

Explaining the creation of his committee, General Constand Viljoen told the *New York Times*:

**I feel personally the climate for violence, the climate for revolution, is running so high at the moment, I don't think that one can talk about negotiations, let alone elections. (May 6.)**

In stifling that revolutionary climate, the ANC only creates the favorable conditions for the victory of fascism.

#### THE DEATH AGONY OF REFORMISM

What we see today in South Africa is not the withering away of apartheid but the death agony of reformism: the strategy put forward by the ANC and SACP that says apartheid can be reformed away while keeping capitalism's ruling

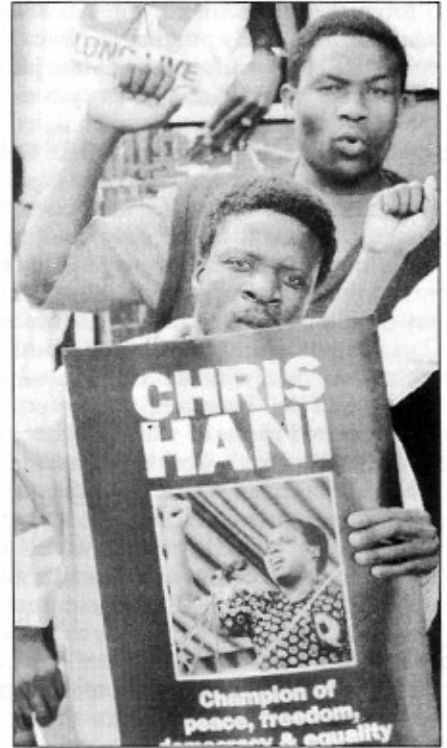
class and armed state intact. Far from marking the birth of "a new South Africa," today's negotiations will be remembered by history as a fleeting moment in which the two major classes of South Africa prepared their decisive battles.

The only role capitalism's decay can find for the ANC's reformism is as a tool for weakening the Black masses in preparation for a crushing defeat. In fact, sixteen years ago we predicted exactly this for the ANC's program:

**Such a policy cannot even lead to a real bourgeois-democratic solution; worse, it would limit the gains of the masses to what decaying capitalism in South Africa can allow and would thus disarm and demoralize the Black masses and set the stage for a bloody racist counterrevolution. (Socialist Voice No. 4.)**

It seems unbelievable that the ANC is prepared to join in a government with apartheid's rulers and promise not to challenge the foundations of white supremacy. Surely the suffering that Mandela and other leaders endured in jails and torture chambers should confirm their commitment to fighting apartheid.

Indeed, the negotiations have seen the ANC's aspirations dampened: it would no doubt prefer to govern in its own right rather than share power with the Nationalists. The question remains: why has it not mobilized its millions of supporters in a struggle to oust de Klerk and secure a



majority-rule democracy? This question holds the key to the fate of the South African revolution. The answer can only be found through a revolutionary Marxist class analysis.

#### ANC TRAPPED

The ANC leadership represents the interests of the small urban Black capitalist class of South Africa. Its development was stopped when apartheid was imposed, and ever since it has needed to get rid of apartheid if it was to flourish. Yet this urban Black bourgeoisie has always been too weak to launch any effective opposition, so its strategy has been to use the mass struggles of the Black working class as a battering ram through which it could become powerful.

During the township uprisings of the mid-1980's, the ANC called for Blacks to make South Africa "ungovernable" — not to let the working class seize power but to force the regime to negotiate with the ANC.

The ANC has had to hope that, despite all the struggle and suffering for the anti-apartheid cause, the masses will accept "democratic" exploitation at the hands of a ruling class dappled with a few Black faces. The ANC is caught in a contradiction: to reconcile the Black masses to a reformed

capitalism, there must be some concrete social and democratic gains. But as we have explained, the capitalist system it is tied to can afford no such gains.

Moreover, the masses themselves threaten to use any democratic gains against the capitalist system itself. For instance, they demand voting rights in order to enact policies to alleviate their exploitation and suffering: higher wages, improvements in working conditions, investment in housing, education and health care. Such gains are ruled out under a decaying capitalist system that demands a radical austerity. This is why a genuine constituent assembly based on "one person, one vote" is ruled out as long as capitalism remains.

The ANC leadership has only one loyalty: to the class of urban Black capitalists it represents. The Black bourgeoisie must have a degree of access to governmental power if it is to develop — a degree of power which apartheid has so far denied it. While it has adapted to popular demands in order to force the rulers' hand, the ANC's commitment to those demands was purely pragmatic. Now that it can deal with the regime for a slice of power, it has junked all demands that could undermine the capitalist system on which it depends.

### **BLACK LIBERATION VIA PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION**

Only the Black working class has a fundamental interest in winning democracy for all of South Africa's oppressed masses, because it is the only class in society propelled to overthrow capitalism. The proletariat in power, with the support of the other oppressed groups, can reorganize the economy on the basis of production for human needs, not profit.

Like all ruling classes, the South African bourgeoisie defends its rule with an entrenched state power of cops, soldiers and death squads, supported by the counterrevolutionary armed gangs of white fascists and Inkatha thugs. To defeat it, the Black working class will have to organize an armed insurrection which destroys the capitalist state, annihilating the repressive apparatus and creating its own state.

What such a workers' state would look like has been discussed for over a century by Marxists and others in the working class, ever since the Paris Commune of 1871 first saw the proletariat in power. The government of such a state would consist of workers' representatives subject to immediate recall and paid no more than an average worker. These provisions embody the proletarian nature of the state. Just as bourgeois states defend bourgeois interests, the workers' state would enforce proletarian rule — in this case the interests of the vast majority.

A Black workers' state in South Africa does not mean driving all whites into the sea. It would encourage the tiny white working class (as well as the middle class) to support the revolution — without letting anyone stand in the way of the revolution's needs.

The workers' state would seize all major sectors of the economy from the capitalists and establish an economic plan to direct production toward eliminating scarcity and want — leading to a society where class divisions dissolve into a free association of peoples. Unemployment would be eliminated by dividing the necessary work equally among all workers, thereby reducing the hours worked by each worker. By seizing the wealth of the banks, it would launch an emergency program of relief for the poverty- and disease-stricken townships. Factories, mines and farms would operate under workers' ownership and control.

This is what the Russian workers achieved in their revolution of 1917. The Soviet workers' state was a tremendous achievement; but mired in the backwardness of Russia, isolated by the defeat of revolutions in Europe, China and

elsewhere, and gravely weakened by the war inflicted on it by the imperialist powers, it was eventually crushed by the counterrevolution of the 1930's. Liquidating the great majority of leaders of the once-revolutionary Communist Party and of the workers' state, Stalin established a state-run capitalist regime that brutally exploited its own workers and enforced counterrevolution across the globe.

But the defeat of the Soviet workers' state did not mean the elimination of authentic Marxism. Instead, it underscores the revolutionary internationalism at the heart of Marxism. The South African Black workers' revolution will assuredly ignite socialist revolution in Africa and around the world. That would be the key to its success.

### **REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS PARTY MUST BE BUILT**

South Africa's working class will not be able to smash apartheid and seize power until it is conscious of its revolutionary tasks. For it to reach that understanding, its most class-conscious members have to launch a struggle against the negotiations and destroy popular illusions about reforming apartheid without a revolution.

The leading layers of the Black working class are fighting courageously towards this end. At every turn in the negotiations, they have tried to break from the ANC's shackles and into an open confrontation with the regime. IN 1992 they launched a strike wave that swept the country with wildcat strikes, against the will of the ANC-SACP union leaders. Later in the year, in response to the township violence, demonstrations of tens of thousands demanded from the ANC and SACP an immediate end to the negotiations, the arming of the working class and a general strike to overthrow de Klerk. (See *PR* 42.) As we have noted, similar demands were raised after the assassination of Chris Hani.

But so far the militants have failed in their attempts. In fact each attempt so far has led to further defeat and demoralization. This is because there is not yet even the nucleus of an authentic communist party based on a program of socialist revolution. Without such a party, when the ANC/SACP leaders betray, the lessons cannot be clearly drawn for the workers. But the current ferment can produce the vanguard nucleus.

The dilemma of the conscious Black workers is how to oppose the ANC's betrayal without alienating themselves from masses who still have illusions in the ANC's reformist strategy. The answer is to create a revolutionary party of communist workers to fight for the mobilization of the entire Black working class in an open struggle for its demands — and to use the experience of this struggle to prove to other workers the absolute necessity of socialist revolution.

For example, the revolutionary party would work today to popularize among all workers the idea of breaking from the negotiations and establishing what is still the central demand of the masses: a constituent assembly based on "one person, one vote" and majority rule. In proposing this struggle, communists openly state their program for revolution but do not insist on agreement in advance from their fellow fighters, non-communist workers.

### **FROM GENERAL STRIKE TO DUAL POWER**

Revolutionaries would also seek to popularize the best way for the working class to mobilize in the current situation: a general strike. The mass strikes or "stayaways" which the ANC has called during the negotiations have in effect been holidays for most workers. With picket lines and factory occupations prohibited, they served to dissipate the energy of the militants. Against this, revolutionaries would argue that

a general strike can mobilize the entire class, enabling it to find its strength again. Led by the trade unions, a general strike would draw into the struggle the unorganized and most oppressed strata of the working class and unemployed.

As well, a general strike in which workers organize picket lines and occupy workplaces would draw the workers' struggle away from the townships, where they are disorganized and exposed to attack, and into the workplaces where the workers exert their power. Revolutionaries would argue for factory-based strike committees to control the strike. Workers could then rely on their own leadership and be able to guard against, and soon dispense with, the treacherous union bureaucrats.

Already the Black working class is faced with physical attack from apartheid cops and soldiers, Inkatha and white fascist gangs. As the boldness of the workers' struggle

local workers' councils — soviets, as they were called in the Russian revolution — in which all political currents of the workers' movement can compete for leadership on the basis of the fullest democracy.

Likewise the workers will find their armed picket lines limited in their ability to battle militarily with the state of cops and soldiers. They need an armed workers' militia with a unified command chosen by the armed workers themselves. The soviets and the militia will form the basis of workers' power, a dual power in opposition to that of the ruling class.

Throughout the struggle, revolutionaries will use every opportunity to point their fellow workers to the revolutionary lessons to be drawn: that the workers' dual power organs can form the basis of a workers' state, and that the insurrectionary destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus is necessary to secure workers' power.

### REVOLUTIONARY PARTY THE KEY

As history has bitterly proven on many occasions, no amount of general striking and arming of the masses will make a revolution. While the mobilization of the workers challenging bourgeois rule can provide the experience from which the masses can draw revolutionary conclusions, only a revolutionary party capable of drawing clear lessons can lead the working class to socialist revolution.

The key in building the revolutionary party is the permanent and relentless fight by revolutionaries for leadership of the working class in implacable opposition to all other leaderships. This does not mean issuing sectarian ultimatums to workers who hold illusions in this or that leader. Rather, every time an ANC, SACP, union or other leader steps forward in the struggle, the revolutionaries will demand that they carry out their promises and enact what workers need.

Coupled with constant warnings of guaranteed betrayals by non-revolutionary leaders, such a policy will mercilessly expose the misleaders in the eyes of the masses. So when some ANC and SACP leaders threaten to break with the ANC and lead a struggle against de Klerk, the revolutionaries will hold them to their word. When union leaders threaten to launch strikes, the revolutionaries will say: carry out your promises, or step aside for the leadership that will! In effect, we challenge our fellow workers to test in practice our claims about the true nature of the leadership.

In spite of the dangers posed to the South African revolution, prospects for its success remain high. The historic mass struggles have taught tremendous lessons, on which the most class-conscious will build their new leadership. Moreover, the apparatus for the misleadership of the masses is pathetically weak. While in the past, revolutionary workers were confronted by Stalinist parties funded and organized by the Stalinist states (and by Social Democratic parties financed by Western imperialism), the collapse of Stalinism and the crisis of Social Democracy have undermined their power. Underneath, the collapse of the phony socialists reflects the deepening crisis of world capitalism.

If South African revolutionaries act to build the kernel of a revolutionary proletarian party, the current situation is ripe for reaching the masses and pointing the way to true liberation. The impact such a party would have on the prospects of socialist revolution elsewhere would be enormous. It would be a giant step forward toward re-creating the world party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International. ●



*'Down with Capitalism, Forward to Workers' Power!'*

escalates, so does the threat of armed counterattack from the forces of reaction. This means that the workers' general strike must be armed. Armed picket lines would defend the workers' control of their workplaces. Turned into permanent workers' defense guards, they would defend the Black townships from reactionary attacks, giving the previously disorganized attempts at self-defense the necessary organization.

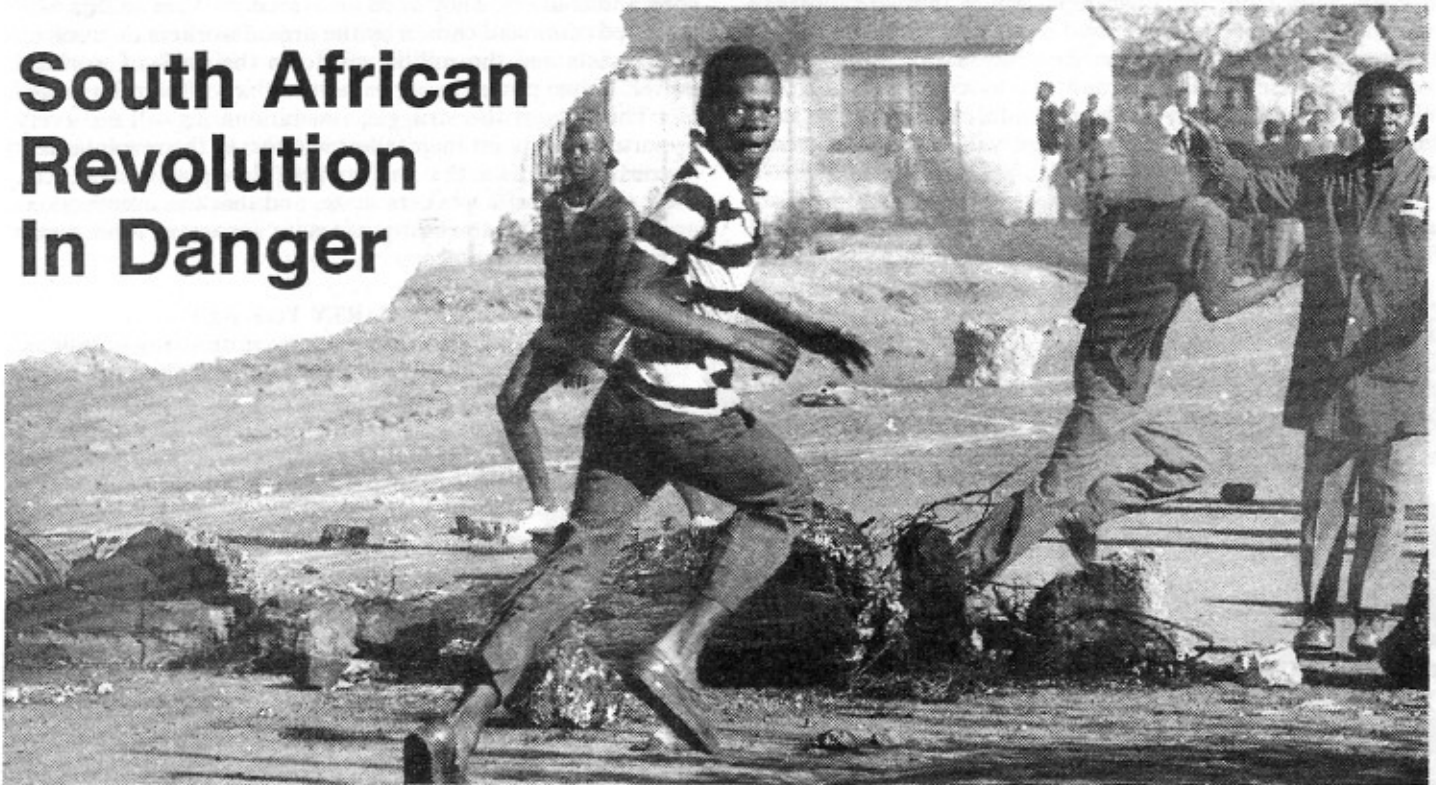
### GENERAL STRIKE CHALLENGES STATE POWER

Although it probably would begin as a defensive struggle, a lasting general strike which paralyzes industry, transport and communication would soon pose the question: which class rules? In this situation, the workers would find their factory committees too narrow for the tasks that go beyond the workplace — organizing the unemployed, scattered individual workers, housewives and youth; arranging transportation, communication and supplies. For this the workers need

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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## South African Revolution In Danger



by Matthew Richardson

The South African revolution faces the gravest danger. Three years of negotiations between Nelson Mandela's African National Congress and F.W. de Klerk's National Party have dragged on, compromising the Black masses' basic rights and costing the lives of over 10,000 in township slaughters. Meanwhile, white fascists are building up their forces and preparing for a bloody racist counterrevolution.

The negotiations were interrupted by the blasts of the fascist's gun that shot down Chris Hani, a prominent leader of the ANC and National Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP). His murder rightfully outraged the Black masses. It also dealt a major blow to the hopes of both the ANC and the white ruling class: they have lost a key player in the ANC's plan to sell the masses a deal which betrays democracy and other basic rights in trade for a coalition government with the National Party.

Throughout the negotiations, the ANC and its SACP ally have strained to entrap the Black working class within their strategy of cooperation with the regime and ending the masses' decades-long *revolutionary* struggle to overthrow apartheid. But the most militant workers and youth have fought to break from the ANC's strategy.

So far, the battle against the negotiations has been headed off by the militants' own leaders, principally Chris Hani. Hani used his revolutionary image as head of the ANC's guerrilla army, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), to try to convince the masses to put a halt to radical struggles and allow the ANC to cut a deal with President de Klerk.

Make no mistake, Hani's assassination must be condemned by every revolutionary. Hani was murdered by the fascists because he seemed to represent mass revolutionary sentiments. In killing him, the fascists were aiming at the

Black masses, calling on white racists to mobilize to crush them. But Hani himself did all he could to blunt the revolutionary impulse that the fascists aim to defeat.

Even when Hani had criticized some of the ANC's capitulations, it was a deception. As a member of the ANC executive and a leading negotiator with de Klerk, Hani was as responsible for compromise as anyone. He had suspended the operations of MK and was preparing to dissolve it into the apartheid army and police. He had also shut down the developing Black community defense organizations in the townships, telling them to either cooperate with the police or be disbanded by force. And he had ordered SACP union officials to put a stop to strikes, arguing for workers to accept wage cuts and job losses "for the good of the economy."

When Hani did criticize an ANC capitulation, he did so out of fear that it was too flagrant to sell to the masses. For instance, he condemned proposals for the ANC to share power with de Klerk for ten years — but he agreed to the "principle" of power sharing. As he explained to the *London Sunday Times* (Jan. 31):

**I want the freedom to criticize from the outside, to lead marches, to organize strikes, to pressurize the new government to do the right things.**

But the *Times* pointed out:

**Hani stressed that he saw no alternative to a temporary power-sharing deal, and confirmed that the communists would remain partners with the ANC for the first election.**

That is, Hani used his freedom to "criticize" and "pressurize" to allow the masses to blow off steam and to hold them for the ANC's deal. Only by seeming to oppose the ANC's sellout could he convince his followers to put down their guns and "make peace" with apartheid.

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