

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

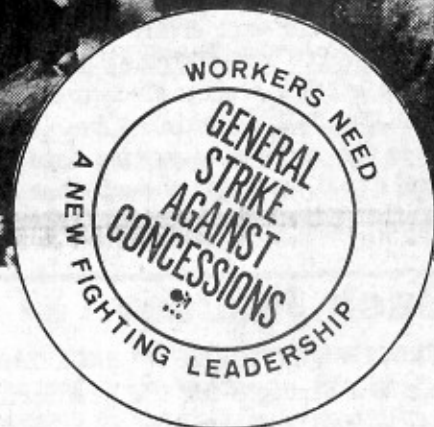
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Re-Create
the Fourth International

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The Battle of Hormel



[The following account was written by LRPers and supporters who traveled to Austin several times to work with the P-9 strike. One comrade was among those arrested in April while picketing at the plant. See also the articles "With Friends Like These ..." on P-9 support work in New York and "For a General Strike Against Concessions."]

Austin, Minnesota has become a battlefield. A war has raged there since August 17, when meatpackers in Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) began their strike against the Hormel Company's major packinghouse. The bosses have fought this war with all their weapons: cops and courts, press and television, the National Guard and scabs -- plus

the AFL-CIO leadership. The meatpackers have courageously refused to buckle under to the union-busting attacks. But bravery is not enough: a new strategy is needed if the strike is to survive.

In recent months P-9ers have traveled throughout the country to win support from other workers and draw the lessons of their struggle. In a real sense they see themselves as the vanguard of the labor movement. On roving pickets in the Midwest, at their

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Defend Guillermo Lora!

We have received the following appeal from representatives of the International Committee for the Defense of Guillermo Lora.

On January 29 the leader of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Revolutionary Workers Party/POR) of Bolivia was arrested. Guillermo Lora is one of the most important revolutionaries of Bolivia. He is the author of the "Theses of Pulacayo," the political document of the Bolivian trade union federation, the COB, and he has played a significant role in every revolutionary development in Bolivia over the past forty years.

The circumstances of his arrest are the following. The POR won no seats in the elections of July 1985, in which the right-wing parties practiced massive electoral fraud and corruption. Basing itself on bourgeois law, the new regime of Paz Estenssoro decreed that any party which did not receive "enough" votes must finance the entire cost of the electoral campaign. The equivalent of \$10,000 (U.S.) was demanded from the POR, a monstrously high sum in Bolivia.

The political basis for this law, and thus also for the arrest of Lora, is evident. It is meant above all to hit the left parties which receive no backing from the state or from capitalists but are supported exclusively by workers and peasants. The POR and Comrade Lora stood in the front ranks of the electoral campaign against the right. The POR chronicled how many millions of pesos the right-wing parties used in their electoral fraud, and also showed that a "democratic" rightist government could "solve" the Bolivian

crisis only through the destruction of the working class and the peasants.

In the elections, the POR raised its revolutionary politics and won further influence among the workers and peasants and in the unions. But the POR is now being muzzled: this is the purpose of Guillermo Lora's arrest!

**INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY
AGAINST THE SUPPRESSION OF THE POR!
FREEDOM FOR GUILLERMO LORA!
DOWN WITH THE REACTIONARY ELECTORAL LAW**

The appeal asks for funds to aid the campaign for Lora's release. Contributions can be sent via international money order to: L.A. Cruz, Gumpendorferstrasse 120/12, 1060 Wien, Austria.

We have since learned that Lora has been released from prison as a result of the campaign, but under the condition that the \$10,000 be paid up by May. Accordingly, financial aid is still essential.

The Paz Estenssoro regime is guilty not only of electoral fraud. It has arrested hundreds of workers' leaders, fired thousands of militants and is slashing the workers' living conditions through a Pinochet-style economic program. Moreover, its policy is a testing ground for the "free-market initiative" put forward by U.S. Treasury Secretary Baker to shore up imperialist domination. Every campaign against this little-publicized intervention must be supported, especially by U.S. working people.

The appeal's statement about the prominent roles
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PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

Workers currently on strike are urged to subscribe to Proletarian Revolution at the special rate of \$1.00 for eight issues. Please use sub blank on p.12.

BUTTON OFFER

Send now for button: "General Strike Against Concessions! Workers Need a New Fighting Leadership!" See ad, p.9.

Workers Need A New Fighting Leadership! **General Strike Against Concessions!**



Austin, MN, April 11: Police attack workers and supporters massed outside Hormel plant. Symbolic acts and pacifism are no answer to cops and scabs.

A new wind is starting to blow. The ranks of the American working class are beginning to stir and fight back once again, as the bosses' attack intensifies. Before this struggle is over the whole face of the country will be changed.

If the workers achieve unity in action -- one for all and all for one, not another concession or layoff anywhere -- their power will be beyond anyone's dreams. It is perfectly possible. Workers, many of whom now believe themselves to be powerless, actually have tremendous strength. They can keep industry from functioning, bring all transport to a halt -- and thereby stop the bosses' profits cold; even the government could be brought to a standstill. The tool for the job is a general strike against the capitalists' concession and giveback demands.

If the unions could be forced to take such action, they would win millions of others to their side. Family farmers in the U.S. are desperate for an alternative to bankruptcy and foreclosures. Non-union workers and the unemployed are looking for something dramatic to point the way out of their troubles. Among the black and Hispanic minorities, not only would many play a big role as workers, but nonworkers would gladly join a struggle telling the country's rulers: "We've had enough!"

If, on the other hand, the unions continue to deal with the capitalists as they do now -- worker by worker, plant by plant, company by company -- then

their struggle will be crushed. The concessions the bosses currently demand will seem minuscule. Unions will be smashed. Unemployment will skyrocket. Families who have never seen real poverty will know it firsthand.

WORKERS NEED A NEW FIGHTING LEADERSHIP

These are the choices. What is excluded is that even the present situation can continue for long. If workers wish to prevent disaster, the present union leadership must be kicked out of office.

Few workers today would be surprised to see an ad like the following in the newspaper:

"UNION-BUSTERS FOR HIRE. If your company wants to destroy workers' resistance, if you need to reduce your work force to a quivering, feeble, fratricidal bunch of drones, then Lane Kirkland & Co., Benevolent and Protective Guild of Labor Statesmen (AFL-CIO), are at your service. We are tested, job-trained, housebroken and cheap. Why risk the hard feelings that come with outside union-busters? Try your own user-friendly union leadership first. Multiple references available."

In reality the AFL-CIO bureaucrats don't have to advertise. Actions speak louder than words.

Last year union members got smaller increases than nonunion workers. By its own admission, the AFL-CIO now has fewer members than there are ex-unionists. But although misleadership has crushed the life

out of the unions and demoralized most of the membership, the American working class has not been broken. Humiliation and retreat, even repeated, does not mean an historic defeat. And the signs are that the tide is now turning.

Strikes, although still isolated and betrayed, are becoming more numerous, more bitter and harder fought. In the last few months many more workers have begun to openly express the idea that concessions aren't eternal: they can be resisted. The slight drop in unemployment rates and the relative plateau in the economy, both momentary, have evidently helped to make workers a bit more self-confident. The high profits of some corporations have raised questions about the need for givebacks. In industries hit by deregulation or slash-and-burn mergers, workers have found no alternative but to fight back.

THE SEMI-OPPOSITIONAL BUREAUCRATS

In addition, there is one telltale sign that no serious worker can ignore. A few high-level bureaucrats like Morty Bahr, Jan Pierce and Henry Nicholas, who have been closet critics of the dominant Kirkland tendency inside labor's bureaucracy, have begun to murmur about the need to change direction and limit concessions. These mildly leftish bureaucrats would never stir in public unless they sense a growing unrest in the ranks.

These bureaucrats are the type of inveterate opportunist whose whole existence depends on sniffing the breezes of workers' consciousness in order to follow them and, if need be, try to divert them. Their noses are expertly trained to detect even the slightest change in the air because their ability to retain power inevitably depends on doing so. Even though their criticisms have been careful and quiet, this is still a significant escalation over their whimpers at the betrayal of PATCO four years ago.

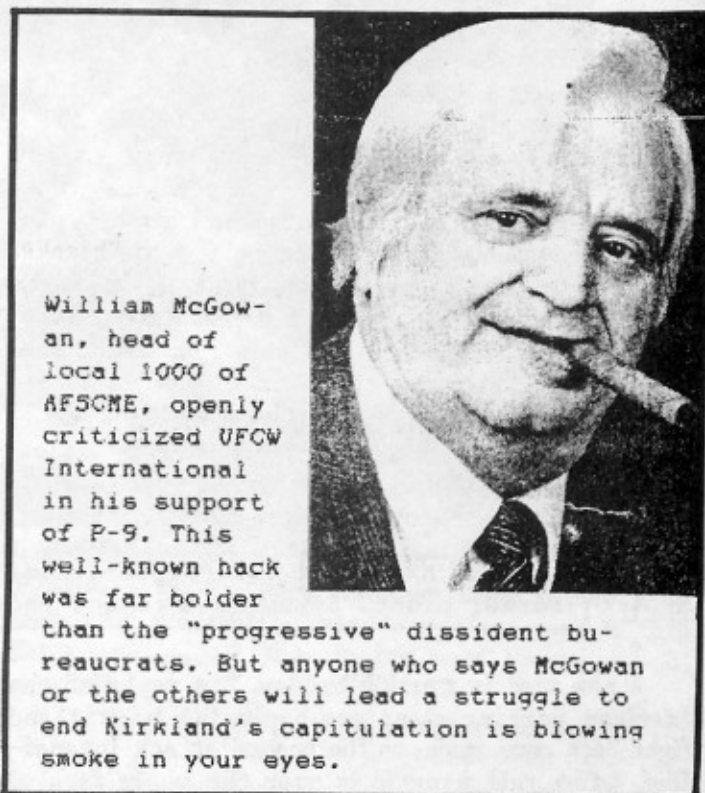
The main-line bureaucrats did not choose to lay down, play dead and hand the companies what they wanted out of mere cowardice. Their jobs and stations in life depend upon their acting as labor brokers, selling their members' ability to produce goods and services to the bosses. From their vantage point, their success is linked to the health and profits of the companies and industries they deal with. They are willing to make the necessary sacrifices, especially since it is not they but the workers who pay. In theory, concessions will keep a company profitable and allow some workers to keep their jobs; the unions will weather the storm and the bureaucrats will survive.

From the late 1960s on, when the bosses began to crack down, the labor leadership undermined the struggle. They buried strikes where they could, and where they couldn't they invented "Apache tactics" (their term) for hit-and-run strikes at isolated plants instead of united actions. The workers' resistance was thereby defused and atomized, but they kept up the fight. There were thousands of local wildcat strikes, unsanctioned but also uncoordinated in the

absence of national leadership.

The whole bureaucracy, its left included, participated in this policy; what's more, they told the workers to cool it and vote for Democrats to solve their problems. Predictably, the Democrats -- pro-capitalists like the Republicans but normally more dependent on working-class votes -- took advantage of the workers' isolation and joined in the attack.

Facing frustration from every side, workers came to feel increasingly cynical and powerless to stop the bosses' juggernaut. With the unions telling each



group of workers that their livelihood depended on the profitability of "their" company, no wonder workers could be sold on self-exploitative profit-sharing and quality-of-life programs. No wonder they could accept two-tier wage settlements at the expense of new hires, and speed-ups to beat out workers in rival companies (or even in different plants of the same company!). No wonder they accepted protectionist schemes to help their bosses: the unions established the principle of letting workers overseas go hang, along with Americans whose jobs depend on imports.

By no means all workers bought this, but many did or saw no alternative. The workforce was divided against itself. When some companies went under in the rat race impelled by the developing crisis of capitalism, other companies gained. Those that survived demanded even greater concessions from their workers.

The bosses' attack was aided enormously by government at all levels. Not only has it used similar methods to crack down on public employees; with the connivance of union leaders it habitually spreads the word that private sector workers should be hostile to decent wages for government workers. In the hands of both Republicans and Democrats, the "social wage" --

the benefits won over the decades in the form of schools, hospitals, unemployment and social insurance, welfare, health and safety standards and the like -- has been driven down. Through military spending and outright subsidies, the big corporations have gained far more from the government than the workers. But when labor leaders agree that what's good for Chrysler is good for the workers, how can they complain about these giveaways? Instead, workers are told it's the "welfare cheats" who are eating up their hard-earned, tax-drained dollars.

KIRKLAND'S VIEW

The overall divide-and-conquer attack had its effect; above all it fanned the sparks of racism. Blacks began to get a break as a result of the ghetto rebellions of the '60s but still were paid less than whites and remained the last hired and first fired. Many white workers blamed their problems on "blacks getting everything," a vicious illusion. As well, black and Hispanic workers are impelled to see each other as rivals for the few available crumbs. So the labor bureaucracy every once in a while issues sincere pamphlets endorsing "brotherhood." Big deal.

The concessions drive could never have succeeded without deepening the divisions within the working class. And this could not have been done without the bosses' fifth column in the ranks of labor, the union bureaucrats. That's why a real fightback can only be made through a struggle for a new fighting leadership of the labor movement. The fight to unite labor means a fight for a new leadership.

Pious words about solidarity and unity mean nothing. Passive activity like voting for Democrats is worse. Unity can be forged only through action, the general strike against the capitalist attacks. The present leadership opposes any genuine unifying action, but above all it is committed to preventing a general strike.

In October 1981 Lane Kirkland's daily routine (breakfast, selling out PATCO, lunch,...) was unforgivably disturbed. He complained, "I would say I have never gotten as much mail on an issue in my life -- about ten percent denounce me for supporting the controllers, about 90 percent are pro-controllers and about 50 percent of those denounce me for not calling a general strike."

Naturally he resisted this pressure bravely. Not because such a strike wouldn't work, he pointed out, but because it would have been so devastatingly effective a weapon that it had to be saved for a "matter of the gravest national concern" like "the rescinding of the Bill of Rights."

But workers have rights too. They include the rights to resist mass unemployment and to preserve gains hard fought for. These are indeed matters of the gravest national concern -- to the rest of us if not to the Kirklands and the bosses.

Kirkland's view is plain. The workers' need the

opposite. Speaking of rights, he has absolutely no right to lead us. We need a new fighting leadership!

THE LRP VIEW

We believe that the only new leadership that can in fact stop the capitalist assault (of which concessions is only one part) is that of a workers revolutionary party. This means a party led by communists: workers dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism, not the reformists and Stalinists who conceal their pro-capitalist aims under a leftist cloak.

But saying even this isn't enough. These days only a small number of very advanced workers share this perspective. Yesterday, when only a few groups of workers were in motion, it sufficed to appeal to the advanced layer of workers by stressing the need to re-create the international revolutionary party. Today when more workers are in action we have the opportunity to prove what kind of leadership is necessary.

Revolutionary forces are thin today, but the mild-militant bureaucrats like Bahr, Pierce and Nicholas are leading thousands of workers willing to fight. And they have the help of militant local officers and staffers like P-9's Jim Guyette and the National Rank and File Against Concessions group. When the big semi-oppositional bureaucrats whistle, NRFAC jumps.

Many workers in struggle would be delighted to



Feb. 15: Thousands of workers came to Austin in solidarity; they got rhetoric. Workers need mass action to stop bosses.

oust the Kirkland types in favor of the Pierces and certainly the Guyettes. Only a few are yet prepared to go beyond these apparent militants and join the ranks of a revolutionary party. Those who are ready are the most farsighted and are most crucial to the class struggle. But the majority of militants must also be won over. It cannot be done by words alone; it takes struggle which will prove that the communist

program is for all workers.

Therefore we raise a demand which we all agree on: the need for a new fighting leadership. Many militant workers believe that the mild-militant bureaucrats and their "rank and file" friends are what they need; we, in contrast, are convinced they are not. Past history and today's struggles like Local P-9's at Hormel have convinced us. The newly militant workers will be convinced by going through their own class-struggle battles and seeing who leads where. People learn through experience, above all their own.

The "new fighting leadership" slogan puts pressure on the mild-militant bureaucrats, because the chief characteristic of the Pierces and Nicholases is that they do not want to fight the Kirklands -- they want above all to cover their asses. Yet the ranks of workers who follow them increasingly understand that a fight within the labor movement is necessary, not just a complaint.

Witness the 156 workers at Austin on April 12 who bought our button with the slogan: "General Strike Against Concessions; Workers Need a New Fighting Leadership." Likewise the dozens of striking Flight Attendants who have snapped them up. (Significantly, the card-carrying leftists tend to sneer at our button as far out and ultra-left, until they observe that "real" militant workers are open to the idea.

We recognize that most of the militants who buy this button mean by "a new fighting leadership" the Pierce and Guyette types whom they admire now -- not revolutionaries. But the workers will come to judge that leadership by what it does in the course of the struggle -- whether or not it fights against the Kirkland officialdom in practice and can win victories. We know that the mild-militant bureaucrats will not carry the struggle to a showdown, that they will back off, compromise, sell out at key moments. We say so. The militant workers say "We'll see." They will learn this truth sooner or later. More and more of them will come to understand that only a revolutionary leadership will do the job and that they have to help build it.

Those who welcome the general strike slogan have already understood something. Their frame of reference is already enlarged. They know through bitter lessons that class unity can be won only through mass action, not just words of sympathy. They see the need to fight for the general strike despite the antipathy of the whole conservative bureaucracy.

Of course, Kirkland & Co. well understand that the issues at stake are national (if not of "the greatest national concern") and even international in scope, not just local. That's why they go out of their way to crack down on local strikes (like in Austin MN, Watsonville CA and Morenci AZ) that have nationwide implications. The only ones who don't like to admit this are the mild-militant bureaucrats who verbally talk up the national importance of local struggles like P-9's but do nothing towards widening the strike. Even though they lead thousands of work-

ers, they refuse to call their own ranks into united action against the common foe.

The fight to build a new leadership against the old can be carried through only by proposing and engaging in actions that mobilize masses of workers. As the militant ranks come to understand this, they will learn to judge the mild-militants, the semi-oppositionist bureaucrats, in a new light.

The real proof of our contention that the left-talking leaders are sellouts will come when a general strike does break out. (And it will: the great unionizing drive of the 1930s was sparked by general or mass strikes in several cities, strikes that appeared seemingly out of the blue after years of depression-stunted labor activity.) The semi-oppositional bureaucrats will fear every step the workers take, will plead with them to hold back, will stab them from behind if given the chance. Some of the militant leaders, especially those at local, elected posts, will break from the bureaucratic vantage point and keep up the fight. It is not a matter only of individual bravery or sincerity. At bottom it is the bureaucrats' commitment to capitalism that prevents them from seeing an alternative society run by the workers themselves.

One example from today. Workers at Hormel in Austin are battling against concessions, yet their union has pinned its resistance to the fact that Hormel happens to be a profitable company. How about workers unfortunate enough to work for companies really in trouble -- are they obliged to give up their wages and jobs? Of course not -- but to say that and stick to it means giving up on the fundamental premise of capitalism: that the means of production belong to the bosses. If the capitalists can't run a factory or an industry, let the state take it over. But today the state is run by the capitalists too. What we need then is a workers' state.

The logic is inexorable. The conclusion is far-reaching -- uncomfortably so, because it means that things cannot go on as they are. But the bureaucrats' logic is even more uncomfortable: accept the profit needs of the companies, accept the divisions within the working class, give up the struggle. In the past, when workers surrendered to the logic of capital they have been smashed by fascism, depression and wars. The alternative is to build a working-class revolutionary party based on the Marxism of today, known as Trotskyism. As a first step let us work together side by side, without preconditions, for the general strike and a new fighting leadership to run it.

And now -- it is only fair -- let us interrupt Lane Kirkland again and give him the last word. In February of last year, he was asked at a press conference: "Mr. Kirkland, you say that workers have to wait another two years and elect more Democrats? That's the only thing they can do?"

He replied: "What do you propose? A general strike? Hello, Mr. Trotsky."

He got our name right too. ■

Battle of Hormel

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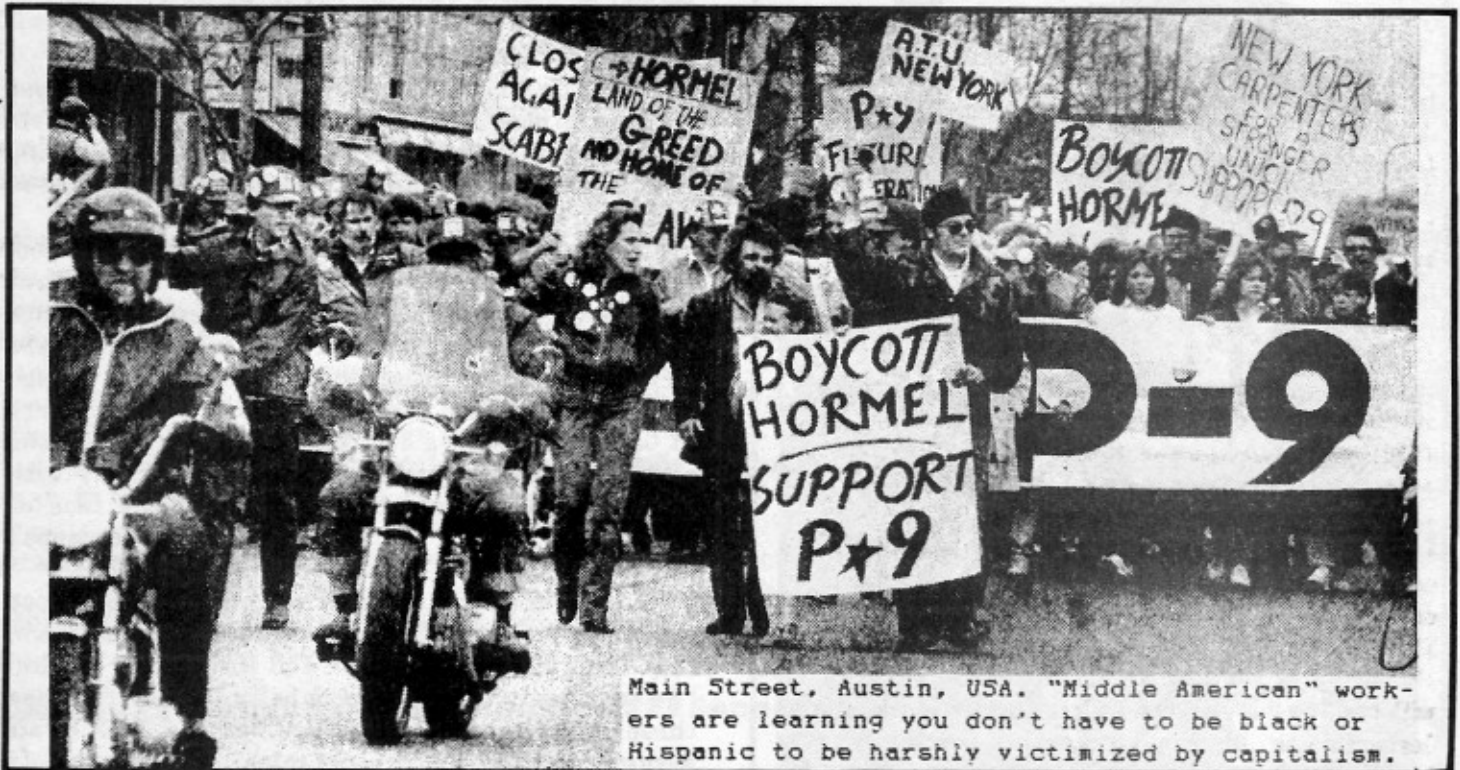
meetings and rallies in Austin and in cities nationwide, their message is simple but powerful: We have to rebuild the labor movement. We have to turn labor's cringing response to concessions into a fighting defense. The P-9 strike must inspire all workers into struggle for our common needs.

Yet after months of hard struggle, P-9 still faces the same task as when the strike began last August: shutting down Hormel, beginning with the Austin plant. This is because the local's strategy has been off target from the start.

P-9's respect for the capitalist laws has been repaid by court injunctions, cop harassment and the

In 1984, in reponse to Hormel's unilateral reduction of wages by over \$2.00 an hour and its demand for a two-tier wage system and the gutting of seniority and safety rights, P-9 voted to hire Ray Rogers' consulting firm, Corporate Campaign, Inc. This was done under the advice of the local leadership headed by Jim Guyette, who had rightly learned not to depend on the UFCW tops for help. After all, president William Wynn & Co. had treacherously portrayed the 1982 contract as a "no givebacks" agreement, when it had included the "me too" clause allowing Hormel to cut back wages to stay "competitive."

Hormel was so obviously greedy and treated its workers with such contempt (serious injuries have increased 120 percent at the new plant) that it seemed a perfect target for Rogers' method: publicizing the company's inhuman practices before public opinion.



Main Street, Austin, USA. "Middle American" workers are learning you don't have to be black or Hispanic to be harshly victimized by capitalism.

National Guard. Its nonviolence has been rewarded by police beatings. P-9ers have found that in the class war the rules of the game are stacked against the workers and can be changed by the bosses and their stooges when it suits them. The strikers need heavy artillery -- the power of a united working class -- in order to win.

CORPORATE CAMPAIGN VS. MASS ACTION

Over the years P-9 has learned many lessons about the class struggle in the school of hard knocks. Austin meatpackers had given Hormel concessions in 16 years out of the last 21. In 1978, when the new \$100 million Austin plant was being built, workers were pressured into giving \$20 million in concessions and a no-strike pledge. Supposedly no further wage cuts were to occur. But -- surprise! -- the company kept asking for more until Austin workers had had enough.

Hormel's record profits, unsafe labor conditions and mistreatment of workers proved it "unfair." It didn't play by the rules of good corporate behavior.

Mobilizing P-9ers to leaflet, organize rallies and expose Hormel's swinishness was necessary. What was wrong was the failure to use such mobilizations to make a direct appeal to the working class for a united fight against the bosses' all-out concessions drive. From the beginning it should have been clear that Hormel would respond to only one thing -- mass action that threatens to slaughter its profits. Instead the idea was to appeal to the public at large to divest funds from a bank linked with Hormel -- in order to pressure the company to "play fair." This was a moral appeal to all classes rather than a fighting working-class strategy.

Besides, even if one bank could be pressured to withdraw funds, others would be glad to take over.

For Hormel did play by the rules of good corporate behavior -- it was vicious, greedy and profitable.

Rogers believed differently. "We've got a campaign that the company and the financial structure behind it cannot withstand," he argued. He convinced P-9 to postpone strike action. But he failed to convince Hormel, which went ahead to impose concessions and force a strike. Once it began, Rogers insisted that the strike would be won not by shutting down Hormel, by spreading the pickets and mass action but by his ability to raise money for strikers. Time was on the side of the workers. "It's not like they [Hormel] can wait this thing out forever."

Rogers hoped to avoid a real confrontation with

Was Greyhound fair? Were the mineowners of Phelps Dodge fair? Can anyone expect capitalism, based on the exploitation of workers, the expropriation of surplus value produced by workers, to be fair? How many times do we have to be kicked in the head, how many workers have to lose their jobs and livelihoods, how many unions have to be crushed, before we learn this lesson?

Singling out Hormel as exceptionally greedy makes an important point that can mobilize sympathy for victims of a particular injustice. But left at that such an appeal reaches other workers on the basis of charity and decency alone. Publicity was needed to show that the battle of Austin was part of a war against all workers, coming from profitable and unprofitable companies and governments as well. That would have led to mobilizing workers in their own self-interest, as a class with the power to win.

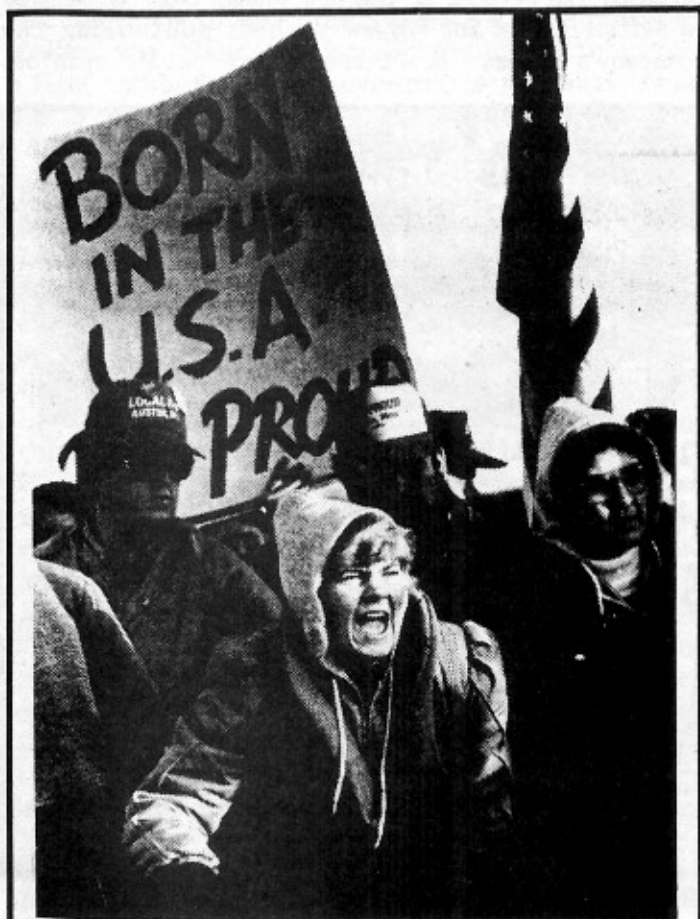
REOPENING THE PLANT

For five months Hormel made no attempt to reopen the Austin plant with scabs. Rogers credited this to his campaign. "We've made it clear that if they bring even one in -- we'll close their whole operation so fast. And, you know, they believe we'll do it."

No doubt Hormel did fear the workers' reaction. It took the bosses time to realize that such talk was more bark than bite. Perhaps the decisive evidence was the P-9 leaders' vacillations on expanding the picketing and confronting Wynn's betrayal. P-9 originally planned to send pickets to other Hormel plants in October. Instead, a deal was made with Wynn, who pledged to sanction pickets only if negotiations with Hormel failed. Rather than spitting in the face of this obvious stalling tactic, P-9's leaders accepted Wynn's terms. Crucial months were lost.

Rogers himself admitted that had they sent out pickets in October, especially with Austin shut down, they would have had a chance for much better results. "We were ready to move certainly by October to close these other plants," he said. "But old Bill Wynn stepped in and held the whole thing up two months. If it was two months earlier with everything together, look at what would have happened. The one thing we never expected was the International's involvement the way it has been, that very negative involvement."

There is no reason for someone with long experience in the labor movement to be caught unawares by such bureaucratic treachery, especially in the light of the UFCW's record on concessions. The problem was that Guyette and Rogers never wanted to openly challenge the International's strategy. They hoped that public relations schemes would force Wynn to support P-9's strike. In particular Guyette argued that P-9ers deserved more because Hormel in Austin was exceptionally profitable. This argument was a gift to Wynn, allowing him to charge that P-9 was divisive for fighting for one local in isolation. P-9 should have called for a UFCW-wide strike against concessions, whether an individual company or plant was



Workers jeer scabs. Fists must replace flags; the bosses own the country. Scab Spam is now more American than apple pie.

the bosses. This is why the good-for-nothing AFL-CIO bureaucracy, although it attacks Rogers for being too radical, is itself a big booster of corporate campaigns. It puts them forward as an alternative to strikes and the kind of mass action that built the unions in the 1930s. It uses the recent wave of defeats and concessions, a result of the bureaucrats' own policies, to argue that the working class is too weak to directly confront the capitalists.

In this period of unbridled attacks on the working class by the government and corporations, Hormel hardly stands apart. Was Ronald Reagan fair to PATCO?

making profits or not. Not doing this and holding back on organizing roving pickets, P-9 allowed Hormel to buy time to organize its counterattack.

In January Hormel called Rogers' bluff. At first P-9 successfully prevented the company's scab operation. But Rogers and the local leaders didn't prepare the strikers for what happened next. Under the pretext of preventing violence, Mayor Tom Keough of Austin, himself a striking meatpacker, called on Governor Rudi Perpich to send in the National Guard.

The Guard's first action was to close the plant, conning strikers into believing it was neutral. But on the second day its role became clear. Closing the highway leading to the plant, the Guard allowed access only to scabs. Several strikers in cars attempted to block the road and were beaten by the "neutral, peacekeeping" Guardsmen. With the Guard on duty, serious scabberding began. What began as a mere handful of workers scabbing grew to over four hundred P-9 members during the month the Guard was there. This was crucial, since the unskilled imported scabs couldn't operate the plant's modern equipment and lacked the training needed for the hazardous work.

Hormel had raised the ante, and P-9's leaders were stunned and unprepared for a confrontation. They saw no way to overcome the Guard except for making feeble attempts to pressure other Democrats to get Perpich remove it. When the governor did so for a few days, it was only in response to a mobilization of hundreds of workers. Perpich's lieutenant on the scene admitted that the Guard was removed out of fear that thousands more unionists would turn out to confront it. This shows what P-9 could have done: for example, wage a fight inside Minnesota labor for a general strike to get rid of the Guard.

Accepting that little could be done with the troops in town cost P-9 the initiative. Emphasis now turned to nationwide support efforts as a substitute

for mass action, and in desperation P-9 called for a boycott of Hormel products. The war still raged but Hormel had recaptured Austin.

SUPPORT IN DUBUQUE

After five months on strike, P-9 suddenly discovered it was in a real war. The battle now had to be fought at the picketlines, but in Austin Hormel was in control. P-9 leaders finally launched roving pickets to try to shut down other Hormel plants, with some success. The tactical problem was for strikers to recognize they were no longer in a corporate campaign but in an old-fashioned brass knuckles brawl. As one striker noted, "the strike only really began in January" — when Hormel brought in the scabs.

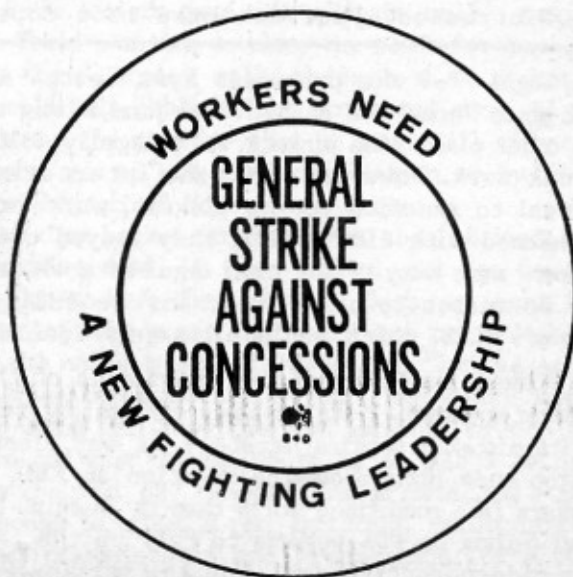
At the Ottumwa, Iowa, Hormel plant, over 500 workers in Local 431 honored P-9 pickets despite threats from the company and the UFCW bureaucrats. Ottumwa strikers won the support of other workers who organized mass marches and food aid. This was clear evidence of the tremendous potential for support for the P-9 strike. But elsewhere success was sparse. At Fremont, Nebraska, Beloit, Wisconsin and the FDL plant in Dubuque, Iowa, UFCW agents convinced workers to cross the lines. The support was there — what was needed was an open challenge to the International.

When roving pickets were finally sent out, it was clear that the corporate campaign strategy had left P-9 unprepared. After a year of work the response to Hormel's new attacks was disorganized and politically incoherent. For example, on a picketing trip to Dubuque on February 16. Some 200 pickets convinced about half of the 900 workers on the morning shift to stay out, thus closing down some lines and cutting into production. The response was encouraging, given the company's threats and the assistance FDL got from Mel Maas, the local union president, who stood at the plant gate with several UFCW reps to tell workers not

NEW BUTTON FROM THE LRP

Militant workers, socialist and non-socialist alike, have been buying hundreds of these buttons in recent weeks. The button has proved especially popular among striking workers who are sick of abstract solidarity rhetoric and want concrete, united mass action. Many in the ranks of labor know that effective action to stop concessions means that Lane Kirkland and other bureaucrats must be replaced by a new militant leadership.

Buttons are \$1.00 each and may be ordered from: Socialist Voice, 170 Broadway, Room 201, New York NY 10038. Make check or money order payable to Socialist Voice.



to honor the unsanctioned picket. FDL workers wanted to support P-9 but were afraid of the consequences in the face of the International's backstabbing.

Disorganization was evident. During the day there were no picket captains to maintain the lines; strikers came and went on their own. More importantly, P-9 was unprepared to capitalize on the good response it did receive. Apparently expecting no success at all, Rogers had organized the trip as a one-day excursion, leaving at 11pm Sunday and scheduled to come back at 6pm Monday. But it was clear to many of us that you can't convince a few hundred workers to stay out and then abandon the picket lines. At first only a handful of picketers agreed to stay, until finally enough volunteered so that it was decided to keep one of the four buses at hand.

A meeting with FDL workers was arranged in a hall a few miles outside the city. Some 40-50 workers who had honored the picket line came to meet with the remaining P-9 contingent. Much of the discussion centered around the question of whether the picket line

"legal." Instead P-9 should have made clear that it would not go back until all jobs are restored in the event of victimization at any plant.

There's a big difference between calling on workers not to cross someone else's picket line and urging them to actually join the fight and strike for the needs of all. If P-9 is to overcome Wynn's sabotage it needs a strategy to mobilize other meatpackers to fight, not just passively stay out. Workers at FDL correctly asked, "How can you tell us to stay out when you haven't shut down Austin?" They pointed to the Achilles heel of the strike -- its failure to close the home plant. Unless P-9 takes decisive action and closes Austin down, all the lawyers in Philadelphia won't convince workers to stay out because its "legal." Bold leadership and action will.

P-9'S LEADERSHIP

The failure to shut Hormel down points to the limitations of the Jim Guyette team. Elected in 1984 on a wave of militant, no-concessions sentiment, Guyette



March 10: Hundreds block Hormel headquarters; over 100 arrested. Pacifist crap lets cops maul workers.

was legal. P-9 vice president Lynn Huston argued that since Hormel had shifted work from Austin to FDL and other places, the pickets were legally following struck work. However, given the International's refusal to sanction roving pickets, workers were threatened with dismissal if they stayed out. FDL workers were wary of the legal arguments since they had no reason to place trust in the rulings of Reagan's NLRB, which would ultimately decide.

Workers were correct to be suspicious of the legalistic approach. P-9's emphasis on legality reflected its mistaken political strategy. It was clear that Huston knew little about the situation at FDL, where workers face conditions worse than in Austin. Rather than calling on FDL workers to tear up the concession-ridden contract and join the strike, P-9 was telling them that not crossing the picket line was

undertook a bold course of action requiring considerable guts. But then he temporized and vacillated in the face of Wynn and Kirkland's hostility. Despite all the anti-concessions talk, P-9 has been offering Hormel wage and other givebacks since February in an effort to sound "reasonable." As well, Guyette has backed down to the courts and allowed legalism to choke the strike, obeying, for example, the injunction allowing only six pickets at any one plant gate.

Despite his political weaknesses, from the start Guyette's stance was an act of defiance against Wynn and the International. Wynn could not afford to allow one local to defeat concessions after the UFCW had insisted that workers had no choice but to accept givebacks. But while this made him a clear threat

to Wynn, Guyette failed to take the only course possible in order to win: leading an industry-wide revolt against the UFCW's concessions policy. Seeking to avoid antagonizing Wynn, he played by Wynn's limits and rules and thereby gave him repeated chances to undercut the strike. The most dramatic was the vote in mid-March to "reconcile" with the International -- to which Wynn responded by ordering the local back to work and rescinding strike funds.

Even when Wynn withdrew the strike pay and threatened receivership, Guyette's response was to take legal action against the International, thereby inviting the capitalist-controlled courts to run union affairs. This still avoids tapping P-9's potential to mobilize all meatpackers in a struggle to roll back the concessions.

The Guyette team appears unable to decide what

kind of strike it wants. It opens up bold struggles and then fails to pursue them to their necessary conclusions. It breaks from Wynn's concessions strategy but doesn't take the necessary steps to lead a revolt against the UFCW bureaucrats. Although the strike has raised a challenge to Lane Kirkland and his cronies

at the top of the AFL-CIO, Guyette continues to play by the bureaucratic rules of debate and holds back from an all-out fight inside the AFL-CIO.

In this he is backed by the main national support group for P-9, an outfit called NRFAC (National Rank and File Against Concessions). Despite its name, NRFAC represents not rank and filers but militant local leaders like Guyette and leftists, especially around the Communist Labor Party, who have won local positions in the labor bureaucracy. They want to fight concessions without openly confronting Kirkland. A wing of NRFAC is pro-Democratic Party, including Guyette who falsely claims that

Governor Perpich is a traitor to the true Democratic heritage. If other NRFAC leaders know better, they sure don't say so out loud.

NRFAC has gone to great lengths to avoid criticizing the AFL-CIO tops. At the large February 15 rally it organized in Austin, there was a virtual conspiracy of silence about the rotten role of the AFL-CIO. The only exception was a crack about "Lame" Kirkland by Pittsburgh steelworkers leader Ron Wiesen. The list of speakers featured Henry Nicholas, president of the 1199 Hospital Workers Union, and Jan Pierce, vice president of the Communication Workers.

In his speech Nicholas danced a tightrope to avoid direct attacks on Kirkland. He "prayed" that the upcoming AFL-CIO meeting in Florida would recognize the dignity of the strike. It was time that "we" leaders of organized labor moved from the back of the line to the front. "We" need to know which side the labor movement is on in Minnesota. "We" remember PATCO and how the labor movement didn't take an aggressive enough stance. A lot of verbal sparring -- but no honest direct opposition.

Nicholas must not have prayed hard enough. Kirkland gave the Hormel strikers another stab in the back as he supported Wynn and attacked Guyette. Kirkland wouldn't even allow Guyette to address the meeting; he all but told the strikers to drop dead.

While the battle lines had been clearly drawn by the bureaucrats, NRFAC continued its diplomatic approach. When Governor Perpich appeared before a state AFL-CIO meeting on February 24, these "left" supporters of P-9 could only issue a feeble statement attacking his presence. No attack was made on the state



April 11: Workers peacefully assemble before police riot, yet Congress pushes anti-union laws citing P-9 "violence."

AFL-CIO's meager support to the strike and its criminal silence on Perpich's use of the National Guard as strikebreakers.

THE APRIL BATTLE

NRFAC called a mobilization to culminate in another rally on April 12; it was billed as an effort to "shut down Hormel." But at press conferences beforehand P-9's leaders gave this militant call a pacifist twist. Their plan was to close the plant for two days before the Saturday rally through mass picketing; this would help publicize the strike and show supporters around the country that it was still effective. The point was to use the mobilization to build the national boycott of Hormel products.

But they backed off from even this limited goal. On Thursday, April 10, they decided that too few had showed up to keep the scabs out. Business agent Pete Winkles told the press that this was no defeat because the union meant its shutdown "in the larger sense," i.e., through the boycott. But every worker in the union hall knew they had intended to stop production and that the failure to do so was a setback.

By the next day hundreds had arrived, and now we had enough to effect a real shutdown. Unfortunately, the lack of leadership and preparation for a fight cost us the victory. The plan was to block the roads leading to the plant with circles of cars. At the

main gate, several hundred workers waited for the cops to make their move.

About 70 police, many in riot gear, gathered 50 yards from the blocked off area. It took them a few hours to decide what to do. While the workers chanted slogans and insults, the situation grew tense. But after the initial success in blocking the roads, the absence of a plan of action lost us the initiative. The strikers had time to rush the plant; with bold leadership the workers could have seized it and car-

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ried out a real shutdown, a sit-down strike inside the factory. But the leaders had no plans to shut the plant down beyond the one day symbolic effort.

Although we had the advantage of numbers, the cops were armed and the workers weren't. And at the pre-picket meeting the goal of nonviolence had been reasserted and stressed. This, however, made it impossible to keep the cops from removing the roadblock. How do you stop police without using force? You could feel the confusion and indecision in the air: when the cops come, do we fight or retreat?

While workers stood by, the cops brought in a van to pull a car off the road, thus breaking the circle. The police were then able to enter and begin arresting picketers one by one. Workers pushed and shoved but no real blows were landed: we had not been prepared to fight back. Many of us were certain that we had the forces to win if we had fought.

Despite the pacifist strategy, there was enough resistance to make the cops think twice. After four or five arrests they looked nervous, fearful that the shoving might give way to all-out fighting. At this point they tossed in a smoke bomb, possibly to test the wind but really as a pretext for declaring the picket a riot and using tear gas against us. With the gas attack the workers were driven back and a police riot ensued. Arrested workers were now beaten by the cops; Ray Rogers was pulled from his car on the other side of town; and a warrant was issued for Jim Guyette's arrest too.

All this should have surprised no one. For days sheriff Wayne Goodnature (!) had talked of "making police history." He boasted of his preparations: attack dogs, tear gas and stun guns. Thus he was on record as threatening violence whether the strikers were

peaceful or not. In truth, a nonviolent plant shutdown was doomed to fail. It takes force, or the credible threat of force, to stop scabs. (Despite the official pacifism, one popular button read, "Pick a scab; make it bleed.") P-9's effort to deny this disarmed only workers, not the cops. Not preparing to defend the action meant using the workers as sacrificial victims for boycott publicity that could never win the strike.

Exposing workers to police violence and arrest has clearly led to demoralization. Many P-9ers held back from the confrontation on April 11 because they had been arrested at previous encounters. They didn't see the point of going to jail in another non-winning action. Besides, NRFAC and P-9's major effort had gone into publicizing the April 12 rally under the slogan "Shut Down Hormel!" While the April 12 rally drew about 3500 people, even more than in February, it was clearly less spirited, and understandably so. Many were disappointed by NRFAC's false promise of shutting down the plant (on a Saturday, when it is closed). Guyette, speaking despite the warrant out for his arrest, continued to spread false optimism in the boycott as a substitute for the action needed to win the strike.

NRFAC's was not the only misleadership around. An important role was played by Jake Cooper, a veteran of the massive 1934 truckers strike in Minneapolis led by the Trotskyists (Cooper today is affiliated to the Socialist Action group). His experience and his organization of food caravans for the strikers gave him considerable prestige inside P-9, but he did not use it to pose an alternative strategy. Speaking at the Thursday night meeting before the attempted shutdown, he admitted that the boycott couldn't win the strike but did not differentiate himself from the pacifist approach of the Guyette team; indeed, he was regarded as one of the main architects of the (ill-prepared) plan of action.

THE JESSE JACKSON SHOW

There was also an intervention by Jesse Jackson, the Democratic presidential politician who knows even more than Ray Rogers about attracting publicity. Invited by P-9 to address the April support rally, he offered instead to mediate; he ended up speaking with Hormel officials and the cops as well as the jailed workers (whom he led in a chorus of "We Shall Overcome"). His point was to reinforce P-9's nonviolent strategy with a dose of civil rights pacifism, and he won deserved praise from Sheriff Goodnature:

"He's the last hope for a resolution of this strike. We've all been reacting. I've been overreacting. He's put some calm in this." (Chicago Tribune, April 14.)

Austin's chief cop was not promising to stop bashing heads at the plant gates and throwing picketers in jail; he probably felt a bit foolish about overpreparing for a milder protest than he had expected from the mood of the workers. His blessing of Jackson is

based on the sure knowledge that goodwill pacifism directed at the workers can only help Hormel. Unfortunately, P-9's no-win strategy allows demoralized workers to look to such disarming mediation as a way out.

THE WAY TO WIN

Through their struggle P-9ers have jumped far to the left of their "left" supporters. To break out of the confines of an isolated strike, they will have to overcome the narrow political approach of NRFAC. P-9 workers see themselves leading a movement, a national struggle against concessions. Their refusal to accept concessions has led to a fight with the UFCW international, a fight that has led many workers to conclude that a struggle for a new leadership throughout the AFL-CIO is needed.

This reflects the life and death character of P-9ers' struggle to save their union and their jobs. In effect they have put the question to the entire workers movement: which side are you on? Yes, P-9 needs money and material assistance. But not at the expense of waging a resolute struggle against concessions. The real strength of the P-9 strike is that it's doing what all unions should be doing -- saying "no more concessions." P-9 should ask for more than applause and money. It should demand that others follow its example. This means a fight inside the labor movement for new leadership.

The road to victory for the strike begins with mass action to really shut down the Austin plant. Yet P-9's leaders continue to spread the illusion that the consumer boycott will save them and that time is on their side. But this is what workers have been told all along. Guyette and Rogers have admitted they never expected Hormel to reopen with scabs. Then too they said time was on their side, but the result was that Hormel regained the initiative. Now time is running out. The Guyette leadership must abandon its strategy of legalism, pacifism, playing by the bosses' rules and hiding behind the feeble boycott -- and face the real job of mobilizing workers for mass action in Austin, in Minnesota and throughout the

country. Here is what has to be done.

MOBILIZE THE RANKS OF MINNESOTA LABOR: BUILD MILITANT MASS PICKETLINES, ORGANIZE SELF-DEFENSE! A real attempt to shut down Austin needs mass support from Minnesota workers and workers around the country. It means mass picketlines to keep out scabs and it means mass self defense against the cops and scabs. An avalanche of support can still be won if workers and farmers are warned of what they face if P-9 loses.

TURN THE STRIKE INTO A SIT-DOWN STRIKE -- SEIZE THE PLANT! Pacifist sit-ins and civil disobedience only show weakness and lead to defeat. Austin meat-packers built the union with a sit-down in 1933. Now they must use the tactic to save their union.

WORKERS NEED A GENERAL STRIKE -- FIGHT FOR A NEW LEADERSHIP! The Austin strike shows why workers must unite and overcome the limits of isolated strikes. Pure trade unionism is not enough: strikes must become openly political and confront the capitalist state. Preparations must be made to call out all Minnesota workers if the Guard is brought back.

Real political action by the working class is called for, not the electoralist trap of the labor bureaucrats and glad-handing politicians. Workers must not forget the absolutely predictable role of their Democratic "friend" Perpich. The need for a general strike fight for a new leadership to mobilize the ranks of labor for the struggles ahead.

The Hormel strike is in extreme danger. It can still seize victory from the jaws of defeat. A win over Hormel would encourage all workers to fight concessions. This is what the bosses fear. This is why they have thrown everything at this strike. Their message is that isolated strikes, no matter how militant, will be crushed. Workers do not need to agree on the need for socialism to understand that we must have united mass action. The only answer is to shut down the Austin plant and fight against the AFL-CIO bureaucracy for a general strike against union-busting and concessions.

April 20, 1986

P-9 Solidarity in New York With Friends Like These...

On its face it was an impressive rally. Thousands of union members and other enthusiasts jammed into a meeting hall in downtown New York on March 14 to shout support for the valiant Hormel strikers. Caps, buttons and T-shirts with Local P-9's logo and slogans sold rapidly to the overflow crowd, like on a holiday at a baseball stadium. Donations for the strikers' families were proudly announced and handed over to beaming officials at the podium.

And these officials were, by title, an impressive lot. David Livingston, the veteran head of District

65 of the United Auto Workers, chaired; the upper union bureaucracy was represented by Jan Pierce, a vice-president of the Communications Workers. Jim Guyette, president of P-9, was there along with his aide, Ray Rogers of Corporate Campaign; as were workers from fellow meatpacking locals who had honored P-9's picketlines and been fired for their solidarity. There were also leaders of other unions currently on strike, including the TWA flight attendants and the Watsonville cannery workers in California, and they were welcomed warmly by the audience. A small clot of liberal Democratic Party politicians also

showed up to take advantage of the free platform.

On its face the rally had an anti-capitalist appearance. Militant workers were the heroes and heroines of the hour. Denunciations of the meatpacking bosses' crimes rang through the hall; no expense of wit was spared to link Hormel's owners with the pigs they slaughter. The loudest cheers went to the Watonsville striker who, speaking in Spanish, denounced the capitalist system openly and directly. Seemingly nothing would stop this crowd from marching off to enlist in the frontline battalions of the class struggle. At the very least it looked like labor's long retreat was over.

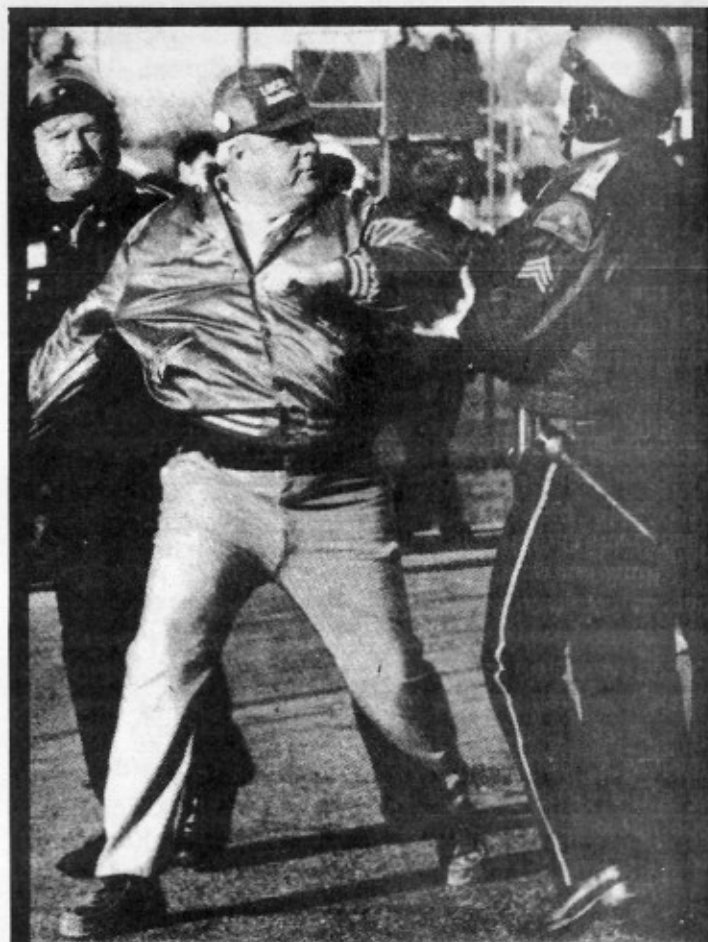
As if wary of what might happen, Livingston made a curious and revealing remark from the podium. In introducing his brother bureaucrat Pierce as the power behind the Greater New York Area Labor Support Committee for Local P-9 that organized the rally, he applauded Pierce's success in "tempering and moderating" the Committee's work. There's no telling what foolishness we'd have seen if Pierce hadn't been there all along to keep things on an even keel!

KIRKLAND, WYNN NOT DENOUNCED

Unfortunately the militant appearance of the rally was only that. The whole affair was a show put on to hide the fact that no real support for P-9 was given, planned or even intended -- beyond donating a few bucks. Throughout the Hormel strike, P-9's parent union, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) headed by William Wynn and wholeheartedly backed by the AFL-CIO, had opposed the local's action as divisive -- but had been compelled to send meager (\$40 a week) strike benefits to the workers. (The popularity of the strike among UFCW and other workers had made it hard for Wynn to move too quickly, lest he set off an anti-bureaucracy explosion.) It was on March 14, the very day of the New York rally, that the International pulled the plug: it ordered the workers back to their nonexistent jobs and cut off their benefits. The money raised at the rally was small change compared to what the workers lost by the International's treachery.

Yet at the rally called to cheer P-9 on to victory, none of the union bureaucrats on the podium thought to denounce Wynn and Kirkland for their latest act in stabbing the strike in the back. One speaker, from the beleaguered Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), did observe that Lane Kirkland hadn't been much help -- to a smattering of applause from the audience and stony silence from the dais. Wynn? Kirkland? Never heard of them.

The "left" union officials at hand had absolutely no intention of confronting the reigning sellout policies and their perpetrators. They wish to modify these policies by pressuring the rest of the bureaucracy to be more flexible, in order to forestall future rebellions and save the unions from being crushed. Indeed, Livingston made clear from the podium that he had nothing in principle against conces-



Cops rough up P-9 demonstrator on April 11. Seventeen were arrested, including an LRP supporter.

sions: it all depended on the given company's needs (rather than the workers!). This sentiment was echoed by Pierce and others.

THE NON-SUPPORT COMMITTEE

To see why so little was happening on stage you had to look behind the scenery, and that's one reason why LRP members had been attending the New York Support Committee's meetings for some time. We joined in fights within the Committee to turn it around, but given its composition we knew the odds were against us. Its weekly sessions attracted between 40 and 75 people, overwhelmingly local union staff members plus a dash of elected officials, Corporate Campaigners for political ballast and legwork, and a few lonely souls from the ranks. Until recently meetings were held during work hours, which cut down on non-staffer attendance.

The leading actors came from the CWA, a one-time mainstream union that has been forced to the left in the current climate. The break-up of AT&T means that companies the CWA organizes are facing non-union competition, and technological changes linked with dwindling membership have set it up for attack. Hence the activism of Jan Pierce, who could hardly have taken

his exposed position without the sub rosa agreement of president Morty Bahr, a new favorite in social democratic circles. Letting the previously uncelebrated Pierce take the heat was the way to rouse a little defense and avoid an open breach with Kirkland.

Many of the Support Committee's participants wore two hats. While seated at Support Committee meetings they were Trade Unionists. But they are also members, ex-members, friends and supporters of a variety of left groups and tendencies, a fact that goes unmentioned even though nearly everybody recognizes where nearly everybody else is coming from. The cast of characters included the reformist DSA (Democratic Socialists of America); its activists never cite their link to the Machinists' head William Winpinger, the hero who "allows" his union members to cross flight attendants picketlines at TWA, just as he once did for PATCO. The Chairman, Bill Henning, a local vice-president in Pierce's CWA, is also a well-known affiliate of the New York Marxist School, a local cooking academy specializing in pabulum. The Big Militant from the Floor, Nick Unger, an Amalgamated Clothing Workers staffer, is also well known on the left speaking circuit. Plus there are SWPers, WWPers

shadowboxing to encourage a more flexibly craven concessions policy. Of course, the right-wing bureaucrats are less inclined to keep their sparring behind the scenes than is the left. When Pierce and similar types elsewhere succeeded in deflecting any blows against Wynn, that's when Wynn pulled the strike benefits from P-9. Why box shadows when you can use the left to help knock out workers?

BOYCOTT HORMEL?

The most significant action of the Support Committee was its failure to endorse the boycott of Hormel products called by Local P-9. Now as revolutionaries, we know that consumer boycotts are relatively ineffective ways of winning strikes. It took years for the California farmworkers to gain from the lettuce and grape boycotts they promoted, and these had broad liberal support in their day. The FLOC boycotted the Campbell Soup Company for ages before winning a miserable agreement. Millions of dollars and seemingly as many years were required before the Amalgamated Clothing Workers forced the union-busting J.P. Stevens Company into a partial settlement. The reason for this weakness is that a consumer boycott substitutes

P-9 striker discusses boycott with Detroit shopper. Workers are being fed baloney about the boycott's instant success.



and an assortment of formerly ferocious Maoists who evidently took time off from Democratic Party cocktail parties to lend a hand.

At one meeting, a delegate from the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists declared that a "street fight" was going on inside the labor movement but warned that "our side was shadowboxing" and couldn't expect to win that way. Almost everybody agreed, but the Committee continued to put out leaflets that said nothing about Wynn or Kirkland and carefully refrained from even endorsing P-9's boycott.

Open criticism of Wynn would have forced Kirkland to crack down on the "left" bureaucrats; hence the

for the workers' strength as a class, their ability to shut down production and thereby halt profits.

But our reservations about boycotts were not at issue at the Support Committee, which continually postponed the question. Hormel was very definitely not on the official list of AFL-CIO approved boycotts. Therefore, from the bureaucratic standpoint, endorsing it would be seen as an open effort to help win the strike and would have placed the Committee in direct opposition to the AFL-CIO, which had declared the strike unwinnable and opposed the boycott. In contrast, raising money to aid strikers -- an act of charity, not confrontation -- could be ex-

cused; after all, Kirkland and Wynn had shed crocodile tears for the P-9ers faced with a "suicidal" local leadership, so welfare for these innocent victims couldn't be challenged.

Despite this careful reasoning there was considerable sentiment at Committee meetings for joining the boycott. After all, this was P-9's favored strategy, so how could a Support Committee for P-9 not go along? When we spoke for it, we emphasized that real solidarity demanded united action against concessions for and by all workers: a general strike. We noted the need to support a mass labor mobilization to shut the Austin plant down. And we stressed winning the civil war inside labor, the "street fight" against the likes of Wynn and Kirkland. We even got a little applause here and there. And a full discussion was promised for the meeting right before the big rally.

But at that meeting, Jan Pierce himself showed up and assumed the chair. This was the signal -- none of the boycott's former enthusiasts said a word. We inquired about the promised discussion, asked for the Committee's endorsement, and urged an announcement at the rally calling on unions to mobilize their ranks to carry the boycott out. The response was silence. Pierce delivered a sermon about how no self-respecting worker would ever be caught dead eating scab meat, but the official endorsement of the boycott got swept under the rug.

COMMITTEE FINALLY PICKETS

Finally, in mid-April with the strike on the ropes, the Committee faced up to its absurd contradiction and made a heroic effort: it called a picket for one supermarket. The effort drew some union staffers plus a few handfuls of leftists; it lasted a pitiful hour and a half despite a favorable response from shoppers. Four out of the 23 picketers were LRPers, despite the others' alleged enthusiasm for the boycott tactic. In justice to the Committee, about 30 of its members were in Austin that day for the P-9 rally, as were several LRPers. But the leaders of the Committee were at neither event.

The point is that no attempt was ever made to bring out the ranks of the unions for anything, not even the favored boycott. When we proposed introducing motions at union meetings for locals to officially endorse the boycott and man picketlines, again we met silence without any counterargument. LRPers and friends have pushed for such motions at meetings of hospital, postal, transport and municipal workers. Of course, we coupled our motions with attacks on Kirkland and Wynn's betrayals. (Most were rebuffed by the bureaucrats, but a Local 384 chapter, DC 37/AFSCME, approved such a motion 40-0, including its condemnation of the union tops.) We could hardly expect the Committee to do likewise, but its endorsement of the simple boycott motions would have carried weight.

Whatever meat there is to the Hormel boycott in New York is cut so thin that you miss it completely if you don't know just where to look. The tragedy is

that in Austin, P-9ers were being sold the idea that boycott is enormously successful, just the thing to base their strategy on. With friends like these...

PROGRESSIVE UNIONISM AT ITS BEST

The "progressive unionists" who populate support committees like this one (and this is hardly the first; our press has reported on several in New York alone in the past few years) are contradictory creatures. They are rightfully fearful that the Kirkland bureaucracy will weaken the unions to the point of collapse. They trembled when Kirkland let Reagan slit PATCO's throat. Yet they have an equal contempt for the mass of workers and are even more afraid that the ranks will someday get out of hand and cause so much turmoil that their jobs will be threatened. The lower-level officials who feel some pressure from the ranks for action are all dependent on the bureaucrats above them; Henning and Pierce are the perfect symbolic twosome. Thus even the "Marxists" among them have no stomach for mobilizing the ranks.

Some of these types feel that the top bureaucrats can still be educated and cajoled. Others see that a fight will be necessary but insist the time is not yet ripe. In reality, the time is never ripe -- until the mass of workers explode and left-talking bureaucrats see the need to "take the lead" and hold them back. One reason the P-9 struggle struck a responsive chord among the "progressives" was that Hormel was victimizing "middle-American" white workers who are far from the poorest and most oppressed of the working class. This leads them to hope that, if not Kirkland, at least a nucleus of bigshots might see their way clear to act.

This is progressive unionism in all its splendor. Or perhaps not quite all: the Communist Party, aside from an occasional Daily World reporter, was absent. While the other progressives gave shaky support to an important strike, the CP stood on the side: it berated P-9 for breaking the UFCW's "unity" (in capitulating to concessions) and for modestly criticizing William Wynn. In the past, there could never have been a feast of progressive unionism without the menu of capitulation being approved by the CPUSA. Today the progressives belong to a variety of small groups pursuing policies similar to the once powerful CP. In the twilight of Stalinism, the ants give the picnic themselves.

Also noticeably missing were those other moral mainstays of human progress, the officials of the Municipal Workers' District Council 37. Usually bosom buddies of the progressives present, they were unavoidably detained -- by the campaign of their boss, Victor Gotbaum, to become head of New York's Central Labor Council. For them to aid a rebel local like P-9 would have done Victor no good; so what matter the livelihoods of a few hundred workers out in Minnesota when weighed against the desire of another leading DSAer to cap his career in the union business with a lifetime sinecure? (Result: he lost anyway.)

This then was the crew that brought its friends together for the March 14 rally. The chance to assemble around a cause that might point the way out of labor's doldrums genuinely inspired the ranks of the labor left in New York. Even some CPers showed up despite their party's hostility. But after you count the union officials, staffers and leftists there was little representation from the most significant layers of New York workers; for example, only a handful of blacks and Hispanics were present, a sure sign that only the upper strata of labor were represented. Why was this? In keeping with the progressives' general attitude, the Support Committee made no attempt to get out the ranks. Typically, Jan Pierce -- no exaggeration -- had promised proudly at the previous Committee meeting to mobilize his whole family!

THE NEW LEFT GROWN OLD

The nature of the crowd turned out shows why, aside from a few shouts from the floor, there was no rush to condemn Kirkland and Wynn: everybody knew what game they were playing and everybody played by the rules. That is why the FLOC speaker who did criticize Kirkland was met with silence: it threatened to lead to action. It also shows why, when the Watson-

ic conservatism as well. In the 1960s they had stood out against the "old left" (notably the CP) on these grounds. But their revolutionism had been that of the disaffected middle classes, and their weapons ranged from elitist guerrillism to reformist electoralism. They learned that students couldn't overthrow the system. The massive French general strike of 1968 and the wave of wildcats in the U.S. in the early '70s showed them the power of the working class.

But the union bureaucrats of the period were not asleep. They found ways to isolate and divide the upheavals. This saved their posts by paving the way for the massive retreat that created today's defeatism among workers. Of the leftists attracted to the working class, some dedicated souls joined the ranks but more took advantage of their degrees to become staffers or secondary bureaucrats. To this day they see themselves as tribunes of the rank and file, more cynical than ever because few workers share their vision of progress. They bear the bright man's burden.

They and their elder brethren in the top union echelons will shadowbox forever, and the right wing will always win. A totally new fighting leadership is needed to stop the capitalist attack. Despite their tremendous power, workers have been taught by their

P-9 president Jim Guyette (center) at March 16 press conference announcing decision to continue strike in defiance of UFCW's Wynn. It is time to throw Hormel's hitman out of union leadership.



ville worker criticized capitalism, the momentarily stunned audience broke into such wild applause. Had it been made by one of the leftist speakers under a Trade Union hat, it would have been ignored as an embarrassing breach of decorum. But since it seemed to come from what is known in these parts as a "real worker," and as long as it was left abstract and didn't call for action, it was approved.

The tragedy of all this knee-deep cynicism is that many, perhaps most, of the lower-echelon progressive unionists of today were once rebels not only against capitalism in general but against bureaucrat-

bureaucratic leaders that they are too weak to defend their gains. It is the communists' task to work within the ranks of the working class to forge the leadership that can help the class find its own strength. We will keep challenging the "progressive" leaders to take the lead and fight, but we will never hide their vacillations and capitulations from our fellow workers; the manipulations of these condescending saviors can only lead to disaster. This is the Marxist way of proving in actual struggle that workers must build a revolutionary party as the only leadership that can take the class struggle to victory. ■

General Strike Against Concessions!
Workers Need A New Fighting Leadership!

The Method in Reagan's Madness

1986 has begun as a year of both reaction and revolution. With its murderous April bombing raid on defenseless Libyan cities, the U.S. escalated its "anti-terrorist" and Cold War saber-rattling to outright war provocations. On the other hand, during the same period mass uprisings continue for a second year in South Africa and popular insurrections toppled long-term dictators in Haiti and the Philippines. As well, other U.S. dependencies like South Korea, Egypt and the Sudan teeter on the edge.

The two developments are intimately linked. The reason for the stepped-up U.S. militarism is that imperialism is confronting an unprecedented danger. For the first time since the upheavals in the late 1960s that marked the end of the post-World War II prosperity boom, the general crisis of capitalism has

of minor devils to keep their allies in tow and the masses at heel. They all serve as surrogates for the real enemy, the revolt of those damned by poverty on this earth.

Reagan's portrayal of Qaddafi as a demonic terrorist of questionable sanity is meant to twist public opinion into a war fury. Terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon and is real enough. But the U.S. case against Libya is nevertheless a fraud. Only a few weeks before the raid Reagan had picked a fight with Qaddafi over an entirely different matter, the law of the sea in the Gulf of Sidra. Other countries harbor terrorists too, and the U.S. chooses to leave them alone. Qaddafi's alleged terrorist act in West Berlin (for which no evidence has yet been made public by this



Civilian plane wrecked by Reagan's imperialist attack on Libya. It was only chance that some "anti-terrorist" bombs missed killing more babies.

generated upsurges on a world scale. Client tyrants like Duvalier and Marcos long served to maintain the worldwide imperialist network of exploitation; their collapse meant a serious defeat. The downfall of two such dictators a few weeks apart exposed the vulnerability of the entire imperial structure. Something had to be done.

In ancient times high priests invented awesome deities representing Good and Evil to consolidate their earthly hegemony and befuddle the masses. Progress has brought new embellishments on the old crap. Today our rulers conjure up Satanic powers and a host

Administration of notorious liars) is a convenient excuse.

The real target is the Arab and African masses, who must be taught to submit rather than revolt against oppression and starvation. The oil price collapse only worsens matters: reactionary potentates are less able to buy off the masses. All the more reason to destroy a symbol of Arab radicalism at a time of threatening mass explosions.

The same goes for Central America. Reagan's beloved contras, a gang of mercenary rapists and killers plus misguided peasants, are pawns manipu-

lated to pressure the Sandinistas to end the Nicaraguan revolution or perish along with it. The fact that the Sandinista leaders have labored hard to accommodate U.S. imperialism doesn't satisfy Washington. The revolutionary spark lit by the Nicaraguan masses' overthrow of Somoza must be extinguished before it ignites the Latin American continent.

Likewise in Africa, where the presence of Archfiend Fidel's troops is the excuse for aid to the puppets of apartheid attacking Angola. The Cubans are protecting Chevron's oil facilities there, but no matter; this takes second place to America's overall imperial interests. It is not easy to get away with pumping military and political aid to the South African rulers, engaged in their daily slaughter of the rebelling black masses. Turning the Angolan nationalists into communistic hobgoblins is the only available pretext.

KEEPING THE MASSES DOWN

In all of this Reagan has a three-pronged goal. One is to whip the West into line by demonstrating that imperialism needs a resurgent America. West Germany in particular is being warned to watch its step in building ties to the USSR and East Europe. His second aim is to flaunt U.S. power in the face of the Russians and their potential clients; this, he hopes, will block Gorbachev's attempts to rebuild the Soviet economy and deepen strains among its rulers.

Third and most important is the lesson for the masses of the world: "I can play the liberals' game and abandon a tyrant or two if I have to, but don't think I'll let too many revolutions go that far. And don't think you can count on the big bad Soviets; they can't even control their own coastline, much less come to the aid of the likes of you. Your local leaders are only little imps; I can crush you if they don't do it for me. So don't make a move."

God may be in his heaven but not all is right with the imperialists' world. Reagan did have to sacrifice dictators Marcos and Duvalier: it is difficult to win support for sending in the Marines to prop up gangsters. But he then faced the sad duty of replacing his fallen stooges with cosmetically suitable alternatives, intermixed with whatever butchers and thieves could be salvaged from the old regimes. At the same time he had to find ways to keep his remaining "friendly despots" in place, painting them as pluralists and democrats as best he could.

Seizing the opportunity of the Haitian and Philippine revolutions, Reagan obscenely took credit for the masses' victories. No one took this seriously except his patsy Democratic opposition, which warmly endorsed his claims. But more had to be done. Where discredited cronies can no longer be relied on, imperialism has no alternative but its own military threats and interventions. The problem is to avoid overreaching the limits that public support will tolerate; the solution is to continuously press against these limits, bit by bit. "Democracy" versus "terror-

ism" is a useful cover.

Why are Reagan's open provocations possible now when he couldn't get away with them at first? As a very general rule, ruling classes have two ways of keeping the majority of working people down. One, the liberal idea, is to grant sops to sections of the masses in order to co-opt some, divide the rest and thereby forestall demands for fundamental change. Conservatives, on the other hand, argue that conces-



Mass protests rocked Europe in wake of raid. Response of U.S. left was small.

sions only encourage the masses to demand more; hence they prefer to repress any sign of opposition. Normally the rulers invoke both of these methods in balanced proportion. They turn to the extremes when political conditions reach a deep crisis.

The key factor today is the lack of any liberal alternative: there are few sops to be given. For world capitalism is facing its sharpest economic crisis since the 1930s. The schisms among the imperialist bourgeoisies have deepened as they vie for bigger slices of the shrinking profit pie. Once the vast U.S. domestic market was open to all, but now it is increasingly barricaded. Once U.S. economic power ruled the world, but now domestic productivity is abysmal and all spheres of exploitation are open to inter-imperialist rivalry. A bitter trade war with West Europe and Japan has already begun.

In the past such trends within capitalism had inevitably led to real wars, even when the rulers preferred to avoid them. Today the rival powers fear nuclear war, especially since none of the working classes of the advanced countries have been broken. So Europe and Japan (and Russia, in its own way -- see below) have tolerated, even propped up, the U.S.'s faltering hegemony. But this only exacerbates their own economic troubles.

Naturally the crisis is deepest in the exploited neo-colonial countries where poverty already reigns. Above all there is the ballooning and unpayable debt owed to the banks and governments of the rich. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution explains why bourgeois nationalism, with or without democracy, has never succeeded in escaping imperialism's clutches. Only a workers' revolution that does away with capitalism's inherent anarchy could hope to run the national economy as a whole and link it internationally with revolutionary allies. Now the theory is proven once again.

The "economic miracles" of Nigeria, Iran, Mexico, and the like have become nightmares. The laboring masses are the first to suffer, but the newly prosperous middle classes are declining as well. The latter are the glue that holds the capitalist structure together. Sensing the upsurge stirring beneath them, they look for ways to incorporate the masses. But the idea that democracy can really work in countries imperialism exploits is an illusion.

The shift to civilian regimes in Latin America in recent years (as well as in the Philippines) is often claimed as proof that liberalism is real, but the truth is the opposite. In Argentina and Brazil the military brass gave up state office when they found no way to satisfy imperialist demands for debt payments without triggering revolutions; power was handed to the politicians in desperation. But the imperialist pressures have not changed; there is no nationalist solution. The grinning skull of austerity remains; the democratic skin grows ever more transparent. The only alternatives are imperialist reaction or revolution.

In the imperialist countries too, the crisis is grinding down the middle classes and their middle-class illusions. The bourgeois liberals have no independent policy to offer. In the U.S. the Democrats have become Reaganites in all but name. They have already jettisoned most New Deal programs in favor of fiscal conservatism. Now they are doing the same with foreign policy. From Kennedy and Johnson to Nixon and Kissinger, liberals and moderate conservatives preferred to rely on regional sub-imperialisms like Israel, Iran, South Africa and Brazil to keep their neighbors down. But this policy is coming to an end as the junior partners collapse one by one.

There was next to no protest in Congress over Reagan's Gulf of Sidra provocation and the later terrorist attacks that killed dozens of Libyan children as well as adults; there was barely a mention of his

taunting thrust at Soviet bases in the Black Sea. And everyone knows that the House of Representatives' defeat of the aid package for the Nicaraguan contras is certain to be reversed. The Democrats may say privately that some of Reagan's rhetoric, like his fantasy of the Nicaraguan military threat to the Western Hemisphere, is off the wall. But they back his actions anyway, adding a dollop more of economic aid and pseudo-democratic cover to save face. There is no alternative to direct U.S. intervention, and that is why the Democrats have stopped laughing at Reagan's supposedly crazy ideas and Holy Wars.

SATANIC RUSSIA, THE FALLEN ANGEL

A comparison with past U.S. foreign policy is useful. In Jimmy Carter's time Washington was already aware of the looming threat of revolution on the world horizon. Through his "human rights" policy the Democrats attempted to reform the status quo before it was too late. They even tried to extend this policy to the USSR. As Carter's UN ambassador Andrew Young said in a 1977 interview:

"Repression causes more dissent rather than quells it, and if you keep on applying pressure, you're creating conditions for the overthrow of governments. ... My feeling is that as the Russians begin to evolve, they're going to have more problems rather than less. The fact that we are helping them deal with these few dissenters right now will prepare them down the road to deal with a massive generation of dissent" (See Socialist Voice No.4, page 14)

This collegial attitude would be hard to imagine today. Young's prognosis of growing difficulties was right, of course -- for dictators of both East and West -- but the cure miscarried. Dressing up the Iranian shah and Nicaragua's Somoza as democrats was impossible; simply trying to do so seemingly encouraged the disasters that followed for imperialism in 1979, another year of revolutions. So Carter shifted gears. He revved up the Russian Menace through his Olympic boycott and grain embargo. He bolstered the military budget in an effort to push the strapped Soviet economy to its knees rather than to reforms. Toughness was now the technique for squelching revolution in the world, and shoving Russia around was a necessary component. It also served to activate capitalism's favorite economic hot air pump, the military budget.

When Reagan came into office he had only to press further with Carter's policy. So he went public with the case that revolutions, the arms build-up and terrorism were all fueled and financed by the Soviet "evil empire." Reagan wants no revolution in Russia (he doesn't want the masses unleashed anywhere), but he does want a compliant power that will act not only to restrain social change but actively help destroy it. Many capitalists believe that Russia's efforts in supporting liberation struggles in order to restrain them actually causes the "destabilization" -- the old devil theory of outside agitators. Some sections of

the U.S. bourgeoisie would also like to get a piece of the West German and Japanese economic action in the East. But all wings agree on forcing Gorbachev to cry uncle. In toying with the Devil they are playing with fire.

At the end of World War II, imperialism faced proletarian revolutions throughout Europe. Stalin's Russia succeeded in crushing the revolt in the East, and its allied Communist Parties did their share of the job in the West as well as in colonial regions. The counterrevolutionary strength of Stalinism that enabled it to serve imperialism so well was based on its usurpation of the Soviet workers' state on the eve of the war, creating a statified capitalist power with imperial ambitions of its own. In smashing the post-war round of European revolutions, Stalinism did what no other force could do: it enabled world capitalism to rise like a phoenix from the ashes.

The forces of God and Good were not grateful. They feared the post-war USSR, despite its irreplaceable services to them, because of the proletarian and

proletariat blew up like in a pressure cooker.

Today the Stalinist states are falling ever further behind their Western rivals in a world dependent on modern technique and imperial control of resources. Their crisis is an intensified version of what capitalism faces as a whole. Its industrial growth has collapsed, its agriculture is a shambles, it looks to the West for vital technology to bolster its dilapidated economy. It can garrison its neighboring client states but must lean on Western governments and banks to keep them economically afloat. The USSR is unable to support its own satellites, and it offers little inspiration to the Communist Parties and other "progressives" abroad. Its decline, its inability to play the stabilizing role it held after World War II, is the greatest change on the world scene in the past forty years. Capitalism now faces a revolutionary world with the prop that renewed its life considerably weakened.

That is why the devil theory of Stalinism no longer carries much weight. When Reagan revived it even the bourgeois pundits laughed. For the USSR was obviously too weak to serve as the universal foil Reagan needed. It intervened abroad to maintain political influence, but any alert observer saw that it also helped stabilize world imperialism by not letting revolutions go beyond bourgeois limits. But even here its hand grows weaker. Around the world the CPs are declining as the proletariat advances. Some threat.

Yet the USSR is strong in one respect: militarily. If the U.S. keeps up a policy of provocations the Russians will have to respond. They cannot stop seeking allies and clients abroad as Reagan wants; nor can the bureaucracy safely democratize itself as Young advised. The Polish events of 1980-81 again showed the need for a status quo policy by all Stalinist rulers. (Even where they loosen the economy, as in China, they have to tighten their political control.) So the Soviets have no choice but to build up militarily in response to Reagan. In sum, Reagan may not want world war but he does want the threat of it, and the exigencies of capital and imperialist domination are moving the U.S. in that direction.

For these reasons Reagan has problems in using Russia as the solitary foil for building up a war craze. Baiting the Soviets, with their loosening grip, prevents no upheavals. Syria's ties with Moscow are too strong, and its services in stabilizing Lebanon too valuable. Libya is more convenient. Like any bully's favorite targets (remember Grenada, Lebanon, Nicaragua), it is small and weak. Its arms are few; indeed, Qaddafi proved that he is far from crazy by refusing to send up his outgunned aircraft to confront the American warplanes. Its petty-bourgeois Bonapartist regime postures volubly about Arab unity to delude the masses and stamp out class struggle.

And Libya may well employ terrorism as a weapon, for it is the only one available to middle-class nationalists who are faced with an overwhelming military opponent. With the growing failure of national



Haiti: masses kill hated Tonton Macoutes. "Red terror" by oppressed is far cry from individual acts that only give credibility to Archterrorist Reagan & Co.

revolutionary legacy that still inspired masses throughout the world. Its statified property forms gave it some temporary ability to grow and at the same time frightened the private property capitalists everywhere. As soon as the immediate post-war threats had been undermined by the Stalinists in the name of preserving the Alliance of the Great Democracies, the West turned on its former friend. Cold War was its answer to hellfire. Denouncing the Soviet Satan, the bourgeoisie drove leftists out of government in Europe and out of the unions in the U.S.

But the Stalinist threat was more apparent than real. The USSR could not overcome the particularly sharp contradictions imposed by its proletarian property forms combined with its capitalist drives. Not accidentally, the first post-war revolts in Europe took place in the East. The concentrated, repressed

economies in the neo-colonial world, no wonder the pulverized middle classes turn to desperate individual acts of heroism/terrorism. These are poor substitutes for class war, and they fuel the imperialist demagogues' fire-and-brimstone speeches. Terrorism against innocent civilians is thus self-defeating as well as foul. But it is incidental when weighed against the everyday misery and death imposed on the world by imperialism. And simply in terms of numbers, imperialist terrorist retaliation always kills more than the acts it is alleged to avenge. No lesser terrorist can outslaughter the U.S.

WHAT ABOUT THE "LEFT"?

The delusion that democracy is on the upswing and that terrorism is the enemy of the world's peoples might fool Americans who get their news from TV, but it does not pacify those who face imperialist reality more closely. Nor has the American war mongering succeeded in intimidating them. In Haiti, for example, there have been angry popular actions against "Duvalierisme sans Duvalier" ever since the dictator fell, despite the presence of U.S. warships offshore; it is the bourgeoisie that seems to have lost its capacity to rule. Argentina and Brazil likewise face mass frustration and frequent strikes. And even in the Philippines the masses are beginning to see through Cory Aquino's "democracy"-via-plebiscite.

But the leaders who claim to be guiding the masses have been virtually silent or, worse, complicit with the pseudo-democratic fraud. The Philippine left, many thousand strong and allied to a popular guerrilla army, is searching for ways to make peace with Aquino. The official Communists in Haiti have reiterated their perennial interest in a democratic popular front with the bourgeoisie. The South African ANC looks towards a deal with the "anti-racist" liberal capitalists. As a result, where the masses desperately need revolutionary leaderships, these have yet to be built.

There are no models to rely on. "Socialist" governments like those of Mitterrand in France and Papanou in Greece have turned from paper promises of reform to real austerity. "Communists" like Fidel Castro warn their friends the Sandinistas not to mess with bourgeois property; likewise they urge insolvent Latin American debtors not to renounce the imperialist debt but to convince their oppressors to nobly grant relief in the interest of the masses (and world banking stability on the side).

The truth is that official Socialists and Communists are pro-capitalists dressed up to conceal their true masters. And as the traditional reformists turn to "reality" and the status quo of reformless capitalism, to their left the various centrist groups with revolutionary pretensions flock to the reform parties. There they hope to push their illusory visions of radical (or even "workers") democracy rather than real proletarian revolution; they share the illusions of the rest of the middle classes.

As for the U.S. left, even though it is small and far removed from governmental office, its responsibilities in "the belly of the imperialist beast" are large. The resurgence of imperial arrogance and slaughter must be opposed; the proletariat has to be aroused. These tasks cannot be left to well-meaning liberals and churchfolk whose ultimate loyalties are to a revamped American empire. But the left powers-that-be are still busy maneuvering in the imperialist Democratic Party, lining up with the alleged "friends of labor," the Congressional Black Caucus, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, or whatever. The left's rightward motion continues unabated.

The crying need at home and abroad is the re-creation of an authentic communism, the alternative buried for years under the muck of reformism and centrism. The place to begin is with the truth. Genuine revolutionaries do not enlist workers in the imperialist Democratic Party by imputing to the Republican president a unique craziness or Satanism. Nor do we see "progressiveness" in the decaying Stalinist props of world capital. The bloody crimes of Babykiller Reagan are the crimes of a system, capitalism, which provides the only true hell -- on earth. To destroy it requires building the world party of socialist revolution, a re-created Fourth International. ■

Lora

continued from page 2

played by Comrade Lora and the POR over forty years is accurate. Unfortunately, in the interest of political honesty, more must be said.

There have been two periods of significant revolutionary activity in Bolivia during Lora's political life -- the early 1950s and then the early 1970s -- and in neither case did the professedly Trotskyist POR play a proletarian revolutionary role. Both times it subordinated the independence of the working class to alliances with left-wing representatives of the bourgeoisie, who inevitably betrayed the workers. In 1970-71 the POR tailed the "revolutionary" General Juan Jose Torres. In 1952, ironically, their "anti-imperialist" bourgeois figure was the same Victor Paz Estenssoro now extorting the workers for imperialism.

Guillermo Lora was arrested and remains endangered, however, not for his centrist misleadership but because he remains an anti-capitalist leader of the working class. The arrests of Lora and others were meant to tell Bolivian workers that any militant fight against their exploiters will be harshly dealt with. Thus the attacks on him are attacks on every worker, on every workers' party and organization, on the very principles of working-class rights and independence. While we feel no special identification with Lora as opposed to the other militants under the gun, his case has become an important symbol. We therefore fully support the campaign for solidarity with Comrade Lora. ■

Theses on the Agrarian Question in the Neocolonial Countries

1. The development of capitalism leads to farming on ever-larger plots by wage labor. The spread of large-scale capitalist farming tends to drive small-holding peasants, sharecroppers and other non-proletarian toilers off the land and to appropriate and consolidate the plots they work. This process is an economic necessity for capitalism.

2. In the twentieth century, the epoch of imperialist decay, capitalism is affected by countervailing tendencies. The complete triumph of large-scale capitalist farming employing landless laborers would endanger the system's social equilibrium. It would require the dispossession of smallholders, small tenants and sharecroppers -- with resulting social unrest. Most of these dispossessed would be driven into the cities and would swell the ranks of the restless unemployed. Some, a minority, would stay on to work as wage laborers on the remaining farms. The farm laborers' resistance would of necessity adopt the tactics of working-class struggles in industry -- strikes, mass pickets, etc. This is especially dangerous for the landowners: they would face laborers in smaller numbers but with greater social weight, and moving toward collective, proletarian forms of struggle rather than individual, small peasant forms.

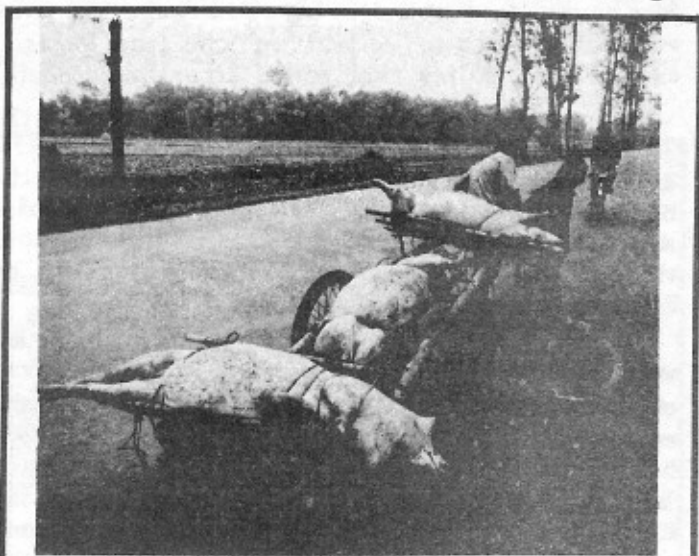
3. Further, capitalism in this epoch depends on ruling strata in the neocolonies who derive surplus value from modes of exploitation retained from the old pre-capitalist societies, such as rent in kind, customary gifts, labor drafts, etc. These landowners are not a "feudal class" or anything of the kind; they are part of the capitalist class, producing for sale on the national or world market. In the least industrialized countries, the large landowners, including those who exploit mostly non-wage labor, are the dominant sector of the national bourgeoisie. They own whatever industry is not wholly owned by foreigners. They are a completely reactionary force, usually the puppets of the imperialist bourgeoisie, which counts on them and their states to repress any struggles by the working people. To force them to modernize their agriculture or, failing that, to replace them with others who will, generates such social tension as to threaten the existence of capitalism in their country.

4. Obviously if the imperialist bourgeoisie and their colonial and semi-colonial bourgeois allies cannot complete the consolidation of the land, even less can they divide it up. "Land to the tiller," the division of the land among the smallholders, sharecroppers and other poor and modest peasants, has been a fundamental democratic demand for centuries. For the majority of the world's peasantry this demand has yet to be fulfilled. The thoroughgoing division of the land would wipe out the economic and political power of the semi-colonial and colonial landowning

sector of the bourgeoisie.

The various middle-class parties -- "democratic" or even "revolutionary democratic anti-imperialist" -- inevitably sabotage, hold back or outrightly crush the rural laborers. As the "prolonged peoples' war" and other radical middle-class strategies become more and more played out, the radicals drop their anti-capitalist mask and effectively side with large landed property. Only the working class can wholeheartedly support the peasants' struggle for the land, and only a revolutionary workers' state can protect and guarantee the seizure and holding of the land by the smaller peasants.

5. This general schema can be illustrated by several examples. In Iran, the "white revolution" begun



Agricultural technology advances, but most farming in the world remains backward. Capitalism is the barrier.

by the late shah in the early sixties bought out or expropriated old-style landlords, lay and clerical, and many small peasants. Their replacements were upstart capitalists, mostly cronies of the shah, who hired wage labor and introduced farm machinery on their huge holdings to produce cash crops for the national and world markets. Many small peasants were driven off the land and into the cities to join the unemployed. The old landlords were no happier: they either lost their land or faced the competition of modernizers with larger holdings and more efficient methods. As the shah's policies were increasingly angering the workers, peasants and other oppressed, making them less manageable and likewise reducing the economic weight of the traditional bourgeoisie, the latter turned further against the regime.

By the time of the 1978-79 revolution, no significant section of any class supported the shah. Various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships claimed to stand for agrarian reform: division of the land. In

power, the clerico-fascist Islamic Republican Party administered a limited and strictly supervised distribution of some of the holdings of "white revolution" landlords among some small peasants. The Organization of Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerrillas led by middle-class radicals claimed to stand for the "democratic revolution," including the complete division of the land by the peasantry. However, when the Turcoman peasants seized and divided the land and then adhered en masse to the OIPFG, its Stalinist and nationalist leadership took the side of landowning reaction and Farsi chauvinism: it assassinated their leaders and betrayed the masses to the IRP.

6. These actions are typical of middle-class radical nationalists. The Chinese Communist Party in the 1930s and '40s prevented the seizure of land by the peasants themselves, sometimes forbidding any land reform in places where the local landlords paid taxes to the CCP, sometimes doling out land to the peasants in a carefully controlled fashion. After winning power, the CCP moved to "collectivize" the land bureaucratically, a policy that ended after Mao's death.

In Vietnam, the Viet Minh promised land to the peasants but also supervised and controlled the division and moved quickly after taking power in the North to consolidate the land under the Stalinist state. The peasants of Vinh province rose up against this new expropriation in 1956, only to be crushed by Ho Chi Minh's army at the cost of 20,000 lives.

In El Salvador, where large-scale farming with wage labor has almost entirely driven out other forms of agriculture, the middle-class radical FMLN has taken over provinces dominated by modern large farms. It has neither divided up this land nor allowed the farm laborers, subsistence farmers or tenants to do so themselves. The FMLN has left the farms in the hands of their oligarchic owners, merely demanding that the latter pay higher wages and benefits. These condescending saviors justify their policy by claiming that there isn't enough land to go around, and that in any case large-scale capitalist farming is more efficient than small-peasant production. This exposes how they and other middle-class formations prop up imperialist capitalism and fight against the democratic, not to mention socialist, aspirations of the peasants, workers and other oppressed.

7. The fact that the middle-class radicals maintain their populist rhetoric and demagogic calls for division of the land has led some would-be Marxists who wish to break with petty-bourgeois pro-capitalism to oppose "land to the tiller" and call for collectivization only. Such people maintain, correctly, that collective agriculture is economically more advantageous not only for consumers but also for the producers, the rural toilers. Under socialism, the argument goes, large-scale agricultural production with a sophisticated division of labor will replace small-peasant production. The break-up of existing large modern farms, the argument continues, would be an economic step backwards.

This conclusion is true: more people can be fed by large-scale modern agriculture than by small peasant plots. The question is, how to get there from where we are? Keeping big farms in the hands of the bourgeoisie or the capitalist state is reactionary, since it feeds the bourgeoisie and starves the laborers and peasants. In most of the colonies and semi-colonies, therefore, the toilers on the land, including even permanently employed farm laborers, prefer division of the land to collectivization. The question of what agrarian program to follow in a given situation is a tactical one. If possible, a workers' state would move immediately to collectivized agriculture; obviously, if the workers won state power and preserved large-scale agriculture, dispossessing the landlords and transferring their holdings intact to the workers' state, the revolutionary government would be in a much better position to move quickly to socialist farming and abundance for all. But in the industrially backward countries, the workers have no way to seize power without the active support of the peasantry and farmworkers.

Consequently, if the peasants want to divide up the big farms among themselves, the workers must support this demand against the landlords -- with their own armed power and by arming the peasantry. Not to do so on the grounds that the revolution can support only collective farming means sacrificing the revolution at the altar of capitalist economic efficiency -- and giving a base to the counterrevolution. Supporting "land to the tiller" gains two objectives: wholehearted support of the peasantry for the workers' state, and the destruction at one stroke of the social and economic power of the landowning bourgeoisie, the enemies of workers and peasants alike. Both advantages help make the revolutionary victory quicker and easier.

In general, in countries where the peasant and farm-laboring masses are numerous and demand division, not collectivization, of the land, the socialist (that is, proletarian) revolution cannot supersede this democratic demand and pass immediately to socialist farming. The workers' state will have to take such socialist measures as the expropriation of many industries, but it must also complete the bulk of the democratic demands that last century's rising capitalism could fulfill only partially and that capitalism in decay cannot carry out at all. Only the workers' revolution can do this. That is, the only solution for the uncompleted democratic tasks is permanent revolution.

8. Permanent revolution does not mean that the workers' state must halt its agricultural program at the democratic stage. Left to itself, a small-peasant sector will inevitably differentiate into larger capitalist farmers exploiting others' labor and poor subsistence farmers. Wherever communists support division of the land for tactical reasons, after the seizure of power they work to show the small peasants that collectivization would be in their interests. They seek to win the mass of the peasantry through

their own experience to voluntary collectivization.

This is analogous to the Leninist position on the self-determination of oppressed nations. Communists are internationalists, opposed to nationalism. Nevertheless, we support unconditionally the right of self-determination, up to and including separation. The reasons are, one, that independence for the oppressed nation breaks up the empire of the oppressor nation and thereby weakens it; two, that working-class support for self-determination proves that the workers do not stand in the way of national liberation as does the imperialist bourgeoisie. Finally, independence won under the rule of the national bourgeoisie will bring the workers and peasants face to face with their native exploiters; they will then find that the whole capitalist class, local as well as imperialist, is their enemy. If the communists have been honest and made clear these facts all along, the exploited classes can then learn through their own experience that they must go beyond the national struggle to socialism and internationalism.

9. This strategy was used successfully in the Russian revolution of October 1917. The Bolshevik

against the landlords' attempt to regain it.

The Bolsheviks encouraged the formation of co-operatives and collective farms where possible, but in the early days of the revolution this was an insignificant fraction of agriculture. After Lenin's death, the rising party bureaucracy together with the party's right wing capitulated to the growing large-peasant ("kulak") sector. The Left Opposition counterposed a policy of voluntary collectivization through high taxes on the kulaks and favorable prices and technical aid to collectives. The agrarian program in the Platform of the Left Opposition stands in sharp contrast to the brutal, almost genocidal and essentially capitalist collectivization carried out by Stalin and his imitators in other countries.

The agrarian program of the Bolsheviks in winning proletarian power and the Left Opposition in fighting to retain it -- and, let us add, of Farabundo Marti and the Salvadorean communists in the revolution of 1932, which is utterly opposed to that of the Frente "Farabundo Marti" de Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) in El Salvador today -- still stand today as the basis for a genuinely communist agrarian policy in Iran, Cen-



Collective farm market for privately produced crops in Kiev, USSR. Stalinism now pushes private agriculture to lift production and prevent peasant revolts.

party was not a workers' and peasants' party or bloc but a working-class party. The Bolsheviks recognized that the peasantry cannot act independently but must follow one of the cohesive urban classes. To break the power of the nobility and landholding bourgeoisie, they supported the peasant demand for division of the land, even though they saw this as an economic step backwards. This was the only way for the workers to gain state power in the first place and to hold that power by assuring peasant support for the Red Army in the civil war against the old ruling classes -- it was the only army that defended peasant land

tral America and many other neocolonial countries.

10. The inexorable tendency towards socialization of agriculture under capitalism is one reflection of the system's penchant for digging its own grave. It is complementary to the tendencies toward socialization of industry, internationalization of the economy and proletarianization of the laboring masses. The bourgeoisie is forced to adapt to these trends in order to prevent their fruition in a new society. State monopoly, imperialism and industrial co-determination are some of the tools it employs. In agriculture, huge agribusiness companies replace old-style

plantations, peasant holdings and family farms. Modern monopoly agriculture uses advanced technology on the one hand and migrant workers on the other to try to mitigate the growth of proletarian consciousness.

Under the Stalinist variant of stratified capitalism, the tension both in industry and on the land is so potentially dangerous to the system that a tight grip is constantly needed to prevent social explosion. The original Stalinist land collectivization in the degenerating Russian workers' state was accompanied by extreme brutality because of the danger of a frontal assault against a social class vital to production. Collectivization only occurred after the proletariat was decapitated in the late 1920s. Its purpose was to give the state tight control over the peasantry and its production in an effort to develop Russian national power in the face of imperialist encirclement. It was a landmark in the developing national capitalist restoration.

The effects of collectivization could be mitigated over time because the stratified economy was able to absorb excess layers of peasants into industry. Here the danger of the massive proletarian growth was handled by guaranteed employment, which gave workers a stake in the status quo. Likewise in agriculture, the impact of the collective farms' tendency toward proletarianization has been met through massive disguised unemployment and the use of auxiliary private agriculture by collective farm workers.

Haiti

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of the delegation declared himself convinced after having met with members of the CNG [the interim government] that General Henry Namphy 'could reestablish democracy'."

The spirited demonstration of about 1000 people thought otherwise. Largely Haitian but with contingents from several U.S. left groups, it marched from the U.S. Capitol to the White House, chanting slogans in English, French and Creole like "U.S. Out of Haiti," "Power to the People," and "The Only Solution: Revolution." The LRP initiated more politically pointed chants which were taken up by many within hearing distance of our contingent: "A bas les militaires, revolution ouvriere," and its English equivalent, "Down with the Junta, Workers' Revolution."

Following the march, speeches by leaders of the sponsoring organization and others reflected the more right-wing current criticized in our leaflet: those who demand a civilian regime to replace the current military junta, as if such a cosmetic change would be decisive. In fact, the call for a civilian government to replace the junta, popular among the mass demonstrators in Port-au-Prince, seems to be the invention of Popular Frontist leftists trying to pose as oppositionists to the current regime without actually advocating the overthrow of capitalism. We say this because of the bourgeois liberal politicians now arriv-

The effect is not only to increase production but also to give the peasants a stake in the system.

The advanced socialization of property forms in industry and on the land under Stalinism represents such a deep threat that the system must block its consequences with methods that consolidate low productivity and low returns on capital investment. Thus, as in the West, the means used to forestall upheavals really only delay them. They also create new barriers to the production of the superabundance that the world is now capable of.

The new Stalinist countries that emerged at the end of World War II are far weaker than the USSR, and there the trend has recently been away from collectivization toward private peasant production. In Poland, the regime could only consolidate itself by allowing private peasant production from the outset. The severe problems of small landholders throughout the world are especially noticeable under Stalinism in their inability to adopt advanced technology and the inadequacy of their capital investment.

An important lesson for today's Bolsheviks is the need to guarantee sufficient credit and technological resources for our peasant allies. This will not only help build the peasantry's confidence in the working class but will also point toward collectivization on the basis of positive benefits to those who labor in what has been the most backward aspect of world production, agriculture. ■

ing on the public scene in Haiti and making themselves conveniently available for high office (a few of whom are cited in our leaflet), all insist on the necessity of the military presence. They do not call for a specifically civilian government.

Also playing a leading role in the march was the July 28 Contingent, apparently a spin-off of the Mouvement Haitien de Liberation (MHL), a left-wing Maoist organization. The July 28 Contingent's leaflets saluted the mass struggle but did not specify workers' revolution as the road forward; indeed, the MHL believes that such a revolution is not on the order of the day in economically backward countries like Haiti. A detailed refutation of the MHL's position can be found in our article "Haitians Fight for Freedom" in Socialist Voice No. 16.

The demonstration showed the high level of political interest and wide variety of viewpoints among Haitians in the United States, confirming our leaflet's point that working-class Marxists in the Haitian community must organize a firm pole of attraction for workers — that is, begin the construction of a revolutionary proletarian party, an authentic Trotskyist party.

(The leaflet has been slightly edited for publication.)

President "for Life" Jean-Claude Duvalier was one of the supposedly unshakeable dictators -- like the shah of Iran, Somoza of Nicaragua and Marcos of the



Anti-U.S. Haitian rally in Washington.

Philippines — who have been overthrown by mass struggle. Right until the end, the United States government aided and armed all these despots, including Baby Doc. Today the same U.S. government is trying to rob the Haitian people of their victory. The revolution has only begun.

The Haitian masses have already proved that they are not fooled by the democratic rhetoric of U.S. imperialism and the Duvalierist military leaders it has imposed. As we write, there is increasing evidence that they see through General Namphy himself. Unfortunately, if overturning the present army regime only results in a civilian government still committed to capitalism, the hopes of workers and peasants for a better life will still be thwarted.

Despite the months of popular demonstrations and the threatened general strike that brought Duvalier down, five out of the six members of the new junta were Duvalierist officials. This is no surprise: after all, the changeover was engineered by the CIA with the cooperation of the Haitian church and army. Duvalier even boasted that he had picked it himself!

Since taking power, the junta and its allies have tried to prevent the people from dealing out justice to the agents and torturers of the old regime. The church appeals for an end to the masses' justified revenge against the bloody Tontons Macoutes; the police and army defend the criminals and their property. No wonder mass dissatisfaction has continued, highlighted by a wave of powerful workers' strikes. General Namphy has been forced to oust the most obvious representatives of Duvalierism without Duvalier. But Namphy himself, the president of the ruling council, served the dictator loyally for decades.

GERARD GOURGUE IS NO ALTERNATIVE

The one member of the junta with any popular respect was Gerard Gourgue, founder of the Haitian Human Rights League, who participated in the regime as Minister of Justice in order to give it a democrat-

ic cover. Gourgue resigned his post on March 20; evidently he was no longer capable of moderating the masses' demands. He criticized the regime's failure to "apply justice," but while in office he shared most of its unjust and blatantly undemocratic aims.

"We think we can have elections in 12 to 18 months," Gourgue said in a telling interview in the March 5 *New York Times*. "That will be the minimum time we need." The Haitian masses obviously have different ideas about how long they ought to wait before getting their say. "There has to be a council that chooses a constituent assembly," Gourgue added, echoing Namphy — as if anyone but the people as a whole has the right to make such a choice. Obviously a selected assembly is designed to maintain rule by the privileged elite, the capitalists -- not the masses.

Although sentiment for a civilian government centers around figures like Gourgue, he himself originally defended the military's domination of the new regime. "For the moment we need the armed forces, because they are the only people who can guarantee security." Guarantee security against what threat? Certainly not their CIA masters, and not the Tontons who are already on the run (it is their safety the army is protecting). It is only the imperialists, capitalists and landlords who are threatened. The threat is the just demand of the masses for a decent life, a demand the bourgeoisie cannot meet and still preserve its rule.

Gourgue admitted this by criticizing the masses for demanding revolutionary gains. "Now everyone believes we had a revolution," he said; "everyone wants change immediately." Obviously preferring that there be no genuine revolution, Gourgue is trying to deflect the true interests and demands of the masses who want much more than the formal justice he advocates. And Gourgue was the best the junta and its U.S. creators had to offer.

After years of deprivation and a heroic struggle, the Haitian workers and peasants fully deserve to see

their dreams come true. But it will not happen as long as they are ruled by capitalist, pro-imperialist politicians. They must take matters into their own hands and carry out their revolution themselves.

"DOWN WITH THE GOVERNMENT!"

After the dismissal of the three Duvalierist ministers, protesters took to the streets and workers went on strike to bring down Namphy himself. Strikes have hit critical areas in both the public and private sectors, including public transportation, telecommunications, the state flour distribution company and customs offices. "Down with the Government!" was the protesters' slogan on March 22. This is a tremendous advance, but the masses must not be satisfied with a new liberal face of imperialism like Gourgue.

All wings of the bourgeoisie bemoan the fact that Haitians now expect big changes, while the new capitalist regime can do nothing to make a dent in Haiti's misery and backwardness. In fact, if the U.S. and the International Monetary Fund have their way, a stiffer austerity will be imposed on Haiti to bleed the masses even more to pay back the foreign debt. Last year Duvalier paid \$21 million in interest alone, and Haiti supposedly owes double that this year. The IMF's man on the scene, Marc Bazin, a former finance minister under Duvalier, is scheming to get back into power through his Movement for the Installation of Democracy.

Most of the "left" has argued that what Haiti needs first is a bourgeois-democratic revolution by the workers and peasants in alliance with "progressive" bourgeois forces. But where are these progressive capitalists? Their survival depends on retaining the 3-dollar-a-day wages and the strike-free environment that attracts foreign businesses. Now that Duvalier's extreme corruption is out of the way, they hope to compete with other low-wage countries like those in Asia. And they will not hesitate to use Duvalier-style repression if that's what it takes to keep the masses down. You can be sure that U.S. officials, Republicans and Democrats alike, will be there with guns to help out.

The capitalists are afraid of the workers. The Times (March 24) quoted an observer as follows: "The managers who were happy not to deal with unions in the past now wish they had them." Workers need to organize their own power through councils, which could mobilize a general strike to bring down the Namphy regime. Workers' and peasants' councils could become the basis of a new state, a workers' state on the road to socialism. They could arm the workers and peasants, expropriate the imperialist and capitalist bosses and invite the peasants to seize the land.

REPUDIATE THE IMPERIALIST DEBT!

Their demand should be not only the return of the half billion dollars stolen by Duvalier, but the repudiation of all the debts Duvalier incurred to imperialist banks and governments. (In Nicaragua, the Sandi-

nistas are still paying off Somoza's debts, six years after his ouster, in a futile attempt to curry favor with imperialism. But it only increases the exploitation of the working people and does nothing to hold off the murderous contra invaders.)

A struggle to abolish the imperialist debts would reverberate throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, where the masses are suffocating under their weight. Abolishing the debt and expropriating the capitalists is the only way to mitigate Haiti's poverty even temporarily and to reconstruct the economy in the interests of the masses. It means a revolutionary fight, and it is also the key to making the Haitian struggle international—the only way it can win.

In a world dominated by imperialism, economic independence for a small country is impossible. This means that an internationalist revolutionary strategy is necessary. Just as the original Haitian revolution of 1804 had a tremendous impact on black slaves in the U.S., so too would a working-class revolution shake the world today. When hundreds of thousands of Haitians live and work in the U.S., the impact here would be even greater. (The influence must also go the other way: Haitian exiles who have experienced the racism of U.S.- style "democracy" first-hand can do a lot to dispel illusions at home over the benefits of imperialist "aid." It is no wonder the new regime has still refused to lift Duvalier's ban on the return of political exiles.)

Despite the maneuverings of the junta and its U.S. manipulators, the mass upsurge that brought down Duvalier has opened up wide possibilities for political struggle. In order to lead the movement of the workers and peasants, it is vital for the most advanced sectors of the working class to form the nucleus of a revolutionary proletarian party. Such a party, dedicated to the goals of socialist revolution and internationalism, would use every strategy and tactic to show the masses that the "democratic" bourgeoisie has nothing to offer. It would be a leading part of a re-created Fourth International, carrying the spirit of the Haitian Revolution across the world, to oppressed and imperialist countries alike.

**GENERAL STRIKE TO BRING DOWN THE U.S. PUPPET JUNTA!
FOR A REVOLUTIONARY, ELECTED CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!**

**U.S. IMPERIALISM OUT OF HAITI!
REPUDIATE THE DUVALIERIST DEBT!**

**FOR A HAITIAN WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' GOVERNMENT!
FOR PROLETARIAN SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!
FOR THE UNITED SOCIALIST STATES OF THE CARIBBEAN!**

**ARMS FOR THE MASSES!
EXPROPRIATE THE CAPITALISTS!
LAND TO THE PEASANTS!**

**HAITI, CENTRAL AMERICA, PHILIPPINES, SOUTH AFRICA, U.S.—
WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!
BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!**

COSATU

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of South Africa (CUSA), whose affiliates have about 200,000 members), and the more radical Azanian Congress of Trade Unions (AZACTU), linked with the militant AZAPO organization that picketed the visiting Ted Kennedy as an imperialist. In addition, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the labor arm of the dominant black liberation group, the African National Congress (ANC), at first refused to join. SACTU today exists mainly in exile circles and is powered by the South African Communist Party, which plays an important role in the ANC subordinated to the ANC's middle-class liberal leadership.

The apartheid system as an extension of South Africa's traditional racism was introduced in the post-World War II period when imperialism re-established itself based on the worldwide defeat of the working class. South African capital was both a junior partner in the imperial system and a vital link in its chain of raw materials and production. Its brand of capitalism depended totally on the super-exploitation of black workers under slavish conditions. To this end, racist repression was coupled with the buying off of white workers to separate them from potential class-struggle unity with the black workforce; the whites held the skilled crafts as a black-free bastion. Yet the growing black proletariat achieved a central position in South Africa's mines and modern industries.

The unionization movement is the outgrowth of a history of workers' self-organization. In 1921 the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union had 150,000 members. During World War II, substantial gains were made through the Council for Non-European Trade Unions. SACTU, formed in 1955, soon became a major force under the booming post-war conditions, but its leaders were arrested or forced into exile when the ANC was subsequently outlawed and forced underground. Nevertheless, the new black proletariat and its explosive struggle could not long be contained.

The new organizing drive has its immediate roots in the wave of wildcat strikes in Durban in 1973. Despite the predictable government repression, successful organizing continued throughout the decade. In 1979 the government officially recognized the new unions, but this was merely a formal and forced acknowledgment of de facto organized working-class power that already existed in many workplaces. Finally, the impulse for organizational unity came with the general strike of late 1984, when the unions, students and community organizations paralyzed South Africa's industrial heartland for two days.

Obviously the ruling class hoped that recognition would establish a layer of black leaders who could act as a labor aristocratic restraint upon the unruly black workers. Within the pattern of grudging acceptance, some capitalists like the Anglo American Corpo-

ration hoped to introduce black labor into the short-handed crafts without rocking the system too much.

Nowhere is the contradictory role of the trade unions more evident than in South Africa. But the polar forces do not resolve in perfect balance. COSATU gets its power from the concentration and motion of a rising proletariat. Its present domination by pro-ANC leaders is a conservatizing factor, but they rest on a tiny middle-class and labor-aristocratic layer. The potential for a breakthrough is very favorable.

THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS AT ISSUE

The road ahead must be cleared by counterposing a revolutionary communist strategy to the political choices presented by the present leaders. When unity talks began in 1981 among a variety of unions (led by FOSATU, then the largest single federation), the question of racial policy became central -- should the unions be exclusively black or not? As far as we can judge, the black consciousness unions rejected COSATU on two grounds: first, its non-racialism, although



COSATU workers raised Barayi to leadership; he cedes it to petty-bourgeois ANC.

the great bulk of COSATU's members and all of its leaders are black. But they also justifiably mistrusted the ANC's integrationist notion that the white bourgeoisie would have an equal role in a liberated South Africa with the black masses. Thus CUSA and AZACTU split away when the unification talks settled on the "non-racialist" position, but the key Mineworkers union switched from CUSA to the new grouping.

The second central issue was how far the unions should engage in politics. The question of political activity had previously separated the community unions, who were allied to the bourgeois liberal United Democratic Front (whose political backbone is the ANC) and insisted on continuing this political role. FOSATU had shunned political activity in order to focus on narrowly conceived immediate economic interests. But asking for more crumbs within the system, when the entire system was so obviously intolerable, could not hold militants for long. The ANC's insistence on the need for revolution was hard to answer.

This debate as it stands is misleading. The real issue is not whether political activity is needed but what political activity. Obviously the oppressor state has to be confronted, along with the corporations whose interests it represents. But the basis for taking on the state must be a working-class alternative, not the UDF-ANC program whose essence is an alliance between white capitalists and the black middle-class political leaders to run a new integrated South Africa. This vision of "liberation" so sweet for the tiny black petty-bourgeois intelligentsia is an ominous threat to the mass of black workers and will hold back the liberation struggle as a whole.

If the workers and their unions follow the ANC road, their efforts will be channeled to pressure the regime (and its allies in Washington and London) to negotiate for a new government on a capitalist basis. But if the workers' struggle is diverted from its essential anti-capitalist focus it will dissipate; then the black movement would be contained in the residential townships. And without access to industrial strength it would be smashed or gradually subside in frustration.

On the other hand, if the masses' pressure is diverted but not curbed then a new integrated regime may actually be installed. But it would be dependent on world imperialism -- its governments, corporations and banks -- for survival. And imperialism would not permit the abolition of South Africa's cheap wage scales, even if apartheid regulations are ended. This solution would require the suppression of black workers' independence and struggle just like apartheid. A prettified reality of race discrimination and super-exploitation would have to remain, but with black ministers as well as imperialist guns to enforce it.

FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

In choosing "politics" rather than narrow syndicalism, the unions are taking the disastrous path of the ANC. President Barayi, an ANC member of long standing, threatened that COSATU members would collectively burn their pass cards if the despised apartheid pass laws weren't repealed in six months. If such action had been taken immediately under the momentum of COSATU's birth, its effect would have been tremendous. Had the black working class refused to use their pass cards it would have in effect threatened a general strike. The regime could have given in, thus suffering a grave defeat, or it could have refused the workers access to their jobs, thus bringing industry (and profits) to a stop. Either way, the black workers would have seized center stage in the liberation movement.

But what Barayi did was to postpone decisive action, thus surrendering leadership to the ANC. This has meant continual warfare by the unarmed masses, who have heroically made the black townships ungovernable by the regime but are unable to destroy the capitalist state. It has meant leaving the initiative

with the "progressive" white capitalists to make a deal with Botha on the one hand and the ANC on the other. But these bosses, who once made overtures when the social explosion seemed ungovernable, now are satisfied to wait the masses out. As of this writing Barayi's six months are almost up. We shall see whether Barayi succeeds in stringing out the confrontation even longer.

Of course, easing the pressure on the capitalists wasn't Barayi's tactic alone. The role of the accommodationist black union leadership was clearly shown in the 1985 Mineworkers' strike (see "South Africa: the Proletarian Alternative," in our previous issue). Forced by mass pressure to call the strike, NUM leader Cyril Ramaphosa settled with Anglo American, the largest employer, and withdrew his threat to call out its workers if other bosses used violence. Then he announced before the strike that repression doomed it to failure. Thus the workers' sacrifices won them little.

The way forward from COSATU's founding would have been to call a general strike, via the pass card route or any other means, against the state's repression. Mass confrontation is inevitable -- it happens every day. Tragically, it is now taking place under circumstances which cannot bring down the regime or even prevent it from functioning. A general strike would be a real alternative. It too would have to face the armed power of the state but could do so in a more organized way than is now possible. It means arming and training the workers and building special armed squads. But under the momentum of a general strike these would be vastly different from the elite guerrilla teams favored by the ANC which leave the defenseless masses disarmed.

Recent reports indicate that COSATU has now accepted the ANC's SACTU as its external wing and accepts the ANC as the leadership of the struggle as a whole. This is a step backward that could dispel the momentum built up by the workers' gains so far. In order to reorient the fight against the bullets and brutality of South African capitalism, a fight within the new workers' organizations over strategy and leadership is necessary.

FOR AN INDEPENDENT LABOR PARTY!

The formation of COSATU points to a political tactic that leads away from the ANC, the call for an independent labor party based on all the unions. Such a demand by revolutionary workers would be aimed at winning over the workers who follow pro-ANC and syndicalist leaders. It takes those union leaders at their word who say that workers have to defend themselves not only against apartheid but even against a future ANC regime.

The independent labor party slogan says to the workers, in effect: "Many of you have confidence in the present union leaders and believe that they really wish to protect your interests against the bosses and even against the ANC. We disagree; we predict that they will call for subordination to the

ANC. Yes, they sometimes argue with the ANC's line, but that is done only to control you, the workers, and prevent you from exercising your power. They will fight against an independent labor party. Let us fight together for such a party and in that way see which of us is right about them."

The tactical and conjunctural call for a labor party is not an alternative to the proletarian revolutionary party whose construction is always central for Marxists. But a small nucleus of revolutionaries cannot counterpose itself to the mass organizations that the unionized workers have built. The vanguard cannot simply demand by fiat that the workers abandon illusions in their present leadership. Revolutionaries must go through united struggles with their fellow workers in order to expose the sellout leaders. Through the labor party tactic they can offer a united front to the leaders as well as the base. If the leaders reject the challenge the workers have learned a lesson in practice, not just political logic; if a few accept it they will have taken a course inimical to their petty-bourgeois interests. Either way, a practical step is taken towards winning cadres for the necessary mass revolutionary party.

Nor do communists insist on their revolutionary program for a labor party as an ultimatic precondition that workers are asked to accept in advance. Instead they propose a united struggle for an independent labor party along with a series of transitional demands that benefit the proletariat. This says, "You may believe that such a program can be carried out under capitalism, without a workers' revolution, possibly under the leadership of the ANC. We do not. We predict that the formation of an independent labor party with working-class demands foreshadowing a workers' state would arouse the ANC's hostility, for we know that the ANC advocates capitalism as a necessity for the foreseeable future. Again, fighting together for such a party will show which of us is right about the ANC and the need for a workers' revolution."

The independent labor party tactic in the South African context is raised in correspondence with the guidelines formulated by Leon Trotsky in discussions with his American followers in the late 1930s. It is designed to redirect the workers struggle away from its primary economic focus, not just to the "community" struggles now common (like consumer boycotts) but toward the question of state power. (The tactic is more fully discussed in two earlier articles: "The Labor Party in the United States," Socialist Voice No.6, and "A Powerless Answer to Reformism," Proletarian Revolution No.23.)

THE NECESSITY OF INTERNATIONALISM

The workers, while devoting their primary attention to building their own class organizations, must take the leadership of the black struggle as a whole, notably the demands of the masses for equality and an end to the vicious apartheid laws. Revolutionaries would therefore call for a Constituent Assembly to

determine the course of the revolution and the state to replace the apartheid regime. This demand recognizes the diversity of forces whose alliance the revolutionary proletariat will need to carry the revolution through. Such an assembly could offer representation to tribally conscious blacks, Indians and "Coloureds" as well as to white workers and unemployed.

The proletarian strategy must as well be internationalist, relying on the theory of "permanent revolution" which demonstrates that the democratic demands can only be fulfilled through the workers' socialist revolution as part of an international struggle. Not only is it impossible to end super-exploitation in South Africa without ending capitalism; the South African economy is so intertwined with imperialism that a free South Africa could not coexist without spreading the revolution. The end of capitalism in South Africa means socialist revolution throughout Africa, as the beleaguered masses of the whole continent see their way out of their grinding exploitation and starvation.

The need for a free South African state to forge links with the world working class demands a fight for an interracialist consciousness. As the current struggle in South Africa develops and the capitulatory line of COSATU's leaders becomes clearer, unless a proletarian alternative presents itself the most radical and militant workers could be won to the trap of racial exclusiveness, nationalism and separatism. The fundamental enemy of the black workers is the capitalist class and its lackeys, whatever their color. Unifying the workers of all races is the internationalist policy, the polar opposite of the ANC's integrationism that depends on a deal between the black middle class and the white bourgeoisie.

It may well be too late to win over significant numbers of white workers in South Africa. But that doesn't mean that the effort shouldn't be made to make interracialism the conscious program of the working class. White workers facing unemployment and the loss of their privileges in crisis-ridden South Africa must not be abandoned to the apartheidists who are ruining them; they could then become shock troops for a fascist regime. A revolutionary communist program offering full employment in a new Workers Azania might offset the trend towards growing dependence on apartheid. No moderate program of capitalist reforms can win such increasingly desperate people.

The stakes in the struggle for the leadership of the South African black working class are enormous. A victory for proletarian consciousness in the Azanian revolution, the most significant of all those that have shaken the former colonial world since World War II, would lead almost directly to the victory over imperialist capitalism everywhere. A defeat would mean fascist oppression of the masses that would make Botha's rule look positively playful. There is no avoiding a political confrontation with the liberal politics of the ANC now, in order to set the stage favorably for the showdown with the forces of apartheid which will inevitably arise. ■

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Summer 1986

COSATU Faces Key Choice For a Revolutionary Party in South Africa

An historic step in the advancing class struggle in South Africa was taken last fall with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. COSATU, the largest independent union federation in South African history, was born out of the relentless mass struggle in the black townships at a moment when the need for working-class leadership in the fight against apartheid capitalism is most critical.

But trade unions, even the best of them, are contradictory institutions. They represent the independent organization of the working class but accept the bounds of the capitalist structure within which they bargain. With a revolutionary proletarian strategy COSATU could become the launching pad for the overthrow of the super-exploitative system; without it, COSATU will be a roadblock to the mass struggle.

The thousand delegates who met in the city of Durban in November to launch the new union represented over 450,000 paid-up (and 600,000 signed-up) workers. Included are industrial unions like the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) whose vice president, Elijah Barayi, was elected president; the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union; and the Metal and Allied Workers Union -- 36 in all. Also included are a number of "community" unions. Of course, the segregated labor-aristocratic white unions are outside.

The "black consciousness" unions rejected COSATU as well; these are grouped into the Council of Unions

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Haiti: The Revolution Continues

We print below the leaflet issued by the League for the Revolutionary Party at the "Demonstration for Haiti" held in Washington on March 29. The demonstration was called by the Committee Against Repression in Haiti to protest "the installation of a Duvalierist junta under the auspices of the United States; the threat of North American military intervention in Haiti; interference in Haitian internal affairs by the U.S. State Department."

These concerns are well justified. Early in the century U.S. Marines occupied Haiti for two decades, and U.S. governments continue to assert the right of intervening militarily in countries in "our backyard" in Central America and the Caribbean. Indeed, despite the extreme impoverishment of the mass of Haitian workers and peasants, the United States — even after

Duvalier's overthrow — concentrates its "generosity" on arms and riot-control equipment for the military junta. This faith in the junta is shared not only by the openly interventionist Reagan administration but by liberals who claim to think differently. Thus we read in the April 2 issue of Haiti Demain:

"A delegation of the Black Caucus [of the U.S. Congress] visited Haiti this week, headed by the representative from Washington, D.C., Walter Fauntroy. The purpose of the visit is to evaluate the main areas in which Haiti needs assistance. The Black Caucus delegation also took the opportunity to renew the support of the American people for the democratic process which has begun in our country. On American television the spokesman

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