

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



Re-Create  
the Fourth International

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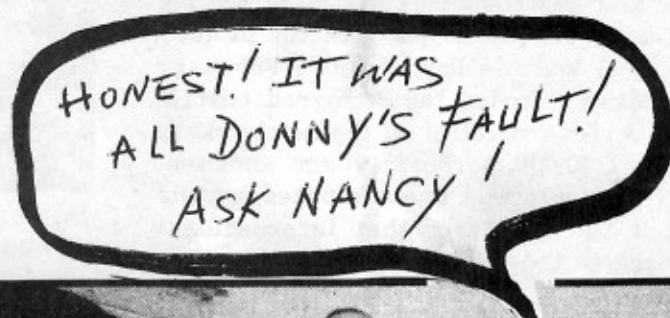
## Reagan on the Rocks

With dazzling speed, the Iran-contra affair has thrown the Reagan administration into a crisis and revealed the fragility of the imperialist world order. Only two years after winning his supposedly overwhelming electoral mandate, the embodiment of the Imperial Presidency is fighting for his political life.

Rambogate is not just a scandal. Like Watergate, it is a crisis in bourgeois democracy. As with all recent presidents, Reagan created his own staff apparatus within the government to free himself from the binds of dealing with the Congress and even his own Cabinet. Foreign policy was run out of the White House basement, as Reagan sought to overcome the post-Watergate restrictions on the State Department and the CIA. Oliver North organized a network of weapons merchants, drug smugglers and assorted adventurers with secret airstrips, Swiss bank accounts and CIA dummy corporations. This international web of intrigue involving Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia and several Central American nations made Richard Nixon's "plumbers" look like pikers. Even Hollywood would have trouble matching Reagan's script.

### Historical Crisis of Democracy

The crisis demonstrates anew the contradiction between democracy and imperialism. In his work Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Vladimir Lenin attacked the view that imperialism was only a



Poindexter, McFarlane, Regan: The fall guys fall, but the Imperial Presidency still stands.

bad policy that could be overcome by reforms. According to the social-democratic revisionists, capitalism was becoming increasingly democratic; socialism would inevitably result from the working class achieving majority status under the progressive march of bourgeois democracy.

Lenin countered with an analysis of the imperial-  
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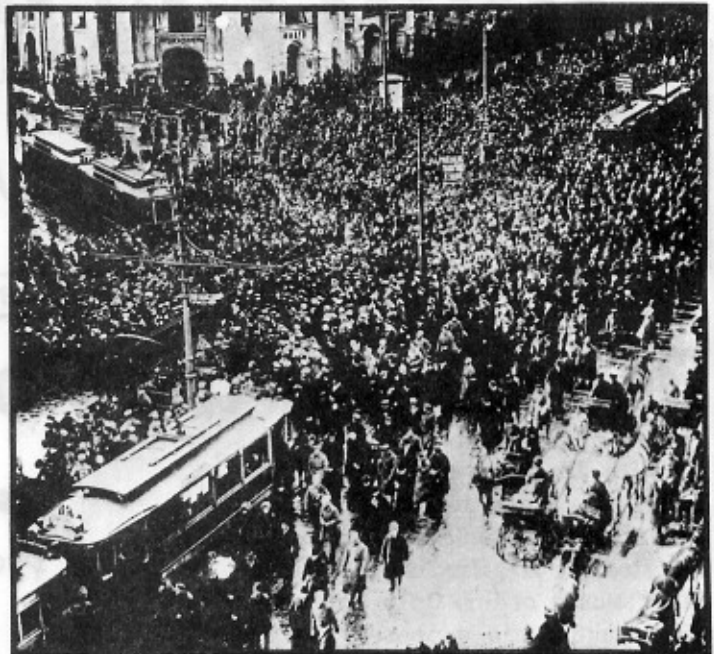
# International Women's Day

Like May Day, International Women's Day arose as a working-class holiday out of workers' struggles in the United States. On March 8, 1857, women textile workers in New York City demonstrated for shorter hours, better pay and working conditions and an end to child labor. A half-century later, on March 8, 1908, middle-class women demanding the right to vote joined in mass demonstrations in New York with women from the needle trades.

In 1910, on the proposal of Clara Zetkin, the Congress of the Socialist International designated March 8 as a day to commemorate these struggles and all struggles of women internationally.

Seven years later it was again women textile workers who led the most important demonstrations marking the day. This time it was not in New York but in Russia. On International Women's Day of 1917, February 23 by the old Russian calendar, the Petrograd textile workers went on strike and called on the metalworkers to join them. In all, 90,000 workers, women and men, participated. The result was unanticipated by the participants, but the events of that International Women's Day triggered the February revolution that overthrew Czarism.

Over the years, the middle-class women's movement has tended to dominate the celebrations of International Women's Day and removed the working-class content. With attacks increasing against the working class and against women workers in particular, it is



International Women's Day: March 8, 1917 in Petrograd, Russia, a prelude to the October revolution.

important to restore the proletarian content, the struggle against exploitation. It is only through the proletarian revolution that women can gain their liberation, and only through the full participation of working-class women can the proletariat succeed. ■

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## PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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# Iran: Counterrevolution in Crisis

The arms dealing between Iran and the United States has staggered not only conservatives in the U.S. loyal to the "anti-terrorist" Reagan. It has also dismayed supporters of the "anti-imperialist" Khomeini. Even an avowed Marxist analyst can write:

"As an Iranian who supported the revolution and many of its ideals and aims, including a genuinely non-aligned foreign policy, I am alarmed to learn of clandestine connections with members of the U.S. and Israeli political elites." (Shahrazad Azad, The Nation, January 24.)

There is no excuse for such naivety on the Iranian side any more than on the American. On the other

hand, there are leftists who insist that "no fundamental differences in policy exist between the present regime and that of the hated shah's regime."

"As did its predecessor, the present regime spends more than 40% of its budget on the military, which is used primarily to suppress the popular movement. Economically, it follows exactly the same policies which result in the further destruction of local producers and peasants, the further exploitation of Iranian workers, and the almost absolute dependence of the Iranian economy on oil revenues -- the list goes on and on." (Iran in Resistance, March-April 1986.)

But this is no answer either, since military and economic similarities -- even the fact that both Khomeini's and the shah's regimes are classified as capitalist -- do not account for vast political differences. A Marxist analysis of Iranian society is necessary to make these differences as well as the politics of the arms deals understandable.

## Mullahs Triumphant?

The Iran-Iraq war has been dragging on now for almost seven years. It began when the clerical fascist Islamic Republican Party (IRP) was governing in coalition with secular bourgeois nationalists like then-president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr. One year into the war, the IRP mullahs jettisoned their secular coalition partners to rule alone.

The brutal attacks on labor unions, workers' shoras (councils), left-wing parties, student organizations and women's and minority nationalities' struggles began, like the war, under the coalition government with the support or acquiescence of the secular bourgeois elements. When the attacks succeeded in destroying or immobilizing the meager bases of

support for bourgeois liberals, the IRP was able to dispense with them. The IRP had a mass base in the Hezbollah (members of "God's Party") and Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards). These stormtroopers were recruited from unemployed peasants newly arrived in the cities, poor bazaar merchants and peddlers, and other middle-class elements pauperized by capitalist development under the late shah.

Once propelled into power, the mullahs liquidated the Hezbollah and institutionalized the Pasdaran. At first the Pasdaran ran about disciplining and countermanding the old army command, which had almost



November 1986: Iranians burn U.S. flags. Mass hatred of imperialism is still fiery.

fallen apart during the revolution. More and more, however, the Pasdaran became another branch of the armed services, with a Ministry of Revolutionary Guards running them from the top down. As well, the mullahs rebuilt the Shah's old secret police, the SAVAK, which they renamed SAVAMA, in order to have a more regular and disciplined state authority to crush systematically any independent organization of the working class and other oppressed.

## Workers' Organizations Underground

The mullahs have forced Iranian women back to wearing the veil. The universities have been "Islamized," with the study of medieval superstition required of all students. At the factories attendance at prayer meetings has been made compulsory. Workers' organizations exist but are deeply underground. The struggles of the Turcoman, Azerbaijani, Qashqai and other oppressed nations within the borders of Iran for self-determination have been smashed, though the Kurds fight on. The jails are full of leftists, labor unionists, women who insisted on wearing Western dress, etc. Internally the mullahs would seem to have

things all their own way.

Externally as well they are riding high. The war with Iraq is going well, instilling high morale once more into the Iranian army and Pasdaran. The Iraqi forces are starting to crumble and may fall apart, bringing down the reactionary Ba'ath government of Saddam Hussein and giving the Iranian mullahs a chance to install a puppet Islamic Republic in Iraq. In other Middle Eastern countries, especially Lebanon, Islamic fundamentalist parties looking to Iran for inspiration are gaining strength and influence.

Finally, the exposure of the arms deals made by the White House with the mullahs has left the Reagan administration humiliated and in disarray, while the mullahs look like masterful dealers and politicians. The IRP regime should be at its peak of power and self-confidence.

Instead, the Islamic rulers are divided and



Democracy vs. Terrorism. U.S. arms clerical fascist murderers of Iranian workers and national minorities.

unsure of themselves as never before. They publicly accuse each other of selling out to imperialism; they even arrest each other's supporters. During debates in the Majlis (parliament), mullahs have almost come to blows. Though independent workers' and women's organizations have been crushed, strikes are fairly frequent and sometimes victorious; often the mullahs are too afraid to send Pasdaran or police to break them. Many women still refuse to wear the veil in public and get away with it. Workers sneer at the clergy and stay away in droves from factory prayer meetings, despite threats of firings and jail. And Iranians of all social classes openly state their desire to keep family members out of the army, despite the great danger of doing so.

### Iranian Fascism

We have pointed out in this magazine that the Islamic Republic is essentially fascist, in a form modified by Iran's "third-world" context. But what kind of fascist regime stands on such shaky ground after six years of untrammelled rule?

The Iranian picture does not resemble the popular image of fascism as spiffily uniformed stormtroopers

marching in lockstep, wheeling about and chanting in unison to the signal of an equally spiffy Leader. Instead there are chaotic mobs of Pasdaran in sport-shirts and slacks waving rifles in the air and yelling "God is great!" Instead of a Supreme Commander, there is a noisy and unruly parliament; robed and turbaned priests shout each other down instead of waiting for orders; and the supreme ruler, Khomeini, does not command but hears disputes and gives verdicts like a judge. And all this is happening not in an imperialist power like Germany, Italy or even Spain, but in an industrially backward and semi-colonial country.

Moreover, the IRP regime seized power in a totally different manner from the European fascists in the 1930s. The latter took over the state by smashing working-class revolutionary movements that were misled by Stalinist, social-democratic and centrist parties. The mullahs, in contrast, were in the leadership of the revolution of 1978-79, which finally overthrew the Shah through an insurrectionary general strike of the workers.

### The Iranian Left

Nevertheless, we maintain that only an understanding of Iranian fascism can explain how the society works and where it is going. The denial by many leftists that the IRP regime is fascist is linked to their failure to recognize Iranian society and its ruling class as capitalist. This has serious political consequences: it denies as well that the proletarian socialist revolution is necessary to end backwardness and misery in Iran.

In fact the revolution against the Shah was won when it turned into a workers' insurrection. But the leaders of the working class, whether Stalinist (like the Fedayeen and the officially pro-Moscow Tudeh Party) or "revolutionary Muslim" (the Mujahedeen), held that Iran had never developed a powerful native capitalist class with its own modern industry. For them the revolution could be only national and anti-imperialist, that is bourgeois.

Consequently these currents accepted the mullahs' leadership in the revolution in order to preserve "anti-imperialist unity." The mullahs, of course, had no qualms about breaking this unity at the first possible moment, mobilizing their thugs against the left parties almost as soon as the Shah fled. The left parties reacted in different ways.

The Fedayeen split into right and left wings. The smaller right wing (misleadingly called the "Majority" because of its overrepresentation in the central committee), along with the Tudeh, backed Khomeini despite his increasing persecution until they were finally banned in 1982-83.

The Mojahedeen, after vacillating as long as pos-

sible, went underground shortly after the start of the war and carried out terrorist bombings that killed a number of leading IRP mullahs. They ended up on the side of Iraq in the war in alliance with ex-president Bani-Sadr, their former persecutor (thereby demonstrating the bankruptcy of Islamic liberation theology). All these groups acted according to the conception that bourgeois democracy is the necessary next stage for the Iranian revolution.

Others, in the Fedayeen "Minority" and the Communist Party of Iran, understood too late the need to remain independent of and in opposition to the mullahs and all capitalist politicians. But most of these comrades too call for a radical "democratic" state of one type or other rather than working-class rule. They recognize the weakness and dependency of the Iranian bourgeoisie and the fact that the Islamic Republic serves capitalism, but they have not drawn the necessary conclusions for a revolutionary working-class strategy.

### Iranian Capitalism

What deceives them is the nature of the Iranian bourgeoisie: it has never ruled directly as does the bourgeoisie in the imperial countries. Iranian capitalism arose after the turn of the century, and in this epoch no oppressed national capitalist class can modernize its country and do away with pre-capitalist forms of oppression. The Iranian industrial bourgeoisie serves as the franchisee of multinational corporations based in the U.S., Europe and Japan. At best, as in the textile industry, it owns its own plants but remains small and dependent on foreign technology. The biggest capitalist in Iran is the state; it owns the oil industry on which the rest of the economy depends.

Iranian capital had supported the Shah for two decades. It had welcomed his suppression of the workers without missing the right to rule as long it kept the right to make money. With his "White Revolution" of the 1960s, however, the Shah began awarding large tracts of land and big industrial concessions to himself and his cronies, robbing the rest of the bourgeoisie of even the right to profit. When working-class unrest that he couldn't suppress broke out in the mid-'70s, most capitalists abandoned him.

During the revolution a few direct representatives of the bourgeoisie briefly held high office. Most prominent were Bani-Sadr and Mehdi Bazargan, now leader of the only legal (and very small) opposition party in the Majlis. But they lacked force and conviction in the face of the mighty working-class upsurge. The workers, peasants, artisans and other poor and oppressed people, guns in hand, would not listen to calls for moderation, respect for private property, and warm relations with imperialism. The Iranian bourgeoisie could not have instituted a moderate bourgeois republic even if it had wanted to.

In the face of the armed anti-capitalist masses, only a radical-sounding program could save private property. This the Islamic Republican Party provided.

The mullahs had a ready-made scripture and tradition preaching obedience, superstition and irrationality (like all religions) -- plus love of the poor, hatred for the rich and the unity of all the faithful across class lines -- a perfect base for a fascist ideology.

The failure of the left to counterpose scientific Marxism and class struggle left the IRP program as the only beacon for the anti-capitalist masses. Experienced industrial workers in oil and other industries remained hostile to the mullahs. With a genuine communist party they could have won the allegiance of other oppressed classes, defeated the IRP, and led the revolution to socialism -- blowing the Middle East wide open. But the bulk of the left was pro-bourgeois and confused, and the opportunity passed.

The mullahs used their mass base against the working class, chopping off its left leadership. They also rallied the masses against the U.S. and some Iranian capitalists. For the most part this was demagoguery; taking the American embassy and its spies as hostages was a move to outflank an oil workers' strike called to protest the welcoming of the exiled shah into the United States.

On the other hand, the mullahs did not mind ridiculing an imperial power whose modern capitalist culture was influencing Iranians to ignore the clergy. Also, the ulema (the Islamic church organization) owned considerable land, which it was losing to large modern capitalist farmers. But part of the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist rhetoric also concealed a class division among the clergy themselves, a division that marks all fascist movements.

### "Moderate" Fascism

Fascist movements never originate as respectable capitalist parties. They start out as lower middle-class groups, and their class composition and radical rhetoric cause the bourgeoisie to fear and despise them. As long as the bourgeoisie faces no severe economic crisis with rising mass anti-capitalist movements, it keeps its distance from fascism. But when the crisis is so severe that traditional "prudent and moderate" policies are totally worthless, the bourgeoisie sees the need for drastic solutions.

As they lose confidence in their own ability to resolve the crisis, the capitalists cede the initiative to someone willing to take the necessary action. When only the total crushing of all independent working class organization can save profits, they throw in their lot with the fascists, who have the necessary militant mass base for this task. They support and increasingly join the fascists, once they gain assurance that the radical anti-capitalist program is trickery. Thus arises a "moderate" wing of fascism.

This process took place at a very accelerated rate in Iran. The party organization and mass following was thrown together from the already existing ulema. Mass rallies, so necessary to fascist organization, were held during the regular Friday Mosque services. The original lower-middle class leadership of

the IRP came for the most part from mullahs of poor families like Khomeini.

The moderate wing of the IRP leadership, under the conditions of crisis, did not wait long to join. Supported by some industrialists and especially by wealthy bazaar merchants, this wing was made up largely of mullahs from wealthy families. This wing, typified by Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani, climbed on board the IRP not only to regain the respect that the clergy were losing under the Shah -- but also to prevent anti-capitalist excesses, restore the orderly functioning of the state, and, when the time came, to reestablish relations with the imperialist "Great Satan." To a large degree they have succeeded.

This follows a law of development of fascism. Once in power, fascism does away with its radical wing; the moderates take over. Sometimes this process is quick and drastic, as in the German "night of the long knives" when Hitler had several hundred of his radical supporters massacred. Sometimes it is a bit more leisurely: Mussolini and Franco demoted their radicals or sent them to posts in the provinces. In Iran this process has been going on for more than five years -- but it is not likely to follow the path of European fascism.

The victory of the European "moderate" fascists became possible once the workers were thoroughly crushed and the fascists' mass petty-bourgeois base demobilized. The international context for the process was mounting world counterrevolution. The major fascist countries were industrialized (to different degrees) and imperialist.

Conditions are quite different in Iran. Although the fascist mass base is either demobilized (the Hezbollahi) or regularized (the Pasdaran), the working class was never crushed to the extent even of the Italian workers under Mussolini. This is due to the rather ramshackle organization of repression in Iran and haphazard nature of IRP totalitarianism, which is based on an old organization, the ulema, run according to old routine.

### Mullahs Face Workers

As well, the international situation of rising world revolution and particularly the instability of the Middle East involves the mullahs in insoluble contradictions. Iranian capitalism can never build or rebuild its own empire, as Italy and Germany did -- Iranian capitalism must remain in hock to imperialism. Hence the drive to improve ties with the U.S. that emerged in the present scandal.

The mullahs, however, face a restive working class which still hates the U.S., as do most Iranians. Many workers and peasants are presently armed, at the front with Iraq or in the reserves at home. Further, the mullahs have a following throughout the Middle East made up of radical lower middle- and working-class Shiites whose allegiance they can keep only by retaining their anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist rhetoric. If their fraud is exposed, the radical Shiites in Lebanon and elsewhere might break out of cler-

ical control and find a working-class alternative.

Last but not least, the mullahs might win the war with Iraq, which would be the biggest possible disaster for them. The Iraqi army has been fighting unenthusiastically all along. If Iran continues to advance on the Basra front, the Iraqis could collapse completely. The soldiers might then desert en masse and head for Baghdad to string up Saddam Hussein and his cohorts: many workers and peasants would certainly join them. Any attempt to impose a puppet Islamic



Imperialism at work. Khomeini's Syrian allies butcher Khomeiniite Hezbollah; U.S., USSR and Israel applaud.

government from Teheran quickly and smoothly would fail. Instead Iranian workers and peasants could themselves copy the Iraqi example and their own history of a few years ago.

"The workers retain a sweet memory of those days in 1979, when a factory committee was elected to run the factory in the interests of the workers, and remember the activities of the factory committee with nostalgia."

So wrote the British Militant (January 30) on a workers' struggle at a pharmaceutical plant near Teheran against the firing of women workers forced to wear the veil on the job.

Even if this scenario is too optimistic, the mullahs will have a hard time hanging on for too many more years in Iran. The life span of the IRP regime may be only months. A "moderate" victory in Iran would cause the splintering of the IRP and the disintegration, sooner or later, of the government. The working class would certainly use the opportunity to break out of its present condition of isolated struggles. The radical wing of the IRP cannot win -- it too would have to carry out moderate bourgeois and pro-imperialist policies.

What would ensure that the IRP not only is overthrown but stays overthrown, would be the creation of a genuine communist party in Iran that will lead the workers to the seizure of state power. That would signal the start of socialist revolution in Iraq and throughout the Middle East as well. ■

# Reagangate

continued from page 1

ist epoch as the negation of bourgeois democracy. Capitalism could no longer play a progressive role. The dominant powers would exploit every country they could get their hands on; capitalism in crisis would lead to inter-imperialist rivalries to redivide the world. Only reactionary wars could resolve the crises, and that only temporarily.

Lenin's understanding that capitalism had entered its epoch of decay, where "certain of its fundamental characteristics began to change into their opposites," was also the foundation for Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. With the turn of the bourgeoisie to the side of reaction, the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution could only be achieved through proletarian rule.

In the 1930s, as the developing crisis swept over Germany, Trotsky concluded that unless the proletariat took power, bourgeois democracy would give way to Bonapartism -- and in its extreme crisis, fascism. The Social Democrats, who betrayed the workers'

revolution in the name of democracy, paved the way. Democracy was an illusion in the imperialist nations as well as in the backward areas of the world.

The illusion was nevertheless materially based. As a result of imperialist exploitation, the metropolitan capitalists could afford to give some sops to the workers in the advanced countries in order to buy off the class struggle. Lenin observed that this created a labor aristocracy and nourished other middle strata; these layers, given their stake in the system, were the carriers of the democratic illusion. In the post-World War II years, the prosperity bubble based on the defeat of the proletariat by Nazism and Stalinism inflated the illusion further.

The aristocratic layers always remained narrow. Trotsky compared imperialist democracy to the democracy of Ancient Greece based on slavery: it existed only because much of the world was enslaved, once through colonialism and now through economic and military domination.

Under modern imperialism, the "democratic" (actually pluralist) institutions like the U.S. Congress have undergone sharp changes favoring the increase of executive power. Insofar as imperialism prospers it can maintain bourgeois democracy at home, but must jettison it when the underlying crisis comes to a boil. Even in the best of times, the capitalist trends toward concentration and centralization of the productive forces are mirrored in the power of the state. In the United States, the accretion of power by the presidency has been going on for decades, from the crisis years under Roosevelt through the post-war boom to the post-boom decline.

## Creeping Bonapartism

Imperialism craves strong rulers. But like all trends under capitalism, this tendency develops in

Rafsanjani displays Bible and scriptural note from hypocrite Reagan. Ayatollahs and Holy Rollers can't openly prey together because of mass hatred for imperialism.

"And the Scripture, promising that  
God would justify the Gentiles  
by faith, presented the gospel  
alikehand to Abraham, saying,  
'All the nations shall be blessed in  
you' Galatians 3:18"

Ronald Reagan  
Oct. 3, 1986



ratchet-like fashion, punctuated with interruptions when sections of the bourgeoisie fear that too strong an executive will override their sectoral interests. The ruling class also fears the workers' reaction to violations of democracy. Still, the consolidation and strengthening of the proletariat is a major reason for the bourgeoisie's continual attraction to strong-man rule. Executive power grows but maintains the trappings of democracy as long as the depths of the crisis can be avoided.

Despite the internationalization of capital, the bourgeoisie is in essence a parochial class. Each capital pursues its own interest, torn between the need to defend its national state and its narrower immediate concerns. Each new institution of the expanding executive branch becomes the servant of the sector of capital it was supposed to regulate in the "national interest." Consequently the White House has to duplicate these functions within its own walls to bring them under the control of the highest authority. The result is Oliver North.

The trend might be called creeping Bonapartism. Classically, a Bonaparte balances between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, seeming to mirror the will of the popular classes while fulfilling the needs of the rulers. In situations of extreme capitalist breakdown, where the proletariat threatens but has failed to revolt successfully, fascism steps in. In the U.S. at this point we are facing a slow Bonapartist trend fraught with hesitations and contradictions.

### From Vietnam to Iran

Reagan's basement operations reflect the effort to overcome the legacy of Vietnam. Hegemonic America has to be able to step in and crush upheavals anywhere in the world. It uses the declining threat of the USSR (and the rising one of mass upsurges, denounced as "terrorism") to lock the working class into the imperialist outlook and bridge the widening gaps between the U.S. and its lesser imperialist allies. (See our analysis in "Reagan Terrorizes the World," Proletarian Revolution No. 26.)

Thus Reagan has escalated the arms buildup begun by Jimmy Carter, denounced the USSR as the "evil empire," attacked easy targets like Grenada, sent marines into Lebanon and carried out his "anti-terrorist" crusade by bombing Libya. Despite his "successes," he has failed to enlist the population behind his military adventures. Hence foreign policy more and more takes on a covert and illegal form.

Reagan's biggest frustration is Nicaragua. While the bourgeoisie is united in support of the contras, it is divided over how to use them. The Democrats in Congress want the reactionary terrorists to force concessions from the Sandinistas: expulsion of Soviet and Cuban advisers, no "export" of revolution, "free" elections with contra participation and containment of the militant workers and peasants who overthrew Somoza. In short, turn the petty-Bonapartist Sandinistas into a direct instrument of U.S. imperialism.

Reagan's fantasy of a contra victory is not shared by strategists who know that a military victory requires a bloody U.S. invasion. Unlike Grenada, this would be a costly and unpopular adventure that could lead to a working-class explosion far beyond anything seen during the Vietnam war.

Before the exposure of the Iran arms deals, there was a constant flow of revelations about the administration's covert operations in Central America. On the surface the Iran arms deals seem hardly as serious as the CIA's mining of Nicaraguan harbors and the murderous contra operations. The Democrats and Republicans in Congress accepted these violations of U.S. and international law -- all powers have to do such things. The Libya disinformation campaign and the shooting down of Americans flying guns to the contras frightened many bourgeois; the Reagan administration seemed out of control and potentially dangerous to the ruling class.

### The Wreckage of Reykjavik

To top it off, Reagan's fiasco at the Iceland summit sent chills down bourgeois spines. On the one hand, Gorbachev's conciliatory policies are convincing people in allied countries that the Soviet threat is bogus; in the eyes of millions, Reagan's blathering at Reykjavik seemed deliberately aimed to destroy a real chance for peaceful coexistence. On the other hand, the mainstream American bourgeoisie may not like the overt war moves of Reagan's right-wing adherents -- but its pants dropped when the president almost gave away the whole missile program, an idiocy from any conceivable imperialist view.

The bourgeois leaders had accepted Reagan despite his demagogic attacks on Eastern bankers and Wall Street, because they knew that their differences with the interdependent Sun Belt capitalists championed by Reagan were relatively minor. The former "liberal establishment" didn't care for, but could nevertheless recognize as necessary, the right-wing rhetoric on social issues (abortion, prayer in the schools, etc.). But the live-and-let-live arrangement between the dominant bourgeois interests who wanted a militarist but "reasonable" American posture and the far-right "cowboys" was now getting out of hand.

The moderates were frightened into moving against Reagan, enough to check his adventurist friends and compel a firmer grip at the top -- but certainly not to throw the president out of the White House. Their aim was to ensure that the next occupant, whether Republican or Democrat, would be more directly responsible to them and not to the far right.

Attacked as wimps for being soft on communism over Nicaragua, the moderates seized on an issue that could force Reagan to put his House in order: softness on terrorism. The major public organs of the Establishment began the campaign: the Washington Post, the New York Times and the television oligopoly. It was not a conspiracy but merely a mounting

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# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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## Fourth International Supplement

### International Tendency Formed

STATEMENT OF TENDENCY  
by Workers Revolution (Australia)  
and the League for the Revolutionary Party (USA)  
January 1987

Workers Revolution (WR) of Australia and the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) of the United States have affiliated. We have established a fraternal international tendency based upon our agreement on the fundamental principles of Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism and their application to our times.

Our tendency was born in the struggle for the independence of the working class and its vanguard party. As opposed to fake-Trotskyist combinations so prevalent today, we make no concessions to social democracy, Stalinism or other forms of bourgeois nationalism and class collaboration. We are dedicated to the re-creation of the Fourth International and a return to its original communist working-class politics.

The significance of our tendency does not lie in its present size, which is small. But there has been a recent increase in interest in our views among left forces internationally. And our real hopes stem from the buildup of mass working-class struggles across the globe. We are confident that this movement will develop not only in numbers but that it will signal the resurrection of authentic proletarian communism as a major world force.

#### The Epoch of Imperialist Decay

We live in the epoch of capitalist decay, world revolution and the transition to socialism. For the first time in history, in this century the human race has had the opportunity to eliminate scarcity and throw off, once and for all, the shackles of exploitation and oppression inherent in the class division of society.

But this epoch has a dual character. The same mode of production which gave humanity its chance for liberation has also saddled the world with the most inhuman reign of brutality in history. Capitalism has become imperialism, and in its death agony it breeds counterrevolution, world war, depression, fascism, genocide and mass starvation. It ruthlessly embraces every form of racial and sexual domination in order



to deepen the divisions among the mass of the oppressed. Each day that the system survives increases human degradation and the possibility of universal barbarism.

Time after time throughout this century the working classes have shaken the world and undermined the citadels of power. The mass unrest generated by the First World War produced the Russian revolution and other nearly successful upheavals. The mighty Chinese and Spanish revolutions between the wars were put down only by the combined efforts of all the world's imperialists. In the wake of the Second World War once again the workers rose up in West Europe, East Europe, Africa and Asia.

But time after time the workers have been defeated and seen their creations aborted. Their defeats were the work of an array of pro-capitalist forces developed by the decaying system and designed to preserve it. These include not only the open enemies of communism but also "socialist" elements who have cap-

tured the leadership of key working-class struggles.

Today's far left groups, the so-called "Trotskyists" included, are characterized by a deadly cynicism that denies the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat. Underneath their rhetoric, whether it be openly revisionist or religiously orthodox, the pseudo-communists blame the working class for the absence of socialism on our planet. To them, the proletariat is "the god that failed." But the truth is exactly opposite.

As Trotsky pointed out, in our epoch the central obstacle to revolution is not the capacity of the proletariat but the nature of its leadership. The once-Marxist Second International was transformed into the social democratic Yellow International, and it led the workers into the fratricide of World War I under the banner of imperialist nationalism. Aided by centrists who spoke in the name of revolution, the social-democratic reformists were instrumental in suppressing workers' revolutions; this had the devastating effect of leaving the Soviet workers' state isolated and open to domination by its nationalist bureaucracy. Stalinism soon joined social democracy in its effort to betray revolutions, and the Communist Third International was transformed into the central instrument of counterrevolution.

#### **The Fourth International**

In the 1920s and 1930s the Left Opposition heroically fought the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and abroad. In 1938 the Trotskyists launched the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution, to fight for revolutionary proletarian leadership.

The Fourth International's Marxist program contained a serious error. It held that the civil war conducted by Stalin underneath the great purges of 1936-38 was only "preventive": a weak bureaucratic caste was trying to preserve the hollow and highly contradictory degenerating workers' state from political revolution by the proletariat. World War II demonstrated, however, that the civil war had signified the Stalinist bureaucracy's consolidation of power as a statified capitalist ruling class. Indeed, Soviet Stalinism proved strong enough to smash workers' uprisings in East Europe; and its allied Communist Parties abroad were able to betray revolutions around the world.

The Trotskyists were weakened by the murderous attacks on them by Nazis, "democrats" and Stalinists alike during the war. After the war they became politically disoriented by the expansion of Stalinism, the consequent defeats of the working class and the unexpected imperialist prosperity under American hegemony. Their belief in the proletariat waned, and their adaptation to the petty-bourgeois forces of social democracy, nationalism and Stalinism advanced. By the late 1940s they adopted the anti-Marxist notion that "deformed workers' states" could be established (and consequently the socialist revolu-

tion won) by counterrevolutionary Stalinism.

In the Bolivian revolution of 1952, the Trotskyist party, with broad influence in the working class, supported the "revolutionary" bourgeois nationalists and thereby led the proletariat into defeat. This betrayal was carried out with the virtually unquestioning support of all sections of the International. The transformation of the Fourth International into centrism was proven in practice.

The exploited masses of the world rose up continually throughout the post-World War II period, despite its vaunted prosperity. Even without a conscious revolutionary leadership, the workers were able to shake the Stalinist states to their roots. The colonial revolutions under petty-bourgeois nationalism were able to win political independence but not to secede from the imperialist world network. Struggles by oppressed races and women achieved gains but not liberation from their bourgeois chains.

With the inevitable resurgence of the mortal crisis of capitalism, the democratic achievements have been rapidly eroded. Exploitation of workers intensifies, poverty spreads, ex-colonies become neo-colonies, trade wars and international depression loom -- and world war threatens anew. The only way out is proletarian revolution. The only leadership capable of carrying out this task is a conscious Marxist vanguard armed with the perspective of permanent revolution. Only through the workers' victory can democratic rights be assured, national rights be made real and the gains of the past retained and deepened. Hence the absolute necessity of an authentic Trotskyist international.

#### **Origins of Our Tendency**

Since the demise of the revolutionary Fourth International, the epigones have split into numerous competing organizations. There are a dozen varieties of "orthodox" Trotskyists inhabiting "Fourth Internationals" that remain defensist towards the counterrevolutionary USSR and habitually invent "deformed workers' states."

An alternative wing rejected Stalinist statification, but it too abandoned hope in the capacity of the working class to transcend reformism. Founded by Max Shachtman and Tony Cliff, this current consists of the International Socialist tendency led by Cliff in Britain, as well as U.S. centrists who stopped short of Shachtman's drive towards reformism in the 1960s. The American International Socialists group (IS) was formed as an amalgam of the more left-wing Shachtmanite elements. Substituting a "rank and file," i.e., reformist, program in place of the revolutionary and transitional demands of communists, they increasingly adapted to labor bureaucrats and reformist politicians.

The explosive events of the 1960s shook the left in general and the IS in particular. The massive French general strike of 1968 signalled the end of the post-war boom around the world. In the U.S. the black ghetto rebellions also announced the propulsion

of working people to break from their traditional liberal and reformist leaderships and search for a revolutionary alternative. Leftward developments took place inside many centrist groups.

Our tendency emerged out of a struggle beginning in 1972 in opposition to the IS's adaptations and in search of genuine Trotskyism. This struggle produced the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). After the rightward-drifting RSL bureaucratically expelled us in order to embrace a melange of reformism and anarchism, the Trotskyists founded the LRP in 1976.

Another round of proletarian upheavals -- the British miners' strike, the South African uprising, revolutions in Haiti and the Philippines, anti-imperialist wars in Central America and further upsurges in Western Europe -- has shaken the far left again. This latest wave of demonstrations of workers' power is all the more important because it occurs in response to the growing crisis of world capitalism. Many centrists have accelerated their drift to the right and are attempting to regroup in order to become a stronger tail to the reformists' kite. But a number of groups have split, and there is a beginning of a leftward polarization as well.

### The Matgamnaites

In Australia, a tendency arose in the Socialist Fight group (SF), which is part of the "orthodox Trotskyist" milieu and is affiliated to the British Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA) led by Sean Matgamna. Both groups have been deeply buried inside their respective Labor Parties and were blindly adapting to reformist forces. The Matgamna tendency, in the past one of the more left of the pseudo-Trotskyist groupings, combines a rank and file strategy of the Shachtman-Cliff type with its traditional Soviet defensism.

The Matgamnaites have replaced the Trotskyist Program, which they scorn as "sectarian," with a gradual, "reasonable" approach tailor-made not to estrange the reformist "lefts" within the trade union and Labor Party bureaucracies. They have abandoned the struggle to build the alternative revolutionary lead-

ership parties Bolsheviks have always fought for.

This adaptation to national chauvinist social democracy in imperialist countries has resulted in the spectacle of British "Trotskyists" now saying that they cannot support unconditionally the immediate withdrawal of British imperialist troops from Northern Ireland. Earlier they had refused to take the side of oppressed Argentina against their "own" imperialist bourgeoisie. The SOA also apologizes for Zionism and includes open Zionists in its ranks.

While nominally opposing the incomes controls planned by the next Labour Party government, the SOA refuses to expose Tony Benn's role as a key architect of this wage-cutting scheme. In fact, Benn regularly writes lead articles for the SOA's paper.

In Australia, the Matgamnaites combine their rightward trajectory with petty bureaucratism. Socialist Fight, the group's journal, has only just reappeared after three years' absence. SF's recent decision to resume publishing an independent paper was made only with great reluctance; it would much prefer a "broad" paper like its British colleagues' to help justify its subordination of revolutionary politics. SF eagerly awaits Australia's own Tony Benn.

SF's sharp drift rightward was dramatically confirmed when its recent national conference agreed to lend practical support to reactionary protectionist campaigns; it overwhelmingly rejected an opposing motion. The leadership then chose to hide this blatantly chauvinist line by publishing a different position in the press. Hypocrisy is no insurance against corruption!

### Our New Tendency

Paul White, the original founder of SF and a well known left oppositionist in the trade unions, conducted a struggle to halt the group's degeneration. Like the LRP a decade before, he was forced to re-examine the very bases of his politics. In doing so he came to agreement with the LRP's views on Stalinism, the nature of the Trotskyist Transitional Program and communist work in the unions. He wrote a series of

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documents on the nature of the USSR, the counter-position of reformist and revolutionary work, the Matgamnaite's adaptation to imperialism over Ireland and Zionism and the SOA's collapse into Bennism.

In reply, the collapsing SF made little attempt to grapple with fundamental issues. Its leaders tried to force comrade White out of SF simply for raising political differences, so as to avoid discussing them. At its conference in November 1986, basic questions were shoved under the table, and Comrade White left SF. The newly founded Workers Revolution paper will serve as the nucleus for the creation of a full-fledged organization.

Our common tendency is a fraternal one, based upon serious discussions on fundamental questions and some degree of practical collaboration. The coming period will provide opportunities for deepening joint work and thereby allow further testing of our agreement in practice. We have every reason to expect that our agreement will solidify further and that an international democratic centralist tendency will be the result. Our disagreements so far are confined to secondary questions.

Our claim to be the pole for the re-creation of the Fourth International is based on our analysis and program, which reflect the material interests of the proletariat. As well, the current period is fruitful for the reconstitution of genuinely revolutionary politics.

The material basis for class-collaborationist misleadership is crumbling, as are the props of its

centrist left wing. The intensifying crisis is deflating the middle layers of capitalist society, puffed up by the post-war prosperity bubble and the illusions it created in capitalism's capacity for democracy and reforms. The Stalinist countries, which once gave political, economic and often military backing to every popular frontist and capitulatory intrusion into mass movements, are visibly decaying and losing their aura of progressiveness.

The rightward drift of the "family of Trotskyist groups" is a desperate attempt to confine workers' consciousness to the "democratic" past rather than open up the revolutionary future. The present-day pseudo-Trotskyists stand no closer to Trotskyism than do the myriad rank and file ex-pseudo-Trotskyists, Maoists, ex-Maoists, pro-Albanians, semi-Stalinists and other centrists who must be fought if the new vanguard is to crystallize on uncompromising revolutionary foundations. Elements from the left groups reacting against their leaders' right-wing transformation will rediscover revolutionary communism and become an important part of the coming revolutionary international.

Once again the proletariat through its own struggles will create an authentic communist leadership, this time under material circumstances likely to strip it of remaining illusions in the beneficence of capitalism. Our new tendency is dedicated to the triumph of this proletarian struggle and to the class of which it is a small but growing part. ■

# Re-Create the Fourth International!

The British Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) issued a call in January addressed to "all Trotskyists" for an International Conference later this year to take up the "urgent task of re-organisation of the Fourth International."

The inspiration for this call comes from the rising tide of working-class struggle from South Africa to Central America, in the Stalinist bloc and Western Europe. Workers are demanding, through their actions, a revolutionary leadership counterposed to the middle-class nationalists and opportunists they are saddled with. They are by no means yet conscious of what they seek, but the political significance of the growing upheaval is clear to Marxists.

On the other hand, the various centrist leaders calling themselves Trotskyist have rotten and bloody

That is why the organizational and political independence of the revolutionary party was the first principle of the International Left Opposition. It is based on the irreconcilability of the class struggle under capitalism. All the pervasive issues -- opposition to imperialism, socialist revolution instead of stagism, internationalism rather than nationalism, proletarian independence as opposed to class collaboration -- are embodied in the independence of the vanguard party.

The history of those who claim to speak as Trotsky's "orthodox" successors proves how right he was. The bitter irony is that calls to revive the Fourth International are being addressed by and to the very organizations whose theory and practice have been responsible for disorganizing and destroying it.

Nevertheless, some elements are questioning



Mix and Match Quiz: Test your skill! Can you match each capitalist ruler pictured above with the 'Trotskyist' group(s) that capitulated to him or her?

records in responding to the need for revolutionary intransigence. Gerry Healy capitulated to the obscurantist politics of Khomeini and Qaddafi. The British affiliates of Ernest Mandel are indistinguishable from Tony Benn and other national chauvinists in the Labour Party; their United Secretariat, the most prominent pretender to the heritage of the Fourth International, advocates class collaboration in popular fronts in Nicaragua and El Salvador as the path to social revolution. The influential Militant group does the same for South Africa.

Moreover, the "Trotskyist" label has been affixed to people who "understood" Ho Chi Minh's need to murder the Vietnamese Trotskyists; it still is claimed by those who backed Jaruzelski's counterrevolution against the Polish workers. Practically the entire milieu accepted Pol Pot's Cambodia as a workers' state. Some now refuse to give unconditional military support to nationalist fighters against imperialism in Lebanon, Ireland and elsewhere. The figure of Leon Trotsky, who fought tenaciously against all forms of corruption in the working-class movement, has been mummified by idolaters with blood on their hands.

Trotsky never ceased to maintain that the crisis of this whole epoch of capitalist decay could be summed up as the crisis of proletarian leadership.

fundamentals and seeking a new road, recognizing the demands placed on them by the level of struggle. That is an important development. In our previous issue we analyzed the explosion that took place in 1985 inside the WRP and its international affiliates, formerly led by the notorious bureaucrat and charlatan Gerry Healy. We wrote:

"As the bulk of the middle-class and labor-aristocratic left is pulled rightward, loyalty to the proletariat pulls other sections to the left. No wonder that in the wake of the British miners' strike, as a consequence of both its proletarian potential and its bureaucratic betrayal, a few gusts of wind blew Healy's little empire to shreds."

We also noted that the surviving WRP embodied "the most promising political ferment" within the debris of Healyism. In fact, the WRP itself recognizes that the workers' struggle is responsible for both its own internal crisis and for the disarray in which the various self-styled Trotskyist groups find themselves. Further, it asserts that the reviving struggle contains the seeds of a rebirth of the revolutionary leadership the proletariat desperately needs. It is on this basis that the WRP issued its conference call.

The WRP is not the only tendency moved to act. Many organizations around the world have committed themselves to discussion; some already have regroupment strategies. Few have gone as far as the WRP's insistence on a re-examination of fundamentals. Given these groups' treacherous history, unless a fearless re-examination is made they will provide only a path toward liquidationism rather than the necessary Bolshevik leadership. The very meaning of Trotskyism is at stake.

### The End of the Fourth International

The Fourth International, founded by Trotsky on the eve of World War II, decayed in the 1940s and finally collapsed in the early 1950s. Its sections had unavoidably gone their separate ways during the World War. Despite acts of great heroism, some parties had made serious concessions to imperialist patriotism. And all lost their bearings when it came to the unexpected march of Stalinist revolutions across Eastern Europe. In 1948 the international leadership shamefully tailed after the dissident Stalinist Tito just before he capitulated to Western imperialism.

Marxist revolutionary optimism demands that communists not give up on gains achieved by the working class unless they have degenerated to the point of no return. By this method the end of the Fourth International as a revolutionary party came with the Bolivian revolution of 1952. Its section, the POR, was influential within the proletariat and had a chance to play a decisive role. Instead, with the International's enthusiastic endorsement, it acted in classically Menshevik fashion, tailing the so-called "anti-imperialist" but even more anti-working class bourgeois nationalist party.

The Bolivian adaptation was intimately linked to the "deformed workers' state" theory originated by the Fourth International's chieftain, Michel Pablo. It held that counterrevolutionary petty-bourgeois forces like the Stalinists in Eastern Europe could carry out the socialist revolution and that "defense of the Soviet Union" was still on the order of the day. Trotsky observed that betrayal abroad always reflects class capitulation at home. Pablo's deviation followed this pattern; it arose from accommodation to the popularity of post-war reformism in its Stalinist and social-democratic forms at home.

Pablo's innovation also drew the organizational consequence: liquidation of Trotskyist cadre into the reformist and nationalist parties. This logic still hangs like a sword of Damocles over the future of every would-be Trotskyist defensist. Why not join the Stalinists if they are stronger than you and can make the revolution too?

Shortly after the Bolivian disaster the International shattered, as different strands sought different middle-class forces to adapt to -- but all claimants had already abandoned in practice the fundamentals of Trotskyism. Since then there have been more fragmentations and correspondingly many blocs, re-

groupments and reorganizations (which then proceeded to re-split and re-merge) -- all based on the denial of the centrality of the class-conscious proletariat for Marxism. With the gutting of the Fourth International and the break in revolutionary continuity from 1952 on, communists have no alternative but to fight under the banner of re-creating, not just reorganizing, the authentic world party of socialist revolution -- the Fourth International.

How does the WRP proposal for reorganization fit into this picture? First of all, it is by no means clear that the WRP favors formal organizational steps in any immediate sense. The post-Healy WRP is an admittedly heterogenous group; the best elements within it may merely be seeking a clarifying discussion over vital questions that have been suppressed for so long. Other elements may want an inconclusive discussion so that they can merge with the more right-wing pseudo-Trotskyists inside the Labour Party who follow Mandel and Alan Thornett. Some may prefer the flirtations of the Latin American-centered Morenoite bloc. We are hardly close enough, politically or geographically, to judge. We can only approach the new international discussion with profound caution, given the history of unprincipled chicanery that has characterized post-war "Trotskyism" in general and Healyism in particular.

### What Is at Stake

We do not hide our objectives. Our disagreement with the entire "family of Trotskyism" is fundamental. Were this not the case we would grit our teeth and join in the moves to reorganize the existing splinters into one formation. Differences that are not those of class are secondary; to use them as an excuse for organizational separation is sectarian.

We are not alone in recognizing the seriousness of our differences. For many in the milieu, our unorthodox "statified capital" position on the "Russian question" and our consequent rejection of Soviet defensism are grounds for dismissal. But that is not even the heart of the matter. We have no more in common with the traditional (and to us Bukharinite) state-capitalists or new-class-societists than we do with the orthodox workers'-statists. All surrender in theory the Marxist principle of the centrality of the conscious proletariat for socialist revolution. All abandon in practice the absolute independence of the proletarian international party from Stalinism, social democracy and petty-bourgeois nationalism. These are the fundamental questions from which the differences over Stalinism derive.

These issues convince us that the defensist and third-campist milieus are centrist. Centrism, however, is not etched in stone. Its ranks contain many subjective revolutionaries devoted to the achievement of a classless world -- as well as the hardened cynics, habitual reformists and middle-class maneuverers. The post-World War II expansion of the middle class is collapsing along with the prosperity bubble

that made it possible. Thus the material base for reformism is eroding. Under the current conditions of impasse at the top and upheaval below, centrism will inevitably polarize between the lieutenants of capital and the loyalists of the proletariat.

This is the perspective from which we assess the International Conference that we have been invited to attend. We will make every effort to intervene in the discussions now going on and in the conference

the ten political points that the document highlights — has a very left-wing air. It attacks "liquidationism into social democracy and petty-bourgeois national movements." It characterizes Stalinism as "counterrevolutionary through and through" (although at the same time it defines the states created by Stalinism as workers' states, which must mean that Stalinists succeeded in making a working-class revolution, however deformed). It defends all



Above: Plant occupation in 1968 French general strike.  
 Right: Civil service strike in 1986. Mass actions are key to re-creation of International.

itself. However, we declare ourselves to be observers rather than sponsors: we have no wish to present ourselves under false colors or to pretend that agreement exists where it doesn't.

**The WRP's Call**

In contrast to previous calls for international discussion and regroupment, the WRP recognizes that the desperate crisis of Trotskyism must be resolved, that they themselves have betrayed Marxist political as well as organizational norms, that fundamental questions have to be discussed anew. (In this they differ distinctly from the other discussants, even those enthusiastic about the proposed conference, who all act as though their politics are in fine shape.) The WRP's document is also refreshingly free of the usual centrist sneers at "sectarians" for whom firmness of principle is still a Bolshevik virtue.

Indeed, much of the Conference call — especially

national liberation movements against imperialism, and properly rejects "any formulas which imply a leadership role for bourgeois or petty-bourgeois forces." All these are slaps in the face of the majority of pseudo-Trotskyist formations.

There are also serious problems with the WRP document. The Russian question is one, of course. The statified capitalist understanding of the USSR and similar countries is the only way to maintain Trotsky's proletarian intransigence against counter-revolutionary reformism and Stalinism.

Another weakness is the WRP's "reaffirmation of the Transitional Program's demand for 'workers' and peasants' government'." This demand is tactical, used for breaking the mass of workers from their treacherous leaders in a revolutionary crisis. However, it has much more often been wielded by pseudo-Trotskyists as an after-the-fact justification for supporting popular frontist or Stalinist regimes. (See

our article "Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program," in Socialist Voice No. 8.) For example, the alleged "workers' government" in Nicaragua provides the Mandelites their excuse for not advocating the creation of a Trotskyist party in that country. The WRP's too-abstract formulation undermines the revolutionary interpretation by not specifically criticizing the opportunist alternative.

But the fundamental misconception of the WRP is the implication that there exists a family of Trotskyism -- that all those styling themselves Trotskyists, whatever crimes against Marxism they may have committed and still defend, are somehow bound together in defense of certain fundamental principles. The WRP suggests without actually saying that the Fourth International still exists: in multiple organizations if not one, in common political concepts if not a common body. In its words:

"The continuity of the Fourth International has been a contradictory process, but it consists in the struggle for the continuity of Bolshevism against Stalinism, and against the liquidationist revisionism which has transmitted this Stalinist pressure into the Trotskyist movement."

But the crisis of the "Trotskyist movement" is precisely that its leading figures and organizations have not fought for Bolshevism against Stalinism. It is contradictory indeed to assert that Trotskyist continuity lies in the struggle against liquidationism and simultaneously to affirm that the liquidationists share this continuity. Such confusion is inescapable on the part of comrades who forget that in 1952 no section or leader of the International stood against the POR's liquidationism in Bolivia. That betrayal severed the continuity of Trotskyism.

It is apparent that the WRP call reflects an opening to the left but not a clear break with the centrist milieu.

### Morenoite Maneuvers

The opportunism inherent in the "Family of Trotskyism" notion is underscored by the very issue of the WRP's paper that contains the call for the International Conference. In it the WRP runs an uncritical obituary of Nahuel Moreno, the founder and leader of "Trotskyist" organizations that have wrapped themselves in the Peronist flag when not devoted to Castroism or Sandinism. (Workers Press, January 31.)

The Morenoites' current organization, the International Workers League (LIT, its initials in Spanish) was born out of a recent split from Pierre Lambert's right-centrist social-democratic outfit in France. It proclaims its strategy of the "revolutionary united front" with non-Trotskyists as the method of building the party -- in contrast with the insistence in the WRP's ten points on the struggle to build "revolutionary parties of the working class, sections of the Fourth International, in every country." The Argentine section, the MAS (Movement for Socialism), was created as a bloc with centrists and "other left

currents," and its present "Trotskyist" status is questionable.

Of all the large pseudo-Trotskyist internationalisms, it is clear that the Morenoites' is the one that the WRP is most entangled with in the pre-conference preparations. It had been negotiating with Moreno before his death, and the ten points appear to be an emanation of dealings between the two groups. Undoubtedly the Morenoites hope to emerge from the proposed International Conference with a bloc between themselves and the WRP on any basis whatsoever. Such a lash-up would be no more lasting than the Morenoites' previous affair with Lambert and would make a mockery of all the high-minded principles advanced by the current WRP -- but it would be perfectly consistent with Morenoite and Healyite history.

Despite its declared admiration for Moreno, the WRP does not seem to have swallowed his line. Last November, for example, there was a "Conference of Trotskyists and Revolutionary Socialists" in San Francisco addressed by representatives of the WRP and the British Mandelites. Here the Morenoites wanted the specific points to be conditions of entry into the international conference, in order to exclude Mandel's United Secretariat (which does not favor building Trotskyist parties in all countries, namely not in Cuba and Nicaragua.) In fact, the LIT had at first wanted to exclude Mandel & Co. by fiat without troubling to find a political excuse for doing so.

The WRP, on the other hand, insisted at that time on an open conference. But in its published call the issue is smudged. "We will fight to defend and develop [the ten points] before and during the Conference," the WRP writes, suggesting that they are not conditions of admission. However, right after the points are listed, the document extends its call for "a Conference on this basis," implying the exact opposite and seemingly offering a concession to the Morenoites. Whatever this means, it is undeniable that the WRP is being less than forthright in its dealing with the highly maneuveristic LIT.

### Murkiness from MRCI

Another intervention into the preliminary rounds of pre-Conference maneuvers is that of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) led by the British group Workers Power (WP). MRCI characterizes the Conference as an opportunity for genuine Trotskyists to confront pseudo-Trotskyist centrism, which is precisely correct. (Workers Power, January 1987.)

But it too fudges its intentions. MRCI concretizes its aims by calling for a "bloc of all those willing to combat centrism, both in theory and practice, in any such conference around a principled common declaration against the centrist distortions of Leninism and Trotskyism." This reads like the pinnacle of Bolshevik candor, except that the "centrist distortions" remain unspecified. Instead, the groups invited into the bloc are listed: the GOR of



Italy, the RWP of Sri Lanka and the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) of the U.S. and Canada.

What are the unique principles shared by these groups that enable them to fight jointly against centrism? MRCI does not say. Nor can it: the BT, a Spartacist splinter, defends the armed suppression of the Polish workers in 1981 by the Jaruzelski regime -- in contrast to MRCI, the GOR and the RWP. What greater crime against Trotskyism can there be than to endorse Stalinist enslavement? If MRCI's bloc has to embrace both sides of a civil war, no wonder the specifics of its political basis are left murky.

A revolutionary pole can only be based on a concrete revolutionary program, not an amalgamation of groups with deeply divergent politics. On the other hand, centrism by its nature uses revolutionary rhetoric to conceal reformist practice. Proposing joint political propaganda with the BT without demanding renunciation of its defense of Stalinism shows that MRCI's "anti-centrist" bloc is itself a centrist dodge.

Further, although we would clearly not join such a bloc, it is indicative that MRCI does not challenge us to participate. Obviously MRCI is less embarrassed by a tendency soft on Stalinism than by the LRP, which supports workers' revolution against Stalinism but considers it to be capitalist. This shows that MRCI is operating under the "family of Trotskyism" methodology in practice, even though it rejects such a view in theory.

MRCI's centrist maneuver comes as no surprise, for Workers Power and its affiliates have ambivalent positions on key questions of proletarian independence. WP stays out of the Labour Party but -- like the Cliffite SWP -- invariably advocates voting for it, even when (as in 1979) Labour has been leading the bourgeois assault on the workers. It nominally favors building the revolutionary party in Britain, but in practice postpones a sharp counterposition to reformism until the moment of revolutionary crisis (see "A Powerless Answer to Reformism," Proletarian Revolution No. 23.) For the oppressed countries similarly, it has resurrected the "anti-imperialist united front," the Stalinist method of subordinating proletarian independence to bourgeois nationalism, from the oblivion Trotsky consigned it to in 1927.

These positions are all concessions to party liquidationism and are linked to the Pabloite deformed workers' state theory that the MRCI shares with the other "Trotskyist" centrists. Together with its waffling over clear-cut opposition to counter-revolutionary Stalinism, this record undermines MRCI's attempt to outflank the WRP from the left.

### The Debate over Stalinism

MRCI's openness to the BT reflects its own theoretical softness on Stalinism. Workers Power denies the WRP's view that Stalinism is thoroughly counter-revolutionary. On the contrary, says WP, counter-revolution is only the "predominant character" of a "high-

ly contradictory" phenomenon, because the Stalinist bureaucracy is still forced to defend "post-capitalist property relations." (Workers Power, March 1986.) On the theoretical level if not in practice, this position is strikingly similar to that of the Spartacists and the BT.

What WP overlooks is that the bureaucracy defends nationalized property solely because it owns it; Stalinism does not defend but rather destroys the centralized (and therefore potentially planned) character of state property. Workers Power needs its theory of Stalinism as partly revolutionary because it has no other way of accounting for the Stalinist seizures of state power after World War II. According to WP, they created "degenerate workers' states" that were never transitional to socialism (see "The Theory of Permanent Counterrevolution" in Proletarian Revolution No. 21) -- a contradiction in terms and with reality.

Thus in this dispute the WRP is formally correct. For Trotsky at the very end of his life, Stalinism had moved from bureaucratic centrism to all-out counter-revolution because it was an unstable, conservative force that was setting the stage for the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. From our point of view, the restoration was completed on the eve of World War II; therefore Stalinism is counter-revolutionary because it is capitalist in the epoch of capitalist decay.

But the WRP's superiority is purely formal, in that it leaves unexplained the Stalinist revolutions that allegedly created workers' states by crushing the workers' movements. In the WRP's past, Healy (like Mandel) used his recognition of the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism as a means of capitulating to it: since the Chinese Communists had made a revolution, for example, that meant they were no longer Stalinist! The current WRP is looking for a way out, and has invited us to reply to a major discussion document of theirs on the post-war overturns.

The WRP's unresolved position exposes it to the danger of abandoning the centrality of the proletarian party, a theoretical adaptation that Workers Power has already made. No wonder WP finds it impossible to avoid giving permanent electoral support to the Labour Party. Its revolutionary/counter-revolutionary theory of Stalinism is rooted in the more immediate need to see British reformism as ambivalent. This makes Workers Power downplay the immediate task of building toward the revolutionary party in counter-position to Labour.

MRCI's professed desire to put up a fight against centrism is laudable in itself. It contrasts with what will undoubtedly be another variety of intervention at the international conference, typified by many of those at the San Francisco meeting. These groups are a variety of small fish, circling around each other to find the best vantage point for a little bite. Some are looking for a convenient excuse for fusions that hide long-lasting disputes under the table in the hope of an immediate ripoff; others are

busy defending their sectarian exclusiveness despite the absence of fundamental class differences. This has nothing in common with the revolutionary method.

### **Our Intervention: Proletarian Independence**

As it shapes up now, this conference will not lead to the re-creation of the Fourth International. But it may provide an arena for a clarifying sorting out of tendencies. The key to the conference's success is that there be a serious reconsideration of fundamental questions.

Our intervention in the international discussion will concentrate on fighting for our analysis of Stalinism, reformism and the revolutionary party. The Russian question, on which we hold so distinct a view, is central; it is in reality the question of the nature of capitalism as a whole in this epoch. We have no need, however, to make it an ultimatum. If left defensists fight consistently for revolutionary party independence, they will inevitably come to Marxist conclusions on the nature of Stalinism. We therefore challenge them to form a bloc on the party question. The struggle will prove which of us is right.

Any attempt to form a principled bloc against centrism must be based on clear concrete tests -- lessons derived from the practical struggle, like those Trotsky specified in his campaign for the Fourth International in the 1930s. These must include the various ways in which "Trotskyist" centrists have chosen the wrong side of the class line on the party question. As outsiders to the defensist milieu, we hold that those who see themselves as its left wing should fight over the decisive questions that stain their tradition's recent history, and therefore adopt the following points as the basis for their bloc.

1. Rejection of popular-frontism, the strategy of political support to bourgeois parties and governments (even those in conflict with imperialism): no political support to even the "shadow of the bourgeoisie," as Trotsky insisted in regard to Spain in the 1930s; no alliance with the Bolivian MNR in 1952; no coalition government in Ceylon in 1964; no political adherence to the ANC in South Africa today.

2. Independence of the proletarian party in the struggle against imperialism: renunciation of the strategy of "anti-imperialist united fronts" as in China in 1925-28; proletarian military blocs with but no political support to the Chinese Maoists in 1949, the Cuban Castroites in 1959 and the Bonapartist Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the petty-bourgeois nationalist rebels in El Salvador today.

3. Opposition to the liquidationist positions of "multi-vanguardism" or strategic "revolutionary united fronts" and for the construction of Trotskyist working-class parties in all countries: neither the Cuban CP nor the Nicaraguan FSLN nor the Salvadorean FDR-FMLN represent the vanguard party.

4. Opposition to strategic entrism: no long-term entry into social-democratic or Stalinist parties as advocated and carried out by Pablo, Shachtman and their followers in the 1940s and '50s; opposition to

the present-day long-term entrism into the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party, the Australian Labor Party, etc.

5. No permanent blocs or united fronts; no political support to social democracy: the use of all proletarian weapons, including the general strike, against social-democratic as well as conservative and liberal governments; no permanent electoral support to the mass-based reformist parties, e.g., no vote for British Labour in 1979 or the French SP in 1981; in the U.S., no support for the Democratic Party or any of its politicians even if they run as "independents."

6. Independent parties to carry out the proletarian revolution under Stalinism: in Hungary against the Nagy government in 1956, in Poland against the reformist Walesa leadership in 1980-81. etc. The proletarian program for a democratic centralist workers' state against Stalinism opposes all decentralist economic schemes (including those of "self-management").

7. Re-founding the Fourth International on international democratic centralism: no colonialist bureaucratic facsimiles like Healy's or the Spartacists; no petty-bourgeois decentralist, nationalist and undisciplined blocs like Mandel's.

We challenge the WRP, the MRCL, the GOR, the RWP and all comrades who see the need to fight for a revolutionary policy against the right-wing drift to adopt such a program. The above points are by no means the full program of a revolutionary international, but their adoption would be a major step towards a principled regroupment around the most fundamental question of our time.

The underlying logic of these points, together with a favorable development of the class struggle, would bring the defensists' theory into sharp contradiction with their practice. Their "degenerated/deformed workers' state" position would be on a collision course with reality and would be shattered by the impact of great events.

In particular, if they rejected the purely democratic reforms typical of most "deformed workers' state" views and agreed with us on the need for centralism, then they would in reality be advocating a social revolution. Centralization of the Stalinist economies requires a revolutionary transformation of the system that has been in operation since the mid-1930s, an overthrow of the class relations of production.

Developments on the world political scene also give our capitalist analysis of the Stalinist system practical support. For one thing, the reforms of Gorbachev and Deng -- their adoption of openly capitalist techniques to stimulate their crisis-ridden economies -- call into question the notion that the Stalinist economies are in any way "post-capitalist." For another, as our tendency has long predicted, the international balance of forces is moving away from its present position where the U.S.-USSR confrontation is central; the American ruling class's main

national enemy may soon be Japan, or West Germany, or a combination of both of them as in World War II, or a bloc of one or both of them with the USSR. The question of "defense of the USSR" would then become secondary even to defensists.

If such comrades actually conducted a theoretical and practical struggle against those whose views lead to liquidating independent Trotskyist parties into Stalinism and social democracy, they will inevitably be forced to adopt our world view, including our position that Stalinism and the Stalinist states are alien to the working class.

The fundamental link between "Trotskyist" liquida-

tionism and Stalinism, developed in the 1940s, was the adaptation to bourgeois nationalism conducted through the medium of the mass reformist parties. Defensist comrades today who carry their fight against party liquidation to the end will have no alternative but to jettison their position that socialist revolutions can be made by anyone other than the proletariat under vanguard leadership.

It is a criminal act to construct a political cover for counterrevolution. To do so in the name of Trotskyism is unspeakable. The Fourth International will rise again out of the struggle to cleanse Bolshevism of this hideous stain.

## Where Are the Matgamnaites Going?

### INTRODUCTION BY THE LRP

A few years ago Comrade Paul White ("Considine") found himself in increasing disagreement with the politics of the organization he had founded -- Socialist Fight (SF), the Australian affiliate of the British Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA). The SOA is the tendency led by Sean Matgamna that had previously been known as the International-Communist League (I-CL), Workers Fight and the Workers Socialist League. Originally one of the more left-wing groups in the pseudo-Trotskyist and Soviet-defensist milieu, the SOA/SF had begun to gallop rightward.

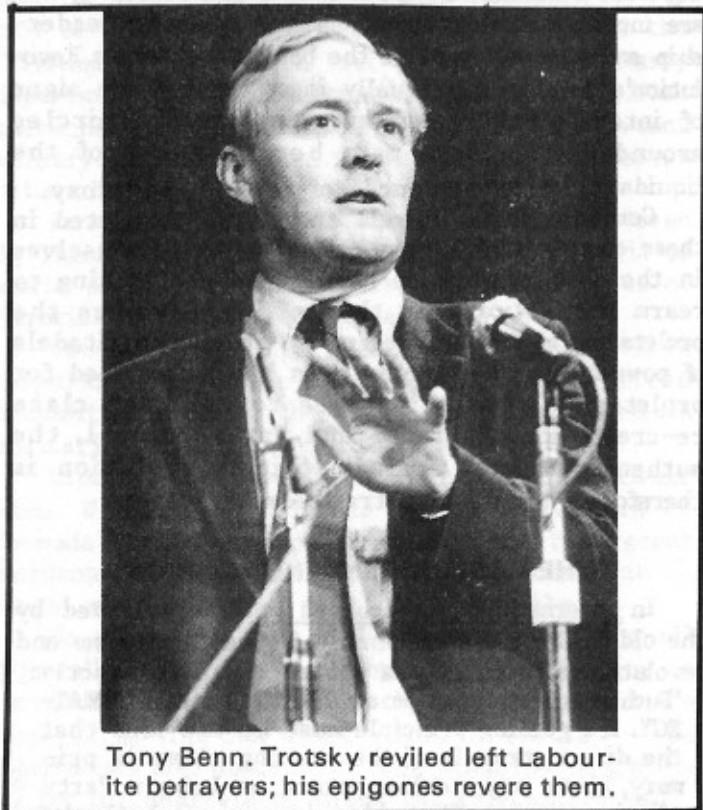
SF was buried deeply inside the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the profoundly conservative outfit that currently governs Australia for the capitalists. In the unions SF joined with non-socialist militant leaders in permanent blocs called "rank and file groups," submerging any expression of revolutionary politics. Thus SF presented only a mildly left reform program as its answer to the growing desperation of the working class.

The SOA/SF had transformed not the working class but themselves. They barely bothered to give lip service to the need for socialist revolution, the normal pursuit of centrist tendencies, at least on holidays.

Comrade White had been not only a prolific writer, advancing SF's politics theoretically and popularly, but an indefatigable leader of its practical work in the ALP and the unions as well. As a student of the dialectic he could not attribute SF's profound crisis to an accident; it had to have underlying roots. The strategy of limiting one's politics to staying one reformist step ahead of the workers' present consciousness no longer seemed so reasonable a path to revolution; in fact it ran counter to the goal. In his struggle Comrade White increasingly came to the conclusion that the LRP's fundamental world view was correct.

For about a year he waged his struggle inside the SF on grounds close to our positions on the Russian question, the capitulation to reformism, and the right of national self-determination against imperialism in Ireland, Palestine and Argentina. In sum, it was a fight against liquidation of the party.

In the course of the fight he wrote a series of documents. Aside from bureaucratic maneuvers, the response was hardly ever serious from either the British or Australian leadership, although they were obviously dismayed by the failure of an erstwhile party stalwart to go along with their rightward move.



Tony Benn. Trotsky reviled left Labourite betrayers; his epigones revere them.

There is much of value in Comrade White's writings, which in essence describe his path from orthodoxy to authentic Trotskyism. His new organization Workers Revolution is producing these documents and we will make them available to our readers as they are published. We also expect to publish his articles in these pages. In this issue, because of severe space limitations, we reprint only an excerpt from one of his documents of the struggle inside SF.

White wrote a lengthy two-part document entitled "Max Shachtman Rides Again!" This work demonstrates

that the Matgamnaite version of the "degenerate and deformed workers' state" theory was in reality a variation on third-camp bureaucratic collectivism. Its anti-Stalinism reflected not the revolutionary proletarian abhorrence of the USSR's degeneration and counterrevolution but instead the consequence of that decay, an extreme cynicism toward the revolutionary capacity of the working class and a maneuveristic view of the world.

The second part, subtitled "Where Is Our Tendency Going?" is excerpted below. It graphically shows the consequence of the maneuveristic cynicism of the Matgamnaites' strategy of "entrism" into reformist organizations. It is doubly important because the rest of the "defensist" milieu is moving in a similar direction, following the path of capitulation to reformism mapped out in parallel ways in the 1940s and '50s by Shachtman and Pablo. The portion omitted presents the views of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky on the questions of the imperialist epoch, transitional demands and entrism -- topics treated in their modern context in the section given here.

In Australia there are serious comrades, including both veterans and those new to the movement, who are increasingly looking to Comrade White for leadership and who will provide the basis for Workers Revolution's development. Equally important are the signs of interest and reawakening in defensist circles around the world, as many become aware of the liquidationist consequences of sterile orthodoxy.

Comrade White is well known and respected in these circles abroad. Many comrades find themselves in the same straits as he did and are looking to rearm themselves for the coming days, as the proletariat once again begins to storm the citadels of power. There has never been a greater need for proletarian revolutionaries to help the class re-create its own party and international, the authentic Fourth. Comrade White's evolution is therefore a significant trailblazing step.

#### "WHERE IS OUR TENDENCY GOING?"

In International Communist No. 1 (published by the old I-CL), the relationship between entrism and revolutionary politics was stated quite succinctly:

"Such work must be seen as a TACTIC, not a STRATEGY. Its guiding principle must be the idea that the direct struggle of the working class is primary, above any parliamentary or Labour Party considerations. That idea determines both the political CONTENT of such work -- the revolutionary PROGRAM must never be subordinated to the TACTIC -- and the METHOD of work -- always trying to turn the Labour Party OUTWARDS."

Earlier in the same article we read how: "The central focus of the League's work is the workplaces and the trade unions. We orientate towards the rank and file, recognizing the fundamental role of the labor bureaucracy as 'labor lieutenants of capital'."

Quite apart from the many political weaknesses of

the article I'm quoting from above (the 14 December 1975 "Political Resolution of the I-CL Fusion"), it's nevertheless clear that the group then had the rudiments of an understanding of the relationship between revolutionaries and Labour Party work.

Unfortunately for the I-CL, one of the "weaknesses" of the 1975 document was the beginnings of the erroneous idea that it was always necessary for revolutionary socialists to work in the British Labour Party (BLP). This was argued for in the following historically inaccurate and politically incorrect statement (IC No. 1):

"Throughout the history of the Labour Party -- bar some exceptional periods -- revolutionaries have sought to develop work inside the Labour Party."

Over the next four years, the IC-L's theoretical journal appeared less and less frequently, as Trotskyist "hardness" became less and less palatable for a leadership orienting increasingly to absorbing assorted centrists in the BLP. All the same, the paper published by I-CL supporters in the BLP during this time (Workers Action) was "harder" than anything these comrades have published subsequently.

By 1980, the logic of the group's commitment to indefinite entry -- plus the appearance of the Benn current in the BLP -- had combined to usher in the beginnings of a qualitative degeneration in the organization's politics. The previous stress on the revolutionary program was now abandoned. At the 12 July 1980 National Conference meeting of the group, a broad paper of the Molinier variety was decided upon. [Raymond Molinier was an entrism in the French SFIO in the 1930s against whom Trotsky bitterly polemicized for his effort at putting out a "broad," i.e., militant reformist, paper in place of an explicitly revolutionary organ.--ed.] The old paper (WA) was supposed to continue "as a monthly magazine," but this didn't really happen, since it wasn't seriously intended.

Sean Matgamna, the prime mover of the changes, explained what was intended, at a meeting of the group's Extended Steering Committee, the previous week. To quote from the group's Internal Bulletin No. 40, here are Sean's own words:

"The basic proposal, agreed among a few comrades now, is this: There are a quite a lot of people around us who agree with much of our politics. But we recruit very little. So: we create a periphery organization; create SO [Socialist Organiser--ed.] groups into which we partly dissolve the League.

"Most of the practical work would be done through SO groups which would generally (though probably not always) be substantially broader than League branches. In the course of work we hope to win the SO groups over to us as a whole in perhaps a year or so -- while at the same time the League becomes more open ... a process of convergence.

"SO would become more frequent. We would be a monthly magazine, in effect a League paper.

"The League would still meet locally say once a month. NC meetings etc. would still function.

"Last week I suggested that we should freeze League recruitment during the period of SO group work. That was wrong, too schematic. But we should aim for convergence, not just individual recruitment.

"How to do it? The SO groups would be built around a platform and minimal rules of activity, but not democratic centralist discipline."

At the NC meeting a week later, Comrade Sean added that: "Our previous tightness has become outmoded." But he also stipulated: "I am also proposing a specific short-term tactic."

The resolution adopted by the Conference of the group spelled out the immediate practical ramifications of the "broad paper" quite explicitly. The practical political work of the group would be handed over to meetings of the broad group, where non-Leninists would "have full rights." The broad groups should have a fairly loose federal structure, at least initially. At the centre there will be a large [broad group] Editorial Board (with "dignitaries").

The main political justification for this project "to partly dissolve the League" was the Matgamma/Reynolds idea of "convergence": This is explained in the Conference resolution:

"Over a period of time we should assimilate the best in our periphery, and have an ongoing recruitment policy that will prevent any gap opening up between potential and realization such as now requires us to make the turn. This is 'convergence.' Comrades who have argued that we will always need a looser association as well as a revolutionary organization anticipate too much. We must deal with the situation now. Our need is not a formula that guarantees a permanent structure of a softer group around us -- but a formula for merging with a definite layer of our political milieu, by drawing them towards our politics.

"We can talk about any further structures we may need at the appropriate time. Here and now it must be understood that the proposal to do most of our practical work through the SO groups will be a formula for liquidating the League organisationally unless it is linked to a firm perspective of developing and hardening these groups towards a serious revolutionary standard of discipline -- i.e. 'convergence.'

"We should be flexible on the tempo and forms of convergence. But conference must pledge itself to fight any such liquidationist interpretation of the turn.

"The tempo of the process of 'convergence' will depend on the class struggles of the coming months. Thus there is no point trying to predict or work out the technical details now. We should review the situation in early 1981."

The turn to the "broad paper" did bring some people around the group -- but far fewer than its lead-

ers expected, and at the cost of a steady erosion in its politics. Weaknesses that had existed in the tendency from its inception began to turn into malignant growths. Not only was the group adapting to its new left social democratic/centrist mini-milieu, but the BLP Right were on the offensive. Stripped of any serious pretensions to be committed to waging a fight for openly uncompromising revolutionary politics, the British comrades succumbed. Trotsky was still quoted in the group's press, but the Old Man was reduced to the status of an icon -- to be "invoked" ritually from time to time, while the serious business of BLP work was left to the "practical" leaders of the group. And the latter were now committed to "staying with the LP Left" and inside the BLP, at any cost.

As the Right's witch-hunt became more strident, Socialist Organiser adapted more and more. Take the case of the Malvinas war. SO was certainly correct to point to the dubious motives of the reactionary Galtieri junta in starting this war. But it was deeply wrong to conclude from this (as did SF, including myself, at the time) that socialists should take no sides in the war. The war was not about a desolate piece of real estate in the South Atlantic. It was part of Western imperialism's drive to shatter the "Vietnam syndrome." In fact it was a particularly important part of the imperialists' plans: British participation was underwritten by U.S. government military assistance on a massive scale. The imperialists had two aims:

Firstly, they wanted to squash any threat (even by Third World dictators) to the delicate fabric of world stability. At all costs, the united front of imperialism had to be maintained.

Secondly, the imperialists wanted to achieve popular acceptance for British imperialist reassertion, while at the same time placing Britain militarily in debt to the U.S.

Clearly, the imperialists succeeded in their aims. Without the Malvinas war, the invasion of Grenada (formally a British colony) and the recent murderous attacks upon Libya (using British bases), would not have been politically possible.

So there was a side in the Malvinas war. For all SO's talk of bringing the troops home, its failure to recognize this constituted an objective adaptation to imperialism. (The SOA wasn't alone, of course -- the Spartacists also abstained). [See Socialist Voice No. 17 for our analysis of these capitulations.--ed.]

As the BLP Right's witch-hunt grew more strident, it began to become apparent that the broad paper and the group around it risked complete proscription. Instead of the remedy proposed in such circumstances by Trotsky - to fight the witch-hunters intransigently with revolutionary politics, even if this means expulsion -- the group's leaders again chose capitulation. At one stage, it was even proposed by Chris Reynolds that the broad group should be wound up in the event of proscription, with its members being directed instead into the explicitly reformist Tribune!

The idea of "convergence" was now resurrected by Sean Matgamna and Chris Reynolds. Except that it wasn't the original notion of winning assorted centrists and left social democrats to Trotskyism which was now under discussion. In late 1983 comrades Matgamna and Reynolds started floating the idea of abandoning any concept of a public democratic-centralist face. In mid-1981 the I-CL had "fused" with the Workers Socialist League [led by Alan Thornett--ed.].

The new organization, known also as the WSL, published an occasional party magazine, Workers Socialist Review. The Matgamna/Reynolds faction now pro-

proclamation:

"Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place - rather than have our representatives run the entire system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and bosses."

These days, as the witch-hunt accelerates daily -- in line with Kinnock's plans to make the BLP Britain's next government -- the broad paper has reached new depths. We read now that the withdrawal of Brit-



British imperialism has always fomented murderous division in Ireland. Matgamna's solution? British troops should stay until Eire is united.

posed dropping all reference to the WSL, scrapping the magazine and dissolving the League into the broad group. Since this faction hasn't been serious about producing a serious openly Leninist paper or journal since 1980, the additional proposal of publishing a bi-monthly magazine in the name of the broad groups, could only mean one thing: no more serious attempts were to be made to present the group as a democratic centralist organization of Trotskyists.

This is what has now happened. All references to the League are now dropped from the broad paper -- which is now a right centrist shadow of even its predecessor papers. The group is now publicly described simply as a group of Labour Party socialists. The group's "Where We Stand" is now wimpish in the extreme. When the broad paper project started, at least the platform concluded with this vague but stirring

ish imperialist troops from Northern Ireland can only be "conditionally" supported. Zionism, while still not very nice, is definitely not racist, and the right of the state of Israel to exist is explicitly defended. And the paper's "Where We Stand" now doesn't even mention the state. It concludes simply:

"We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper -- to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small financial contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board."

British capitalism is now in severe crisis. The Thatcher government, hated by British workers for its

attacks upon their standard of living and basic rights, will be unable to control a working class fightback in the near future. So the ruling class is giving the nod to Labour to again do its dirty work. The Kinnock Labour government will preside over attacks on workers' pay, jobs and organizations which will make Thatcher's Britain look like a welfare state in comparison.

As in Australia in 1983, the Labour "Lefts" have been co-opted into the process of "preparing for government" -- to give it credibility in workers' eyes. Thus, Tony Benn has helped formulate plans for a new incomes policy - a British version of the Accord. [The Accord is a no-strike agreement signed by the ALP government and the reformist unions.--ed.]

Socialist Organiser's response to this situation is simply to promote itself as the "best builders" of Benn's faction -- the "Campaign" group. Naturally, it condemns Kinnock's more obscene policies - but so does even Benn.

All those who support the Socialist Organiser Alliance should ask themselves a question: "When is the last time that the 'new look' SO attacked Benn?" The answer, of course, is that SO avoids criticizing Benn and the other fake lefts like the plague, these days.

Once upon a time, of course, this was not so; the comrades now organized in the Socialist Organiser Alliance represented, for all their weaknesses, a qualitatively far better organization than the SOA of today. The old Workers Fight grouping, for instance, was one of the very few British Left groups to uncompromisingly defend the right of the Irish republicans to carry out their struggle against British imperialism on British soil. (WF was the political "grandfather" of SO). Both WF and Workers Action exposed Benn's treacherous "workers participation" schemes and incomes deals, during the last Labour government.

But that was a different period. The SOA has become a right centrist appendage of British Labour's fake left wing. In Australia, its supporters have not published an independent ostensibly Trotskyist paper for three years, and the group itself barely exists.

Like the opportunists Lenin warned us of, both the SOA leaders and the SF majority consider that "politics consists of little tricks." Abandoning any view of "phenomena as a whole," they deny that -- in the epoch of capitalist decay -- capitalism is unable to guarantee even lasting reforms. They are thus unable to discern the dividing line between revolutionary politics and reformism.

In fact, if we take what the comrades say seriously, it's apparent that they don't have any serious conception of this epoch as the epoch of social revolution (or horrendous counter-revolution). Take Chris Reynolds' recent letter to SF (entitled "Conscience's Polemics"), for instance.

In his letter, Comrade Reynolds tries to reconcile Trotsky with a view that this is not the epoch of decay. Comrade Chris says the epoch of decay notion has been "fairly meaningless" since World War I;

yet "this does not mean that Trotsky was wrong in the 20s and 30s." But, obviously this does mean just this, since, for example, Trotsky based the immediacy of the Transitional Program on the observation that "mankind's productive forces stagnate," Chris further notes that Trotsky "explicitly talked about the possibility of a new epoch of capitalist expansion." However the comrade forgets to mention that for Trotsky this new expansion would be the result of a new proletarian defeat. Chris Reynolds seems to be theorizing that Trotsky was right, and even was able to foresee the possibility of a new capitalist expansion, but now that such an expansion has occurred, it proves that Trotsky's theory of the epoch was wrong!

But the biggest problems with Chris's "theory" are not its logical inconsistencies. The danger in the theory of capitalist non-decay is that it makes the system progressive. If backward countries can rise to the ranks of semi-imperialism, then why can't advanced capitalist countries, all the more so, satisfy the reasonable demands of their working classes? Certainly there's no longer any point in issuing far-out calls for a general strike if capitalism is capable of solutions under lesser demands.

"Especially under a Labor government," Chris writes, "the working class has a number of other channels for exasperation and discontent ... ." Chris here admits more than he wants to, for his theory should lead him to believe that the bourgeoisie has a number of channels for yielding adequate sops to satisfy the workers' discontent. But "exasperation" is perfectly accurate. The workers' other channels will not work, especially in periods of economic downturn in the epoch of decay -- one of which we are now in. It is no part of the business of revolutionaries to lead the workers down hopeless paths.

But whatever its logical inconsistencies, Chris Reynolds' politics of exasperation are perfectly consistent with the SOA view of the Stalinist states as progressive (when compared to capitalism), but reactionary as compared to a workers' state. In other words, the Stalinist states are qualitatively different forms of society, which can only exist in a new (post-imperialist) epoch. That's why Chris Reynolds' denial of the nature of the epoch is central to the SOA's view of the Stalinist states, as new forms of society.

The explicit denial of the nature of the epoch also fits in with the SOA/SF majority's liquidationist view of revolutionary leadership. Trotsky stressed the "crisis of leadership" as the decisive question for the working class. Against Trotsky, Sean Matgamma and Co. advocate "rank and filism" in the unions and labour parties. Instead of building a revolutionary leadership in the labour movement -- the only sort of political leadership which makes sense to proletarian revolutionaries in the imperialist epoch -- they advocate non-communist leadership: "broad groups."

The rank and file is praised by these comrades as the source of all change. Or, rather, the working

class is patronised by the Matgamnaites. Thus we have the startlingly cynical instance in which comrade Frances (Reply to Considine) sneers at my correction of the traditional SF/SOA viewpoint on revolutionary leadership:

"Considine would wish away all the reformists and bureaucrats and rely on his view that ... the working class is spontaneously revolutionary. It should fairly simply follow that, bit by bit, as the spontaneous trend is manifested, his party, THE ONLY revolutionary party (which the spontaneous workers will of course recognize as such) will automatically accumulate revolutionary workers to its ranks, so long as there is no possibility of confusion with the reformists and centrists."

Now, aside from the fact that this is a serious misrepresentation of my position [What I actually said was that "the view of the mature Lenin" was that "the working class (given the right objective circumstances)" was spontaneously revolutionary, not spontaneously reformist.] and that it ignores what Trotsky said on the subject (see his Stalin, p.58), Frances' little diatribe is interesting for the implied defence of Lenin's old (i.e. Kautskyist) view of revolutionary consciousness only coming to the proletariat 'from the outside.'

This is not a Marxist viewpoint. Indeed, it owes more to bourgeois notions of 'outside agitators.' Marxist theory was not produced outside the working class, but inside it. The bourgeois or petty-bourgeois origins of comrades producing the ideas are irrelevant. They were (and are) men and women who linked their future indissolubly with the proletariat's. They formed organizations to lead the fight for that future and participated actively in the class struggle as part of these organizations. Does Frances perhaps think that Trotsky was petty bourgeois? And what about that notorious Manchester factory owner, Friedrich Engels?

Comrades in a revolutionary organization, by virtue of having broken with the class attitudes and vantage points that they originally came from, are working class also. The origins pose problems, as Cannon and Trotsky pointed out, but not final descriptions. Revolutionary comrades are political workers -- part of the working class in its generalized political sense. They represent the proletarian outlook, the proletarian class interest.

If Comrades Frances et al have a different self-conception, this can only be a political problem, nothing more. "Worker" does not mean boasting, it's simply a necessary beginning point for politics, as a self-conception. Otherwise, we have an elitist notion of the socialist manipulators standing upon Mount Olympus. These "socialists" look down upon the working class, and work out how to prod them into action today. Revolutionary communists are reduced to outside organizers and prodders, elitist condescending bureaucrats.

Today the SOA leaders and the SF majority praise

the rank and file as the source of all change. But when the hoped-for changes don't occur, this cynical, manipulatory method will lead to them blaming the workers for this. That's the inexorable logic of denying the nature of the period, of asserting that the system can still be progressive, and that the working class will only fight for socialism when prodded by altruistic socialists.

Comrade Frances also seems to question the idea that Trotskyists must fight to eliminate "confusion with the reformists and centrists." This fits in with her implied self-conception as a non-proletarian socialist (socialists being "outside" the proletariat). For there is absolutely no doubt that proletarian socialists fight tooth and nail to eliminate alien class ideology. If Frances agrees with Trotsky (In Defense of Marxism) that "Any serious factional fight in a party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle," she should explain what class camp she is in, and how her ideas reflect the interests of that class. For Trotsky was adamant that the Matgamnaites' political great-grandparents -- the Shachtmanites -- represented a thoroughly petty-bourgeois political tendency. He also commented that the Shachtmanite faction "precisely because of its petty-bourgeois character, does not even attempt to look for the social roots of the hostile camp."

Like Molinier and Pivert [Marcel Pivert was a centrist in the French SFIO in the 1930s whom Trotsky warned against--ed.], the SOA leaders and the SF majority regard Bolshevik intransigence and even as innocuous as name as "Workers Socialist League" to be an obstacle. And they're right! These are an obstacle to the sort of organizations which they want to build: tame-cat fake-left "loyal oppositions" on the left wing of social democracy. As social democracy internationally moves to the right, so does its "left" wing -- including the SOA and the SF majority. Such are the inevitable consequences of dumping the revolutionary program (not to mention SF's voluntary dropping of democratic centralism!) -- despite the sincerity and "good intentions" of most of the comrades involved.

Max Shachtman had "good intentions" when he started his faction fight with Trotsky; he ended up a Cold Warrior. "Good intentions" are not enough. Supporters of the SOA's politics both in Australia and in Britain have a clear choice. Either together with the SOA leaders, to become professional appendages of the reformists -- or to once again take up a serious fight for Trotskyist politics. The latter course will mean a sharp break from the current politics of the Socialist Organiser Alliance. But it is the only revolutionary communist stance. ■

#### WORKERS REVOLUTION

Interested readers may obtain information on further documents of struggle to be published from the LRP or from Workers Revolution, GPO Box 1729P; Melbourne, Victoria, 3001; AUSTRALIA.



# Reangate

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class fear touched off by the conjuncture of events.

First, Reagan's support proved to be softer than expected when the Democrats won the Congressional elections despite the president's seeming popularity. Then came the revelation of the White House link to the Iranian deals. Although politically aware observers knew that Western and Israeli arms had been going to Khomeini for some time, it would have been dangerous to expose that fact to the American public when Reagan remained strong. (As well, it would have meant criticizing their useful ally Israel, which the imperialists are loathe to do.)



U.S.-trained Costa Ricans near Nicaragua border. White House felt Central Americans wouldn't feel secure until they were all dead.

The Democratic Party as such started off in low key lest the affair appear to become partisan. Nevertheless, as the scandal deepened, the Democrats increasingly exploited it as a tool to bring a semblance of unity to their badly divided party. Their attack on Reagan from the right fits in perfectly with the Democrat's jingoist protectionism strategy and their broader need to out-Reagan Reagan, exemplified by the Mondale campaign.

## The Contra Connection

On October 5, Nicaraguan soldiers shot down an American-operated plane running guns to the contras. Eugene Hasenfus, the only survivor, admitted his CIA connections, and documents on board the plane gave evidence of a CIA supply network operating through bases in El Salvador and Honduras. This violated a 1984 Congressional ban on direct involvement of the CIA following the exposure of its role in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors.

After a bit of outcry, Congress quickly white-washed this violation of law and flaunting of its own

ban. A Senate committee completely absolved the CIA of any involvement in illegality. This was the go-ahead for Congress to pass \$100 million in direct military aid which Reagan signed on October 19 — two weeks after Hasenfus was shot down.

Interestingly, Congress rejected a resolution to require the administration to report on its involvement in private supply networks to the contras. If Congress knew nothing about Contragate it was because it didn't want to know -- or more precisely, because it wished to pretend it didn't know. One senator bluntly admitted that everyone in Congress knew of the secret weapons to the contras.

Thus even before the Iran arms reports emerged, Reagan and Congress were busy trying to put a lid on

the revelations concerning the dirty war in Nicaragua. Later it was revealed that Attorney General Meese, who "uncovered" the Iran-contra link, had ordered the FBI to halt a probe into the contra arms network in October. Reagan might have gotten away with this sleazy coverup had not the Iran situation blown up in his face.

## From Rambo to Dumbo

The news of the Iranian arms deals hit Washington like a bomb. Reagan owed his 1980 election to the Iranian hostage crisis that had crippled the Carter regime. Along with Libya and Nicaragua, Iran was on Reagan's hit list of "terrorist nations." Coming only months after the Libyan bombings and Reagan's rantings on terrorism, the revelations proved Reagan a liar and hypocrite.

Suddenly the administration was caught in a mad scramble to cover its tracks. Contradictory statements were issued daily. Before a national television audience, the president flatly lied over and over as he insisted on denying Israel's role; the White House had to issue an embarrassed "correction."

Reagan claimed that the arms deal was not a trade for hostages. "We did not, repeat did not, trade weapons or anything else for hostages -- nor will we." Most Americans know he is lying. His attempts to explain his actions as a carefully constructed probe to open up a relationship with Iranian "moderates" would sound plausible -- except for the entire operation's patent disorganization and incoherence.

As we have pointed out before, American foreign policy has been incoherent well before Reagan. Neither Carter, who intervened in everything, nor Reagan, who lets others run the show, could stifle the divisions within capitalist society. In the case of Iran, the smooth and tough exterior policy concealed severe underlying clashes.

The hostage dealing, for example, as real as it

may have seemed to some of the players, was probably just a cover; the White House is concerned about hostages mainly as a potential electoral embarrassment (and as a convenient excuse for military interventions). The arms dealing meshed with the policy of supporting both sides in the Iran-Iraq war, just enough to keep up the monstrous bloodletting that prevents the oppressed classes on both sides from acting against imperialism. They also supplied a handy slush fund to use in support of counterrevolutionary forces everywhere.

### Reagan Discovers Islam

Most important, they served as a vehicle for exploring the possibilities of opening ties to Iranian leaders. Contrary to their rhetoric against terrorism, the realpolitik specialists in the White House all want links to Iran. The differences and ultimate chaos emerged over matters of assessment, timing and the danger of exposure.

During his hostage crisis, Jimmy Carter had also hoped to deal with Iranian "moderates" and even Khomeini himself. Carter failed because the Iranian masses who had overthrown the Shah prevented any deals. Now, as a result of war-weariness and the triumph of Khomeini's counterrevolution, the Reaganites saw new possibilities for regaining Iran.

That Reagan should stumble over Iran, Bible in hand, is no accident. It reflects the bourgeoisie's contradictory attitude towards the mullahs in power. The U.S. authorities were frightened and repelled by the mass struggles that destroyed their agent, the Shah. They would love to embrace a reactionary Islamic regime in Iran that could be used to police the Middle East, particularly the oppressed Palestinians. Reaganite terrorists rant and rave about Middle Eastern terrorists but would have no qualms about employing them in defense of imperialism.

Given Khomeini's victory over the masses in Iran, imperialism now can hope that Iran is safe enough for a deal. In order to sell this to the American people, they have to couch their policy as a bid to "moderates." But this simply means those who want an anti-Soviet regime based on a more secular dictatorship; there is no basis for bourgeois democracy in Iran. Unless the working class overthrows the regime the only choices are bourgeois rule through a military or Islamic dictatorship.

If coming to terms with the Islamic regime in Iran is in U.S. imperialism's interests, why did the arms deals explode in Reagan's face? After all, if the deal had been successful in creating a de facto alliance between the U.S. and Iran, no bourgeois wing would have complained. But no such arrangement could hold up. In addition, there was fear that Reagan was balancing so unevenly that he could allow Iran to win the war. After nearly giving away NATO to Gorbachev in Iceland, was Reagan about to hand Iran a decisive role in the Middle East with nothing to show for it but a few hostages?

Reagan's problem is that the Iranians gave him

virtually nothing. While he acknowledges he took a gamble and lost, many are asking whether he was playing with a full deck. His conservative base, which equates Iran with the devil, is wobbling. A leading reactionary in the White House, communications director Patrick Buchanan, was forced to attack fellow conservatives for failing to back the administration. On top of this, by swapping arms for hostages Reagan left his policy open to ridicule. Allied powers whom Reagan had reproached for being soft on terrorism now learned that he was a terrorist coddler himself.

Reagan screwed up so badly that the Democrats rushed to join the Republicans in an effort to "save the presidency" -- i.e., re-establish mass confidence in the legitimacy of bourgeois rule. In opening up the can of worms, all bourgeois parties hoped that Reagan could recap it by tightening up the ship, collaborating more with Congress and throwing some face-saving sop to the people, i.e. a generous apology or Donald Regan's scalp. But as the situation drifted out of control, they had to avert the danger of a paralyzed administration.

Nevertheless, as each day brings new revelations, the Democrats can be expected to take advantage of the situation to the fullest. Already the potential candidates for 1988 are reassessing their strategies, since now the Democratic presidential nominee will be in a good position to win.

### Why Reagan Failed

Bourgeois propagandists are now faced with the task of explaining why yet another president has fallen on his face. Some whisper that Reagan is dumb, that he delegates too much authority and doesn't really know what's going on. Reagan ignores the professionals in the State Department (note the absurd attempts to make Secretary of State Shultz into a hero) and relies on unstable characters like Ollie North.

Without a doubt the administration has blundered. But it is doing just what all administrations before it have done. As we have seen, imperialism requires its president to take decisive action to defend the system, and each successive leader must strive to free the White House from all restraints. From the capitalists' viewpoint, Reagan's error was not the abuse of power but the inability to manipulate it in their interest. Lying and law-breaking are accepted practice. But failing to deal with trade and budget deficits while engaging in adventures in Libya, Nicaragua and Iran showed that Reagan wasn't running the country.

This leads some pundits to suggest that the real problem is that Reagan is trapped by his own ideology: supply-side economics, an almost religious hatred of Russia, an uncontrollable fondness for imagined militaristic heroism. But the reality is just the opposite. Reagan has been an opportunist and pragmatist from the beginning, to the dismay of the far right. He speechifies about less government while

expanding the federal deficit and creating layer upon layer of new bureaucracy. Talking tough on foreign policy while dealing with the Iranian "terrorist" regime is only his latest contradiction.

The gap between Reagan's rhetoric and performance only shows that his real role is to propagandize for imperialist militarism. He has labored to create a political climate for aggressive intervention against the growing threat of the international proletariat. That he couldn't resolve the crisis of imperialism dating from Vietnam was predictable: the international economic crisis prevents capitalism from offering



Nicaraguan soldier holds Eugene Hasenfus, captured CIA pawn, on a leash.

serious reforms. As dissatisfied masses explode throughout the world, imperialism must rely on violence and reaction to keep its power. And without a credible scapegoat (given Russia's weakness and general conservatism), Reagan has been unable to whip up sufficient jingoism to support an all-out Rambo policy abroad. Hence its failure.

Reagan's military spending combined with vast budget deficits has enabled the U.S. economy to gain a temporary prosperity largely financed by Japan and Europe. But U.S. capitalism has resolved nothing; it has only swept its contradictions under the rug. This only means that the coming shocks will explode with even greater force. Mass upheavals and revolutionary struggles will be on the order of the day.

To blame Reagan's Iran-contragate fiasco on stupidity explains nothing. Why then does the bourgeoisie continue to select stupid leaders? Imperialism's fragile position is what produces the ruling class's crisis of leadership. It wants a strong leader but fears the dangers of decisive confrontation -- and thus reins in Reagan's adventurism. The paralysis of the Reagan regime is due not just to Iran-contragate but to divisions within a ruling class that fears the revolutionary potential of the international working class struggle. For now, the bourgeoisie prefers to avoid the convulsions that would accompany military interventions and attempts

to smash the working class. Better to move cautiously than arouse the sleeping giant.

Creeping Bonapartism tried to achieve the stature of a full-scale Bonaparte standing far above the divisions and crises that wrack ordinary mortals below. But the celluloid Rambo was dissolved by the storms of the real world. We cannot say how far Reaganism's collapse will deepen or what new revelations will open up. Despite all bourgeois efforts to contain the crisis, it has a logic of its own. We revolutionaries disdain to hide our views: we hope that the situation deteriorates into a full constitutional crisis that exposes all the contradictions of bourgeois society and undermines the hegemonic imperialist state.

Working classes abroad, sensing the paralysis of the imperial presidency, should take full advantage of the situation but remain wary of U.S. imperialism's attempts to recoup its losses through a potentially popular military strike. The working class at home, beleaguered as it is, now has an opportunity to recover. But to do so it will have to overcome its chief obstacle, the labor bureaucracy.

If Rambogate exposes the fragility of imperialism, it also points to the crisis of leadership in the working class. In U.S. labor, the only powerful organized force, the AFL-CIO, has played no substantial role in response to the political crisis. Indeed, the labor bureaucrats support imperialism's counterrevolutionary efforts in Central America and throughout the world. A tremendous opportunity to cripple the imperialist militarist drive towards war is thus being squandered as a result of the betrayals of the labor flunkies.

Re-creating a proletarian vanguard party is the first necessity. In its absence there is a real danger of Popular Frontism. The last election saw the left leaping into the foul waters of the Democratic Party as salvation from the right. As the Democrats gain from Iran-contragate, this trend will accelerate. But as history shows, the Democratic Party, the left wing of imperialism, will never prevent war. Its role is to make international conflict acceptable to the working class -- as evidenced by its current protectionist position.

As it did in the 1930s in France and Spain, Popular Frontism can only mislead and demoralize the masses. A variation on the Bonapartist theme, it demagogically adopts a populist rhetoric and the pretence of standing above classes to attract the workers while defending bourgeois power. Its promise of impossible bourgeois-democratic solutions ties the workers to the system and paves the way for Bonapartism -- and therefore for depression, fascism and war.

Rather than serving as cannon fodder to prop up the rotting foundations of bourgeois democracy, the proletariat must build its own international revolutionary party committed to leading all the exploited and oppressed against imperialism. Rambogate can be the starting point for turning the imperialists' crisis into a revolutionary struggle for power. ■

# Philippines: Democratic Dead End

The overwhelming vote of approval given by the Philippine people on February 2 to the new constitution sponsored by President Corazon Aquino is being hailed as a great victory for democracy. However, it represents not the power of the people but the continued domination of the United States. It also showed once again the simply awesome ability of the left to turn a situation favorable to the masses into a defeat. Another such victory for democracy and the "demos" -- the masses -- will be dead.

Self-congratulation is particularly evident among the moderate U.S. imperialists who champion "Cory." According to a New York Times editorial, "Only last week President Aquino was pursued by mutinous troops

and political crisis. In comparison to the relatively steady hand of Aquino, their record was one of constant vacillation.

## Aquino and the Left

Aquino came to power in Manila a year ago, riding a wave of popular sympathy over the killing of her husband, the leading liberal opponent of Marcos. The tide of popular revolt had grown so strong that the Reagan administration was forced to cut bait in order to prevent a revolution. It forced Marcos out and compelled the Philippine army and Marcos' defense minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, to join Aquino, the only bourgeois politician capable of gaining mass support.

The right wing had no choice but to comply, and Aquino, for her part, welcomed into her government the gangsters who had murdered her husband.

From the outset the left has been flummoxed. It wavered between abstention and support for Aquino in the election against Marcos, disdaining the option of an independent working-class campaign. Afterwards it stood captivated by what it saw as an irrefutable fact -- her ascension to office via "people's power."

The National Democratic Front (NDF) and its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA), have been desperately pursuing negotiations and ceasefires in the on-going guerrilla war against the army. But the

army, hiding behind Aquino's liberal handwringing and calls for unity, has now been able to place fourteen more combat divisions in the field against the rebels than it had under Marcos in 1985. Only the military's intransigence forced the NDF to terminate the 60-day truce that expired February 8.

Aquino had already indicated that despite her negotiations with the guerrillas, she expects to accelerate military action against them. A leading supporter, Cardinal Jaime Sin, calls the discussions desirable "because you cannot just kill communists without giving them an opportunity to surrender."

On the political front, the new leftist party PNB (Party of the People) announced in November that it would support Aquino's new constitution. This document gives Aquino a six-year term in office and guarantees the U.S. its military bases for at least four more years. In return for its support, Aquino democratically banned the new party from the elections.

The blatant confusionism of the left is rooted in its class relations and political programs. The NDF is spearheaded by the Communist Party and bases its



Aquino's troops massacre Philippine demonstrators at January 22 protest. Bourgeois democracy is on the march.

and leftists rioters. ... To the rescue came the Philippine people, by the tens of millions. They buried Mrs. Aquino's opponents in a plebiscite remarkable for its huge and peaceful turnout." Hallelujah!

It is true that Aquino won a huge popular victory and that the margin was unexpected. As of September, to illustrate, the number of workers' strikes in the country had exceeded the total for all of 1985 under the hated and openly anti-working class regime of Ferdinand Marcos, a notoriously corrupt and despotic U.S. pawn. As well, thousands of peasants demonstrated over and over again for land redistribution. Fred Whiting, head of the American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines, said, "It's people power run amok."

Aquino had been losing her grip because she was too clearly the agent of Washington and the Philippine ruling class of capitalists and landowners. But by early 1987 the masses had come to feel that there was no alternative; without her there would be only the naked oppression of the U.S.-sponsored military. The left parties, with their immense mass base, offered no way out of an increasingly desperate eco-



Philippine masses turn back tanks during anti-Marcos revolt. Workers will have to oust Aquino, too.

strategy on guerrilla warfare in peasant areas rather than working-class struggle. This befits its class-collaborationist bloc, which includes elements from the bourgeoisie, the church, the peasants and the proletariat. Its program calls for land reform, not seizure of the land by the peasants; readjusting the stupendous foreign debt, not renouncing it; and liberal reforms and a mixed capitalist economy, not socialist revolution. It appears as a weak echo of the more demagogic promises made by Aquino with her supposed pipeline for aid from Washington.

Playing games with Aquino resulted in the killing of Roland Olalia, head of the May First Movement (KMU) in November. The KMU is the largest labor federation in the Philippines and was opposed to the new constitution. Despite the workers' anger at Olalia's murder, the response of the leadership has been feeble. It is obvious even to Aquino who the killers are, but the assassination is still listed as unsolved. On January 22, the marines and police massacred 25 peaceful demonstrators and wounded scores of others in an unprovoked bloodbath. The government responded by slapping the military's wrists.

The next day Dr. Enrique de la Cruz, head of the Alliance for Philippines Concerns, representing 48 organizations of "progressive" Filipinos in the U.S., mourned: "The Aquino government was a product of people's power. How soon it forgets where it came from."

The left is still trying to counterbalance the military by beseeching Aquino to represent the people. This policy has been a miserable failure; it enables the regime to accommodate the army all the more easily. Thus Enrile, despite his continuous attempts to overthrow Aquino, remains a free man. Right-wing military conspirators (the latest coup attempt oc-

curred in late January) have been treated with kid gloves. The army under General Fidel Ramos uses the rightist insurrections to demand more concessions. Ramos said of the January coup leader, "We wanted to assure our good friend that he would be treated honorably if he surrendered. I appealed to his idealism and professionalism ... ."

American imperialism is well aware that the Philippine masses are still far too strong to tolerate an open military dictatorship. So it backs Aquino, on the condition that she allows the army gradually to take over the effective running of the government. The NDF claims to have a U.S. State Department document outlining such a "creeping coup." Document or no, U.S. policy is obvious, and it depends on the left's blocking the workers from taking the kind of mass action they have been clamoring for.

Aquino's standing rose among the masses because of their hope that she can do something for them, at least prevent a military takeover. The reality is otherwise. A large landowner herself, she represents only the class that has ruled one of the world's most unequal societies since independence. As Alberto Alvarez, president of a peasant association, asked, "How can we have genuine land reform where the people making the laws are the landowners?"

Good question. The answer for the Philippines is the creation of a revolutionary proletarian party as intransigent in fighting for the masses as are the army officers for the bosses. Leading the working class in alliance with the peasants in a socialist revolution is the only way to bring land to the peasants, power to the workers and the boot to the bourgeoisie plus all its military servitors and imperialist masters. ■

# Howard Beach

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black leaders -- who were labeled "handkerchief heads" and "Uncle Toms" for their pacifist calls for moderation in the face of murders.

The militants have so far followed the lead of Alton H. Maddox Jr. and C. Vernon Mason, lawyers defending Howard Beach victim Cedric Sandiford. Black nationalists Maddox and Mason were attacked by both black and white liberals for not cooperating with the District Attorney and the police. But the cops were treating the two black survivors of the lynch mob as if they were the "perpetrators"! Maddox and Mason's justified mistrust gained them considerable support from people demanding to see justice done.

Unfortunately Maddox and Mason are tied to the same capitalist system, the same judicial apparatus and the same Democratic Party. Mason ran as a Democrat in the primary two years ago for District Attorney of Manhattan. Had he won, his victory would have meant working alongside black Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward in enforcing the racist, anti-working class legal structure. Their praise for Governor Mario Cuomo for appointing a special prosecutor spreads the lie that blacks can really expect a fair deal under capitalism and that Cuomo is some kind of friend of the oppressed.

The militants looked to Maddox and Mason for action. But all the nationalists offered was a boycott of white businesses in New York, an action impossible to organize or implement. As of this writing, with no apparent alternative except to await the trial's results, the militancy has been successfully cooled.

## General Strike Against Racist Attacks!

Like the liberal and radical black leaders, the labor bureaucrats had no answer to Howard Beach. Officials of unions like the Transit Workers, with their large militant and black membership, had to say something: so they declared their devotion to Martin Luther King and announced support for protest demonstrations. Real action was the farthest thing from their minds. But black workers who are furious at the travesty of justice need not feel helpless -- they have a mighty weapon in their hands.

The transit union alone could shut down New York -- and if it moved others would quickly join it. Many white workers too were outraged over the Howard Beach lynching. At home in their communities there is no powerful way to make their feelings known. However, capitalism itself organizes and concentrates workers at the heart of the profit-making system. On the job, the relation between white and black workers is far different from what it is in their segregated neighborhoods. A 24-hour general strike demanded by black workers to protest Howard Beach would have won strong support from white workers. Such an act would have showed the bosses the outrage of the working class that can bring the system to a halt. And all workers would have learned their strength in practice when

united against the common capitalist enemy.

Howard Beach is also a warning to black workers of the need for self-defense. Soon the lynch mobs won't operate on their "home turf" alone but will escalate into the black communities. Defense organizations at the moment can only be temporary; they are hard to maintain on a community basis. It is only with the development of mass action based upon the industrial working class that mass movement can provide real protection against an inherently racist system. Such movements will also show black and white workers their own ability to overthrow this capitalist state and create their own, where the scourge of racism can finally be wiped out.

## Jesse Jackson's Answer

Howard Beach attracted national attention, and Jesse Jackson, the most radical-talking black Democrat, has stepped into the fray. In a New York Times article (January 28), he pointed out that "Howard Beach and Harlem" get the same raw deal in America. The Reaganites and the big corporations, he wrote, are letting working-class whites and blacks fight each other for crumbs.

Jackson made the same point in a speech to a Democratic convention in Sacramento in late January:

"Who has made the most adjustment to Dr. King's dream -- Queens or Wall Street? Working-class whites, though reduced to the mythology of Archie Bunker, have the most potential to be coalition partners in a drive for jobs, peace and justice."

Jackson's goal is a coalition of working-class whites and blacks inside the Democratic Party. Mapping out a "new" course with an old history, he hopes to resurrect the New Deal coalition of the 1930s. Like Franklin Roosevelt he cries out against the "malefactors of great wealth" and the minions of Wall Street, in order to preserve capitalism overall.

But as a black leader dedicated to a bourgeois interracial coalition, Jackson has to go further. In arguing for his electoral combination, he denies the need for militant action over events like Howard Beach. In his Times article, justice was only an afterthought: "Of course, the killers of Howard Beach must be punished." But he added:

"Instead of confronting one another at the pizza parlor, we must march together to the factory gates. Howard Beach and Harlem are two sides of the same coin -- and that coin has been devalued by Reaganomics."

Jackson is right in that racism does indeed emanate from the upper layers of capitalist society. And working-class unity is the way to stop it. But his "factory gates" rhetoric is only a figure of speech; he really means marching to the polling booths, as his article and speech (as well as his whole political career) make plain. He has to dissolve the racism issue in order to win his real goal, unifying the Democratic Party in time for 1988. Thus he advocates in fact an alliance between the two

sides who confronted each other in Howard Beach.

That would be a disaster for blacks and white working people alike. The killers do not represent the white working class. Yes, most white workers are politically and socially backward at this time. They have contradictory consciousness on most questions, including race. But despite their racial prejudices they also hold ideas of equality, decency and fairness -- toward the underdog, fellow workers on the job and on the unemployment lines.

That is why Reagan and Koch are not openly racist. They hide behind hypocrisy because blatant bigotry would offend the majority of people in the U.S., including the white working class. The overwhelming bulk of working-class racism today is not the sort that leads people to join or condone lynch mobs. The implication that Howard Beach represents white workers is as great a slander as that perpetrated by the bourgeois press in 1984 when it maliciously equated Jackson's own anti-Jewish comments with Nazism.

### Class Consciousness

Jackson is maligning the working class in order to put forward a moderate program wrapped in radical rhetoric. The Times reporter in Sacramento suggested that Jackson's new strategy is a "defense of working class whites who live in places like Howard Beach" -- in a word, it is "old-fashioned class consciousness." (February 2.)

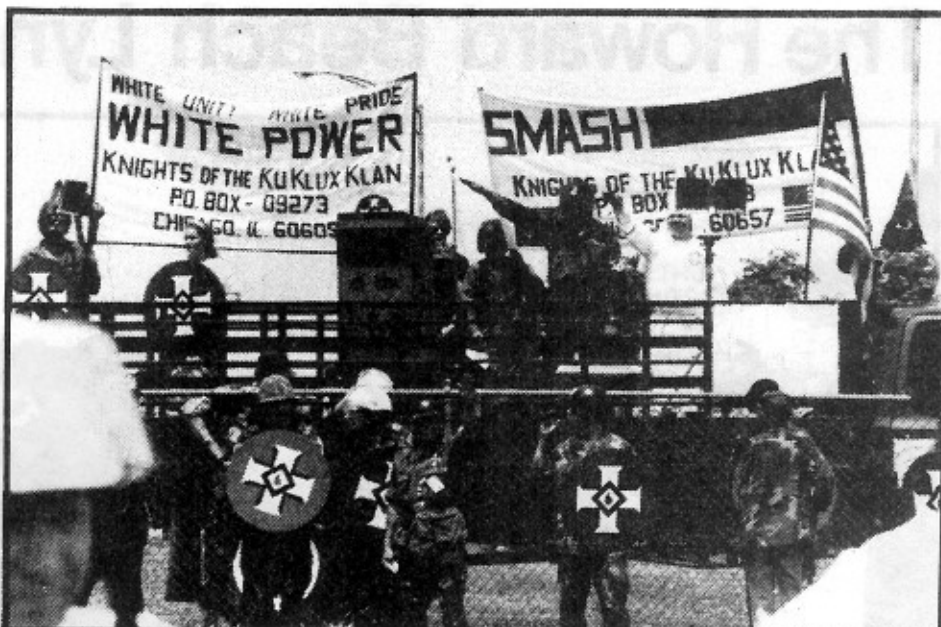
But Jackson is not preaching "class consciousness," a Marxist expression that means awareness by the working class of its own power and its mission to overthrow capitalism. The workers can come to such consciousness only through their own mass struggles -- not through electoral diversions, and certainly not by voting for bourgeois politicians.

Because he far outdistances the other bourgeois politicians in ability, Jackson has understood the growing desperation of workers, white as well as black. Hence his battle cry against economic injustice and corporate power. Unlike Roosevelt, Jackson faces the task of preventing an imminent mass movement rather than containing one that already exists. If he is able to channel the coming struggle into the Democratic Party, the results will be catastrophic.

The prosperity of the post-war period is gone, never to return as long as capitalism exists. Capitalism today can't limit its attacks to blacks. Mass cut-backs and union-busting attacks are spreading misery to white workers as well. The threat of unemployment hangs over all. The basis for united action by workers exists, and therein lies the solution to the capitalist attacks. Marxists know that such mass struggles are key to genuine class consciousness -- and

the formation of a revolutionary workers' party as a real alternative to the capitalist politicians.

Since the key question for revolutionaries is the real development of mass consciousness, the struggle against each and every act of racism must be waged without compromise. The advanced working class must rid itself of every vestige of backwardness if it is to overcome capitalism. Therefore we call for a unit-



Ku Klux Klan open rally in Chicago, June 1986. These racist maggots feed off the decay of capitalism.

ed general strike of all workers in response to the bosses' attacks.

### Democrats Oppose Workers

Every Democratic politician, including Jackson, stands for the opposite of working-class unity. They deal in coalitions among middle-class leaders and labor bureaucrats who misrepresent the workers -- not the workers themselves. Jackson's Rainbow Coalition is no different. It welcomes bureaucrats like strike-breaker William Winpisinger, head of the Machinists, who led his union in crossing PATCO and flight attendants' picket lines. Jackson himself defends the likes of Philadelphia mayor Wilson Goode, not the eleven victims of Goode's bombing of MOVE and the destroyed black community. Jackson's allies are the politicians and labor bureaucrats who represent their supporters in the same treacherous way.

If blacks swallow Jackson's pill, if workers follow their narrow sectoral leaders, then the divided working class will be set up for defeat. Capitalism can no longer afford the past gains won by workers and the black struggle; it must pit worker against worker, white against black, black against Hispanic. Jackson plays into its hands by containing the struggle and preserving the system; if he succeeds, the escalation of racist violence to the point of fratricidal warfare will become a reality. ■

## The Howard Beach Lynching



Black youths march on Howard Beach after racist murder. Protests cooled when Gov. Cuomo appointed a special prosecutor. History proves that the capitalist legal system is a trap for movements.

New York City has been convulsed by the racist killing of Michael Griffith on December 20 in Howard Beach, a segregated white neighborhood in the borough of Queens. Mayor Koch and even President Reagan have expressed concern, liberal black leaders have counseled restraint, and "radical" black nationalists have misled an incipient protest movement.

In a just society the answer Griffith's killers would face execution. Even today, they may not get off as lightly as did the assassins of Willie Turks, Michael Stewart, Eleanor Bumpurs and other black victims of racial violence. Knowing that black people are outraged at the coddling of one murderer after another, the authorities might choose to yield a small concession. After all, these latest killers are expendable, unlike the cops in the Stewart and Bumpurs cases; they are only the miserable pawns of a social system that is racist to the core.

Even though the Governor's special prosecutor has indicted the gang of killers, black people cannot afford to moderate their militant anger in exchange for a token of justice. For even if these racist killers are punished, racism in this country is still growing and will spread like the plague if the social system, capitalism, is to survive.

For the moment, hypocritical masks are necessary

to hide racism's malignant growth. Koch's mealy-mouthed statements at Howard Beach are matched only by Ronald Reagan's sham concern over racial injustice. Both administrations are notorious for their efforts to roll back every gain that blacks have won in decades of struggle. For capitalism in crisis depends on high unemployment among blacks to lower the wages and living standards of all workers. Above all, the system must keep the working class divided by pitting better-off workers against the more oppressed minorities to prevent a powerful unity.

Less obvious and therefore more dangerous are the liberals who denounce racism across the board while preaching calm to the oppressed. Black politicians like Rep. Charles Rangel and the leaders of integrationist groups like the NAACP have always pleaded the case for electoral support to liberal Democrats. Electoralism is a safety valve to forestall mass action. But the truth is that black people won their past gains through mass struggles that forced the capitalist politicians to cough up some reforms.

Commentators have pointed to the new consciousness growing among New York blacks in response to Howard Beach. Young and militant protesters responded wholeheartedly to denunciations of the mainstream

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