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South Africa: Black Workers vs. ANC

by Matthew Richardson

A new chapter in the struggle against apartheid is being written. Militant Black workers are demanding that their powerful unions and the Communist Party (which they look to for leadership) break their alliance with the ANC and take the lead in building a workers' party.

Sam Shilowa, a pro-ANC leader of the COSATU union federation, gave the reasons for the workers' explosive new direction. He cited "a growing perception and feeling that three years of negotiations have brought nothing but continued violence, poverty, unemployment, retrenchment, and dismissals," plus "a growing perception that the African National Congress and South African Communist Party (SACP) are making a lot of compromises at the talks and that the 'left' have no real say in the turn of events." (*Socialist Action* (U.S.), Sept. 1993.)

While every political leader in the world has hailed the deal between the ANC and the de Klerk government, the negotiations have indeed been a disaster for the Black

masses. Now the dealing is ended, and the ANC is sharing governmental power in the pre-election Transitional Executive Council. The wreckage is clear:



South African Black miners march against bosses. ANC marches with bosses.

- Thousands of Blacks lie dead in the townships, victims of the police, army, Inkatha and white fascists — a slaughter abetted by the National Party government.

- Every basic demand of the struggle has been sold out. The promise of "one person, one vote" and majority rule is no more; instead there are two chambers of parliament, with the higher chamber guaranteeing disproportionate influence to whites and an effective veto.

- Expropriation of property without compensation is constitutionally forbidden. Thus the wealth of the apartheid ruling class is protected from the Black masses, who will still live with horrendous unemployment and poverty.

THE CLASS DIVISION

Historically, apartheid crushed any hope for the development of an urban Black bourgeoisie. Too weak to launch an independent struggle against apartheid, Black bourgeois elements aimed to use the struggles of the masses to force the white rulers into negotiations for a share of governmental power. But since they are as tied to the South African economy as the white capitalists, they are equally reliant on the superexploitation of Blacks.

The ANC represents these urban Black capitalists. However, no form of capitalism can grant the Black majority full democratic rights, for that would encourage the masses to demand an end to all aspects of oppression and superexploitation — which are bound together into one system. The negotiations made the division of class interests between the

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COFI and LRP Report

Our Swedish section, the FRP held its second annual convention in December, against a background of class explosions across Europe to which it believes Sweden will be no exception. Evidence of rising class tensions has taken the

high school in Melbourne that was slated for closure.

The occupation had gone on for months, surviving police attacks. But it didn't survive the betrayal of the trade union bureaucracy, which strangled the battle with the helpful cooperation of the Militant tendency. Details will appear in the forthcoming issue of Workers Revolution. The LRP has also been conducting a series of educationals on revolutionary politics, including the recent faction fight. (See p. 13.)

\$\$\$ — Urgent!

The LRP is much more than a magazine. We are a revolutionary organization facing enormous tasks. We started this COFI/LRP page in *PR* last year for the very purpose of informing our readers of our range of activities.

In the past year we have greatly expanded our work as new opportunities have opened up for us. We are publishing bulletins aimed at working-class students in both New York and Chicago. We now have more expenses due to the welcome addition of our Chicago group, as well as increased activities abroad as a result of heightened interest in our politics. Upcoming projects include organizing an international COFI conference, now scheduled for January 1995. As well, we will publish major pamphlets on South Africa and on Marxism and the U.S. Black struggle.

Up until now, the LRP has been able to publish its materials through membership dues and added contributions from active sympathizers. In the past few months we have received a larger number of supporting subs than ever before, but our needs cannot be filled by that means alone. The greater demands now facing our organizations here and abroad compel us to make an urgent appeal for funds from readers and friends. Please send whatever you can afford to: **Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008-3573.**

elementary form of anger against the current Government headed by the Conservative Party, which has tried to dismantle past gains.

A victory of the Social-Democratic Party is expected in September 1994. The reactionary Social Democrats, who can in reality offer no more reforms than the Conservatives, are already proposing a popular front coalition government with the Liberal Party — even in the likely case of an absolute Social-Democratic majority in Parliament. In this they are already demonstrating that they need the Popular Front to escape the pressure of the working class. Once Social Democracy is in power, given its inability to deliver any reforms and its need to deepen austerity, formidable explosions of workers' struggles are on the agenda.

According to the FRP's communiqué, the convention focused on major questions of planting the revolutionary pole within the working-class movement, in the framework of the world capitalist crisis. Among other matters, the FRP took the position of supporting neither Swedish affiliation nor Swedish national independence on the EEC question.

AUSTRALIA

The League for the Revolutionary Party (Australia) has intervened strongly in workers' struggles against government austerity. In particular, our comrades fought against the sell-out of a significant fightback involving the occupation of a

City College, with a series of forums scheduled for the new semester. As well, we are continuing our monthly forums. February's topic was the struggle for a workers' party in South Africa (see p. 1). Some of our other activities are reported in this issue: the James Frazier defense (p. 5) and an anti-Nazi rally (p. 22).

At a demoralized Solidarity forum in December on Congressional health care bills, the chair defined the Solidarity group as "revolutionary socialist" — the last mention of these words, or the concept, at the meeting from anyone but the LRP.

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Proletarian Revolution

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Black Struggle Arms Itself

by Matthew Richardson

The first article in this series, "Race, Class and Cop Brutality," appeared in the last issue of *Proletarian Revolution*. It detailed the recent history of police violence toward Black and Latino people around the country. It pointed out that the attacks on oppressed communities were designed not only to divide the working class through racism, but were also a prelude to increased savagery toward all workers.

The article also cited recent investigations that prove the intimate ties between the cops' brutality and their criminal connection to the drug trade. It showed how police recruits are molded into tools of the capitalist ruling class and how, in the coming years, cops will provide a significant striking force for a growing fascist movement.

The present article highlights some important lessons to be learned from recent examples of how Blacks have fought back. A third article will show how armed self-defense and a revolutionary political response can defeat the capitalists' onslaught against minorities and the working class.

Blacks and Latinos have not just been the historic victims of racist cop violence. In fact they have established a proud tradition of *fighting back* against police brutality and other attacks that capitalism has launched against them.

The high points of the Black struggle include armed self-defense efforts that offer tremendous lessons for all revolutionary-minded workers. The best example is the movement of the 1960's, which produced outstanding champions of armed self-defense. Malcolm X and the Black Panthers were products of the turn made by the most militant Blacks: away from trying to reform the system and towards overthrowing it.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND PACIFISM

The civil rights movement of the late 1950's and early 1960's had been marked by a central contradiction. The courageous struggle of poor Blacks was headed by a pacifist leadership dedicated, when push came to shove, to begging the ruling class for help.

The Black masses aimed at smashing segregation, super-exploitation and the denial of the most basic services and legal protection. Economic equality for Black workers was impossible without full employment and its inevitable consequence, enormous wage demands by workers across the board. Such a prospect was incompatible with ruling-class profitability.

Thus the struggle struck at the foundations of American capitalism. In contrast, the paramount leader of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., hoped to *integrate* Blacks into capitalist America by showing that Blacks offered no threat to the system. As King summed up his strategy in a speech addressed to the ruling class:

We will wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and in winning our freedom we will so appeal to your heart that we will win you in the process. (Quoted in J. Bloom, *Class, Race and the Civil Rights Movement*, p. 194.)

Key to King's "love thy oppressor" reformism was pacifist non-violence. But the whole experience of the treatment of Blacks at the hands of the white ruling class proved that their suffering allowed capitalism to grow stronger, not

weaker. The scenes of one peaceful demonstration of Blacks after another being beaten, tear-gassed and shot at by police and other racists made clear to all who wanted to see that pacifism ties the hands of the oppressed behind their backs. Non-violent defense was a way to assure the rulers that the struggle would not challenge the system as a whole.

Pacifism was an important, tell-tale reason why Black industrial workers, penned up in the ghettos of America's metropolises, never fully identified with the civil rights leadership. The proletarian Black masses wanted not only their rights but also their rightful share of the economic pie. They also knew that if they were physically attacked, they



Los Angeles banner: 'Malcolm: We're Not Americans. We're victims of Americanism.'

wouldn't "turn the other cheek." They suspected that one good reason why King & Co. got more promises than results was their non-violence.

When the ghettos rose up in the 1960's, it wasn't with flower power. And that's when the system began to deliver sops to the threatening masses. There were as well several inspiring attempts by Black fighters within the civil rights movement in the South to break from King's crippling pacifist strategy.

First was Robert F. Williams of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who advocated armed self-defense for Blacks in North Carolina. In his book, *Negroes with Guns*, Williams writes:

I am held responsible for this action, that for the first time in history American Negroes armed themselves as a group, to defend their homes, their wives, their children, in a situation where law and order had broken down, where the authorities could not, or rather would not, enforce their duty to protect Americans from a lawless mob. I accept this responsibility and am proud of it. I have asserted the right of Negroes to meet the violence of the Ku Klux Klan by armed self-defense — and have acted on it.

Williams goes on to tell how his struggle began: Many people will remember that in the summer of 1957

the Ku Klux Klan made an armed raid on an Indian community in the South and were met with determined rifle fire from the Indians acting in self-defense. The nation approved of the action and there were widespread expressions of pleasure at the defeat of the Kluxers, who showed their courage by running away despite their armed superiority. What the nation doesn't know, because it had never been told, is that the Negro community in Monroe, North Carolina, had set the example two weeks before when we shot up an armed motorcade of the Ku Klux Klan, including two police cars, which had come to attack the home of Dr. Albert E. Perry, vice-president of the Monroe chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The events in Monroe demonstrated once again the time-honored truth that depending on cops to stop racist violence is like feeding fuel to the Klan's fiery crosses. Today's blue-clad flatfoot is tomorrow's white-sheeted fascist — and enough of them don't wait for tomorrow.

The initial defense of Dr. Perry was the forerunner of regular Black self-defense patrols in Monroe, which lasted a for a short time. Williams was framed by the government, denounced by the pacifistic Black leaders, threatened by the Klan and forced to flee into exile abroad.

Although civil rights demonstrations in the South were non-violent, the racist response from both the law and private citizens was not. Therefore Blacks sensibly had armed guards protect the persons, homes and families of those involved in the struggles.

Such sporadic defense efforts led to the formation of the Deacons for Defense, established by Black civil rights militants in the South. An extensive organization formed specifically for Black self-defense against racist attack, the Deacons too were short-lived. Nevertheless, they struck fear into the ranks of the night-riding vermin. However, given the hostility of Democratic Party "friends" in Washington and of civil right leaders who felt threatened more by armed Blacks than by the Klan, the struggle for self-defense reached a dead-end. It was taken forward by more radical leaders in the industrial cities of the North.

MALCOLM X: FROM DEFENSE TO REVOLUTION

By the beginning of the 1960's, years of civil rights struggle had failed to improve the lives of the vast majority of Blacks. While the legal barriers to advancement had been lowered with the repeal of many Jim Crow laws, the racist class system still treated Blacks brutally. The ruling class had

shown itself to be unwilling to integrate Blacks into the wider society; instead it continued to spit them out into the ghettos and jails.

As the bankruptcy of King's integrationist strategy became clearer, militant Black fighters looked for a new leadership that seemed to take an uncompromising stand against racism. The Southern-based Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) split from King and adopted (along with CORE) the banner of Black Power. But it developed no viable alternative strategy to go along with its rejection of pacifism.

In the urban ghettos, many turned to the "Black Muslims" and Malcolm X. In his early days as a Black leader while a member of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam (NOI), Malcolm rallied to his leader's call to "square up to the white enemy." Malcolm gave Blacks good advice when he said, "if a white man lays a hand on you, make sure he doesn't get to lay his hand on another."

The NOI advocated Black pride and Black power, and vaguely put forward the idea of separatism. Its meetings and rallies soon attracted thousands of Blacks. Malcolm was the first Black leader with a significant following who condemned King's approach. He railed against anyone, whether white liberal or Black "Uncle Tom," whose preachings served to disarm Blacks against oppression.

While honoring the heroism of rank and file Blacks in the civil rights movement, Malcolm condemned the leaders for spreading the lie of pacifism. He called them "almost agents of the Ku Klux Klan." (*Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 209.) Against King and other pacifists, he raised what was common sense for working-class people — armed self-defense.

But as Malcolm soon understood, the Nation's nationalism was not a real alternative to King's integrationism. On the one hand, King reflected the aspirations of upwardly mobile Blacks who sought admission into middle-class ranks. So he immediately compromised with the ruling class. Once the Kennedy Administration had handed his movement some concessions of economic and political influence, King assented to their attempt to detour the mass struggles into safer electoral channels and choreographed demonstrations.

On the other hand, the Nation of Islam sought upward mobility and economic power for urban Black small businessmen, based upon mass support from impoverished but aspiring marginal workers. Elijah Muhammad's religio-nationalist demagoguery was a cynical and corrupt method of mobilizing the support of poor Blacks; in this respect, it bore no

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 primarily 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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fundamental difference with King's far less radical-sounding Christianity.

Soon it became clear to Elijah Muhammad that capitalism in the 1960's could tolerate some economic growth by a few Black small capitalists, and that the Nation could take part as an organization. The advance and struggle of the mass of Black working people, however, was a threat to the system. So he shut down all the Nation's operations that could have inspired greater struggle — in particular anything that suggested armed self-defense by Blacks as a whole.

The Nation had always had an official policy of being a religious organization playing no politically active role. Now, when more militant Blacks were looking to the Nation to lead in the wider struggle, its leadership strictly enforced the group's apolitical inaction. As Malcolm explained:

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 labelling of Muslims as "talk only" could see us, powerful as we were, one day suddenly separated from the Negroes' front-line struggle. (Quoted in E.V. Wolfenstein, *The Victims of Democracy: Malcolm X and the Black Revolution*, p. 243.)

When the ghetto riots rocked the cities, the Black masses learned the lessons of their struggle quickly. Their demands for liberation grew along with their confidence. A foundation-stone of capitalist rule in the U.S., the oppression of the Black working class, was threatened. Malcolm was at the cutting edge of the revolutionary lessons the masses were generating; he championed the movement's radicalization.

Despite both Elijah Muhammad and Martin Luther

King, neither the movement nor Malcolm could be held back. Malcolm was ejected from the NOI and threw himself into the Black masses' immediate struggles. At the same time he sought a new strategy for liberation. Key to this was his emphasis on armed self-defense for the Black masses. For example, he announced his intention to arm and train the best Black fighters to defend the still non-violent civil-rights marchers in the South.

As Malcolm announced in a letter to the leader of the American Nazi Party, George Lincoln Rockwell:

This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting the white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation . . . causes any physical harm to Reverend King or any other black Americans who are only trying to enjoy their rights as free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by the disarming philosophy of non-violence, and who believe in asserting our right to self defense — by any means necessary. (*Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 201.)

Malcolm understood that the struggle for armed self-defense by the oppressed threatened the ability of the rulers to enforce their rule, and he knew that armed self-defense had to be made part of a total strategy for the overthrow of the racist system. He aimed to develop a revolutionary strategy of economic and social measures.

Tragically, however, by the time of his assassination in 1965, Malcolm had not worked out a revolutionary program — he still had illusions in the possibility of radical reform. That stage was encapsulated in his slogan, "the ballot or the bullet." In other words, the Black masses would test whether they could make their revolution by running independent

NYC Subway Worker Shot, Framed by Cops

On October 24, Brooklyn cops shot New York transit worker James Frazier in the head from behind.

The attack was unprovoked and completely without warning. Frazier, who is Black, survived with the loss of his left eye. He never saw or heard the cops: the bullet hit him as he started to drive through a traffic light that had turned green. Later, right after surgery at the hospital, cops assigned to guard him roughed him up, trying again to kill him. They failed again.

Weeks later, on his discharge, the cops grabbed him before he could even step outside the hospital and dragged him in handcuffs to criminal court. There the prosecutor tried to have him arraigned on several charges, including attempted murder of a police officer, assault on a police officer, resisting arrest and possession of an illegal handgun. They ended up only charging him with gun possession — make, type, caliber and serial number of the alleged weapon unspecified — and the judge released him on only \$250 bail!

The Transit Authority joined in the attack by dismissing Frazier, a probationary track worker, for supposed "unsatisfactory performance," although his supervisors had given him a perfect job evaluation just before the shooting.

The attacks on Frazier outraged many workers. Dozens of defenders showed up at his numerous court appearances. Our turnout had its effect. After many continuances, the D.A.'s office dropped its frame-up attempt. On February 14, the charges were withdrawn.

James Frazier won this round — no thanks to Transport

Workers Union Local 100's leadership. Headed by President Damaso Seda, the local not only refrained from organizing any defense: they publicly declared that they would do nothing for Frazier pending the outcome of his legal case. Now that he's vindicated they have appointed V.P. O'Brien to "request" his job back. Don't hold your breath.

Some Track Division union officials showed up in court, helped spread information and otherwise worked on the case. But they favored behind-the-scenes negotiations and tried to turn the case into a campaign against the new mayor, conservative Republican Rudolph Giuliani — even though the shooting took place while the liberal Democratic (and Black) mayor David Dinkins was in office.

New Directions, the chief opposition in Local 100, a grab-bag of liberals and closet "socialists," supported the motion for a defense committee and published a brief article on his case in their newsletter. One or two showed up in court; otherwise their support was imperceptible.

The Spartacist League, through their allegedly non-sectarian front, the Partisan Defense Committee, brought supporters to court — but undercut efforts to fight the union bureaucracy for a union defense committee. The motions for such a committee were raised by Eric Josephson, a supporter of the LRP. Not fighting for an ongoing union mobilization means not fighting to help Frazier with the resources in people, funds and media of the huge TWU local. Those who do not fight the bureaucracy on this "small" case will not fight them on big things — whatever "revolutionary" verbiage they sling. ●

candidates; if that failed, revolution would then be necessary.

In the last days of his life, Malcolm specifically rejected "Black nationalism." Although he hailed socialists for their commitment to Black liberation, he had not embraced working-class politics by the time assassination cut short his quest for a political strategy to accompany armed self-defense. (See the article on Malcolm X in *PR* 43.)

PANTHERS: LUMPEN PROLETARIANS THE ANSWER

After Malcolm's death, the search for a revolutionary anti-capitalist strategy featuring armed self-defense was taken up by the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. The Panthers were formed on a ten-point program of economic, political and democratic demands, around which they aimed to mobilize the poor of all races for a "socialist revolution."

Their demand to end police violence and their policy of armed self-defense attracted thousands to their banner in the 1960's. The sight of the armed and uniformed Panthers still stirs pride and militancy in Black people today. They followed cop patrols around to observe any misconduct. The

and therefore argued that the oppressed could free themselves by seizing control of their own communities.

The oppression of the ghettos and working-class neighborhoods certainly comes from outside. The bourgeoisie's power is determined by its ownership and control of the factories, banks and businesses — as well as the state, its cops and its troops, which they use to defend their rule. That is why the oppressed can only seize power *outside* their "communities." Within them there is only the illusion of power.

Impoverished urban "communities" do not promote community among their residents in any real sense. In fact, capitalism uses such neighborhoods to atomize and demoralize people, not to organize them. That is why "community" self-defense units are short-lived.

GUNS WITHOUT STRATEGY NO WAY OUT

The deepening of world capitalism's mortal crisis in the 1970's revealed that the claims of the radical nationalists — that the formerly colonial countries had escaped from the web of international capital — were totally false. The masses of these nations were rudely awakened to the fact that they were still being sucked dry by imperialism.

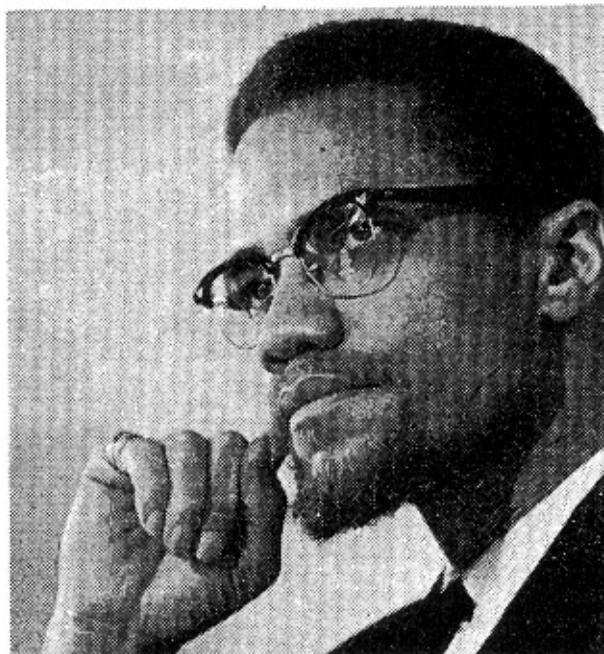
So too were those in the U.S. who accepted the claims of the leaders advocating community control: that their communities could escape domination by capitalism. The ghettos were still fundamentally powerless to determine their own destiny; their community leaders were Black faces for the same old power structure.

The capitalist system works to keep working-class communities powerless: drowning in poverty, crime, drugs and hopelessness. But at the same time, it brings together workers from all parts of the country and the world into common factories and workplaces. Capitalism makes workers cooperate with one another in production. When workers, conscious of being workers (and not just residents of the same neighborhood) take to struggle, their capacity for cooperation against the bosses is enormous.

That is why Marx wrote that capitalism creates its own gravediggers: workers organized at the point of production have a chokehold on the system's profits. Moreover, workers' position as the producers of the wealth of society gives them the unique opportunity to see through to the exploitative essence of the capitalist system. This centrality and organization enables the working class to overthrow capitalism and build a new, classless society.

Although they were often heroic fighters for armed self-defense and Black liberation, the Panthers never achieved authentic working-class — communist — consciousness. Instead, their leaders identified with the elitist guerrillas dominant in the radical, middle class-led nationalist movements that flourished around the world in the late 1960's. Not by accident, these elements based themselves among peasants, whose political outlook is necessarily narrow and local. Essentially, they want to own pieces of land and become tiny capitalists.

That is why peasants represent no independent alternative in capitalist society. In this historical epoch they can never rule — but they can be controlled, far more easily than can urban workers engaged in mass struggles. Peasants often rallied to guerrilla groups at war with their oppressors, but



NOI wanted a deal with KKK. Malcolm X wanted armed Black self-defense to deal with KKK.

pride and sense of purpose the Panthers gave to ghettos across the country acted to reduce crime and drug-taking among their ghetto following.

The Panthers originally based their strategy on mobilizing what they called the "lumpen proletariat": unemployed, destitute people who often survive by crime. The Panthers largely ignored industrial workers because they saw the "lumpens" as the most oppressed, angriest base of support.

But the lumpen proletariat, while brutalized and outraged by the system, cannot play an independent role in society. Lumpen proletarians are so oppressed that they are driven out of the working class by permanent unemployment and usually act as parasites off the working class itself: the victims of muggers, dealers and hoodlums are rarely the rich. Lumpens can become a tool for demagogues and under some circumstances, the cops; they are not a class force for liberation. Their interests are so diffuse — little more than the battle to survive on their own piece of turf — that they cannot pose a revolutionary alternative.

This reality was reflected in the Panthers' proposed solution to capitalism's ills — "community control." They saw the source of racism as coming from outside the ghettos,

rallied to guerrilla groups at war with their oppressors, but they did not demand the anti-capitalist political program that workers in struggle inevitably move toward.

In the U.S., lumpen proletarians were a potential battering ram against the system. That was the theory of many radicals, Black, Latino and white, who thought that just picking up the gun was the road to power, rather than elaborating and carrying out a Marxist program to meet the needs of the masses. The Panthers identified with this stand of the New Left. Therefore their leaders, who themselves either were not lumpen in origin or had definitively risen into the political intelligentsia, embraced Maoism, the "little red book" and the claim that "power grows out of the barrel of the gun."

While such a declaration sounds very revolutionary, and of course appeals to anyone with a healthy hatred of the cops, it is no answer to either cop violence or the system that uses it. If liberation or an end to police violence can come simply through killing police, there would be no need to overthrow the system. That is, the Panther slogan aims at a radical reform of capitalism rather than its revolutionary overthrow and the construction of a new society.

FROM GUNS TO ELECTORALISM

This was made clear when the Panthers flipped from their gun-centered radical reformism to an alliance with the capitalist Democratic Party and even so-called "anti-fascist" Republicans. Their violent rhetoric of overthrowing capitalism was replaced by "serve the people" do-goodism, creating illusions that poverty and hunger could be eradicated through the social work of benevolent saviors. The idea that killing cops and other bad guys was enough to win liberation proved to be not fundamentally different from the idea that liberation could come by voting the bad guys out.

The Panthers eventually collapsed under vicious police persecution and FBI provocations. The cops killed many and also stirred up deadly fights among Panthers. The potential shown in the Panthers' earliest days, when revolutionary striving was linked to a program of armed self-defense, had attracted thousands of fighters. But without a truly revolutionary program that based itself upon the working class, the

Panthers were doomed.

Police violence against the working class, especially its most oppressed sections, is not independent of the government. Politicians at times decry "excessive" cop brutality and corruption. But the viciousness of the cops as a mercenary force defending capitalist property is vital to the survival of the system that the state defends.

Even when cops get so far "out of hand" that they identify openly with Nazism and the Klan, they do so to defend the state and capital. In the future, despite current bourgeois misgivings about police ideology, the ruling class will abandon such sentiments when the cops prove right — that is, when vicious attacks on the exploited and oppressed by lynch mobs and fascist gangs are the only way to save the system.

WORKING-CLASS ROUTE TO LIBERATION

Armed self-defense must be built starting from workplaces. Workers organized in factory units can be a source for a future working-class militia, which will defend communities as well as strikes and picket lines.

In the 1930's, workers organized mobile flying squads in order to defend their struggles. Armed workers, Black, Latino and white, on more than one occasion have defended their homes from seizure by the state, and have defended themselves and their neighbors from criminals as well as government and fascist thugs. Workers have even met and defeated troops and cops in open battles.

The time for local responses as the solution, however, is long gone. The oppressed and exploited need a centrally organized defense to meet the attacks organized by the capitalists nationally and internationally. Only the motivation coming from the struggle for a new and better world can really sustain a permanent working-class self-defense organization.

In the U.S., the crucial task is for workers to unite and fight against the three-pronged attack of racism, police brutality and economic misery. Blacks and Latinos can and must play a central role in leading the working class. The job can only be finished when the working class does away with the capitalist system and creates its own state power. ●

Gun Control No Answer to Crime

Based on a statement by the LRP Central Committee.

For months the ruling class has subjected the American people to an unrelenting propaganda barrage about the dangers of crime and especially guns in U.S. cities. Right-wing politicians and tabloid media have been in the forefront — not surprisingly, since a major purpose of the campaign is to scapegoat Blacks for the ills of the system and justify increasing repression. But liberal leaders, starting from Bill Clinton with his vindictive crime legislation, have gone along, as have Black spokesmen from Jackson to Farrakhan.

STOP GUN CONTROL!

Crime in the cities is indeed mounting, bred by the miseries of decaying capitalism. The ruling class, society's biggest criminals, foster misery and the plagues of drugs and violent crime in poor communities. The favorite panaceas of liberals of all hues is gun control: take weapons away from everyone but the cops and the military, plus a handful of "respectable" (i.e., upper middle-class) types.

At the time of its revolutionary origins, the U.S. had to grant its citizens the right to bear arms. Now in its epoch of

imperialist decay, it tries to remove that right. By using the crime campaign to hide its own, far greater violence, it denies the right of the oppressed masses to defend themselves.

In the absence of proletarian leadership that provides a real answer, the initiative has been handed to reactionaries. The National Rifle Association, a right-wing outfit, takes the lead in defending the Second Amendment, while left, union, and Black leaders go along with the gun-control mania.

Working-class revolutionaries recognize the need for measures of self-defense — not only against crime in the streets but also against the violence of the ruling class. It will take revolution to achieve a socialist world, the only answer to capitalism's horrors. Yet the working class needs to survive *today* to fight in the mass struggles on the horizon.

For starters, we say to working people: defend your constitutional right to bear arms! The NRA says that individual gun ownership is the answer. But what's needed is organized, mass, self-defense. Another article in this issue, "Black Struggle Arms Itself," sketches the history of Black self-defense efforts and details the reasons why a class-based strategy is crucial.

But unable to take on the whole class frontally yet, it uses the old divide-and-conquer tool of racism. It first heats up its crusade against Blacks and Latinos who have fought capitalist immiseration through rebellions against capitalist police and property from Los Angeles to Washington Heights.

ANTI-GUN CAMPAIGN

It is no surprise that the anti-gun campaign in New York originated against the rebellious Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights and then moved to the seething Black community in Brooklyn. The media hero of the day is a Dominican businessman, Fernando Mateo, who started the "Toys for Guns" program. Owners of illegal guns were encouraged to bring them in to the local police station in exchange for a \$100 gift certificate at their local "Toys 'R' Us" store. That program has become a permanent "Goods for Guns" program across the country.

A few facts show that the program is pure deception. The \$100 incentive will obviously not persuade big-time criminals to throw down their guns and adopt pacifism. Nor

themselves.

The gun-control program is not about protecting the honest working person. Clinton and his cops and phony programs like "Toys for Guns" do nothing to deter the petty criminals who plague us. That is not their intention.

The aim is to reinforce the lie that working and oppressed people must rely not on themselves but on the cops to protect them. That way we will be deluded into supporting a further buildup of the state's armed forces. The cops say they will protect us. But as the ruling class has itself documented, cops more often than not protect (and join) the drug dealers and do nothing to protect ordinary people, especially Blacks and Latinos, from petty criminals. (See "Race, Class and Cop Brutality," PR 45.)

ARMED SELF-DEFENSE: A WORKING-CLASS POLICY

The capitalist classes of all countries defend their power through their states, institutions holding a legal monopoly of armed force. The liberal's remedy for crime is to rely on the state to prevent it. Most working people know that doesn't

*Cops: guns
are them.
Dead Black
and Latin
kids don't
need toys.*



will it attract the drug gangs who shoot bystanders in the streets. Sure, some will turn in a spare peashooter or two, but they know the value of real weapons. According to the New York press, many gun traders admitted to owning other guns; some even planned to use the cash reward toward the purchase of better weapons!

Even Mateo, the founder of Goods for Guns, said that he had no intention of giving up *his* gun. People with legal connections can get guns; people with illegal connections can, too. But not if you are a working woman or man liable to be mugged on the street, robbed at home or subject to unprovoked attacks by the cops (see our article on the James Frazier case). The media won't admit that many people who are not criminals need to keep guns for self-protection.

At the other end of the scale, Clinton, accurately described by the *Boston Globe* as the "Earth's top pusher of arms," has no intention of surrendering his guns. Those he needs for future mass slaughters, as in Panama and Iraq. Nor do the capitalists' cops and National Guard ever disarm

work — especially Blacks and Latinos, who more often than not see the state's agents, the cops, fighting against them.

The far right-wingers have a different answer. They see Blacks, Latinos and other militant workers as the real (or at best potential) criminals and don't trust even the bosses' state to keep them down. They will look to armies of fascists when the time is ripe. Even with gun-control laws, these thugs will get weapons (plus quite a few members) from the cops. This has always been the case when fascism rises.

For all sections of the bourgeois class, the notion of working people, especially Blacks and Latinos, arming themselves is a great threat. Capitalism wouldn't last a moment if working people were armed and organized. That is why the right to armed self-defense today is a working-class demand.

Certainly the working class is concerned to get rid of the criminal elements in our communities once and for all. We will stop these elements most effectively through a mass struggle to build a revolutionary movement and leadership to do away with the criminal system altogether. ●

Centrality of the Revolutionary Party

by Sy Landy

Over the last twenty years, working-class struggles in the United States have drastically declined. The industrial battles of the late '60's and early '70's were diverted by the union bureaucracy into electoral support for the bourgeois Democrats. It is no accident that the centrist left, which invertebrately hails and tails "militancy," tailed it backwards and capitulated in reverse gear.

Naturally the centrists blame the workers for the "down-turn" or for the class's failure to "intersect" with middle-class saviors. The same conditions swept down on us. But tides can be overcome: alone on the far left we stood out against the current of the times. Nevertheless, we made mistakes. The LRP leadership must take responsibility for a certain retreat on the centrality of the revolutionary party.

Leon Trotsky once wrote:

[The] masses undergo their own experiences that permit them to choose and to progress along the revolutionary road, but on condition that they find a vanguard that, at every stage of the struggle, explains the situation to them, shows them the objectives to be obtained, the methods to use and the ultimate perspectives. (*Writings 1933-34*, p. 292.)

From the start of our existence as a political tendency, it has been our most firmly held belief that the success of the class struggle is tied to the re-creation of the revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat. In our first days we not only reprinted Trotsky's words above; we elaborated on the idea in article after article as well as in our practice.

We knew through bitter experience that the task of building the party could not be accomplished on a layaway plan. The Leninist party cannot first be put together at the point when revolution becomes possible. The party-building organization is vital at every point in the struggle if communist class consciousness is to develop. Without that consciousness, no proletarian revolution could be successful.

This understanding was so central to our views that we called ourselves the "League for the Revolutionary Party." Yet we now realize that we have made an error in some of our propaganda on the necessity for the party — an error which, while limited, did hamper our work. Therefore it is important for us to identify the error, understand why it was made, correct the cause as far as possible as well as the problem — and then, so fortified, move on with our work.

AT THE START OF THE LEAGUE

Our political tendency was originally formed within the Revolutionary Socialist League, when we warned that organization that it was on the road toward betrayal of its Trotskyist program. The RSL refused to listen and instead expelled us. It betrayed. It shattered. It died.

In June of 1975, I wrote a document for the RSL internal bulletin entitled *Labor Party, General Strike Proposal* which was a stepping-stone to the formation of our tendency. It advocated dropping the fight for a labor party in the United States in favor of a propaganda struggle for a general strike. The RSL had not yet rid itself of the need to make the idea of creating a labor party a centerpiece of its program. This was one indication that the RSL had not abandoned all vestiges of centrism — revolution in rhetoric, reformism in practice — which so totally dominates all other

groups claiming a Trotskyist heritage.

In the late 1930's, as well as at other times in the history of the American class struggle, the slogan of a labor party did not inevitably signify a desire for a reformist party led by union bureaucrats. At points where unionized workers are very militant but have real illusions in their counterrevolutionary reformist and liberal misleaders, the idea of raising class independence and combativity from the industrial level



Trotsky: 'The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.'

to the political plane can expose these bureaucrats. It can open a major road toward the creation of the mass revolutionary party, if the organized advanced workers openly champion this direction and fight against the reformists' electoral detour.

The document pointed to the mechanistic error involved in making what once was a correct tactical demand into a permanent strategy, spelling out its anti-revolutionary consequences. By the 1970's, it was already clear that whatever illusions workers still held in the union bureaucracy, they didn't include expectations of political or even industrial militancy and class independence from them. Challenges that the union tops form a labor party could expose nothing; they would rather reveal that the leftists had more illusions in the bureaucrats than did the ranks. Given the setbacks suffered by workers, what was necessary was hardly passive electoralism but a convincing and self-convincing demonstration of power, the general strike.

Additionally, the article pointed out that the general strike demand by itself did not totally solve the critical problem of the revolutionary party. It warned:

We have failed to, in the past, adequately stress the

revolutionary party content we must place into the Labor Party demand. Frequently, we have seemed to pose the Labor Party as the real solution and the revolutionary organization as simply a desirable ginger group for its attainment. Obviously and crucially we must exercise care not to fall into the same trap with the General Strike demand.

Yet despite our early self-warning, we walked into the same trap. We only caught a toe or two, but given the importance we attach to the issue, it has been bad enough. Too many times for comfort, we in the LRP permitted ourselves to appear as a militant pressure group fighting for the general strike, letting that struggle overshadow our fundamental purpose for existence, party-building.

In our self-conception, in much of our general propaganda and practical activities, we unambiguously maintained the fight for the party as central. In our theoretical work we never retreated on our gains in this crucial area. This helped us overlook the fact that too often, in our trade union work and the propaganda associated with it, stress on the iron necessity to build the party was subordinated to promoting the general strike.

SUBORDINATING THE PARTY QUESTION

Let us cite only one small instance to illustrate an unfortunately more extensive misuse. The *Proletarian Revolution Supplement* No. 6 of Feb.-March 1986 carried an article "Transit Union Brakes Struggles." In the next-to-last paragraph it noted: "A revolutionary leadership would make an appeal to all the unions and workers in New York for a general strike against union busting and concessions." That was the only place in the article where revolutionary leadership was mentioned, and it was cited only as a group fighting for a general strike.

This particular reference to revolutionary leadership was not typical of our articles that downgraded the party. However, it was atypical only in that we more commonly referred to "revolutionary party leadership," and we often reserved the comment for the last paragraph rather than the preceding

one. In other words, we just tacked it on.

So what? Why is this error so important?

For one thing, our looseness led us to overlook for too long the increasingly open and generalized anti-party positions held by the former leader of our Australian affiliate. (See page 13.)

But its real importance lies in the fact that our mistake touched on fundamentals: this is the epoch of capitalism's decay — the era of revolution and counterrevolution, imperialism, world war and the transition to socialism. In this epoch, the fundamental crisis is the crisis of working-class leadership. Capitalism, with all its characteristic inhuman brutality, has created an economically interdependent world. It has matured and socialized the forces of production so that for the first time in human history the potential already exists to eliminate scarcity and therefore class society. Objectively, the most important productive force, the working class, is certainly big enough, concentrated enough and powerful enough to overthrow capitalism and take state power. And, generally speaking, throughout this century, the workers have risen up in strikes, general strikes, riots, rebellions, revolts and revolutions. We don't need a new working class, we need a new leadership.

But if the LRP really believes that, what's the difference whether we say it or not as long as we carry through on it?

Trotsky never tired of telling revolutionaries to "say what is" to the working class. A revolutionary party is the material manifestation of its program. Its program reflects its understanding of the world and how the proletariat should proceed to transform it. This understanding — this consciousness — has its origin in the workings of capitalist development itself. The system creates its own gravedigger, the working class. The key to socialist revolution is the development of consciousness by the workers as to their role and their mission. The truth enables the proletariat to set itself free — above all, the truth that it needs to form its own advanced party, the embodiment of its' program, consciousness and mission.

COMMUNIST CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE LEFT

The working class is not homogeneous, and being composed of human beings, it learns much through experience. Communist class consciousness doesn't occur all at once; different layers of the class advance at different times and rates. Experience can be interpreted wrongly as well as rightly. The pro-capitalist leadership forces, rewarded by the system, are hardly unwilling to misdirect.

For example, take a situation in which a union leadership is forced into a strike it doesn't want. Fearful of going too far, it puts forward very limited demands on the company. Many workers, desperately pinching pennies, don't support the strike because the sacrifice doesn't seem worth the possible gain. The strike becomes endangered. Some militant workers accept the leadership's conclusion that the strike was too radical an idea in the first place and must be given up. Some listen to those who say the strike isn't radical enough.

The same dialogue occurs, writ large, in revolutionary situations. If the most advanced workers — the vanguard leadership — doesn't go through all these experiences with its fellow workers, giving communist guidance, the less advanced and backward layers will not develop to full class consciousness, and the struggle will be lost.

One or two far left tendencies (for example, the International Socialists) acknowledge the working class as the source of socialist consciousness but assert that this is an automatic or spontaneous development once the class fights.

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Vol. 5, No. 1

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Thus, these leftists believe they do not have to stress the need for revolutionary guidance: militancy will do. In contrast, all the other so-called Trotskyist organizations today assert that the intelligentsia is the deliverer of advanced consciousness — à la Lenin before he corrected himself. Their view also runs counter to Trotsky's repeated assertions. (See PR 29, "What Has Been Done to *What Is to Be Done?*")

There is nothing wrong with disagreeing with Marx, Lenin, Trotsky or our other great teachers even on subjects where they were emphatic — we have done so ourselves — but then one has the obligation to acknowledge the difference, show why they were wrong and what bad consequences followed from their errors. Shamefully, none of the alleged Trotskyists do that. Hiding their differences follows from their basic view: if the workers are the battering rams but not the bearers of socialist ideas, they don't have to know the truth. It is enough that their condescending saviors know. Therefore, these groups too put forward "militancy" rather than revolutionary answers.

MILITANCY ALONE NO ANSWER

Militancy alone will never transcend capitalism. The working class, in the form of its ever-increasing advanced layers, must be conscious of its need and ability to overthrow the system and lay the basis for a new one.

Is the answer then to downplay the general strike?

No. The general strike is as vital for the working class today as it was yesterday. We continue to put it forward, but we must correct how we do so where we have made mistakes.



Lenin proved party is key to workers' revolution.

The LRP is a small group. The left is now composed of small groups; we are smaller than some, bigger than others. In the long run this is not critical. Whether or not the group's program expresses the interests of the proletariat is decisive. Only yesterday, the Communist Parties were massive compared to us.

There is a second decisive factor, reflecting the first. We are tiny compared to the mass of the working class, which doesn't yet have communist class consciousness. Unlike phony socialists, we do not adapt to the current level of militancy and limit our effective program to demands calculated to take the working class only to the next step — after which there will be more next steps, until in the by-and-by, presto!, comes the revolution. Except that it never comes.

Aside from the manipulation and lies this method demonstrates, the idea is absurd. It is the changing character of the exploitative capitalist system that pressures the proletariat in the direction of revolution, not the goosing tactics of small groups who believe that they can maneuver the class into exploding. Talk about chutzpah!

GENERAL STRIKE AND REVOLUTION

The LRP knows that when the general strike breaks out, as it inevitably will, it will not be as a result of the working class listening to us — unless by that time we are far bigger and in a far more commanding position than we are today. Only on very few occasions are we in a position to agitate — to address one or two slogans to broad masses of workers in the actual expectation that they can be carried out. Rather our present task is to propagandize — to relate a complex set of revolutionary slogans and ideas to our fellow advanced workers.

That is, we speak to a relatively small but growing layer of politically interested and radicalized workers about the necessity of building the party, its strategy for revolution and the tactics which flow from it. Capitalism generates and regenerates such layers, bigger and more influential than we are at present. These are layers that we can influence — and, lately to a growing extent, actually are influencing. To them we explain that the crucial importance of the general strike is that it unifies the working class, demonstrates its power, raises consciousness and poses the question that the working

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class can and should rule in society. The general strike puts the question of revolution before the masses for decision, but it doesn't answer the question. If there is not a Leninist leadership, not only will there be no revolution but even minimal class aims will be undermined.

We seek to show not only how a revolutionary leadership would act if it were at the helm of a general strike but also how vanguard workers should communicate the need for such a mass strike to layers of their fellow workers who are moving forward. Militant workers now need a general strike because they wish to defend themselves against the capitalist attacks on their jobs, pay and unions. It is a major step toward a defense of Black and Latino workers, an answer to the system's attempt to whip up race war and divisiveness.

One crucial aspect of united working-class mass actions like the general strike is that they do not demand political agreement by the workers who participate. We can all fight together in defense of our class needs. We tell advanced workers to warn militants, as openly as we do, that if there is not revolutionary leadership created in time, the reformist leaderships will inevitably betray the strike because they do not wish even the idea of state power to be posed. They are committed to capitalism. The struggle itself will prove which is right — the militants' present belief that their needs can be answered without overthrowing capitalism, or the communist understanding that even the most minimal defense of the working class demands revolution as the crisis of the system inexorably deepens.

In this way we fight for the general strike while emphasizing our essential task, the need for advanced workers and those who identify with their interests to join us in building the party of our class. The proletariat has suffered enough from the social engineering and lies of the middle-class "progressive" saviors.

EVENTS THAT FORCED US TO RETHINK

Those who have read *Proletarian Revolution* carefully over the last few issues will see that we have already begun to correct our course. Recognition of our problem did not occur by accident. The rebellion in Los Angeles over the Rodney King beating pointed out in no uncertain terms that, at this time, challenging the present labor leadership to launch a general strike in response would expose nothing and be treated as a joke by fighting anti-racist workers. Such workers had to be reached by communist propaganda on why the party must be built now if a successful fight for a general strike to bring L.A. to a halt was to be made.

The other event which greatly affected us was the recent workers' upheaval in Melbourne, Australia involving thousands upon thousands of union militants. We in the LRP have participated in class battles over the years, and sometimes we achieved a modest impact. In the Melbourne events, however, our Australian comrades proved that our program, strategy and tactics not only won for us the ear of the advanced workers but confirmed in practice our fundamental outlook. These massive events forced COFI as a whole to conclude that our only important shortcoming on the streets of Melbourne was in not making the party even more central than we did.

Los Angeles, Melbourne and the renewed class battles in Europe, South Africa and elsewhere herald a new day. The working classes of the world are moving toward an enormous rising which will dwarf even the titanic strikes and revolts of the late 1960's and the early 1970's, events that created our tendency in the first place. Such a prospect forces us to re-examine our world view to arm us for the coming days of

decision. Making errors is no crime; it is impossible not to make errors. The crime is to ignore them and not to learn from the experience.

SCIENTIFIC PREDICTIONS

Our confidence in dealing with our errors comes in part from the record achieved by our program and our method. When almost every left tendency pointed to Stalinism in the USSR as powerful, the wave of the future for good or bad, we showed at the height of the Cold War how weak it was. We pointed out that it was doomed not simply to collapse but to try to rebuild its faltering stultified capitalist economy by increasingly adapting to market forms like those of Western capitalism. Far in advance of the actual events, we predicted that this tendency toward privatization would not go the whole way before it stalled completely. We predicted not only the central role that the workers would play in the collapse of Stalinist states but warned that if their party was not built in time, fascism would loom large.

Likewise, we predicted that there was a far greater likelihood that the next world war would be fought among the U.S., Japan and Germany than between the U.S. and the USSR. Fifteen years ago, the middle-class left laughed at these ideas. Now many of them are commonplace.

But the idea that party-building has been reconfirmed as a central task will still inspire smirks, along with the snickers at the "outdated" idea that the task of freeing the proletariat is that of the proletariat itself. In the coming years, the class-conscious workers will deal with these Cheshire cats in the course of making their revolution. It is no accident today that as the left grows even more cynical and pessimistic, our optimism expands. ●

COFI

continued from page 2

The speakers all advocated a Canada-style "single-payer" plan instead of Clinton's insurance company rip-off. As no Solidarity members had much to say from the floor, the chair had to call on the LRPers present. We pointed out that even the lesser-evil single-payer plan, at a time of capitalist austerity, could lead to attacks on workers' health care through cutbacks and higher taxes. Instead of tying ourselves to "reforms" without building a real fight, revolutionaries fight for struggles, like general strikes, that point toward the overturn of capitalism and make possible the decent health care that only socialist revolution can bring.

The Solidarity speakers responded, reluctantly, to the LRP (there was no one else to respond to.) One said that this revolutionary stuff is a pipedream: the workers' living standard would have to go much lower before they could be expected to rise up.

This is exactly the kind of "left" cynicism that COFI is fighting everywhere.

LETTERS

Proletarian Revolution welcomes letters from its readers. If you have something to say on a topic discussed in the magazine, political or social events or questions of socialist theory, send it in.

Write to us at P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008.

Paul White Betrays Revolutionary Politics

Paul White, the former leader of the Australian section of COFI, and another ex-member, Duggi Silins, have stolen the name of *Workers Revolution* magazine as well as the mailing and subscription lists, address and other resources. They have produced a fake issue of *WR* in the name of the "Workers Revolution Group, External Faction of COFI."

An extended political fight led to the expulsion of the two comrades. Before that, the majority had chosen a new leadership based on major political resolutions at a full-scale conference. The conference emphasized both the group's origins through the political work of the LRP (U.S.) and the

dealing here not with an ideological dispute but with a case of petty larceny.

EXTERNAL FACTION?

The claim to be an "external faction" is also fraudulent. Last June, the Central Committee of the LRP (U.S.) issued a brief internal statement reaffirming our position that "workers will come to communist consciousness only through the work of building the revolutionary proletarian party." White responded with an hysterical, alarmist document denouncing us as if it we had invented a new position never



Melbourne, Victoria, 1992. Australian comrades played serious role in mass workers' rallies. White abdicated political leadership; young comrades took the helm politically and practically.

centrality of the revolutionary party by voting to change its name from the Workers Revolution Group to the League for the Revolutionary Party (Australia).

Our Australian comrades noted in a letter to subscribers that White's thievery echoed the act perpetrated by Shachtman and Abern against the U.S. Trotskyists after a factional split in 1940. White has the nerve to run a laudatory article on James P. Cannon, the early American Trotskyist leader. He somehow fails to mention that Cannon's book, *The Struggle for the Proletarian Party*, condemned White's predecessors for their action:

By a breach of trust, morally and legally equivalent to a misappropriation of funds by a financial officer of a workers' organization, Burnham, Shachtman and Abern... have usurped the name of the magazine and attempted to appropriate its mailing rights as their personal property. ... A casual reading of the forged copy is sufficient to convince any reader that it is not the magazine they have known, but a miserable counterfeit. ... Obviously, we are

before heard of. But it is impossible for anyone in COFI not to know that the centrality of the vanguard party is the central point of our existence. White was not able to convince a single comrade in our international tendency of his position, except for one old friend in Australia.

As for COFI, White did not bother to make a case. He chose not to respond to a document from the Central Committee of the LRP (U.S.) criticizing the WRG's intervention in the unemployment campaign of the Trades Hall Council in Victoria in 1991. This work showed a marked tendency to replace working-class leadership with middle-class student vanguardism. During the faction fight, White also ignored the major document written by the COFI International Secretary attacking his views. He followed up by not responding to criticism of his work with an exiled Turkish left group. He says he wants to be part of COFI, but he didn't act as if COFI matters.

Neither during nor since the faction fight have either White or Silins written to the COFI center, either formally

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or informally, in an attempt to convince anyone of their positions. They walked out of their trial, in which one charge referred to the theft of funds involving a transfer of a loan from the LRP (U.S.). They made no attempt to appeal their expulsion to COFI or even to ask other sections to review the action. From all their actions, they seem happy to be out.

COFI is not yet a democratic centralist organization. We are making steps in that direction: it is the goal of each of our sections. Nevertheless, White's actual behavior during the dispute was to ignore COFI as much as possible, concentrating narrowly on Australian questions. This anti-internationalist spirit makes the claim to be an external faction of COFI all the more ridiculous.

THE POLITICS OF BETRAYAL

The Cannon article in White's fake *WR* bypasses any criticism of Cannon's failure to provide leadership to the Fourth International during and after World War II, a major task that Trotsky had left to the U.S. section. This failure was based on a national-centered view of politics like White's. In this article and its predecessor, White also ignores Cannon's errors on trade union policy that Trotsky had criticized: his tailing of reformist union leaderships.

Today, as with Shachtman & Co., "a casual reading of the forged copy" is sufficient to demonstrate the difference with the real *Workers Revolution*. The genuine edition dealt head-on with the main issue in dispute, the centrality of the revolutionary party. A major article, "Lenin, Luxemburg and the Party" shows how a pamphlet White wrote a few years ago, *Revolution and Stagnation in Marxism*, contained the theoretical roots of the opportunist practices White attempted to foist on the group during the class struggle upheavals in Victoria in 1992-1993. The pamphlet subverts the Leninist concept of the vanguard party. But the practical meaning of its hazy formulations did not become clear until the Victorian struggle, when counterposed notions of how to intervene in the workers' movement emerged.

White attempted to champion Rosa Luxemburg's errors on spontaneity in order to negate Lenin's leadership methods. The term spontaneity in Marxist usage means the tendency of the working class to struggle against capitalist attacks but without a conscious communist agenda. White poses the general strike and the spontaneity of the working class as immediate needs, with revolutionary leadership desirable only as an organizational vehicle in later stages.

In White's view, the "working class is spontaneously revolutionary in the right material circumstances." This led him to propaganda and agitation that reflected confusion, at best, about when revolutionary leadership would be needed. The opposition in the WRG had to fight White at every turn to produce factory bulletins and leaflets that would argue for revolutionary leadership of the general strike and for socialist revolution as the necessary outcome; White insisted on militant trade unionism as the central task. This dispute occurred during interventions in the important car industry, as well as in other unions where members participate in struggles as openly communist workers.

A second major article in our comrades' *WR*, "The Leninist Concept of the Revolutionary Vanguard Party," is based on the major resolution passed at their conference. Starting with the historic struggle of the Bolsheviks against the Mensheviks and following through to Trotsky's transitional program as the major weapon of the Fourth International, it shows how a clear-cut view of the role of the revolutionary party at every stage of the class struggle has always separated Marxists from wavering centrists.

White's magazine avoids the main issues of the faction fight. Doing so would only have shown how far White has degenerated to the opportunist right from the revolutionary positions he once echoed. But it is not uncommon for opportunists to also demonstrate their flip side, infantile leftism, on particular questions. And so White does. Thus the only document he reproduces is his "Resolution on Secret Ballots and Trade Union Independence," rejected by the conference.

Our tendency relentlessly opposes the bourgeois state's intrusions into the unions in all countries. White's resolution claimed that communists on principle could not participate in union votes that are regulated by the government. He stated, "Calling for a 'no' vote, or even a strike and a 'no' vote, is a treacherous betrayal."

We say that once the state's imposition into a union's affairs has occurred, the question of a "no" vote versus a mass boycott is purely tactical; in either case we continue to openly attack state intervention. Mass boycott movements, in fact, are far rarer than campaigns for a "no" vote.

White's "principled" opposition to voting was in fact based on a particular contract vote at the Ford Broadmeadows plant near Melbourne. But it was not tied to any hope for a mass boycott movement that could turn the situation around. Contrasted to our comrades' line of agitating for a "no" vote and a strike, his position was abstentionist. Abandoning the fight for revolutionary leadership in the unions led rather quickly to White's abstaining from a concrete struggle.

"WE NEVER PARTICIPATE"

This abstentionism jibes with the fact that White, the leader and most experienced member of the WRG, abdicated political and organizational responsibility during the huge upsurge of Melbourne workers in the fall of 1992 (see *PR* 43). The WRG's successful intervention was led by Comrade Geoff Boucher, the LRP's new Secretary.

Among other silly things, White's resolution also stated, "We never participate in class collaborative bodies, which are always capitalist property." We can only wonder what he meant by this in light of the Bolsheviks participation in Czarist dumas, not to speak of revolutionary work in bourgeois parliaments. Indeed, if government regulation is the test, working in unions almost anywhere today is ruled out.

It has always been our policy to engage in serious polemics with leftist tendencies. From one angle, it is easy to make fun of White's magazine and some of the political positions he is now cooking up as he moves toward the "practical" politics of capitulation to nationalism, rank and filism and middle-class politics in general. His fake *Workers Revolution* Group adds one more piece of centrist litter to the political landscape, obstructing the workers' view.

But we who have dedicated our lives to the cause of working-class revolution are not cavalier about our losses. White and Silins had left the centrist milieu for a short sojourn into the ranks of authentic revolutionaries. The contributions White could have made in the coming decisive class struggles as a leader of COFI are now lost. The recent workers' explosions in Australia are only a prelude. They provided a test for would-be revolutionaries — a test the White grouplet has already failed and our COFI section has passed with flying red colors. ●

COFI will soon issue a pamphlet featuring the articles by our Australian section cited above and other documents from the dispute, including those of White faction. We will also respond to questions and discussion on the issues, given their importance for proletarian revolution internationally.

Middle-Class 'Marxist-Leninists' Call It Quits

The long and often strange political journey of the Marxist-Leninist Party has ended. Originating in the New Left and the morass of Maoism and Stalinism, the MLP and its predecessors had rejected first Mao, then substitute-guru Enver Hoxha, then even some of Stalin. But when they ran up against the Trotskyist alternative to counterrevolutionary Stalinism, their odyssey stalled. Now, faced with the world crisis of Stalinist "socialism," the MLP has given up.

The MLP's dissolution over Thanksgiving weekend was no surprise to even the most casual reader of its press: both *Workers' Advocate* and the *WA Supplement* had publicly questioned the party's viability over the last two years. Between the lines (and behind the scenes), many in the leadership were doubting the need for a revolutionary party at all.

The final statement by the party's Central Committee on September 19 captures the bleak and strikingly agnostic outlook that had flourished in the MLP's last years. Membership declined, its industrial base "has nearly been extinguished" and the MLP suffered a "loss of ideological cohesiveness." The leadership saw no way out. Here are its last words:

Rather than endure further drift, rather than permit our organization to become a mockery of its past, the Central Committee prefers that we recognize that the end has come, and make a clean break of things, the better to clear the way for whatever the future will bring.

Que será, será! Whatever will be, will be. The leaders propose simply to walk away from the class struggle. That is, despite their claim to have headed a proletarian tendency, their departure from political life betrays the middle-class character of the Stalinism they never broke from. This is also seen in their demoralized view of the situation:

For nearly a decade, the social movements have failed to give rise to new forces attracted to [our] program as we in our time rallied to it.

For years, the MLP had been something of a "hard-left" wing in the popular-front coalition efforts of the radical-liberal left. From this vantage point, it had argued for militant tactics in the "mass movements" — as if the bankruptcy of the left could be reduced to tactical questions. The MLP never saw the middle-class left as an *obstacle* to the emergence of a mass, fighting working-class movement. So with the decline of this left, the MLP lost its bearings.

The disheartened majority statement portrays the objective situation as a new world reality with "outstanding theoretical problems [that] have multiplied beyond our ability to satisfactorily address them." In fact it draws precisely the wrong conclusions from the current period.

Genuine Marxists and Leninists know that capitalism always generates proletarian resistance to the bourgeois assaults, driving workers in an anti-capitalist direction. The end of the post-World War II stabilization has decisively eroded the material basis of reformism: the unfolding period will be one of explosive struggles. With the downfall of Stalinism under the blows of the working classes of East Europe, a key obstacle to the workers' finding the road to revolution has been wiped out. Revolutionary optimism is called for, not cynicism.

DISHONEST LEADERSHIP

Even at the end, the MLP leadership failed to come clean with an honest account of the organization's collapse. A statement by the Chicago branch, which intends to continue political work, reveals that in the last few years the leadership had questioned even their own distorted version

of Marxism and Leninism.

What finally became obvious, in our opinion, was that a number of party members (particularly some Central Committee members) had developed one or more of the following views:

- that Lenin's theory of imperialism no longer applies to the current world and was perhaps flawed in its time;
- that a perspective for socialist revolution is not valid for the developing countries until socialism is achieved in all the advanced countries;
- that Leninism, and perhaps Marxism, are a burden, not a tool, and that we need to start from scratch to develop class analysis and revolutionary theory, and more.

Moreover, MLP leaders had even come to believe that ... imperialism, when taken in the sense of a stage of capitalist development, is an historically progressive phenomenon in contrast to what went before. (*Theoretical Supplement to Chicago Workers' Voice*, Jan. 25, 1994.)

If imperialism keeps capitalism historically progressive (despite a century of world wars, fascism, Stalinism and counterrevolution), then it is easy to see why anti-imperialists might become discouraged!

The leadership view also helps account for the MLP's not-so-anti-imperialist line during the U.S.'s Gulf War assault on Iraq in 1991. The MLP opposed both sides, with a lot of left rhetoric denouncing the crimes of George Bush and Saddam Hussein — but without recognizing that U.S. imperialism was far and away the chief criminal on the scene. It's hard to take the position of militarily defending Iraq and opposing the U.S. war if your Central Committee is toying with the notion that imperialism is a good thing.

The differences and doubts were largely suppressed in *WA* and its *Supplement*, as the "leaders" tried to keep their debates secret even from members who had toiled loyally for years for ideas being abandoned at the top. The cowardly Central Committee not only deserted the struggle — it didn't have enough respect for the working class, whose "advocate" it claimed to be, to tell the truth about what went on.

Desertion by such pretended leaders is no great loss. But for members and supporters, especially those in the working class who have no choice but to continue the class struggle, a great deal of rethinking is on the agenda.

IDEALIST METHOD

The MLP was the last significant offshoot of the so-called "M-L" trend that emerged from the Maoist party-building milieu dominating the middle-class New Left in the 1970's. One of Maoism's greatest betrayals was its alliance with U.S. imperialism. For example, in 1976, the MLP (then COUSML) hailed Jonas Savimbi, the CIA-backed front man in South Africa's invasion of newly independent Angola.

On breaking with Maoism in 1979, the MLP acclaimed Stalinist Albania as the world's "only genuinely socialist country." In 1984 it reconsidered — not because of the absurdity that such a politically and economically backward state could be the model for the world proletariat, but because it had discovered that Albania too was "revisionist." And now the MLP traces the degeneration of the Soviet Union to the mid-1930's — under J.V. Stalin himself.

These turns presented a set of theoretical and ideological challenges. For a decade and a half, the MLP and its organizational antecedents, ACWM-ML and COUSML, had been defined by the dogmas of national Stalinism. After severing their ideological link with China and Albania, the MLP had

to decide what it meant by "orthodox Marxism-Leninism." Having rejected the unalluring prospect of joining the Progressive Labor Party in the Orwellian world of third-period Stalinism ("Uncle Joe good, Khrushchev bad"), it was obliged to re-work its theory and practice in the light of the history of international communism.

To this end, the MLP launched a series of internal study groups to determine where the communist movement had gone wrong. In one sense, these efforts to break with Stalinism were admirable: in a decade, the MLP discovered the crimes and betrayals of Mao, Hoxha and — to an extent — Stalin. The best comrades of the MLP always seemed subjectively committed to a proletarian-centered vision of socialist revolution.

However, a closer look at the MLP's efforts reveals a series of empirical turns that raise questions but lead to no

logy with material forces. In fact, it is not bad ideas but class struggle that transforms societies. Whether a society is socialist depends not on its leaders' pronouncements but on class relations. Thus despite their subjective intentions, the MLPers based their politics not on Marxist materialist class analysis but on the marketplace of ideas.

THE 7TH CONGRESS AS TURNING POINT

The criticism of Stalinism after World War II hints that its betrayals were rooted in the 1930's. By 1985, the MLP began to see a dramatic shift in the mid-1930's in the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, which adopted Dimitroff's theses on the "United Front Against Fascism."

Despite its pseudo-Leninist terminology, this perspective was not for a working-class united front; it called for subordinating the proletariat to a multi-class political bloc with



Lenin and Trotsky blazed the way. MLP tops burned out.

answers. Working its way backward in time, the MLP found at each turn a new series of "errors" it couldn't explain. Eventually, this led some to question whether Leninism and Marxism themselves were fundamentally flawed and unable to explain the world.

A key break was the MLP's discovery in 1984 that Soviet "revisionism" didn't begin with the coming to power of Khrushchev in 1956. Underlying this new position were the MLP's differences with the ruling "Party of Labor" of Albania. The MLP had become critical of the PLA's capitulations to imperialism, its appeals to bourgeois nationalism in Europe against the U.S. This pattern followed Stalin's post-war efforts to detach struggles against U.S. imperialism from the goal of socialist revolution. This line also led the PLA to retreat from criticizing bourgeois nationalist regimes in the "dependent" countries.

For the MLP, it followed that Stalin was no longer to be considered one of the standard Marxist sources. His works before the war were good; those after the war, not so good; he lacked "consistency" and had become a revisionist. There was no explanation, however, other than to say he had changed his "orientation."

Here we see the result of the absence of a theoretical framework. Without a materialist analysis of the degeneration of the Russian revolution, the MLP regarded all problems as results of the leadership's wrong line. It was exactly the same method as Mao's when he blamed Khrushchev's secret speech against Stalin for bringing down Soviet socialism.

This method is idealist because it fails to connect ideo-

"democratic" sections of the "patriotic" bourgeoisie — the "Popular Front." As Trotsky observed at the time, Stalin's Comintern had come full circle; it now played the treacherous role of the Second "Yellow" International of 1914.

Indeed, the popular-front Congress marked the turn of the Comintern to an openly counterrevolutionary policy that led to treason and disaster in the Spanish Civil War. Nevertheless, the MLP's portrayal of the Seventh Congress as the decisive break with Leninism is anti-historical and fundamentally dishonest.

The Popular Front of the mid-1930's merely deepened the class collaborationism that had characterized the Comintern for a full decade. The shattering defeat of the Chinese proletariat in 1925-27 resulted from a popular front with the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang. In the British general strike of 1926, the Comintern stuck with the liberal labor politicians who betrayed the revolutionary movement. But what did the MLP say?

The line of the first six congresses of the CI, from its founding in 1919 to the Sixth Congress in 1928, was both consistent and Marxist-Leninist. This was also true of "the Sixth Congress period" from 1928 to 1934, until a year or so before the Seventh Congress when the line began to change. (*Supplement*, May 1, 1985.)

The MLP leaders felt compelled to assure the ranks that there had been a continuous and unbroken line from the early revolutionary Comintern to that of Stalin and Bukharin in the late 1920's. Yet they conspicuously avoided any reference to the key developments of this critical juncture in the

history of the world communist movement. Knowledgeable readers can only pity the cadre who were trained for political combat on the basis of this document.

While the MLP attacked the Comintern's capitulations to social democracy and bourgeois nationalism in the 1930's, it failed to address its distortion of the united front tactic in the fight against fascism. Ignoring the Comintern's sectarian "united front from below" policy before 1935, it said:

Previously the Communist International centered its tactics on the mobilization of the rank-and-file. United front agreements and appeals "from above," to the social-democratic parties and leaders or even to the Second International itself, were not ruled out. On the contrary, such appeals "from above" were essential, at the appropriate times, to be able to approach the masses at the base of the reformist parties. But they were to be used for the purpose of strengthening the work at the base. (Supplement, May 1, 1985.)

This is a complete whitewash. Prior to Hitler's coming to power, the German Communist Party criminally rejected the united front tactic that might have persuaded social-democratic workers to fight alongside communists against fascism. The CP said it was impossible to unite in action with the Social Democracy, which it labeled "social-fascist." Instead it issued the sterile call for a united front from below, demanding by fiat that socialist workers simply abandon their organizations and follow the CP.

Distorting history, the MLP accused Trotsky, the leading critic of the third-period line, of having the same soft approach to Social Democracy as the Seventh Congress. On the contrary, Trotsky had proposed an aggressive united front approach in Germany to force the Social Democratic leaders into mass struggles — to expose their capitulations to capitalism and fascism. Instead, the third-period line allowed the Social Democratic leaders to avoid the danger of contact between their base and the communist ranks in struggle.

Instead of a serious critique of the Sixth Congress period, the MLP only hinted at "rigidities" in the pre-1935 line. Given its fear of Trotskyism, it could not accept Trotsky's analysis that the line was a betrayal of the proletariat. (It is also revealing that in contrasting the 1935 theses with the Comintern's early work on the united front, the MLP never acknowledged Trotsky's leading role in developing the united front tactics during the early Comintern years.)

Underneath the failure to grasp the third period and the popular-front capitulation to bourgeois democracy is the lack of a class analysis of the forces driving the Comintern and the Soviet Union to counterrevolution. All the MLP saw was a bad line, a series of errors. It could not see that the international zigzags of the Comintern were directly linked to the zigzags of the Soviet leadership under Stalin — reflecting the needs of the new bureaucratic rulers at the expense of the interests of the proletariat and the oppressed masses.

WHENCE STATE CAPITALISM?

As always, the MLP found errors but had no explanation for the Comintern's reactionary turn. Still, study of Soviet history continued. In the fall of 1988, the MLP admitted that it made little progress in understanding Soviet history. Nevertheless, it discovered something else Trotskyists had known all along: that Stalin was wrong to say the Soviet Union had achieved socialism.

After the October Revolution, the task was not the immediate establishment of socialism but the beginning of the transition towards socialism. Socialism, the MLP now explained, is the first phase of communism, a society at a

high level of development. Based on this, the Soviet Union (like China and Albania) had never achieved socialism.

The idea of a transitional society between capitalism and communism appears to have come as a revelation to the MLP. They refused to acknowledge that this was not only Marx and Lenin's position but was also what Trotsky and the Left Opposition had fought for against Stalin and Bukharin's theory of "socialism in one country."

While continuing to slander (when not ignoring) the work of Trotsky, the MLP concluded that by the mid-1930's, after the First Five-Year Plan, the Soviet Union made a turn in a capitalist direction. This discovery appears to result from pressures to develop a state capitalist analysis that could explain the collapse of Stalinism at the end of the 1980's.

The Albanian and Chinese "theories" of state capitalism pointed to a Khrushchev coup in 1956 and the growth of market forces as the sources of counterrevolution. The MLP found this unconvincing: if socialism had been achieved, how could it collapse so easily? And if capitalism meant simply the growth of market forces, how could one explain the changes taking place under Gorbachev and then Yeltsin?

The collapse of Stalinism forced the MLP to recognize that the degeneration of the Soviet Union required a more profound explanation than such simplistic, ahistorical answers. Yet even when forced to rethink basic questions the MLP could not overcome its lack of a Marxist method. More study, more quotes, more facts revealed only more errors. While some new insights were found, there was no fundamental understanding of the degeneration and overthrow of the Soviet revolution.

Thus, the new understanding of a transitional society enabled the MLP to see that state capitalist features exist under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trouble is, they can't distinguish between the "state capitalism" controlled by the workers' state under Lenin and the stratified capitalism of the ruling class under Stalin, Khrushchev and Gorbachev.

Like a broken record, the MLP sees one reactionary turn after another that it cannot explain:

Comrades raised the question of what was the basis of the turn that took place during the 30s in the Soviet Union. We cannot answer that question, which shows how much work is still to be done. (Supplement, April 15, 1989.)

Without a materialist explanation, the MLP could only put forward its idealist method — bad ideas led to bad things, the collapse of the revolution.

Beginning especially clearly in the Soviet Union of the mid-1930's, revolutionary Marxism-Leninism was increasingly discarded and replaced with ideas that undermined the socialist goal of the working class. (Supplement, June 15, 1990.)

NEW QUESTIONS, MORE PROBLEMS

Shortly after discovering that the degeneration began in the mid-1930's, the MLP was forced again to change its line. The critique of the mid-'30's was accompanied by assurances that the line of the First Five-Year Plan had been revolutionary. But even this could no longer be claimed, when the MLP began to question the policies of industrialization and collectivization after 1928. Once again, the MLP was unsure of its conclusions and suggested that more study might reveal problems going back even further.

How does this change our view of the history overall? Our investigation has not gone to the point where we can put forward a comprehensive overview of the history, even on a most tentative basis. But what we have uncovered most recently suggests that the events of the mid-1930's may

represent the culmination of processes which began earlier and developed further than we had previously suspected. (*Supplement*, July 20, 1991.)

By 1991, the MLP was in a real theoretical crisis. Its studies had brought it to the point where it had to re-examine the 1920's and the very beginnings of the October Revolution itself. It found problems not only in the mid-1920's when Stalin came to power, but even earlier, under the NEP and war communism. While it took comfort in Lenin's brutal honesty, which allowed him to openly discuss the problems facing the workers' state, calling a concession a concession and a retreat a retreat, the MLP found that its confidence in Leninism and the revolution was being tested.

Thus a speech on Soviet history at the national conference in 1990 ends with a discussion of "the need to demythologize the process of revolution." While still touting the October Revolution, the MLP underneath appears to have questioned its validity.

Who was the MLP trying to convince? Certainly Lenin, Trotsky, and the Marxists who followed their lead all acknowledged that the process of bureaucratic degeneration took place from the beginning. Indeed, it was the MLP and its fellow Stalinists who created the myths of "socialism in one country" and the "final victory of socialism" in the USSR.

Now that the MLP had discovered that the October Revolution contained "warts and all," that their petty-bourgeois idealization of the revolution was false, they became increasingly demoralized. This is further evidenced by a speech on "The technical and cultural basis for workers' socialism in the modern world." (*Supplement*, July 20, 1991.) This speech opened up a long debate and revealed a pessimistic attitude towards the revolution. It seems to be an effort to reassure the party that the defeat of the October Revolution doesn't mean that socialism is impossible. Rather, it shows that socialism cannot grow in a backward country like Russia.

"The material conditions for socialism proper," we read,

"certainly did not exist in Russia of 1917, or 1913 (pre-war)." Under such circumstances the prospects for transition to socialism proved difficult. So, we learn, the Bolsheviks eventually gave up and opened the way for counterrevolution:

Russian society had not attained a level of development that facilitated drawing the working masses into administration; into all spheres of intellectual life: culture, science and especially government. The Russian party made efforts to do so, but weren't able to get very far in this. After a while the Bolshevik leaders said "to hell with it" and came to rely on their newly-formed, loyal, ex-worker-peasant intelligentsia as a new ruling class.

Given the capitalist encirclement and the low level of development of Russia, the Bolsheviks could not prevent the victory of state capitalism.

In sum, very favorable soil existed for a new class to emerge, consolidate and organize society in its narrow interests. When you add to this the lousy international environment, and the internal political problems, history happened the way it did. State capitalism was erected.

In short, "shit happens."

THE ANSWER: MORE STUDY

Here we see the outline of the reactionary social-democratic view that socialist revolution is possible only in advanced capitalist states. The author refuses to discuss "the question of 'was this inevitable?'" — that is, was the revolution doomed from the start? But it is clear that this is the direction of the analysis, despite its recognition that this is essentially the view of Kautsky and the Mensheviks. The purpose of the article seems to be to show that because conditions in advanced capitalism are at a higher level, victory is possible — unlike in Russia, China and elsewhere.

With their world view in shambles, the MLP could only conclude that more study was needed. Most revealing is a speech that dealt with Soviet history. (*Supplement*, August 20,

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1991). It concludes with the need to investigate further a number of areas including the inner party debates of the 1920's. Among the list of topics for study is Trotsky and the Left opposition and "the hotly debated issues such as the theory of socialism in one country and permanent revolution." In addition, the speech points to a number of crucial international questions: the German uprising of 1923, the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee and the British general strike of 1926, and the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27.

But any hope that the MLP might actually get somewhere was undermined by their middle-class "Marxist" world view, which divorced these debates from their class basis.

These are not directly a question of development of the Soviet revolution, but they say something about the thinking among the ranks of the Bolshevik leaders.

Once again, the decisive question was what the leaders were thinking. Lacking a materialist world view, the MLP separated the "internal" degeneration of the USSR from the "external" questions of international strategy and tactics.

'LOUSY ENVIRONMENT'

While they fatalistically bemoaned the "lousy international environment" the Bolsheviks faced, the MLPers failed to understand the responsibility of the Comintern under Stalin's leadership for the defeats suffered, as well as their relation to the degeneration of the revolution. This reveals the flip side of their idealistic view of leadership. Either they explain things by pointing to wrong ideas and wrong lines, or else they sink into an objectivism that views the defeat of the revolution as inevitable.

The Comintern debate over socialism in one country and permanent revolution was completely intertwined with the central international questions. At issue was whether to adapt to the class pressures that were driving the process of degeneration of the revolution or to fight to save the revolutionary character of the workers' state. No correct line could guarantee that the revolution would survive. Nevertheless, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution — the theoretical opposite of "socialism in one country" — shows how it is possible for a proletarian revolution in a backward country to lead to socialism: by increasing the proletariat's power and consciousness and fighting for international revolution. Otherwise, "socialism in one country" inevitably led to an attempt to build "capitalism in one country."

Only the spread of revolution throughout Europe and the world could have saved the gains of October. But Stalin's perspective, based on the needs of the growing bureaucracy, was rooted in the backward material conditions of the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Stalin's "mistakes" were made in an

attempt to preserve the ruling group through accommodation with imperialism. The international defeats were directly linked to the betrayals of the Russian proletariat.

THE PARTY'S OVER

In the words of the dissolution statement of the MLP Central Committee, the group had reached "the end of its natural life" (whatever that means). Starting with a voluntaristic, subjectivist understanding of Leninism and party-building, the MLP ended up objectivist and fatalist with little place for Lenin. From an action-oriented party that claimed to be guided by its "Marxist-Leninist" truths, the MLP shriveled up to a passive study group, groping for answers to the most fundamental questions.

Having cast aside the theoretical certainties of Mao, Stalin and Hoxha, the MLP discovered that it had never followed the real, historic Lenin but an icon, the idealized figure of Stalinist lies. If the revolution must be "demythicalized," then it was only natural that the same be done to the revolution's leader, Lenin.

Ultimately, the abandonment of Leninism means giving up not only on Marxism but also on the proletariat. Actually, what the MLP has given up on is not the real proletariat, the working class as it actually is, but the Stalinist image of workers ever-ready to struggle onward at the beck and call of self-appointed leaders.

The MLP leaders are wrong: the collapse of their party is not the fault of the working class but the failure of a middle-class element to adopt the standpoint of the real proletariat, "warts and all." That's the working class that made the Russian revolution when its advanced guard, the Bolsheviks, won leadership through honest and open struggle.

The Trotskyists, the continuers of Bolshevism, are fighting for revolutionary consciousness. In theory and practice, we deal critically with our predecessors' achievements, always defending the gains of the working class both materially and on the level of ideas. We welcome the efforts of subjective revolutionaries from the MLP, like the Chicago Workers' Voice group, to continue probing fundamental questions. We are convinced they will find no alternative to Trotskyism.

That was the lesson learned by the kernel of the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden, a group formerly affiliated with the MLP. As these comrades have observed, their contact with the LRP, especially our book *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, helped them come to grips with the class difference between the "M-L" tradition and authentic communism. Their study and practice led them to the Communist Organization for the Fourth International. That is the way forward for all proletarian communists.●

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Why I Am Joining the LRP

The letter below is from a Chicago worker, once in the now-defunct Revolutionary Socialist League, who has joined the League for the Revolutionary Party.

On the basis of recent discussions, I have concluded that I am in close political agreement with the program and perspectives of the LRP and the Communist Organization for the Fourth International.

My decision to join the LRP is the result of a fairly intense process of reflection and study which began shortly after the dissolution of the Revolutionary Socialist League in November 1989. In my search for an authentic proletarian communist political organization, I have closely examined the various groups that claim to base themselves on the Bolshevik-Leninist (Trotskyist) tradition.

The field was narrowed almost immediately. The Persian Gulf War was a vital test — and the “left” flunked! By refusing to defend Iraq against U.S. imperialism, the various ostensibly Trotskyist organizations share political responsibility for the brutal, racist carnage that ensued. The position of the International Socialist tendency (the ISO in the U.S.) was noteworthy for its overt cynicism: it acknowledged that defending Iraq was correct but concluded that it would be a “tactical error” to do so!

As Trotsky stressed, revolutionaries “say what is”; others don’t. Rather than “call things by their right names,” the yellow-ribbon socialists capitulated to the atmosphere of social chauvinism. By contrast, the LRP fought for the Leninist position on imperialist war. They were, to my knowledge, one of two groups (the Spartacist League being the other) that fought for a genuine proletarian-internationalist policy.

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, I began to investigate the history and politics of the LRP. I was deeply impressed by the LRP’s book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory*. This work not only advances a clear Marxist analysis of the Stalinist societies, it also reaffirms Marx’s understanding that the class struggle lies at the heart of the capitalist mode of production. In common with Marx, the LRP argues that it is the battle between the classes for the surplus product, rather than competition between individual capitalists, that determines the capitalist laws of motion. This is the root of the social crisis in the epoch of decaying capitalism, and it is the key to its overthrow.

In this sense, *The Life and Death of Stalinism* is also a broader polemic against the petty-bourgeois character of the “Marxist” left. The LRP stands on the view, shared by Lenin and Trotsky, the crisis of human society can only be resolved through international proletarian socialist revolution. By contrast, the middle-class pretenders to Marxism deny the centrality of the proletariat in their political practice. The pseudo-Trotskyist left is characterized by its frantic, opportunistic search for petty-bourgeois leaderships of the social-democratic, Stalinist and nationalist varieties.

The LRP advances a dialectical materialist explanation for the phenomenon it terms “middle-class Marxism.” That is, the degeneration of the Trotskyist movement in the post-war period cannot simply be explained as a matter of “bad politics,” the cynicism and demoralization of its leadership. I sent a short sketch to the LRP called “Workers’ State Theory and the Crisis of Trotskyism.” In it, I concluded:

The degeneration of the Fourth International is largely rooted in its historic failure to come to terms with the expansion of Stalinism on a world scale in the postwar period. Over the years, the various configurations of the Fourth International have capitulated to petty-bourgeois

nationalism, feminism, the liberal sectoralism of the middle-class New Left and the narrow, racist chauvinism of the trade union bureaucracy.

But this is inevitable. If Stalinists and nationalists can create workers’ states, what’s the point of standing on principle? Come to that, why be a Trotskyist at all? That was the reasoning of the SWP when it finally (and mercifully) renounced Trotskyism.

In response, the comrades of the LRP stressed that the world view of the pseudo-Trotskyist left reflects the objective social position and aspirations of its middle-class leadership. This applies equally to relatively left-appearing tendencies such as the Spartacist League.

When the SL desperately looks for some section of the Stalinist state to step in and restore “order” (as in Poland), it reveals not only its fear and contempt of the proletariat but also its affinity for the bureaucracy. When the SL recoils from the “lumpen rage” of the masses in L.A., it reveals its affinity for the chauvinistic world view of the labor aristocracy and its fear of the most deeply oppressed layers of the proletariat. When the SL defends mobster John Gotti but calls on the capitalist state to jail the L.A. Four, it reveals its objective social base for all to see. The proletariat has no need for these hand-wringing would-be social engineers.

The events of the last few years confirm once again the character of the epoch. They confirm the centrality of the proletariat for the socialist revolution. They confirm the crisis of proletarian leadership and the need for an authentic revolutionary party.

This was once the view of the Revolutionary Socialist League. (In fact, I was largely drawn to the RSL after reading its polemics on the Transitional Program against the majority faction in the IS [in 1973].) The LRP was expelled from the RSL for defending this same revolutionary outlook only three years later.

I haven’t discussed my experiences in the RSL in greater detail because today I understand that the political degeneration of the RSL was well under way by 1976 — ten years before I joined. Today I understand that the LRP is the organization I thought I was joining when I joined the RSL.

In the process of my discussions with the LRP, we have thoroughly explored the key historical and theoretical questions facing the proletariat in its fight for the revolutionary party: the nature of the epoch, permanent revolution, the Russian question (and the LRP’s theory of statified capitalism), workers’ state theory and the crisis in Trotskyism, the Transitional Program, the labor party question, Leninist work in the trade unions, united front tactics, liberation struggles of specially oppressed groups, South Africa, the Iranian revolution, the anti-war movement, etc.

These discussions, our correspondence and subsequent political collaboration have confirmed my initial impression of the LRP. Lenin always stressed that the fight for the revolutionary party involves a relentless, principled struggle against the various reformist and centrist currents within the working class. The LRP possesses the theoretical and programmatic clarity necessary.

The LRP stands on the heritage of the October Revolution, the Soviet workers’ state under Lenin and Trotsky, the proletarian internationalism of the early, revolutionary Comintern, and the authentic Bolshevik-Leninist tradition of the early Fourth International.

I stand with you.

Guy Lindsay

NWROC's 'Action' vs. Workers' Revolution

by Eric Nacar

The National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition, led by the Revolutionary Workers League, prides itself on its action-oriented militancy. The LRP has joined with NWROC in abortion clinic defense actions (see PR 42). NWROC/RWL, however, is not a working-class revolutionary organization but the extreme left-wing of the radical middle-class movement. That makes it a roadblock to building a real communist party and the movement that can defeat fascism.

Their role surfaced during the anti-fascist mobilization near New Hope, Pennsylvania, on November 6. The Nazi "Nationalist Party" and some Klansmen had planned an anti-gay march through New Hope, a resort town with large gay patronage. Public outcry and plans for counterdemonstrations forced the government to confine the 60 or so fascists to an isolated rally miles from town — protected by 700 state troopers. Some 300 opponents, including an LRP contingent, showed up to confront the fascists, but the cops kept us away. We thus spent most of our time picketing and chanting.

NWROC/RWL, with the largest single contingent, at times dominated the counter-rally. Their favorite chant was, "Stop the Nazis, Stop the Klan: Only Militant Action Can!"

This slogan is completely false. The LRP comrades at the demonstration chanted instead, "Stop the Nazis, Stop the Klan: Workers' Revolution Can!" — the correct approach to stopping fascism. Obviously, militant action is necessary: pacifism and electoralism are no threat to the fascist goons. But capitalism is a decaying system that breeds fascism; even if we stop the small fascist forces today through direct action, capitalism itself will promote the growth of larger fascist forces in the future. Only the overthrow of capitalism by the workers' socialist revolution can end the fascist threat once and for all.

Without a revolutionary message, repeated "militant action" that doesn't confront the capitalist system will just wear out the working class. By seeming to keep society in constant disorder with no outcome, this strategy plays into the hands of the fascists. They can appeal to the desires of some middle-class and working-class people for order. If the working class doesn't pose a solid revolutionary alternative to fascism, eventually it will be seen as part of the problem. The *real* solution is the workers' order: communist revolution.

When we argued with RWL supporters that only communist revolution could stop fascism, they replied, "Of course, we know that!" Then why not say so, instead of spreading dangerous and self-defeating illusions? The reason is the *middle-class sectoralism* of the RWL. They orient to radicalizing, often middle-class students. Indeed, many such people can become excellent revolutionaries. The problem is *how* to orient to these layers: the RWL chooses to organize them around illusions.

REVOLUTIONARY PARTY VS. REFORMIST FRONT

The RWL's argument for its approach is the same tired old opportunism that every centrist puts forward. Good fighters mostly aren't revolutionaries yet, so revolutionaries have to work with them around demands they agree with — non-revolutionary demands — and postpone pushing communist ideas to the forefront. For genuine Trotskyists, in contrast, there is no conflict between full participation in genuine united fronts, including small actions like the New Hope mobilization, and openly raising communist politics.

The RWL view is exactly wrong. It is true both that winning people to communism usually takes a long collaboration, and that communists fight for immediate victories. But we always and everywhere say and fight to demonstrate that lasting victories are no longer possible under imperialist capitalism. The vanguard of the working class needs to use



When militants try forward motion, pseudo-red RWL pushes reverse gear.

every struggle, no matter how partial, and every advance, no matter how small, to convince our fellow workers and youth of the need for socialist revolution. We act jointly in the struggle with all who want to fight: but our main purpose at all times is to win the best elements to the *revolutionary party*, without which the working class cannot train itself to seize power and end capitalist oppression.

The RWL, in contrast, devotes most of its efforts to building NWROC and putting forward a reformist program. Such an approach leads the RWL into the same dishonest political conduct as everyone else who has tried it.

Endless mass militancy is impossible, especially now, when far left forces are tiny. In desperation, NWROC/RWL lies to puff itself up. A brochure for its December conference blatantly claims that "NWROC busted up 'Gay Bash '93,' a KKK/Nazi attempt to celebrate violence against lesbians and gay men in New Hope, Pennsylvania."

This didn't happen and everybody who was there knows it. No organization can tell such a whopper without proving that it is more interested in self-aggrandizement than "saying what is" to the working class. NWROC/RWL cannot be trusted to lead workers anywhere, least of all to revolution. ●

South Africa

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ANC leaders and the masses of Black workers and poor clearer than ever. Now the ANC wants Blacks to sacrifice further for the good of the "post-apartheid" economy.

Black workers have defiantly built unions and other organizations. They have waged class war through mass rallies, stayaways and armed struggle. But middle-class leaders used revolutionary rhetoric to entrap the workers' struggles within the ANC. These leaders, chiefly the SACP Stalinists, claimed to be for communism. But their line was that before workers can make the socialist revolution, bourgeois democracy has to be won through an ANC-led "national liberation struggle." Until apartheid was ended and democracy won, the SACP demanded (and enforced) that the workers support the ANC and play no independent role. The role of the SACP was to use the Black masses as a battering ram to force the rulers to negotiate with the ANC — while at the same time keeping strict control over the workers.

THE ROLE OF THE SACP

Given the class difference between the ANC leaders and themselves, most militant Black workers knew the leaders would support capitalism. But they still believed in the ANC's commitment to democracy. This led many to think that by acting as a counterbalance to the ANC, they could force a democratic ANC government to enact its promised policies. Many saw the unions and the SACP as the guarantor of workers' interests in a "post-apartheid" government.

That's why in 1989, when the ANC and the SACP were unbanned, workers flocked not to the ANC but to the SACP, building it into an organization of tens of thousands. But rather than acting as a counterforce to the ANC, the SACP served to tie workers to the sell-out deal.

For much of the time, the SACP succeeded in controlling its militant supporters. However, when the mass pressure became too great, the SACP leaders called protests and strikes to let off the accumulated pressure and derail the workers' struggles. At the highest points of tension, the two-faced SACP leaders would even mouth off about breaking with the ANC if it compromised: but at each specific point they turned around and warned the workers that to break from the ANC would be "treason." Only when democracy was won could the fight for socialism begin.

The clash between the workers' struggle, on the one hand, and the ANC in alliance with the SACP, on the other, was highlighted at each key event during the negotiations.

When the de Klerk government implemented an austerity drive through a value added tax in 1991, angry Black workers forced the union leaders to call a stayaway mass strike and mass demonstrations.

When the Ciskei army massacred peaceful ANC and SACP demonstrators in 1992, there were mass protests, calls for armed self-defense and a general strike to oust the de Klerk government. (See PR 42.)

After the killing of Black CP leader Chris Hani in 1993, demonstrators booed down Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders in favor of more militant speakers; they forced the union leaders to call a series of stayaway strikes. (See PR 44.)

The recent period has left the ANC and SACP's grip on the most militant Black workers significantly weakened. The agreement for supposedly democratic elections has ended the SACP's "not until after democracy" argument for continual

postponement of the fight against the capitalist system.

Each explosion of struggle has focused on COSATU and the SACP (whose leaders preside over most COSATU unions). Organizing the most combative and politically advanced workers, COSATU has the power to shut down the economy through strike action. And with its history of leading the 1980's mass struggles, the masses of workers naturally look first to COSATU. The whole direction of the



With de Klerk or Mandela, capitalist South Africa will wage war on workers' wages.

militant workers' struggles has been to demand that the Communist Party and COSATU break the Alliance with the ANC, but the workers have been held back by their leaders.

DEMAND FOR A WORKERS' PARTY

The Black masses' anger continued to build throughout the negotiations, inevitably causing cracks within the SACP leadership. The leaders began to differ on how to keep the workers subordinated to the ANC. Rumors circulated that some favored the building of an independent workers' party.

These first rumblings gave way to an explosion at the July Conference of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), dominated by workers in heavy industries like auto. Its members are among the most radical and courageous of all COSATU. Most delegates were CP supporters.

A sign of what was to come was the opening discussion on nationalization of industry. The Black workers have long raised the demand for nationalization as a central aim of the anti-apartheid struggle. Adapting to popular will, the ANC included it in its Freedom Charter. But in the negotiations, it surrendered nationalization in favor of defending the white capitalists' apartheid-won wealth. The conference fought for hours until the demand of "nationalization without compensation" was endorsed, sending a clear message to the ANC.

But then the meeting exploded over a resolution from the last NUMSA conference on unifying the left, which had not been carried out. This time the conference resolved to:

- Look at new forms of organization that will unify the

working class organizations and parties, that will take forward a program to implement socialism. This could take the form of a Working Class Party.

- Set into motion a concrete program of action to address the needs of the unemployed and underemployed.

- Instead of simply calling conferences, we want a mechanism to be put into place to monitor the decisions implemented after these two conferences. This mechanism must be based regionally and nationally.

- Implement the 1991 resolution on the unity of the left. The left [is] defined as those organizations with a program reflecting the following: commitment to control the means of production by the working class for the benefit of society as a whole; democracy; internationalism; anti-imperialism; non-racialism.

Finally the conference resolved that:

Once an Interim Government of National Unity is established and the ANC is part of it, we should not have a formal alliance with the ANC. We should deal with the ANC as part of the government of the day through engagement in forums such as the NEF, NMC, etc.

These bodies, the National Economic Forum and National Manpower Commission, deal with agreements on various economic policies including wages and conditions.

THE SACP COUNTERATTACK

Not surprisingly, the NUMSA conference panicked the bourgeoisie, with flaming editorials printed in all the capitalist journals. But the workers' militant resolutions also sent the SACP into convulsions.

First to respond was Jeremy Cronin, with an article that outraged many SACP supporters as well as independent militants. In a classic Stalinist smear, Cronin charged that a mass workers' party would fit in with the regime's intelligence service's disclosed plan to draw the negotiations out as long as possible in order to sap the strength of the ANC. Admitting that the ANC was heavily influenced by Black capitalists prepared to sell out the masses' demands, Cronin argued that

To Our South African Readers

Proletarian Revolution is proud of our unique coverage and analysis of South Africa. As long ago as 1977 we said of the ANC's reformist strategy:

Such a policy cannot lead even 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 bloody racist counterrevolution. (No. 4.)

And in 1990, when practically all on the left were celebrating the imminent death of apartheid capitalism under the ANC's leadership, we countered:

The pending negotiations are a real danger for the working class. . . . 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. (No. 37.)

We think all revolutionaries in South Africa should see our press. Therefore if you know friends or comrades there who would be interested in a free copy of *Proletarian Revolution*, please send us their addresses.

the left's task was to fight "for the life and soul of the ANC," not break with it. (*Weekly Mail*, July 23.)

Another reply came from Moses Mayekiso, NUMSA's leader and an ANC electoral candidate. Mayekiso had once led a radical struggle against the Freedom Charter, counterposing a Workers' Charter, and was jailed for his anti-apartheid activities. The LRP joined in the international defense and intervened in the Workers' Charter campaign, which had great revolutionary potential. But Mayekiso and other leaders dropped their opposition to the ANC and later joined the SACP. (See PR 31.)

Mayekiso came out in the *South African Labour Bulletin* with a report attempting to blunt the radical message of the resolutions, since he couldn't assail the conference's militancy directly. He made light of the fact that the rank and file had adopted the demand for nationalization without compensation. Also, since he opposes a workers' party and any notion of breaking with the ANC, he tried to blunt what the ranks had clearly said on that question:

This is not a call for movement by the left forces from the ANC, but as looking at the possibilities of strengthening the left as a class force within the multiclass ANC. The struggle for the soul of the ANC is not in contradiction to the consolidation of the left as a force. . . .

In our case, we believe that the formal status of the Alliance must end and that we should relate with the ANC as the government of the day. Ending the alliance does not necessarily mean we will stop sharing political objectives with the ANC and SACP. (*SALB*, July-Aug. 1993.)

Mayekiso is lying! The motions were meant to break from the ANC and only negotiate with it as an adversarial party. The aim was *not* to continue supporting ANC politics.

Fareed Abdullah, an Executive Committee member of the SACP's Cape Town Branch, offered a slightly more radical variation of Mayekiso's line. He proposed supporting a conference of the Left which would decide the question of forming a workers' party.

The working class can and must act within the ANC and shape its program, but it will never be able to do so effectively without a political center, a rallying center and a vehicle which organizes it as a class.

Abdullah agrees with Mayekiso that workers shouldn't break with the ANC but differs on how best to keep them under control. Conceding a superficially independent workers' party operating within the ANC may be the only way to stop the workers from breaking free of the ANC and SACP's grip altogether. Thus Abdullah warned:

If the [Communist] Party, COSATU and other Left formations do not rise to that challenge, there is no doubt that workers and militants will surge forward without us. (*Work in Progress*, Sept.-Oct. 1993.)

The SACP is obviously pulling out all stops to forestall the movement for a workers' party. Cronin says it would be consistent with a secret service conspiracy. Mayekiso denies the workers' resolutions were really for an independent party. Abdullah admits the mass sentiment for a workers' party and proposes an inside/outside trap to keep workers in the ANC.

A CONTRADICTIONARY STRUGGLE

Meanwhile the movement for an independent workers' party continues to grow. The Catering Workers, the Chemical Workers' Union and the Transport and General Workers' all passed resolutions in support of such a party. Yet the struggle for an independent mass party is contradictory: while the impulse of the struggle points to a break from the ANC, the workers still hold ideas foisted upon them by the SACP,

ideas which have kept them subordinated to the ANC so far.

The workers who have spearheaded the struggle for a workers' party (as well as the previous struggles for general strikes and armed self-defense) have largely been SACP rank and filers. These workers entered the period of negotiations wary of the ANC leadership but at the same time holding illusions that the ANC would secure their rights. Once democracy was achieved, they believe they could use mass struggle through their unions and the SACP to force the ANC to implement measures that favored the working class.

As well, given the poisoning of Marxist thought by Stalinism, workers have been drastically misled as to what

The workers have opened the road but have illusions as to how far they will have to travel. If revolutionaries intervene correctly, the workers' party struggle holds tremendous potential for the workers to finally break from the ANC and build an authentic revolutionary party that can really lead the masses of workers and poor to power.

Revolutionaries solidarize with all that is progressive in the movement. But our central task is to fight illusions that such a party could lead the workers to anything other than bloody defeat — if it is led by people who aim to reform capitalism by pushing the ANC to the left. The struggle must be transformed into a conscious confrontation with the SACP



*Now you see it,
now you don't.
Capitalism masks
apartheid to hide
greater exploitation.*

scientific socialism is. The popular concept is that socialism means simply nationalization of the "commanding heights" of the economy in order to redistribute wealth under the democratic control of the workers.

Yet the South African workers' experience confirms the historic Marxist principle that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes" but must destroy the capitalist state and establish a workers' state resting upon the working class's own armed force. That is, the *dictatorship of the proletariat* is the necessary transition to socialism, which can only be realized through international revolution and reorganization of the world economy. Any government resting on a capitalist system will betray and rescind any gains the workers win.

Given the contradiction, the greater the Black workers' struggle for their idea of socialism becomes, the greater will be the reaction against them — from the capitalists as well as the SACP and union leaders committed to capitalism. Hence the SACP's eagerness to use every argument — true or not, consistent or not — against the workers' party movement.

For the whole period of negotiations, the most militant workers have been kept in check by the SACP's argument that today's fight is for the "democratic revolution" only. With the ANC about to take its place in government, these workers now see the opportunity (according to the SACP leaders' own stagist methodology) to break onto a road of independent struggle. This explains why the very same workers who fought in the NUMSA conference for COSATU and the SACP to split from the Congress Alliance and form a workers' party also voted overwhelmingly in favor of NUMSA campaigning for the ANC in the coming elections.

and other reformist leaders, to prove the need for a mass party of the working class and socialist revolution.

REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY AND PROGRAM

In carrying out this task we utilize the Trotskyist understanding of the united front, the methodology of the Transitional Program and an adaptation of the labor party tactic for South Africa today. We aim to participate in the existing struggle for the workers' party in order to expose the SACP and union leaders by proving in practice that they oppose the program of the working class. Our method of intervention is intended to help our fellow workers to overcome their illusions in these false leaders.

We start with the central demand: **SACP, COSATU: Break with the ANC! Build an Independent Workers' Party!**

We know that the current leaders will try in every way to sabotage the development of such a party, since they know that a workers' party under present conditions would threaten the capitalist system. In raising the demand for an independent workers' party, communists tell their fellow workers that there is only one way to secure democracy and end exploitation and brutality: workers need to build a mass revolutionary party for the seizure of state power through an armed insurrection. This is the essence of the revolutionary program.

But we are not sectarians. We will join in the struggle for a mass workers' party alongside workers who do not share our revolutionary goals — in the confidence that the struggle will show that only a revolutionary party and program can meet workers' needs. We will join in demanding that the workers' present leaders lead the struggle for the workers'

party. And we will help in applying every possible pressure upon them to do so — while continuing to warn that they will betray the struggle.

What *program* the mass party will advocate is a key question. We say openly that we believe only an authentically communist program can represent our class interests. But we can fight together for the following transitional program for the workers' party, designed to represent the immediate interests and tasks of working people. Many workers who do not yet see revolution as necessary will agree with the demands of this program. In the course of fighting together for this program, the necessity of the revolution and the building of the revolutionary party will be demonstrated.

General Strike to Stop the Capitalist Attacks! Workers are not fighting for a mass party that passively runs in elections and counts votes, but for one that mobilizes the power of the working class in struggle. The bosses' attacks on wages, jobs and living conditions have already made a defensive mobilization of the working class necessary; these attacks will continue under the new capitalist government after the elections. Thus the demand for a general strike must be a central tactic of the workers' party. In fact, workers should demand a general strike even before the party is formed. What better way to launch a class party than through a united workers' struggle!

But this can not be a repeat of what workers have already been through. From the beginning we would urge workers to see that the general strike organizes picket lines and factory occupations, not "stayaways" designed to leave them passive and vulnerable to attack in the townships and removed from the centers of the economy.

A general strike would start as a defense against the capitalist attacks. In it we fight for the workers' party to adopt the demands outlined below: jobs for all, a sliding scale of wages and hours, a full public works program, a democratic constituent assembly. We do not hide that our aim in the general strike is to move it from simple defense to a political offensive against the capitalist class. General strikes inevitably pose the question of which class holds state power.

Strike Committees. The workers' party, in the course of the struggle for the general strike, must fight for the creation of strike committees in every workplace to ensure that the struggles are under the democratic control of the rank and file workers. These committees will organize the occupations and strikes. Given the nationwide character of the struggle, to prevent the inevitable divide-and-conquer tactics of the enemy, militants will fight for a representative nationwide strike committee. In the course of struggle, strike committees can develop into or help develop a network of factory committees which will become organs of dual power in the workplaces, vying with the will of the bosses at every step.

Committees of Action. Depending on how the struggle unfolds, strike committees can become the core of committees of action or help in their mobilization. The task of committees of action would be to organize workers locally and nationally in representative bodies to legislate class policies and take action against the capitalist state. As well, they can mobilize other strata of the population, especially the unemployed, to support the general strike and other working-class actions.

Given the proven record of vulnerability inherent in mass actions organized through townships, it is imperative that such committees be dominated by the industrially organized proletarians. Revolutionaries will point out that the action committees should serve as dual power workers' councils (like the soviets of 1917), posing working-class rule as the

alternative to the capitalist state. Since the general strike inevitably pushes to the forefront the question of which class rules, the fight for such councils is essential.

Armed self-defense guards. This must be a central policy of the workers' party. The attacks by police, the army, the fascists and Inkatha have already made armed self-defense in the townships an immediate necessity. The more our struggle challenges the ruling class, the greater will be the frequency and power of the attacks by the counterrevolutionaries. We must place no faith in the "post-apartheid" police.

Defense guards are required in connection with every strike and demonstration, above all the general strike. They should be organized at every workplace as organs of the strike committees, and there must be trained defense guards organized to protect every committee of action. The goal



1961: Mandela after his trial. Yesterday's fighter, today's fig leaf.

must be the construction of a centralized workers' militia, supported by the masses at large, to defend all our struggles against counterrevolutionary attacks.

Constituent Assembly. The workers' party should reject the pseudo-democracy of constitutional protection of the ruling class, power-sharing and sunset clauses agreed on in the negotiations and demand the unfettered democracy of a single chamber Constituent Assembly based on *one person, one vote* and *majority rule*.

Jobs for all with a living wage. The workers' party must continue the fight for a living wage, so that all workers will get a guaranteed minimum. This wage must then be defended against rising costs by a *sliding scale of wages*, which means that wages rise in accordance with inflation. To solve the great problem of unemployment, the workers' party should advocate a *sliding scale of hours*: that means dividing all the necessary work equally among all workers at full pay.

A full public works program. The struggle for full employment necessitates a broad program of public works. The workers' party should fight for a modern transit system, more and better schools, hospitals, child care centers and other desperately needed social services to meet the requirements of society and provide meaningful work for its members.

Nationalization without compensation of the banks and

the "Big Six" cartels. This will provide the funds for all the social programs the working class needs. Apartheid's wealth must be returned to the people!

A workers' government. Most importantly, the workers' party must not confine itself to being a pressure group on the ANC; it must aim for power itself. Such a workers' government should be pledged to implement all the above policies.

The mass of workers do not yet see the need for revolution against capitalism and its state as the only way forward, but they demand a change in government favorable to their

ideological strands in the world socialist movement, in order to establish as soon as possible a Left Bloc of groups and individuals rooted in the mass organizations of the working class. Such an initiative must be capable of generating a mass socialist movement towards the possible creation of a mass democratic workers' party. (*Documents of Third National Conference*, emphasis added.)

WOSA can only talk of putting aside differences with the SACP by proposing to unite with them on a reformist basis. The only "socialism" that can possibly be involved in such a



Pan-Africanist Congress parades. Against ANC, PAC offers no real alternative.

class. The demand for a workers' government will inevitably expose the misleaders of our class who oppose independent working-class political power.

Communists will argue for a *revolutionary* workers' government and demonstrate that a workers' *state* is necessary for such a government to survive. After all, if a workers' government is formed (under the mass armed pressure of fighting workers), it could only last for a moment. Given the inevitable capitalist response, workers will quickly see the need to destroy capitalism and construct their own state.

WOSA: REVIVING THE OLD STAGISM

Our revolutionary strategy contrasts sharply with that of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA), loosely affiliated with the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat. WOSA has taken a formal position opposing the negotiations, and says that socialist revolution is necessary to overthrow apartheid. This makes it capable of influencing radicalizing workers who are rejecting the SACP's stagism.

A WOSA meeting held immediately after the NUMSA conference announced an action program for a mass workers' party, and WOSA members who hold leading positions have led their unions in echoing the NUMSA resolutions. However, instead of fighting within the workers' party campaign to intensify the struggle against the SACP misleaders, WOSA seeks to use it to compromise with them. It says:

We call on all socialists in South Africa to realize the urgency of the hour by putting aside those differences of approach and of historical association with particular

bloc is another version of the rhetorical promises for the future, an "ultimate aim" in the by-and-by.

While WOSA *formally* says that socialist revolution is necessary to overthrow apartheid and establish democracy, they argue that because the "world socialist movement" is in retreat, the best that workers can hope for today is to be a mass opposition to an ANC government, pushing it to grant reforms. In other words, they echo the SACP's stagism with a more radical veneer of Marxist analysis.

In its program for a mass workers' party, WOSA repeats this projection, giving the party purely reformist tasks:

In the short term, a workers' party will necessarily be an opposition movement. It will fearlessly promote what it considers to be the real interests and demands of the working people of our country. In doing so it will hinder the ruling parties' attempts to implement their class agenda. In the longer term, it will build the capacity to take over state power and to transform society along radically democratic lines. (*Work In Progress*, Dec. 1993.)

Thus WOSA ends up proposing the more radical reformist program that the SACP championed yesterday, through the line that nationalization and workers' control are enough to realize the needs of the working class and poor — while the capitalists remain in power. WOSA writes:

The platform for such a Mass Workers Party will revolve around basic working class demands. These demands include jobs for all, a living wage, no retrenchment, free education and health care, decent housing, women's rights, self-defense and environmental issues. Such demands can

only be met if the commanding heights of the economy are nationalized under workers' control. (*Press Statement*, July 22, 1993.)

Nowhere in WOSA's publications can one find a single warning to workers that their present leaders, if not replaced by revolutionaries, will betray the workers' struggle and lead it to bloody defeat. Nowhere are the workers warned that their demands cannot be won under capitalism, that it will take an armed seizure of power to smash the capitalist state and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. Such warnings are not ultimatums to the workers, but — as our strategy above outlines — they are a necessity for winning militant workers in struggle to communist consciousness. If not com-

of permanent revolution. Trotsky's theory shows that in the epoch of capitalism's decay, bourgeois-democratic demands like national liberation, once promised by the bourgeoisie in its progressive epoch, can no longer be achieved within capitalism; they can now only be conquered through the workers' international revolution.

WOSA's point of departure is Ernest Mandel's fake Trotskyism, which saw counterrevolutionary Stalinism forced by the "historic process" to unconsciously make socialist revolutions in countries like Vietnam and Cuba. WOSA distorts permanent revolution to mean that the fight for democracy automatically leads to socialism because democracy cannot be won within capitalism. For the decisive refutation of

this theory, see our pamphlet *Permanent Revolution and Postwar Stalinism*.

It is of course true that under a complete and unrestrained democracy in South Africa, the Black masses would use their political power to end their oppression at the hands of the small minority of capitalists. This is precisely why such a thing is out of the question under capitalism: the ruling class cannot grant full democracy. Any attempt to turn democracy into socialism through mass struggle will, with iron certainty, immediately confront the question of state power: revolution or counterrevolution. And with equal certainty, the more bold the workers' struggle for democracy becomes, the more sharply the bourgeois democrats of the ANC and SACP will turn on the workers.

Today the SACP and unions are trying to bury the workers within the populist ANC. If the workers force the creation of their own independent party, the last resort of the betrayers will be to push a popular front, where the workers' organizations play a reformist role in a joint government with bourgeois forces like the ANC.

WOSA's hodgepodge program — proposing a reformist struggle today and a socialist one for the future, arguing for democracy while offering

only silence on the immediate revolutionary tasks of the workers — means that it must tail the ANC. Thus it can play only the most disastrous role.

From the bloodbath of the Spanish revolution to the slaughter of Chile's "democratic road to socialism," the entire record of workers' uprisings under non-revolutionary leaderships confirms that history casts a cruel and bloody judgment upon the proletariat — if it does not seize control of its own struggle with conscious revolutionary goals.

False leadership can turn a revolutionary situation into one of counterrevolution within days. That is why the task of forming the nucleus of a revolutionary party in South Africa that openly fights for the workers to break with the ANC and SACP can't be delayed. The best fighters from the SACP, WOSA and other left groups will inevitably find their place under the banner of the revolutionary party.●

**Smash Apartheid Through Socialist Revolution!
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!
Re-create the Fourth International!**



COSATU workers rally. Fighting South African proletariat can lead the way to world socialist revolution.

bated, the reformist illusions that led the workers into the negotiations in the first place — and which WOSA prolongs — will pave the road for counterrevolution.

WOSA leaders have at times defended their line by arguing that public revolutionary statements open their organization to state repression. There is certainly a danger of victimization. Under such circumstances revolutionaries must utilize an illegal press, distributed clandestinely, to get across the full revolutionary message. But this is irrelevant for WOSA, which rejects the necessity of revolutionary party leadership today. Like classic centrists vacillating between reform and revolution, WOSA unloads the task of building the revolutionary party onto the "historic process," believing in effect that mass struggles for reforms automatically become revolutionary.

WOSA's central slogan for the negotiations period, under which they have held conferences and toured their leaders, has been "Socialism Is Democracy." They justify their slogan and approach by invoking Leon Trotsky's theory

Imperialism

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what Stalinism and his beloved Maoism really were. He is wallowing in the dominant ideology of our times, cynicism. Long ago he and his ilk decided that the proletariat had failed them. Now the so-called third world has deserted them as well, so he says capital has conquered.

The same unreal view of a world safely in capitalism's pocket characterizes the outlook of various pseudo-Trotskyists, notably Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat. Its *Manifesto of the Fourth International* says "the international capitalist system (imperialism) ... seems more strongly entrenched than it has been for decades." It goes on: "Tens if not

Nor has the "world-historically defeated" working class of Europe been letting the bourgeoisie walk all over it (as the Spartacist press is forced to note.) Accepting the capitalist victory, the left is moving even further to the right.

THE STALINIST STOPGAP

For middle-class leftists, the notion of Stalinism as progressive — even if nasty and deformed — reflects their underlying view that the workers themselves are not capable of revolutionary leadership. In effect, the leftists feel that socialism derives from the intelligence of the intelligentsia, wedded to the raw power of an aroused mass base.

Contempt for workers' revolutionary capacity is symptomatic of the "new middle-class" that arose within capitalism this century, expanding greatly in the post-World War II prosperity period. But there is also fear that workers' power



Nov. '93:
French coal
miners fight
cops, storm
government
buildings.

hundreds of thousands of active and exemplary militants ... have broken in recent years with the Communist and social-democratic parties." Their "skepticism" and withdrawal from political life "represents a serious loss from the point of view of rapidly reconstructing strong revolutionary organizations."

In reality, the CPs and social democrats are counter-revolutionary parties that keep the working class subservient to capitalism. Their loss of cadres whom they long ago rendered cynical (hardly "exemplary"!) removes a roadblock from the workers' revolutionary path.

The more left-sounding but cynically hardened Spartacists first reacted to the fall of Stalinism by embracing the "red-brown" alliances of bureaucrats and fascists (see *PR* 43). Today, after being forced to change that bizarre stance, they still lament the end of Stalinism as a total victory for capitalism: "The degenerated workers state of Stalin and his heirs has been destroyed, representing a world-historic defeat for the international working class." (*Spartacist*, Winter 1993.)

In reality, when the confrontations came, few workers lifted a finger to defend "their" states; mass workers' protests in East Europe were instrumental in bringing them down.

can get out of hand. That is why middle class-led revolts around the world often sought a peasant base instead.

When forced to rely on organized workers, left labor bureaucrats (most powerfully, Stalinists) sought to keep industrial struggles separate from challenges to political power. Workers organized at their worksites, at the point of production, were led to confine their activities to wage and work-linked demands. Passive electoralism — voting for the reformist parties — was the preferred detour.

Thus the end of Stalinism removes a tremendous barrier to the proletariat. Despite the very real rivalry between East and West in the Cold War, Stalinism always acted to undermine working-class struggles, containing them within the bounds of capitalism. This counterrevolutionary buttress of imperialism succeeded for a time in choking off every possibility of socialist revolution.

STATIFIED CAPITALISM BREEDS REVOLT

Stalinism and Western "democracy" combined to defeat workers' upheavals at the end of World War II. This defeat and its consequence, the reassertion of imperialism and an

interval of prosperity, politically destroyed the once-Trotskyist Fourth International as the proletarian revolutionary leadership around the world.

Stalinist-style statified capitalism won out in countries where traditional "market" capitalism was too weak to resist imperialist penetration. After the war, it served to plug leaks in the world imperialist order wherever they occurred. Stop-gaps, however, are themselves intrinsically weak. Only a few years after their postwar advance in Asia and East Europe, the Stalinist states were hit by a series of workers' uprisings, starting in the early 1950's.



Recent Klan rally in Tennessee. Capitalism regenerates its fascist-racist-nationalist degenerates as trap for radicalizing masses.

The late '60's and early '70's saw the outbreak of mass strikes and workers' revolts, first in Western Europe and then in virtually every part of the globe. In the West, they signaled the end of the postwar boom. But they were also a product of the same underlying crisis that afflicted Stalinism: the profit shortage that demands ever-deeper exploitation. Working-class upheavals against Stalinist rule continued throughout the '80's right on Russia's doorstep and in China.

Tragically, in the absence of revolutionary proletarian parties, these outbreaks did not culminate in social revolution. This has allowed the bourgeois nationalists to run rampant, while Western imperialism's attempts to stabilize the ex-USSR are going nowhere. Indeed, social, economic and political chaos are even more rampant than before. No wonder both the left and the imperialists are in disarray.

RUSSIA: CLINTON'S LATEST STUMBLE

Russia today is a case study in imperialism's attempts to stabilize the world without Stalinist aid. The U.S. backs Yeltsin, in part because he is willing to open Russia's economy to Western investment and outright looting. The December elections in Russia posed a problem: the voters rejected Yeltsin's economic shock therapy "reformers"; they gave a large vote to Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, a virulent nationalist and fascist who threatens to destabilize the region if he gets his hands on state power — with or without his allies, the old Stalinist bosses.

Since the election, Washington has been tacking and veering on how hard to press Yeltsin on market "reforms." The leading shock therapists have quit Yeltsin's cabinet, and the West and its compradors are at a loss. All factions fear the danger of a volatile proletariat if they go too far. Further unemployment on top of skyrocketing inflation could detonate a strike avalanche — that's what undermined Gorbachev and led to the present impasse.

As well, Clinton clings to Yeltsin in the hope that Russia can keep order in the national conflicts erupting throughout the ex-USSR and East Europe. A lasting power vacuum there will draw Germany in militarily to bolster its economic penetration. That would mean open rivalry with the U.S.

Yeltsin's pseudo-democratic reform policies cannot last. The masses are radicalizing. Zhirinovskiy is one political pole. The only real alternative lies in the impending workers' battles, as yet local and not political. In this arena revolutionary workers must fight to rebuild the genuine Bolshevik party as the Russian section of a re-created Fourth International.

WORKERS STRIKE BACK

The collapse of the statified capitalist economies has driven many East European workers to the West, where they meet the chauvinism once reserved for immigrant workers from Asia, Africa and the West Indies. The

crisis conditions lie behind the growth of right-wing racist, anti-immigrant and fascist groupings in Europe. Today the upper bourgeoisie generally looks with disdain on the fascists — but they leave the door open to the more respectable nationalists. The fascists, however, are preparing for the day when the bosses will turn to them to defend their system.

It is not just Europe. In the U.S., racist "populism" is also accelerating. In the Middle East and North Africa, reactionary clerical movements are capturing popular support. The world is in the throes of an historic radicalization; that it occurs in a rightward direction should be no surprise. The secular middle-class leftist politicians promised the masses a real alternative, a better life — and all that remains is greater exploitation, oppression and a tightening imperial grip. However, the working class is once again beginning to lay the basis for its alternative path.

Workers are now proving that the fall of Stalinism and social democracy does not hold them back. Quite the opposite. Largely unreported in the U.S. press, in the fall of 1992 there was a wave of strikes and protests from Europe to Australia, and it repeated in 1993:

- The powerful Air France strike brought fear to the French bourgeoisie that sooner or later an upheaval bigger than the general strike of 1968 would break out. Then government workers went out; the militancy was also echoed by coal miners in open combat with the police. Later high school and university students demonstrated across France

Fake Socialists Con Workers with Democrats

Much of the far left, despite its protestations about the working class, is fundamentally loyal to middle-class layers and therefore in practice tails "democratic" reformist capitalist politicians. Two recent examples.

SPARTACISTS PIN THEIR TAIL

In a self-congratulatory summary of the Spartacists' organizing against a Klan march in Springfield, Illinois, *Workers Vanguard* (Feb. 4) writes:

The role played in this mobilization by black Democrats, especially by Cook County Commissioner Danny Davis but also the other black politicians, both in Chicago and in the state legislature, was really unusual. ... These Democrats who want to struggle have a very big contradiction: black people need a party that will fight for their interests. It is currently abundantly clear that this cannot happen within the Democratic Party. If a workers party with some social weight existed, some of the more serious of these black Democrats would very likely come over to such a party.

"These Democrats who want to struggle" refers not to militant Black workers but to Chicago machine pols who betray these constituents because they serve capitalism. Posturing as champions of Black defense is not "really unusual" at all. What is unusual is for the Spartacists to so

openly applaud them and to reveal that they themselves are a tail on the donkey.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS SHOW CLASS

Summing up the lessons of fascist Vladimir Zhirinovsky's triumph at the polls in Russia and the pullout by the "free-market reformers" from Yeltsin's government, the IS tendency's February *Socialist Review* commented:

Those who fought against oppression and for democracy in 1989 and 1990 are in complete disarray since the collapse of the marketization program. Most of them had come to see it as the only alternative to the old order. Now they are terrified by the advance of Zhirinovsky but do not know what to do to counter him. ... If the best of the democrats turn to the working class, there is every chance of the working class fighting for real democracy.

If these types turn to the working class, the workers had better turn the other way. The "democrats" referred to are those who, in the name of democracy, advocated the viciously anti-working class shock-therapy measures demanded by Western banks and imposed by Yeltsin.

Even if such elements were halfway decent, a "revolutionary socialist" with even a smidgeon of Marxism might think to tell middle-class "democrats" to follow working-class leadership, not vice versa. A revealing choice.

and made the government retreat from its cutback plans.

- In October over 100,000 German construction workers marched through Bonn. Miners fought in the Ruhr basin.

- In Italy, 14 million workers backed a general strike.

- An October general strike, followed by partial general strikes later in the fall, forced the Belgian government to hastily retreat from its austerity policy.

- In Spain, over half a million workers struck in November in preparation for a general strike in late January.

- Resistance was not limited to West Europe: Indian peasants in Chiapas declared war against the Mexican government to halt the threat to their already miserable livelihoods embodied in the NAFTA agreement.

Even without revolutionary leadership, workers' resistance has forced the bourgeoisie to think twice. For example:

Workers across Europe appear to have taken strength from the spectacular victory of Air France employees. ...

In Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and France, employers are facing increasing militancy as they demand job cuts and flexibility. (*Financial Times*, Nov. 1.)

The workers' actions reminded reporters of the sharp class battles of the '60's and '70's. But then the bosses had fat, some of which they were forced to deliver. Without it, they will inevitably resume their attack. At the moment, Europe's bourgeoisie are in political chaos. But the lingering legacy of reformism still restrains the class struggle; the fact that social democracy and Stalinism are linked in workers' minds with socialism has proved to be a real obstacle. Nevertheless, the fall of Stalinism has not undermined working-class resistance. And the past is being overcome.

THE ROAD FORWARD

The imperialist powers are caught in a dilemma: they must wrestle from each other what they can't squeeze from the workers in their grip. The wide open U.S.-Japan trade conflict reflects tensions long submerged by the Cold War. Now that the hope that workers would be easy targets after

the fall of Stalinism has proved a pipedream, the trend is toward trade wars and imperialist nationalism on the road to world war.

The hope for humanity is for the working class to eliminate the capitalist predators through socialist revolution. Even the most minimal demands of workers can be met only by connecting the mass industrial struggles, which unite workers of all backgrounds, to revolutionary politics — the conquest of state power.

We are living through a momentary interregnum. The social democratic mainstream is no longer "social." Ex-Stalinists and left social democrats try to coalesce in defense of less austerity; bewildered leftists mutter about revolution but march to moderation and tailism.

Meanwhile, masses of people around the world are increasingly driven to fight. Many hesitate because they see no alternative: only fascists and clerical reactionaries seem to point a radical way out. Others are launching massive industrial struggles; these will inevitably engulf the world as they did a quarter-century ago.

And when they do, middle-class leftists will once again seek to divert them into electoral and non-political channels. These forces must be openly fought by revolutionary workers. Today they are much weaker than in the past, and we have learned much from the massive events of the '60's and '70's. Today there is every reason to be confident that the present struggles will cast up growing layers of revolutionary workers — if we communists do our job.

As Leon Trotsky observed at the time of the last great historical turning point, the crisis boils down to one of working-class leadership. The world does not need any more "progressive" or pseudo-reformist labor parties — it needs the reassertion of leadership through mass proletarian action. Its crowning need is for workers to form anew their own revolutionary class parties, section of a re-created Fourth International. The only alternative to world war, racism and fascism is a new socialist world. ●

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Spring 1994

Imperialism and Left in Disarray

by Walter Daum

After a year as head of the world's sole superpower, Bill Clinton has maintained the U.S. bourgeoisie's international policy in the condition in which George Bush left it: great disorder. In its year-end summary, the ruling-class journal *Foreign Affairs* referred politely to the administration's "sense of confusion about defining and pursuing central important national interests" — that is, how to keep the world safe for imperialist exploitation.

In our last issue we showed that the U.S.'s floundering over Somalia and Haiti stemmed from its need to build up military strongmen in those countries while pretending to serve humanitarian concerns.

Likewise in Bosnia: NATO's threats to bomb the Serbian forces serve to appease public opinion outraged by ethnic slaughter, but the move is really meant to reassert imperialist authority and induce the beleaguered Bosnians to settle.

Clinton's recent harder lines over Japan and Bosnia will not alter the underlying disarray. The U.S.'s international strategy is in a predicament because the world has changed dramatically — and the result of the West's "victory" in the Cold War has not been what the rulers expected.

When Bush trumpeted his "New World Order" in 1991, the largely empty phrase amounted to an obscene cheer over the smashing of Iraq. He meant that with Stalinist "communism" routed, the U.S. could lord it over upstarts like Saddam Hussein and even Japan and Germany. Bourgeois deep-thinkers joined in, proclaiming the triumph of "free market" capitalism, the "end of history."

The end of the Cold War has brought no such worldwide stabilization. Instead capitalism faces a looming global depression, not prevented by the opening of new areas for foreign exploitation in East Europe and the ex-USSR. Huge areas of the world are in chaos. Starvation and disease stalk millions as the systemic crisis intensifies by the day.

With the economic pie shrinking, bitter nationalist wars have broken out on three continents. Countries once thought to have achieved the status of nation-states are being obliterated by vicious ethnic hostilities. And although

Washington remains top dog, it must watch both its bark and its bite lest Germany and Japan, its rival imperialist allies, feel too endangered.

The once-jubilant capitalists wanted to deepen exploita-



Heroic Mexican peasants rise again. History proves that alliance with revolutionary workers is only way to victory.

tion in a world of docile masses and imperialist accord. Now they are in disarray only a few years after Stalinism's fall.

LEFT PROCLAIMS CAPITALISM'S TRIUMPH

The collapse of Stalinism is not the only consequence of the capitalist crisis. With the middle classes and labor aristocracies shrinking everywhere, the reformist parties — their counterrevolutionary reflections — are likewise declining. Communist Parties in the West and South have disintegrated, leaving only mildly left reformist shards. The Social Democrats too have ditched their "progressive" and "reform" stances and now vie with the openly bourgeois parties over who can better administer austerity to the workers.

On the far left, the post-Cold War spirit has been even more gloomy. Paul Sweezy, the prominent "Marxist" who devoted fifty years to writing off the working class, refers to the "great showdown of the second half of the twentieth century" that brought about the defeat of the "opposition to the rule of capital" (*Monthly Review*, Jan. 1994) — as if that's

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