

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



Re-Create  
the Fourth International

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## The Democrats' Jackson Dilemma

The primaries are finally over. The seemingly endless electioneering and windbag speeches have given way to the festivals of more political rhetoric and back-stabbing known as the party conventions. Meant to be showcases for the Democrats and Republicans, the

conventions serve to reveal the crisis of leadership facing the U.S. capitalist rulers.

In order not to further alienate the masses of working people hostile to the system that offers them so meager  
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### Free Moses Mayekiso!

## ANC Stifles South African Workers

The struggle to free Moses Mayekiso continues. On trial for treason, the leader of South Africa's National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), the second most powerful union in the main trade union federation, COSATU, has been held in jail since June 1986. What makes his case so important to the international proletariat is that he is an open advocate of working-class power in South Africa.

In the government's indictment, Mayekiso is accused of holding the following views:

- “That the working class (also referred to as the proletariat), as the vanguard for liberation, should be in the center of and in control of the struggle;
- “That the working class, including the unem-

ployed, the youth and other members of the community should be mobilized, organized and united against the capitalist system and the State;

“That the working class or its unions and the so-called progressive organizations should seize control of the means of production and of the residential areas;

“That the so-called capitalists must be forced into a situation where they are unable to exercise control.” (*Azania Frontline*, August 1987.)

These views are consistent with those found in the document proposing a Workers Charter. As we explained in the article “Free Moses Mayekiso!” (*Proletarian Revolution* No. 31), Mayekiso and other NUMSA leaders are part of a left syndicalist trend in South Africa that has championed the Workers Charter. (We inaccurately implied in that article that NUMSA had adopted the Workers Charter; in fact, the resolutions listed were adopted to initiate a discussion over “the aims and program of the working class at all levels.”)

In posing the need for a socialist South Africa to replace apartheid capitalism, the Workers Charter is a  
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# For a Palestinian Workers' Revolution!

Calling for an end to all aid to Israel and a democratic and secular Palestine, an ad signed by 300 prominent individuals appeared in the *New York Times* March 13. The ad received a predictably hostile response from Zionist groups. However, what may come as a surprise to many supporters of the Palestinian struggle is the attack on it by leading backers of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

Hilton Obenzinger of the National Executive Committee of the Palestine Solidarity Committee wrote in polite terms:

**"For many progressives there would be no problem with such an anti-Zionist position. To be sure, the fundamental thrust of the Palestinian revolution is for self-determination, democracy and secularism. However, it's questionable that this was the best use of time, money and visibility in the *New York Times*." (Guardian, April 13.)**

Why are PLO supporters against raising the very position which that organization has been identified with in the past? Obenzinger makes it clear that the real reason for opposing the ad is that it fails to put forward the PLO's current line which calls for a United Nations international peace conference that will lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Obenzinger accuses the ad of ignoring the PLO and for failing to tail the position of the nationalist leadership.

**"For anti-Zionists to drop the 'minor' detail of the**

**PLO and the international peace conference and appear to argue against an independent Palestinian state can only be seen as veering far from the concrete political tasks at this stage of the solidarity struggle in favor of idealist and voluntarist impulses."**

Obenzinger's attack reflects the growing capitulation of the nationalist PLO to the Zionist state. The demand for a democratic and secular Palestine is reduced to "the fundamental thrust" and "the ultimate goal" to be fought for at some future stage. Given the PLO's bourgeois nationalist politics and its reliance on the reactionary Arab regimes, it should come as no surprise to revolutionaries that it would seek a deal at the expense of the Palestinian masses. As in El Salvador, Nicaragua and elsewhere, petty-bourgeois nationalist forces are incapable of consistently fighting imperialism and eventually betray even their own nationalist programs.

## IMPERIALIST OUTPOST

Zionism and the Palestinian struggle represent two irreconcilable forces. The Zionist state of Israel can only exist as an imperialist outpost in the Arab world whose role is to police the region in order to prevent the Arab revolution. The very existence of the colonial-settler state of Israel is based on the denial of the rights of the Palestinian people. Self-determination for the Palestinians can only mean the destruction of the Zionist

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- No. 8: Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program
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# How Not to Defend Trotskyism

## The Pseudo-Trotskyist Legacy

In power and in exile, Leon Trotsky was an uncompromising fighter for the class independence of the proletariat, the key element in revolutionary consciousness. In contrast, the Social Democrats and Communists, have been mired in class-collaborationism for over half a century.

It would seem necessary for those who claim to admire Trotsky to stand unswervingly against such capitulation. Yet in the post-war decades, whenever the call for working-class subordination has sounded, it has been echoed by self-styled Trotskyists of one brand or another. What distinguishes most of the pseudo-Trotskyist organizations from one another is which anti-working class force they choose to tail. The deepest division among tendencies deriving from the FI has been over the "Russian question": what is the class nature of the Stalinist Soviet Union?

In 1939 Max Shachtman led a major desertion from the Fourth International and its American section, the Socialist Workers Party. His faction eventually concluded that the USSR had ceased to be a degenerated workers' state (Trotsky's position) and had turned into a new form of class society, "bureaucratic collectivism," antithetical to both capitalism and socialism. In 1950 a British group led by Tony Cliff broke from the FI and retrospectively decided that Rus-

sia had become "state capitalist" in the late 1920s. Cliff heads the relatively large British SWP and its International Socialism tendency.

Cliff's state capitalism theory describes a system not subject to the internal laws discovered by Marx. This implies that a value-producing proletariat does not exist under Stalinism; thus Stalinist society amounts to a new social system neither capitalist nor socialist, a variant of Shachtman's "third campism." The Cliff/Shachtman analysis reflects not only a rejection of Stalinism but also the cynical Orwellian denial of the working class's capacity for revolutionary and socialist consciousness — a view popular among the post-World War II intelligentsia worldwide.

A second major schism occurred in 1953 when the International Committee, led by James Cannon, Gerry Healy and Pierre Lambert and calling itself the "orthodox Trotskyists," split from the "Pabloites," the international leadership headed by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel. The main issue was Pablo's insistence that the Fourth International's national groups should enter the mass reformist parties, both social-democratic and Stalinist, in order to reach the workers. This policy was bolstered by the theoretical conception of Pablo and others that the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe and later China have become ("deformed") workers' states

without the blessing of any workers' revolution. It was a theory that the "anti-Pabloites," who remained Soviet defensists, in no way challenged.

A myriad of splits, fusions and re-splits have taken place within and between the two defensist factions, proving that the differences among them were in no way clarified. For example, both Pabloites and anti-Pabloites agreed to invite "Comrade Tito" and the Yugoslav CP to join the Fourth International after his break from Moscow in 1948 — despite his continuing Stalinist politics and practice. All the defensists likewise supported the Bolivian nationalist Paz Estenssoro and his "anti-imperialist" MNR in 1952, a capitulation that detoured the revolutionary Bolivian proletariat — in which the Trotskyists were strongly based — away from making a socialist revolution. Pablo's deformed workers' state theory, of course, contributed to the tailing of "revolutionary" petty-bourgeois forces.

Since then some of the pseudo-Trotskyists have adapted to the CPs, others to social democracy, and many to a variety of "third-world" Bonapartes. Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Aneurin Bevan, Peron, Ben Bella, Castro, Cabral, Machel, Qaddafi, Khomeini, Saddam Hussein, Pol Pot, Mitterrand and even the pathetic Jaruzelski have all had their "Trotskyist" courtiers and touts. It is a wretched history.

In 1987 there was a flurry of maneuvers within the pseudo-Trotskyist milieu around a campaign waged by the British Workers Revolutionary Party for an international conference "to reorganize the Fourth International." The purported aim of the conference was a thorough reexamination of basic questions to account for the milieu's evident degeneration.

We in the LRP welcomed the discussion of fundamentals and sought to participate in the proposed conference as observers. But our warnings in recent issues about the political corruption of the pseudo-Trotskyists proved accurate. Fundamental discussion gave way to opportunist deals, and the effort collapsed amid familiar backstabbing scenarios. The WRP's "conference" became a fig leaf for merging the WRP into the More-

noite International Workers League (LIT in Spanish).

This Spring the LIT abandoned its attempt to swallow the WRP whole and chose instead to bite off a small chunk led by Bill Hunter. The dwindling main body of the WRP led by political contortionist Cliff Slaughter is still hopeful of an eventual merger with the Morenoites. The section of the WRP most interested in a serious reconsideration of political questions, the Internationalist Faction led by Dave Bruce and Chris Bailey (whose document on permanent revolution we have published and answered<sup>1</sup>) also departed. This tendency is still striving to keep alive an international discussion. However, insofar as it concentrates on building the "process" by gathering together available groups rather than continuing to boldly challenge orthodox shibbo-

leths, the value of its initial leadership role has declined.

Within the resulting political vacuum, organizational maneuvers became even more prominent. Smaller groups left hanging by the WRP/LIT intrigues are trying to pick up the pieces, still without probing the reasons for the milieu's sorry state. One effort was the "U.S. Open Trotskyist Conference" in San Francisco in April; similar meetings will be held in Europe. What defines the milieu as "Trotskyist" is the position that the Soviet Union is still a "degenerated workers' state" and the other Stalinist countries are "deformed workers' states." Few make any theoretical attempt to explain such a phenomenon or even outline its political-economic laws of motion.

### MRCI TO THE RESCUE

On the left edge of the milieu stands the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI), a tendency led by the British Workers Power group. Its document, the "Twenty-two Theses in Defense of Trotskyism," has drawn particular attention. It claims to put together a set of principles that rescues Trotskyism from the centrist morass. Tragically, it is just one more endeavor to rationalize capitulation without coming to grips with the fundamental problems.

The "Twenty-two Theses" proclaims that "1988, fifty years since the foundation of the Fourth International, is a fitting date to make a serious attempt to tackle

the *political* problems which have rent asunder Trotsky's work." Indeed, the Theses are presented as "the MRCI's starting contribution to such a discussion process." But we are dubious. We have polemicized against Workers Power in the past over several fundamental questions, without once receiving a considered reply. They refuse to respond because of their exceedingly pragmatic outlook. They prefer to engage only in narrow discussion with groups close to them on the political landscape — while carefully avoiding interchanges which hit the real sorespots.

The MRCI document claims to analyze the degeneration of Trotskyism into centrism, a term applied to political currents that cover their reformist practice by revolutionary rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> But MRCI fails. Contrary to the Leninist tradition, the Theses do not even attempt to lay out clear positions on the decisive struggles of the day. It is remarkable that "Marxists" would lay out their program without outlining the objective situation as to epoch and period, the state of the productive forces or the balance of class power. Instead they offer ringing affirmations of the essential principles of Trotskyism — the theory of permanent revolution, the vanguard party, the Transitional Program — but they end up using them to cover for the old muddle of centrist capitulation typical of the whole milieu.

In order to decipher the "Twenty-two Theses" as well as MRCI's differences with the rest of the "Trot-

## In Defense of Defensism?

The British organization Workers Power is one of the many "orthodox Trotskyist" outfits that regards the USSR and other Stalinist societies as deformed and degenerated "workers' states" — but it came to this theory relatively recently. Workers Power first adopted its "defense of the Soviet Union" position over the issue of Afghanistan. When the USSR first sent troops into that country they wrote:

"In analyzing the events surrounding the invasion of Afghanistan and developing a strategy for revolutionaries in the face of a new cold war offensive, we found it impossible to advance a principled revolutionary program from any other standpoint than that of characterizing the USSR as a degenerate workers' state." (*Workers Power*, February 1980.)

We were not convinced. The Soviet invasion's immediate aim was to murder the leader of the local radical Stalinist faction that held power and replace him with more conciliatory

elements. It hardly seemed the peg on which to hang a theory that the Stalinist system was progressive. Workers Power, of course, did not label the USSR a workers' state because they saw it as a loyal ally of the working class. No, their point — the only positive thing they found to say about the Soviet invasion — was that *despite* Stalinism's betrayal of the workers, it was congenitally a threat to imperialism on an international scale:

"In a situation where imperialism is under serious pressure, the Soviet bureaucracy can increase its bargaining strength internationally by alliances with, and aid to, the anti-imperialist forces. ... For the imperialists, the possibility of such alliances necessarily casts the Russian bureaucracy as a permanent obstacle to the fulfillment of their plans."

Today, however, Gorbachev's withdrawal from Afghanistan draws the opposite analysis:

"It is U.S. imperialism in particular that has paved the way for an

Afghan bloodbath. And the Soviet bureaucracy now seems set to serve as its willing accomplice. Let this be a warning to those who take the Soviet Union's commitment to progressive causes and regimes as good coin. The Kremlin will sell their struggles and their lives if, in doing so, it strengthens its bonds with the imperialists." (*Workers Power*, March 1988.)

True enough: the Soviet bureaucracy is no "permanent obstacle" to world imperialism but indeed a "willing accomplice." This in fact has been our position all along, based on our analysis that the Stalinist system is statified capitalism. Now that Workers Power appears to have recognized the Soviet rulers' true role in world politics, will they reconsider their defensist theory? Undoubtedly not, because the real reason for their 1980 position was not the Afghan events but rather their desire to sign up as full members in the family of pseudo-Trotskyism. And for that, political consistency is not at all the price of admission.

skyist" family, it is crucial to note that Workers Power originated as a left split from the British Cliff tendency in the mid-1970s. It eventually metamorphosed into Soviet defensism, adopting a variant of the deformed workers' state theory.<sup>3</sup> It is the pseudo-Trotskyist defensist groups toward whom MRCI orients.

To its credit, MRCI is indignant over most of the "Trotskyist" betrayals. It believes that the other Soviet defensist groups are centrist and that continuity with genuine Trotskyism has been decisively broken. But it does not challenge the fundamental world view of the Pabloites and Orthodoxists, and it tail-ends social-democratic reformism at home. This posture is reflected in the view that Stalinism and other petty-bourgeois elements abroad can make socialist revolutions and do away with capitalism. Herein lies the key to MRCI's distortions of permanent revolution, the Transitional Program, and the end of the Fourth International.

### PERMANENT REVOLUTION?

In the first lines of Thesis 1, MRCI bursts with Trotskyist fervor: "The theory, perspective and program of permanent revolution retains its full validity."

"In the imperialist epoch no fundamental remaining tasks of the bourgeois revolution can be resolved in the historic interests of the toiling masses except under the leadership of the proletariat. ... The objective necessity of the revolution in permanence must, however, be translated into a conscious strategy by the proletarian party. To turn permanent revolution into an objective process which uses differing leaderships — Stalinist, petty-bourgeois nationalist or centrist — to achieve its ends is to throw onto the historic process the tasks of revolutionaries."

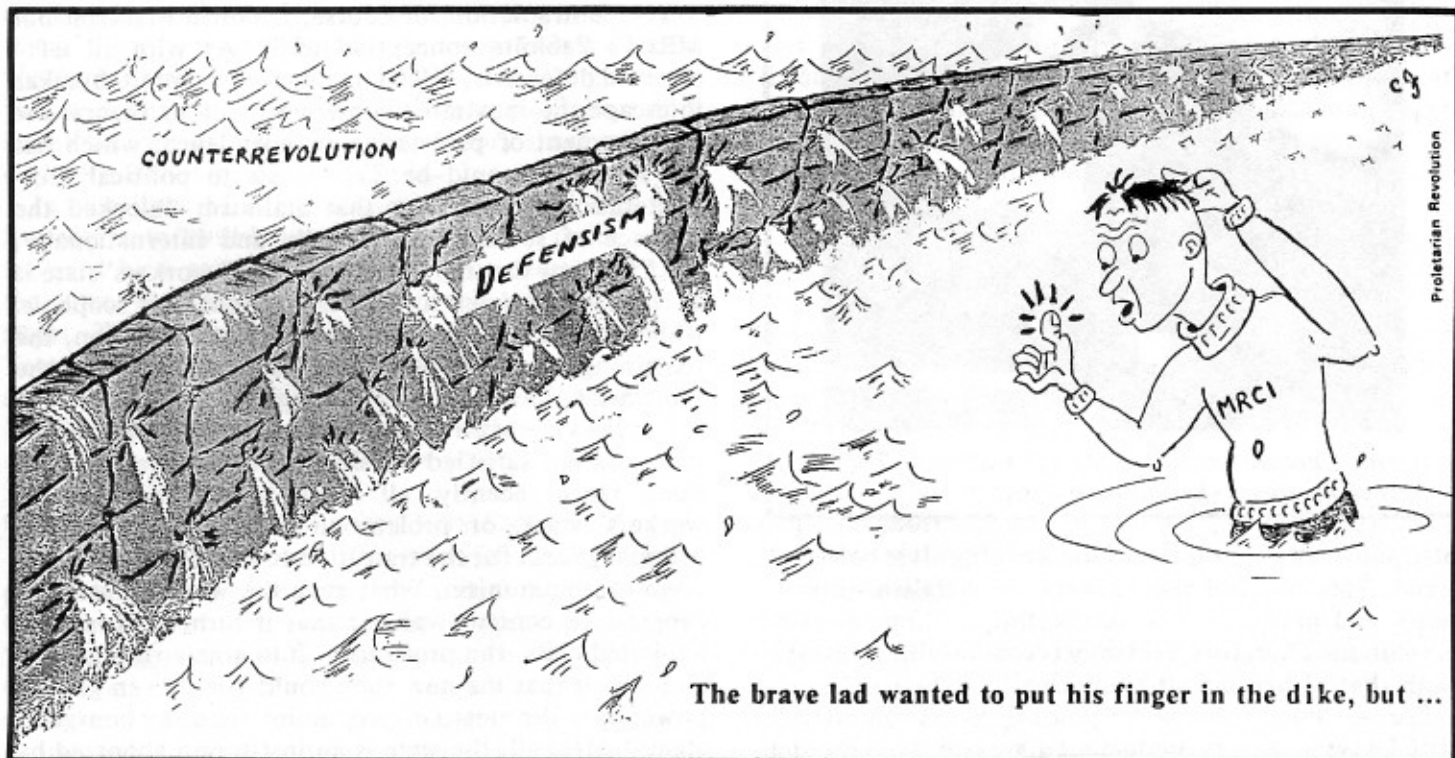
Well said. The last sentence is a thrust at Pablo, Mandel, Healy, Cannon and all those who have granted rev-

olutionary capacity to the Stalinists and other petty-bourgeois forces. In the same uncompromising spirit, Thesis 2 "condemns as unprincipled the political support given to such movements by the centrist FI during the Bolivian revolution of 1952" and a dozen other similar betrayals.

But MRCI cannot maintain this intransigence for long, for it has to present its own politics. Thus Thesis 3 endorses the alleged "Leninist/Trotskyist tactic of the Anti-Imperialist United Front." This conception was abandoned by Trotsky after it proved disastrous in the course of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, where Stalin's class collaborationism led to the slaughter of the workers. Trotsky used the slogan in the early 1920s because he then accepted Lenin's pre-1917 slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" for China.<sup>4</sup> Only through the unfolding of the Chinese events did he recognize the applicability of permanent revolution on the international plane. The very term "anti-imperialist united front" became a symbol of sellout.

MRCI's anti-imperialist front is consistent with the obsolete "democratic dictatorship" but not with permanent revolution, since it poses a strategic alliance with non-proletarian forces. Permanent revolution rests upon the conviction that no bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois-led) elements are anti-imperialist in reality in this epoch, and that only an independent proletariat, led by its own vanguard party, can carry out the anti-imperialist (i.e., anti-capitalist) struggle.

MRCI presents its "anti-imperialist united front" as one of a number of tactics that communists use to expose "progressive" anti-working class forces. But since it is seen as an inevitable stage in revolutionary development, it is really an overall strategy, not just a tactic. Despite MRCI's warning against "popular frontist



The brave lad wanted to put his finger in the dike, but ...

distortions of this tactic," the entire conception leads to illusions in the "anti-imperialist" petty bourgeoisie.

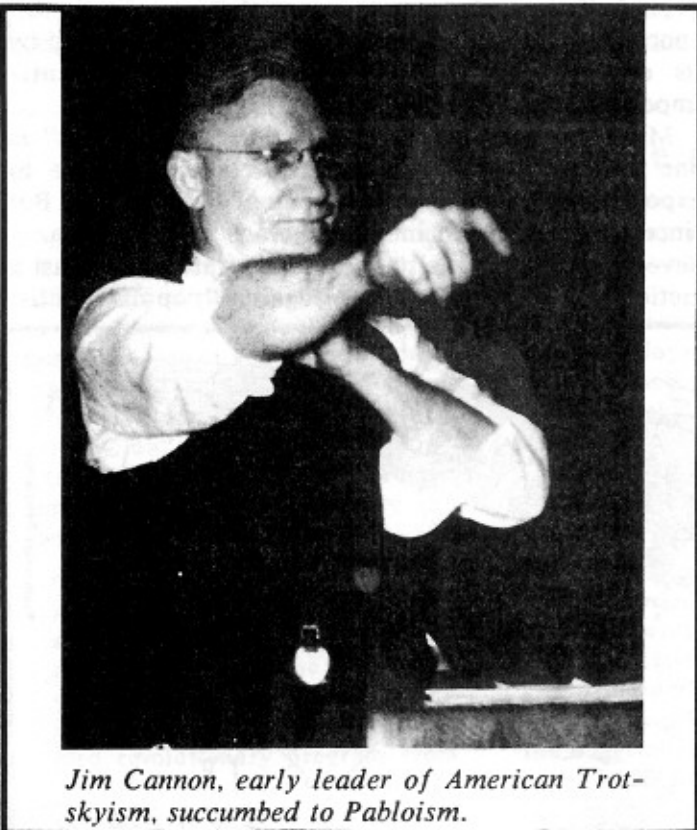
Ironically, MRCI dates the collapse of the Fourth International to its Third Congress of 1951 (Thesis 22). One of this Congress's achievements was to adopt the anti-imperialist united front strategy for Latin America — thereby paving the way for a series of disasters, including the Argentine Morenoites' flirtations with Peronism and the decisive capitulation of the Bolivian POR to petty-bourgeois nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

### STALINISM'S TRIUMPH

Of course, illusions in the petty-bourgeoisie should come as no surprise from people who imagine that non-working-class forces can overthrow capitalism. Thus in Thesis 10 on Stalinism, MRCI admits that according to its theory the petty bourgeoisie can replace the proletarian party. This is stated offhandedly, as if such a violation of the most fundamental principles of Marxism requires no explanation:

**"Where Stalinist parties have taken and hold state power on the basis of post-capitalist property relations, ... they retain their politically counterrevolutionary character. ...**

**"While in China, Cuba and Vietnam, Stalinist parties did carry out the overthrow of capitalism, they**



*Jim Cannon, early leader of American Trotskyism, succumbed to Pabloism.*

**also politically expropriated the working class beforehand. This blocked the advance of socialism internally and prevented the internationalization of the revolution. Therefore Trotskyists combat this strategy with that of permanent revolution."**

The working class was "politically expropriated," MRCI says — a very understated way to describe the

bloody slaughter the workers and their Trotskyist leadership suffered at Stalinist hands in Vietnam, for example, and the counterrevolutionary measures taken against working-class upsurges in Eastern Europe. Only when the proletariat was suppressed did the Stalinists complete their revolutions — revolutions that deposed the old bourgeoisies without removing capitalist exploitation of the working class.

If only the "Trotskyists" *had* combatted Stalinism with permanent revolution! But on MRCI's account it would have been entirely unnecessary. The "overthrow of capitalism" and the establishment of "post-capitalist property relations" (of a workers' state — deformed, degenerated or whatever) means in Marxist terms not simply social revolution but *socialist* revolution. Stalinism, it seems, has therefore made socialist revolutions in a dozen countries. The Stalinists may carry out their revolutions badly and brutally, but they — not the proletariat — accomplished the job wherever it was done in the post-war world. Once you grant Stalinism the socialist revolution, there is little work left for Trotskyists aside from prodding.

This problem is what led so many Fourth Internationalists down the path from Pabloite theory to open capitulation. It served as justification for abandoning independent proletarian communist parties in favor of burial in the mass reformist parties at home and tailing petty-bourgeois forces abroad.

To put it in a nutshell, MRCI affirms that only the proletariat can fulfill the remaining tasks of the *bourgeois* revolution. Petty-bourgeois forces, however, can handle the central task of the *socialist* revolution. What a strange science is MRCI's Marxism: each class is suited for the other's goal!

### MRCI'S LOOPHOLE

The contradiction, of course, is not in Marxism but MRCI's Pabloite conception of it. As with all left-oriented defensists, MRCI tries to find a circuit-breaker to escape the inevitable consequence of its theory: the abandonment of proletarian independence, which has led so many would-be Trotskyists to political self-obliteration. By arguing that Stalinism "blocked the advance of socialism" internally and internationally, MRCI claims that the Stalinist form of workers' state is an inherent barrier to socialism. Hence its loophole: while Stalinism can make the socialist revolution, the remaining tasks of transition require Trotskyism and the proletariat. Thus Marxism is allegedly saved.

But the vicious circuit is not broken so easily. Marxist theory is not satisfied by sleight-of-hand rationalizations. Until recently, all Marxists believed that the workers' state, or proletarian dictatorship, was the necessary form for the transition to socialism, the lower stage of communism. What gave the workers' state its progressive content was not that it turned a formerly exploited class, the proletariat, into a new ruling class. Nor was it that the new state could wield even greater power over the means of production than any bourgeois state — after all, the state is an institution abhorred by

Marxists as much as by anarchists.

No, the workers' state is progressive solely because it is the means for creating abundance and wiping out exploitation, classes and states — that is, because it is transitional to communism. A "workers' state" which is inherently *not* transitional is no workers' state at all.

Such was exactly Trotsky's view. He knew that defeats could occur and that the Stalinist degeneration was indeed blocking Soviet Russia's transition to socialism. That is why he regarded the "counterrevolutionary workers' state" (his term for Stalin's USSR) as possible for only a moment in time; its contradiction was so narrow that it could be resolved only by an immediate proletarian revolution or a capitalist restoration. He described it as a ball balanced on the point of a pyramid that had to fall to one side or the other. That the Stalinist degenerated workers' state could last half a century would have been an absurdity to Trotsky — all the more so the other "workers' states" created by the "political expropriation beforehand" of the working class.

It was the Fourth International's 1951 Congress that codified the theory of "deformed workers' states" created without the proletariat. MRCI labels this Congress the critical point in the International's move to centrism — but still adheres to its anti-Marxist innovation on the workers' state. Strange that such a lasting "contribution" would emerge from the same Congress that abandoned the Trotskyist program.

MRCI has made a convoluted effort to stave off the cynical rejection of the working class's socialist potential that inheres in Pabloism. But its alternative is in reality a variant of the Shachtman/Cliff tradition's "third system" theory. That is, for MRCI Stalinist states are progressive with respect to capitalism but reactionary with respect to genuine workers' states. Stalinism is counterrevolutionary not because it defends capitalism (as Trotsky understood) but because it blocks the road to socialism from an intermediate point. This is exactly Shachtman's original conception of bureaucratic collectivism: a society qualitatively between capitalism and socialism. All versions of Pabloite theory share such an outlook without acknowledging it.

In this light MRCI proclaims (Thesis 11) that the Stalinist state "will have to be smashed" in order to be replaced by a genuine "commune type semi-state" of the actual workers. But Marxists don't smash workers' states. The political revolution against Stalinism that Trotsky called for would have *preserved* the workers' state while rescuing it from its bureaucratic usurpers. MRCI's inconsistent formulation here only confirms the underlying Shachtmanism of their position.

#### WHAT IS A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT?

That MRCI elevates an anti-imperialist tactic into a permanent strategy is no accident: it does the same with key elements of the Transitional Program. Take the "workers' government." When introduced by the early Comintern, this term's meaning ranged all the way from a workers' state after the proletarian revolution to a bourgeois reformist regime — including the unlikely

possibility of an unstable reformist government in a revolutionary situation.<sup>6</sup>

The workers' government *slogan*, especially as refined by Trotsky in the Transitional Program on the model of the Bolsheviks' practice in 1917, was a tactical demand to expose the essential pro-capitalist character of the reformist parties. MRCI claims to fight against opportunist distortions of this slogan — but in reality uses it as a permanent strategic and stagist call, gutting its exposure quality and projecting it as a basis for political agreement with reformist forces. Thesis 4 says: **"The only workers' and peasant's government which it is possible for communists to give political support to ... must be a government committed to defending the workers' organizations and solving the political and economic crisis at the expense of the bourgeoisie. The most elementary program of such a government must consist of arming the proletariat, disarming the counterrevolutionary bourgeois organizations, expropriating all capitalists who sabotage production, installing workers' supervision over production, ensuring the burden of taxation falls on the rich, not on the workers and peasants. It must actively support the struggles of workers and peasants internationally."**

This description traces back to the Comintern analysis but actually concerns an extremely unlikely case of an already unlikely circumstance, namely a regime in which the communists themselves could participate. In 1917 the Bolsheviks offered a deal for non-violence to the Mensheviks and SRs in the class-collaborationist Provisional Government — *if* they would break from their bourgeois allies — but they categorically rejected participation.

MRCI's version has little to do with Bolshevism: it would have been absurd, for example, to expect the Mensheviks to "actively support" international struggles. The point of a workers' government, as the Transitional Program explains, is its transitional character: if the reformists did take over the government under revolutionary conditions, this would show the workers the limitations of *any* regime under a capitalist state and prove the need to establish their own state power.

Reformists normally (as in 1917) refuse to break with their bourgeois allies. However, mass working-class pressure, exercised through dual-power soviets under communist leadership, could conceivably force them into such a break and the establishment of a vacillating centrist regime. Under these circumstances Bolsheviks would work among the masses for the revolutionary creation of a workers' state. As Trotsky put it, such a workers' (and farmers') government "would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat."

By pressing only for a workers' government led by reformists "which it is possible for communists to give political support to," MRCI not only undermines revolutionaries' ability to patiently break workers from their mass organizations; it also creates immense illusions in the revolutionary powers of petty-bour-

geois-led formations. MRCI's conception of a workers' government worthy of support is determined by the political positions taken by the misleaders — not by finding ways for Marxists to show their fellow workers how to *overcome* the impediment of the petty-bourgeois parties. Typically the need for a workers' government is put in terms of the consciousness of the misleaders, not the workers. MRCI fosters illusions in the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia because it has them itself.

By always calling for a workers' government rather than a proletarian state, MRCI downplays the necessity for Bolshevik leadership via the revolutionary party. It also subordinates the use of transitional slogans as a means to achieve united fronts (based on common action and allowing political disagreement) in favor of an illusory political agreement with reformists.

Another plank in the revolutionary program that MRCI empties of its transitional character is the slogan of soviets, or workers' councils. Here is Thesis 5:

**"Soviet-type bodies are the only organizational form ... that draw in representatives of all those groups and strata fighting for the revolution and coordinate the struggles of these groups. Soviets are the highest organizational form of the class struggle and the embryonic organs of working-class power. Therein lies their transitional content. It is the fight for these types of organization ... within the revolutionary situation that distinguishes authentic Trotskyists from all manner of centrism."**

On the contrary: centrists frequently call for dual-power forms like soviets. What they omit is the need to resolve the dual power through socialist revolution. It is typically centrist to claim that such organizations with uncertain leaderships are in themselves the "highest form" of class struggle simply because of their mass character. What distinguishes Trotskyists is their fight for the *revolutionary party as the leadership* of these vital mass achievements.

In 1917 the soviets were long led by reformists and played a reformist, even counterrevolutionary, role — until the Bolsheviks won control through tactics like the workers' government demand. The transitional content of soviets only emerges when they are treated as arenas for struggle for the leadership of the working class.

Typically MRCI applauds the masses for their numbers and democratic potential while ignoring the decisive question, the proletariat's capacity for socialist consciousness. Despite its ritual obeisance to Trotsky's insistence on the centrality of the vanguard revolution-

ary party, MRCI always leaves class consciousness and the party as an afterthought. It uses the tactic of "critical support" to mass working-class-based parties, designed as a weapon *against* reformist misleaders, as a near-permanent strategy of support for such politicians. "Rank and file" caucuses as programmatic blocs are built as an alternative to genuine united fronts based on joint action, on the one hand, and to the necessary *revolutionary* leadership, on the other.<sup>7</sup>

## THE WORKERS' DEFEATS

The logic of MRCI's politics emerges most significantly in its concluding Thesis 22. Here MRCI defines the roots of the division between itself and the rest of the Trotskyist milieu on the crucial question of the collapse of the Fourth International.

**"The Fourth International definitively sank into centrism at the Third Congress of 1951 and disintegrated as a centralized international in 1953. From this date the Fourth International ceased to exist. ...**

**"The causes for the collapse of Trotsky's FI were, objectively, the triumph in World War Two of the allied imperialist bourgeoisies and the Kremlin bureaucracy, the subsequent stabilization of capitalism and the expansion of the degenerate workers' state. This falsified Trotsky's perspective and prognosis for the post-war period. The leaders of the FI — Pablo, Mandel, Healy and Cannon — were unable to correct this perspective and re-elaborate the program to take account of these developments."**

MRCI's analysis sounds materialist, based as it is on objective factors. But it misses the point. Yes, Trotsky predicted that World War II would bring in its wake a round of proletarian revolutions, as did the First World War. This prediction was indeed falsified, and the revolutionary failure undermined the FI. But the two most critical questions remain unanswered. How, despite Trotsky's prediction to the contrary, could capitalism stabilize and Stalinism expand? Why did the FI fail to adjust its perspective?

Trotsky predicted a successful international working-class upheaval because he had confidence that the Fourth International could put itself at the head of the inevitable revolutionary wave. The proletariat had suffered defeats, but in important countries it remained on its feet fighting; moreover, it still retained a bastion in what he considered to be the still-proletarian USSR. The war would prove to workers the objective need for revolution; the central question was therefore working-class leadership.

The Stalinists' domination in Russia had given them authority among the world's working classes and stifled the growth of the Fourth International. Nevertheless, according to Trotsky's analysis, Stalinism was desperately weak and would be shattered by the upcoming war. That is, he saw Stalinism in the USSR as an ephemeral bureaucratic caste serving no essential social function and yet trying to maintain its grip on the degenerating workers' state. Elsewhere the Communist Parties were declining, becoming ever more reformist and nationalist

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and losing their base in the workers' movement.

But reality proved different: Stalinism was far more powerful and stable than Trotsky thought. It wasn't his immediate "perspective and prognosis" that proved wrong but his underlying analysis of Stalinism. Stalinism turned out not to be at death's door because, contrary to Trotsky, it had succeeded in completing the counter-revolution and establishing a capitalist state on the basis of statified property. Contrary to the MRCI scheme, the problem was not resurgent capitalism to which Stalinism was a secondary additional factor. The destruction of the Soviet workers' state on the eve of the war gave Stalinism the strength to tighten its grip on the advanced workers and throttle revolutions which broke out after the war. The massive defeat inflicted by Stalinism is what enabled Western capitalism to recover.

Soviet Stalinism entered the war with a newly consolidated ruling class of bureaucrats and managers; the working class was now subject to draconian labor laws and miserable living conditions. The USSR waged the war not with a communist internationalist motivation but under slogans of Russian (not even Soviet!) nationalism and imperial conquest. In the wake of Hitler's retreat, the Soviet Army crushed working-class upsurges in East Europe; in France and Italy the CPs detoured potentially revolutionary movements into propping up bourgeois rule both at home and in the colonies. Thus

when Stalinism had successfully checked the workers, the U.S. could step in with Marshall Plan aid and Cold War remilitarization.

As evidenced by other writings, MRCI knows that working-class defeats occurred — but they aren't important enough to penetrate the "Twenty-two Theses" and nowhere are they treated as a major factor. Overlooking them means giving credit for capitalism's revival to the system's organic powers of recovery and the progressive potential of Stalinism. This too is a substantial and unacknowledged revision of Marxist fundamentals. ■

[to be continued]

## NOTES

1. With our reply, it is contained in the LRP pamphlet Permanent Revolution and Post-War Stalinism.
2. For a brief initial debate over the nature of this document, see "Exchange on Trotskyism," Proletarian Revolution No. 30.
3. See The Degenerated Revolution by Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group (1982), and our critique in Proletarian Revolution Nos. 20 and 21.
4. See our "Self-Determination for Ireland," Socialist Voice No. 14, and "Letter to the IWG," Socialist Voice No. 19.
5. See the resolution, "Latin America: Problems and Tasks," in the U.S. SWP's Fourth International, November-December 1951.
6. See our analysis, "Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program," Socialist Voice No. 9.
7. For details see "Workers Power: A Powerless Answer to Reformism" in Proletarian Revolution No. 23.

## "Let Them Eat Democracy"

The world watched with astonishment at the unexpected degree of openness and criticism of leaders at the Soviet party conference in June. But the establishment Western press took pains to point out its limitations. "It stops well short of democracy as understood in the West," wrote the British *Economist*. "It was breathtaking to Soviet citizens," added the *Wall Street Journal*, "but it still shouldn't be confused with the genuine, Jeffersonian article. This, rather, is a tactical, ad hoc democracy aimed at motivating and mobilizing individuals to carry out the purposes of the party and state."

So it is, and so it was explained by party leader Gorbachev. As he has been saying for years, the Soviet economy is in an acute crisis, and now it is clear that his economic reforms — perestroika — have so far only worsened the conditions of most Soviet working people. Gorbachev notes with urgency that without persuading the masses that austerity is in their interests, without incorporating the working classes into the political arena, reforms will inevitably be met by resistance:

**"Today we must have the courage to admit that if the political system remains immobile and unchanged, we will not cope with the tasks of perestroika."**

Well known for his familiarity with Western ways, Gorbachev even proposed a parliamentary-style presidency for the Soviet Union. Bourgeois pundits interpreted this as a bid for greater personal power over

recalcitrant party bureaucrats, but it meant far more than that. Western elections help make the electorate feel responsibility for the ruling class's decisions, especially when they entail sacrifices by the masses.

Take the current presidential campaign in the U.S. None of the candidates in the primaries advocated austerity as the necessary economic policy for the next administration, but that is what they are *all* talking about behind the voters' backs. Michael Dukakis' economic advisers, for example, propose "reducing consumer demand" — that is, lowering wages and raising prices. As we noted in our last issue, bourgeois theorist Felix Rohatyn called for a depoliticized, bipartisan group of prestigious experts to prepare the next president for what he can't say in public.

**"This country's standard of living is going to have to be lowered. How it is lowered and for whom it is lowered and whether it will be accepted socially — these are open questions."**

The ruling classes, East and West, have the same worries. World capitalism is descending deeper into crisis, and the working masses are going to have to pay — if capitalism is to survive. The alternative, East and West, is for the workers to reject capitalism and its inevitable austerity. That means building the international proletarian party that will make communism — and with it, real openness and mass decision-making — possible. ■



## Left Jabs



This occasional column aims to puncture the pretensions — to wisdom, honesty, antisectarianism and/or Marxism — of the numerous charlatans of the left. Contributions from readers are welcome.

### We Warned They Could Go Either Way — And They Did!

It takes unusual gall for the Spartacist League to claim Marxist prescience over the class character of Nicaragua. But claim they do:

“Now with the defeat of Washington’s contra terrorists, we have warned that the petty-bourgeois bonapartist FSLN regime, rather than following the ‘Cuban road’ to a bureaucratically deformed workers state, is moving toward reconsolidating a capitalist state ... .”

(*Workers Vanguard*, May 6.)

The fact is that since the Sandinista revolution, the FSLN has stood firmly against the wishes and actions of the workers and peasants to wipe out the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and abolish capitalist relations. As true Bonapartists, the Sandinistas defended the content of bourgeois class relations while allowing the nationalization of some property. Their constant goal has been to reach an accommodation with the U.S. — despite the imperialists’ unrelenting war against them.

Marxists are obliged to make clear the regime’s true anti-working class nature. But *Workers Vanguard* has hedged all along.

“The victorious FSLN did not establish a new proletarian state based on collective property and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. These petty-bourgeois nationalists were not wedded to either socialist or capitalist property forms. Like the victorious Cuban guerrillas led by Fidel Castro who conquered Havana 20 years before, they could go either way.”

(*Workers Vanguard*, September 4, 1987.)

Not only did the Spartacists insist that the Sandinista state had an indeterminate class basis, they even denied its existence! “There is a Sandinista regime, but a *state* in the precise Marxist sense does not exist in

Nicaragua today.” (April 19, 1985.)

A regime without a state is like a face without a head — in the precise Marxist sense, it is a mask. The SL’s indeterminate line is a mask with a purpose: it suggests that the Sandinistas have proletarian potential and thereby allows supporters like the SL to blur class distinctions and give political and financial support to the “non-class” regime. Indeterminacy in analysis is a precise Marxist symptom of centrism in politics. It also allows you to boldly predict what has already happened.

### Disarming Strategy

A futile attempt to present the Marxist position on disarmament was made by Samuel Adams in the May *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. He started off well enough, outlining American imperialism’s history of interventions around the world and citing the reasons why no capitalist power can disarm itself. He quoted Leon Trotsky appropriately: “Pressure can never induce the bourgeoisie to change its policy on a question that involves its own fate.” Also: “The only disarmament which can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers.”

Adams concluded that “disarmament is possible *only* as a result of the destruction and elimination of capitalism.” Exactly so. Rarely does a writer for a centrist publication put the case against reformism so straightforwardly.

But the effect didn’t last. Adams lambasted the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Action group for their capitulations to petty-bourgeois pacifism in preparation for the rallies to be held on June 11 in favor of “complete nuclear disarmament by the year 2000” and other demands. What was his alternative?

“Instead of the June 11 call for ‘a substantial reduction of global

military spending’ — which would apply to imperialist and nonimperialist nations alike — our demand must be for an end to *all* military spending by the capitalist-run U.S. government, with the money to be used for jobs and social programs.”

This is a backhanded endorsement of the strategy of unilateral disarmament. For Adams it is absurd to think that all governments can be persuaded to stop spending money for arms and spend it on social programs instead — but it makes sense to ask it of the super-imperialist U.S. alone, while all others retain their guns!

The FIT’s unilateralism is a device for dodging the truth that the only way to disarm capitalism is to destroy it. Adams says this only to renounce it in the next breath. Thus is centrism disarmed by opportunism.

### Sectarianism Smashed

We are not partisans of the French Lutte Ouvriere tendency, but we instantly sympathized with the LO comrades when they came under an “anti-sectarian” attack for running their own candidate in the presidential elections this spring. The attackers included the United Secretariat, whose French section supported the multi-sectoral, populist and allegedly widely popular campaign of the ex-Communist Party “renovators.”

“The candidacy of Pierre Juquin, supported by a wide range of left groups and individuals organized in hundreds of local and workplace support committees, has breathed some fresh air into an otherwise stagnant atmosphere. ...

“... there are three further candidates expected to get around 1% each. First is Arlette Laguiller, the only woman running in the campaign, representing Lutte Ouvriere (LO), a group that identifies with Trotskyism but generally has a rather rank-and-fileist, sectarian approach to politics.”

(*International Viewpoint*, April 4.)

As it happened, Juquin received a fresh, massive 2.1 percent of the vote, in contrast to Laguiller’s stagnant and sectarian 2.0 percent. Once again opportunists’ hunger is greater than the masses can stomach. ■

## Australia

# Class Struggle in the 'Lucky Country'

By Paul White, Workers Revolution (Australia)

They call it the "Lucky Country." Even in Marx's day Australia was put forward as an example of how the poor could "better themselves" through simple hard work, without having recourse to class struggle. The basis for this bourgeois optimism has been Australia's extraordinary prosperity, especially in the postwar period. Revolutionary socialists have had to contend with a jibe which also rings familiar to US socialists' ears: "you'll never have a revolution here — workers are too conservative."

The grain of truth in this statement has been that the combined effects of economic prosperity, Laborite and Stalinist misleadership and the Arbitration system have meant a certain political conservatism in Australia. The Lucky Country myth seemed real; every working class family was apparently able to buy its own house and car, in an economic climate of seemingly endless plenty.

But the grain of truth has never been more than just that. Propaganda from the bosses and the labor movement bureaucrats aside, the truth is that workers have always had to wring improvements in pay and conditions from the bosses through industrial struggle. Workers' action has generally been kept within the bounds of bourgeois legality, during the period of the postwar boom. But the end of that boom has done irreparable damage to the Lucky Country myth. If the boom was the material basis for political conservatism, it should not surprise us to find that the breakup of boom means that this corporatist fantasy is now becoming discredited.

### **WORKERS' ACTIONS WIN GAINS**

Like workers in other imperialist countries, Australian workers marched off to murder their class brothers and sisters in World War II. As they went, the ruling class assured them that their standard of living would be vastly improved upon their return. "It won't be like it was in 1918," the bosses promised. Six long years later, workers returned from active duty, to discover that the capitalists didn't mean a word of this. During the war officials of unions led by members of the Communist Party (CPA) had been in the forefront of strikebreaking — on the pretext of "defending the Soviet Union," "fighting fascism" and upholding the "national interest." Now these same officials were forced to head an extremely militant strike wave during 1945-49.

Substantial improvements in pay and conditions were secured by workers' action. Then, in 1949, coal miners launched a prolonged strike struggle. The Labor Party (ALP) government of the day, led by former train driver and trade unionist Ben Chifley, then showed its real colors: an emergency bill was introduced which allowed the use of troops as scab labor to mine coal. The

strike was smashed — but so was the Labor government, as demoralized workers refused to vote for armed scabbery. A Coalition of the Liberal and National parties was returned in a Federal election held shortly afterwards. The Coalition built upon Chifley's scab legislation, introducing further constraints upon independent working class action.

### **APPROACHING CRISIS**

By the late 1960s, the first signals of the approaching economic crisis had already appeared. This prompted the Commonwealth Arbitration Court to change the ground rules for calculating the important annual hearing for the National Wage Case which affected all workers, effectively cutting wages. This caused a growing tendency towards settling disputes outside Arbitration, through collective bargaining backed up by industrial action.

Over 400 strikes took place during the first two months of 1968 in the metal industry, as employers tried to bludgeon metal unions into accepting the new pay regulations. The ruling class struck back with legal sanctions (the so-called "penal provisions"). Metal unions were fined almost 92,000 Australian dollars (about \$70,000 U.S.) during 1968, and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU: Australia's AFL-CIO) threatened to call a national general strike. By the end of February, the bosses acknowledged defeat. An Arbitration ruling rescinding the new regulations contributed to the comparatively large National Wage Case decision to increase pay by 6% that year.

But the stakes were too high for the ruling class to give in too easily. The penal provisions continued to be ruthlessly applied to unions who ignored Arbitration Commission rulings. In May 1969 an official of the Victorian Tramways Union in Melbourne, Clarrie O'Shea, was jailed indefinitely for refusing to pay fines imposed upon his union by the Arbitration Commission.

Prior to O'Shea's arrest, he and some other union officials made good use of the 1968 ACTU decision to call a national general strike if the state acted against a union through the new penal provisions. They succeeded in obtaining pledges of indefinite strike action from unions throughout the country, if O'Shea was actually jailed. These officials' task was a simple one, since deep resentment had built up in other trade unions, which had been forced back to work by the penal provisions, while on the verge of winning strikes.

A national general strike erupted when O'Shea was jailed. In Melbourne, workers fought in the streets with police. The action had been initiated by union officials, but this official support also reflected widespread resolve in union ranks to deal with the penal provisions. Three days later, O'Shea was freed when a anonymous "well-wisher" paid all fines imposed on him and his

union. (This individual was later shown to be an operative of the secret police, ASIO). The capitalists are yet to completely take back the main gain won by workers in 1969, the crippling of the Arbitration Commission's penal provisions.

Workers justly saw O'Shea's release as a victory for working class militancy. A generalized wages push now began, as growing inflation (fueled by the emerging economic crisis) spurred unionists to make up for years of institutionalized decline in real wages. Back in 1964, the National Wage Case has accounted for almost 90% of pay rises. By the mid-1970s, in contrast, this component was only 21.2%, as workers turned instead to independent industrial action and collective bargaining.

### **BOSSSES BACK LABOR PARTY**

The economic crisis went from bad to worse internationally. In Australia, unemployment and inflation rose alarmingly. At the same time, it became apparent to the ruling class that Australia's conscript troops were achieving nothing by assisting the U.S. war in Vietnam, apart from further turning public opinion against Coalition government. The Coalition, meanwhile, lurched from one internal crisis to another.

The capitalists therefore decided overwhelmingly to back Gough Whitlam's Labor Party in the Federal elections of late 1972. Coming to power on the back of a wave of industrial militancy, Labor had to move slowly in attacking workers' real wages. The ALP's task was made even harder by the fact that workers regarded still necessary. The index was rigged, of course, and any increases were way overdue by the time they were paid. In both 1921 and 1975, indexation was introduced to contain explosive wages pushes. And both resulted in extensive real wage losses.

The Labor Party's response was an old form of pay restraint dressed up in new clothes. Wage Indexation (as this was called) had existed between 1921 and 1953. Elements of it had even continued into the 1960s. Under Whitlam, as before, indexation meant that wages were adjusted quarterly, in line with movements in a state-monitored prices index. But such increases were by no means automatic; time-wasting and energy-sapping litigation at Arbitration (backed by industrial action) was still necessary. The index was rigged, of course, and any increases were way overdue by the time they were paid. In both 1921 and 1975, indexation was introduced to contain explosive wages pushes. And both resulted in extensive real wage loss.

The Labor Party did a good job for Australia's capitalists. Not only did real pay decline, but further class collaboration was also institutionalized as a consequence of Labor's wages fraud. Whitlam's scheme included an unspoken social contract. In return for quarterly indexed adjustments, and promises to ensure more social spending, union leaders promised Whitlam they would cooperate in stifling strikes over pay.

But since wages do not cause inflation, this persisted. Inflation still soaked-up pay increases despite the new pay-cutting scheme. The ruling class became increas-

ingly disenchanted with the Labor government's ability to control working class militancy. On November 11, 1975, the ceremonial head of Australian capitalism, the Governor-General, sacked the Whitlam administration.

Working-class response was swift. Once again a general strike movement began to develop. But the main difference with 1969 was that this time the movement was completely spontaneous. The instant Whitlam's sacking was announced, workers began walking off the job and congregating at spontaneous demonstrations. In Melbourne demonstrators marched upon Liberal Party headquarters and proceeded to smash it up. Immense demonstrations continued for weeks afterwards.

Union bureaucrats joined with the sacked Laborites to head off the general strike that was about to erupt. The key role was played by Bob Hawke, then ACTU President, who told workers not to strike but donate the day's pay to the ALP election campaign fund instead! Not surprisingly, the ALP's cowardice only demoralized its working class electoral support. The Coalition, headed by the monetarist Malcolm Fraser, was returned in the December 1975 extraordinary general election.

But an ALP electoral defeat is not identical to a defeat for the working class. The Labor Party is a party with a traditional working class base of support, and formal links with trade unions. But it is itself a petty bourgeois organization, with bourgeois politics. So working class resistance to Fraser continued for several months after the Labor Party's electoral defeat. It was only when the trade union bureaucracy sabotaged a campaign of industrial action aimed at preventing the dismantling of the national health system (Medibank) that action tapered off.

### **WATERSHED DEFEAT**

The defeat over Medibank was a real watershed, however. By June 1978, the Fraser government felt confident enough to cut the quarterly indexation hearings back to six-monthly hearings. By March 1980, the original provision for increases on the basis of alleged "community catchup" was formally deleted. By the end of the year, however, these restrictions (once again in the context of steadily worsening inflation) had provoked the beginnings of working class fightback. All sections of the working class had suffered substantial real wage loss from the start of Whitlam's Wage Indexation onwards.

By August 1981, communications workers and then truckers won big pay rises through determined industrial action, despite open sabotage from the ALP State Premiers of Tasmania and New South Wales. The Arbitration system had to be formally scrapped, as both the Commission and the government admitted it was clearly achieving nothing.

The following month, the then ALP leaders Bill Hayden (Foreign Affairs Minister in the current Labor government) launched a campaign for a prices and incomes policy, otherwise known as a social contract. The ALP was offering the trade union bureaucrats a deal: agree to wage restraint under a Labor government,

and Labor will increase social spending and turn the unemployment trend around.

The ALP and ACTU bureaucrats now combined to rein in the developing pay push. It was evident to all that the Fraser government was on its last legs. Workers were beginning to take action to claw back some of the 20% in real wages lost by workers lost since 1975 under Labor and the Coalition. The bureaucracy adopted a

aside, this concerted sabotage achieved the desired result of railroading the anti-Fraser fight. If the Laborites had learned nothing else from the experience of the Whitlam years, it was that on no account should they ever take government on the crest of a strike wave!

The Hawke Labor government took office in March 1983. In the previous December, the Fraser Coalition government had imposed a wage freeze on workers,



*1976: Medibank workers' general strike against exploitation by national health system. Australian workers have shown great willingness to fight despite reformists' betrayals.*

two-pronged strategy to cope with this. On the one hand, the ACTU put forward a counter-perspective calculated to dissipate workers' combativity: in place of the actual existing strike movement, the bureaucrats counterposed an industry by industry campaign, which barely got off the ground.

By the end of the year, the CPA and ALP "left" leaders of one of the country's biggest unions, the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, had abandoned the pace-setting hours and wages campaign their union was spearheading, after achieving half of what was intended. They even signed a 12 month "no claims" agreement with metal bosses, so great was their rush to jump onto the social contract bandwagon.

Bert Evans, National Director of the Metal Trades Industry Association, expressed the bosses' gratitude: "There have been occasions where employees on the job have sought to raise the question of wages, but very properly, without exception, the metal unions have been quick to point out to the members that they voted on the agreement and are bound to honor it."

The Stalinists and Laborites also accused workers who bucked against this strategy of "jeopardizing Labor's chances of being reelected." Some notable exceptions

which was dutifully enacted by State Labor governments. The return of the ALP to office in Canberra had long been awaited by the vast majority of the working class, in the expectation that such attacks would be reversed. But Hawke maintained the wages freeze for a further nine months, after which Arbitration reinstated the Wage Indexation system and all workers got a modest 4.3% National Wage increase. But for most, real wages still lagged at least 20% behind 1974 pay rates.

But if Indexation under Whitlam had meant real wage loss, it meant comparative highway robbery under the Hawke ALP administration. This time the corporatist social contract was explicitly wage-cutting under the nomenclature of the Prices and Incomes Accord. The Accord was the finished version of the social contract first mooted by Bill Hayden at the ACTU Congress the previous year. Its corporatist nature was paraded as a virtue by the Laborites and the social democratic CPA. Prominent CPA leader and AMWU bureaucrat Laurie Carmichael described the Accord as "a transitional program for socialism."

The ALP's election campaign slogan sums its essence up: "Bringing Australia Together." Hawke's first act upon taking office was to organize a "summit" of capitalists, union bureaucrats and assorted petty-bourgeois

professionals from the welfare bureaucracy. The reward for pay restraint was supposed to be a reversal of the unemployment trend and a better standard of living for all. But by mid-1983 youth unemployment alone had reached 27.5% of young people seeking full-time work.

A survey conducted by the OECD during 1984/85 heartily approved of the Accord, noting that business profits had risen dramatically. Unemployment had fallen slightly also, but this was due to a mild international upturn, not pay cuts. This was proven when this world economy turned downwards again shortly afterwards, and Australian jobless figures rose sharply. The bosses, of course, had no qualms about the growth of the reserve army of labor. But the capitalists were disturbed about the increase in inflation which accompanied unemployment growth.

### CLASS COLLABORATION VIA 'CONSENSUS'

The class-collaborationist watchword of Hawke's government has been consensus. But by early 1985, this was beginning to come unstuck as electricity workers, train drivers, construction workers, food processing workers, public servants, metal workers and longshoremen took strike action. In each case, the issues were different, yet similar: the failure of class collaboration to provide workers with an answer to the capitalist recession.

In the cases of public servants and metal workers, the spark igniting the action was the failure of the government to honor long-standing commitments under the Accord. In all the other instances cited, matters were far more serious: the need to resist attacks by bosses and governments emboldened by the climate of class collaboration and union passivity.

The case of the workers employed by the South East Queensland Electricity Board (SEQEB) shows the starkly anti-working class logic of the Accord. On February 6, 1986, the then Queensland Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, announced that workers employed by SEQEB were to be henceforth employed under contracts. The contracts were to be between *individual* workers and their employer, with reduced pay and conditions (including safety conditions), and less union rights. The work force was to be reduced by 10%. The power workers struck immediately. Six days later, all 1002 were sacked by the government.

It was obviously a full-blooded attack upon the fundamentals of trade unionism. For almost two weeks, Queensland was blacked out, as members of the SEQEB workers' union, the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), and other Queensland unionists took solidarity action with their comrades. Then, just as victory was near, the bureaucrats struck. SEQEB militant Bernie Neville told the story, to a rally outside the September 1985 ACTU Congress:

**"We were close to victory. We were so close to a victory that would have meant an end to that bastard Petersen. But the Trades and Labor Council under its secretary Ray Dempsey fled and turned on the lights.**

**"The decision to retreat and turn the lights on had**

**the backing of every union official (right and left) in Brisbane [capital of Queensland]. Not one of them then or since has criticized the decision. Yet the truth is that when the lights were turned on, we the striking workers were betrayed and sold out.**

**"The labor movement then retreated and of course Bjelke-Petersen advanced. He passed anti-union legislation which will make it very difficult for unions to survive in Queensland. And he has publicly called for similar laws to be used against workers in every State in Australia.**

**"The Australian Council of Trade Unions responded to Petersen's anti-union crusade by putting on a trade blockade of Queensland in May (1985). The blockade was very effective. It was starting to hurt Petersen. Once more he was down and almost out. Once more we were close to a great victory. But the Federal ALP intervened and forced the ACTU to lift the blockade.**

**"Bob Hawke, the leader of the Federal ALP, the Prime Minister of the country, promised the union officials Federal awards [rulings in the federal Arbitration Commission] if they would lift the blockade. Well, they lifted it and, once more, we the strikers were abandoned and sold out."**

Queensland is often referred to as Australia's "deep North" — its recently retired Premier is a sort of Aussie George Wallace. But the neighboring state, the Northern Territory, is no more liberal. When the ACTU blockade of Queensland was aborted in May 1985, a section of the ruling class pressed home their offensive there. Once again, the ACTU's politics of appeasement and capitulation had only evoked further attacks on the working class.

### ONSLAUGHT BY THE COURTS

Bosses succeeded in obtaining a new Federal Award covering meatworkers in the Territory. This allowed employers to pay meatworkers in an individual enterprise in accordance with an agreement between the majority of meatworkers in that enterprise and its bosses — excluding the union. As with the SEQEB dispute, employers also insisted on contracts with each individual worker.

In May, the employer at the isolated Mudginberri Station Abattoirs announced that they had secured the agreement of 25 workers to work under individual contracts. On May 10, the union covering meat workers — the AMIEU — imposed work bans against the company and commenced picketing it. The picket closed down the abattoir, since even workers willing to sign contracts were not willing to cross a picket line.

The employer, a man by the name of Pendarvis, immediately hit back by appealing to the courts that the union's picket line was in breach of anti-union legislation still on the books from the pre-Hawke days although it should have been long ago removed under the Accord. He later sought to have the union's national secretary imprisoned.

Over 5 weeks later, an order by the Federal Court

that the picket cease was still ignored by the union, which was then fined the sum of \$10,000 for contempt of court, with a further \$2000 to be paid by the union for each additional day the picket remained. Legal costs were awarded against the union. Pendarvis then asked the court to seize the union's assets, and the meat employers' body, the MATF, sought orders stripping the AMIEU of all members in the Northern Territory and commenced groundwork to set up a scab union. To its credit, the union refused to pay a cent to the courts. In retaliation, the Federal court seized all the union's assets on June 18.

Now the ACTU stepped in to "assist" the union. ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty declared that the AMIEU picket had ACTU backing, which would be supported by unions in the meat, maritime and road transport industries. Meatworkers staged two 24-hour national protest stoppages. Unions in the industries named by Kelty stopped work for 24 hours on August 7. Truckers placed additional industrial bans on meat transportation. Kelty expressed the paucity of this response accurately, when he commented at the time that these actions were "merely a protest, not a declaration of war."

Months afterwards, the union's assets were still frozen. By the time of the biennial ACTU Congress in September, the union faced \$2.8 million in damage claims alone. The ACTU Congress pledged more support, but no substantial solidarity action ever emerged.

The onslaught by the courts, and the refusal of the union bureaucracy to adequately support the AMIEU — and the latter's inability to see beyond a reliance upon legal maneuvers as its prime means of defending its picket — eventually spelled victory for the bosses. The union was forced to shell out millions of dollars to the courts and Pendarvis.

Very early in the dispute, it had become apparent that the AMIEU was not just up against Pendarvis or

even the MATF, but also a whole battery of bosses, coordinated by the National Farmers Federation (NFF). Strong evidence exists to show that the dispute was in fact a carefully mapped out pre-planned campaign, on the part of a very farsighted section of the ruling class, the so called New Right. The New Right realizes that even the Laborites' union-bashing has its limits; the Accord was useful in softening up union for fundamental attacks, but unions have to be completely neutered if capital is to survive the economic crisis.

Since the Mudginberri defeat, other unions have suffered hefty fines for simply pursuing traditional aims of defending their members' basic rights. The Plumbers Union was hit with \$280,000 in fines. And the small Confectioners Union had fines imposed on individual members involved in picketing a plant where the boss was demanding a no-strike agreement from workers. The courts ruled against the unionists, banning the picket, as "an interference with the rights of others trying to make deliveries." In effect, the right to picket had been outlawed in the State of Victoria.

#### LABOR PARTY ATTACKS

It is worth noting that the attacks upon the plumbers and confectioners were done by Labor Party State and Federal governments. A sickening pattern has been established under the Hawke government — a symbiotic relationship between the bosses, the Laborites and the union bureaucracy. First the bosses (or their open representatives like the Liberal or National parties) initiate an attack upon a section of the working class — the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF), the SEQEB workers, meatworkers, etc. — then Labor and the union bureaucrats first undermine workers' resistance to this, guaranteeing defeat. Then these bosses' agents complement the bosses' attacks with their own.

With both the bosses and workers restive about the effects of the Accord, a new version of the latter was



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imposed in September 1985. This continued the same essential approach as its predecessor, but shifted the emphasis improving superannuation and taxation mechanisms for wage earners.

The rejigged Accord was even a bigger rip-off than its predecessor. For starters, the ACTU bureaucrats agreed that the next National Wage indexation increase would be 2% less than the (more or less accurately) predicted 4.35% CPI increase. In other words, even if we concede that the CPI is a fair measure of price rises (and it most definitely is not!), the ACTU is here conceding a 2% pay cut — about \$5 for most workers.

Of course, the bureaucrats didn't put it quite like that. They claimed that their "deal" was in fact simply a clever way to obtain the same rise — and a bit extra — through the back door. In return for conceding \$5, workers would receive \$5 (or less) worth of tax reforms and a universal superannuation scheme.

As shown earlier, however, tax reform was supposed to be one of the payoffs for wage restraint under the original Accord. The new agreement only made delivery of this promise conditional upon further pay restraint. It also stipulated that this "tax reform" would not occur until a full 12 months later. In the meantime, the government made sure that the anticipated revenue loss was adequately funded by breaking another Accord promise of enhanced social spending; health, welfare and education were cut, to fund "tax reform." Industrial action to oppose these cuts was, of course, forbidden, on pain of the unionists involved being refused National Wage increases.

Movement on the new superannuation scheme did not commence until the following June. Some workers have benefitted — though usually only at the expense of them making still further concessions. But workers are still waiting for a national superannuation scheme, even now. It should also be noted that the government only agreed to "support" the ACTU's superannuation project when the ACTU agreed to cancel a planned campaign for an additional national pay rise based on productivity increases. In other words, the only results of extra pay restraint were agreement to further postpone Accord promises and bureaucratic obstruction of resistance to government cuts. Some deal!

### **RULING CLASS VICTORY**

The parliamentary Opposition parties and some employers grumbled at the time that the new Accord was a "backdown" on government promises to them to cut real wages drastically. But most bosses agreed with the capitalist media's verdict that the new agreement was an all around victory for the ruling class. Michelle Grattan, veteran political commentator and editorial writer for the *Melbourne Age* newspaper (September 5, 1987) put it best:

**"The Hawke government has produced the miracle deal which seemed unattainable. It not only saves the Accord, but renews it for two more years, while still achieving most of the government's economic aims.**

**"Sometimes it (the Hawke government) succeeds beyond expectations, as yesterday when Labor's Accord made a nice contrast to the Liberals' dreadful discord."**

The *Age* was counting its chickens before they hatched. The Accord Mark 2 was undeniably an even bigger set back for the workers' movement than its predecessor. But despite what the petty-bourgeois left asserts, the working class is not stupid, simply misled.

### **LABOR'S BETRAYAL**

The original Accord had been conceded by workers under tremendous pressure from the union bureaucracy, in the belief that the alternative was a continuation of union bashing from the Coalition. At the same time, workers believed that a Labor government would honor its promises of maintaining the real value of wages, providing tax relief and universal superannuation benefits, abolishing anti-union laws, boosting social spending, and winding-down unemployment. Workers in early 1983 were still reeling from eight years of sustained attacks from the Coalition.

Of course, the Labor Party didn't deliver its side of the Accord — and itself attacked workers resisting the capitalist offensive. The demoralization which had developed under the Coalition and had been so carefully nurtured by Hawke and the union bureaucrats began to turn into resentment, as workers were betrayed in struggle by the Laborites and the bureaucrats.

As we've seen, the demoralizing and disorganizing logic of the Accord was beginning to break down even before it was revised in September 1985. The new Accord held the line even less. By May 1986, even the AMWU bureaucrats (who authored the Accord) were forced to talk militant for the first time in years, at mass meetings of their powerful membership. Metalworkers were angry at the government's refusal to honor its promises to them under the new Accord, and demanded action. Bureaucrats in other unions had similar experiences. Some unions even delayed giving the Arbitration Commission a commitment to pursue "no extra claims" — even though without this commitment no National Wage increase could be given to their members.

Meanwhile, the New Right's offensive continued. SEQEB workers were still being sacked in Queensland, while capitalists in resource rich Western Australia (WA) took on key groups of workers. An occupation of an offshore natural gas rig by 330 sacked workers was broken by the WA State Labor government, when it threatened the workers with \$10,000 fines and blacklisting. Both the State and Federal governments refused to deny rumors that the paramilitary Special Air Service would be brought in if the workers didn't capitulate.

Then 1160 miners employed by Robe River (a subsidiary of Peko-Wallsend in WA) were sacked for refusing to relinquish traditional working conditions. As this dispute unfolded, it became clear that it — like the SEQEB dispute — had been carefully pre-planned. Unions involved estimated that at least two years'

careful planning had taken place. Peko-Wallsend chief executive Charles Copeman, who emerged as the leader of the New Right during this dispute, served a list of no less than 2894 work practices the company wanted abolished, upon unions.

Robe River is situated in the industrially militant Pilbara mining region. Not surprisingly, there was widespread sentiment throughout the Pilbara for Pilbara-wide strike action to stop the company in its



*Paramilitary unit of Victoria's Labor government raids office of Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) and steals union records. Workers' outrage has been restrained by union leaders.*

tracks. This was subverted (although not without some difficulty) by the leaders of the unions involved: the AMWU (metalworkers); ETU (electricians — the same union covering the SEQEB workers) and FEDFA (crane and locomotive drivers).

Strike action erupted in late December, by the 800 Robe River workers. A combination of the still-existing anti-union laws and ACTU were used to force them to accept a "compromise" settlement. Robe River shop steward Graham Haynes later made it clear that he thought Copeman should have faced an all-Pilbara strike and — if that failed — a general strike. Robe River was a defeat for the working class — but one which created further resentment against the Laborites.

As the year progressed, it became clear that the mood of demoralization was beginning to really end. Many

unionists succeeded in breaking out of the Accord's suffocating stranglehold, by winning agreements on superannuation and other benefits outside the Arbitration framework. Some workers even secured pay rises.

On December 23, the ruling class effectively conceded defeat over the Accord by allowing the Arbitration Commission to substitute a new two-tier wage fixing system. Under the new arrangement, all workers are eligible for the first-tier pay rises every six months.

This is supposed to represent a cost of living increase, but in fact it is heavily discounted, even by the standards of the government's Consumer Price Index. The second tier is supposed to make up some of the difference, but it allows rises of up to 4% only. It is estimated that over 50% of workers will get the first tier alone. This is because of the very limited criteria enabling access to this tier.

Proletarian socialists oppose this system entirely. Apart from the obvious wage-cutting logic inherent in it, there is an even more ominous trap, as well. For the second tier is only payable in return for U.S.-style concessions on work practices, "efficiency" and "restructuring." In plain English, this means that, under this corporatist system, workers must give back working conditions won over several decades of struggle, in order to even partially keep up with inflation.

What's more, the Arbitration Commission has since made it clear that "it is primarily at the enterprise level that the objectives of this principle (regarding second tier payouts) will be achieved." This makes a lie out of the allegation by ALP "lefts" and their mouthpieces like *Age* journalist Brendan Donohoe at the time of the launching of the two tier system, who claimed that

**"Implicit in the Commission's decision was a rejection of New Right politics for labor market deregulation, company-by-company wage bargaining and individual contracts replacing awards."**

Instead of the two tier system representing an instance of the Labor government or the ACTU serving as bulwarks against the New Right, it is yet another sickening example of these bureaucrats actually implementing the New Right's agenda, in response to a little pressure from the latter. ACTU President Simon Crean is quite explicit about whom the latest wage-cutting scheme is intended to serve. As Crean said in November 1986: "What we want is for the so-called entrepreneurs in the community to indicate what they are aiming for and how we can assist."

The bureaucrats and the capitalists have combined ever since to savage traditional work practices, in the name of "restructuring" and "saving jobs." The result has been the loss of many basic conditions — as well as more real wage loss and unemployment — and the further incorporation of the bureaucrats into the state.

But 1988 is not 1983; Hawke's "honeymoon" with the working class is over. Whatever successes have been chalked up so far by the reactionaries in implementing the two tier system, the unavoidable fact remains that the current system is a replacement for the Accord which had to be abandoned — primarily due to a rising tide of working class resistance.

That resistance continues to disrupt the capitalists' "industrial harmony." Both the bosses and the Laborites had a particularly anxious time in mid-1987, when the powerful Queensland miners threatened to take on the bosses. At meetings throughout that State, they resolved to take on the Queensland government's vicious anti-union laws. The Queensland miners were pledged the support of miners in neighboring New South Wales, also. The miners realized that unless the anti-union laws are smashed, a fight to save jobs in their rapidly-decaying industry is impossible.

### **STRIKE THREAT ABUSED BY BUREAUCRATS**

Unfortunately, the miners left the final decision on when the all-out action was to be called up to their national union officials. These bureaucrats were probably even more frightened of the ramifications of such action than the Laborites. The threat to strike was cynically used as a bargaining chip by the union bureaucrats, in an unsuccessful bid to secure a corporatist Coal Marketing Authority, at which union bureaucrats and capitalists could sit down to collectively manage this ailing industry's overseas sales.

The result was predictable. Only a couple of very brief "protest" stoppages occurred — and miners' jobs continue to disappear. And Miners Union President Maitland has agreed to negotiate over conditions whose loss threatens pit safety, to keep a handful of jobs. As usual, the union bureaucrats' treachery was central in sabotaging effective action. But the most important factor utilized by the bureaucrats this time was probably the snap Federal election in June.

For Bob Hawke and his government, the increased frequency of industrial disputes in early 1987 was quite worrying. But the threat of an indefinite strike by at least Queensland miners struck terror into their hearts.

Given that Opposition parties were in disarray at the time (the ALP has, after all, stolen all of their policies!) an election seemed a good diversion from class struggle action, to derail the emerging fightback. Once again workers were conned or coerced into holding off action "so as to not jeopardize Labor's chances in the election." "Labor" was backed overwhelmingly by the capitalists in the Federal election. And the bosses' media was not slow in pointing out that the overall ALP vote increased also.

What was not talked about very much was the really exciting development of the elections, from a working class point of view. This is the 6% to 8% decline in the ALP vote in traditional Labor electorates. In other words, while supporters of the openly pro-capitalist parties tended to drift into the ALP camp in the elections, working class support for Labor actually declined.

This vindicates the stand taken by Workers Revolution on the elections. Alone on the left, we counterposed a general strike to these elections. We pointed out that the timing of the elections was not accidental. It was no coincidence that the elections were called at a time when working class combativity was at its highest for some years. The ALP and the capitalists were particularly worried that the miners might go into action, which could spark class-wide industrial militancy.

### **GUTLESS LEFT**

We also pointed to a growing working class disenchantment with Laborism, concluding:

**"Labor has earned itself the hatred of many working class militants. Many of these will never vote Labor again. For this reason, and due to the reactionary reasons for this snap election, Workers Revolution opposes a vote for Labor in this election."**

The election results justified our confidence in the developing working class offensive and its accompanying self-consciousness. The working class is beginning to assert itself to reclaim what it has lost in the past period. Inevitably, a rise in political consciousness accompanies this radical development. Genuine revolutionaries prize such a development, fanning the flames of discontent, and seizing the opportunity of an obviously diversionary election to exacerbate any proletarian break with Laborism and electoralism.

Not so our gutless Australian "left." Virtually all the established left organizations urged a vote for Labor. International Socialists, Socialist Action, Socialist Labour League, Socialist Workers Party, and the increasingly pro-reformist Socialist Fight all lined up to support the Laborites. The excuse for this prostration before the reformists was usually that the support offered was only "critical." As *WR* pointed out, however, critical support is not timeless. It is only permissible when it enables revolutionaries to win an audience in the class for a revolutionary alternative to reformism. When Labor is moving so obviously rightwards so rapidly — and at least a section of the class is breaking from Laborism as a result — even the support of a "rope to a hanging man" is treachery.

### **DISCIPLINING THE WORKERS**

Events since the election have shown that the election, while successful in diverting the miners' struggle, could not eliminate the developing fightback by workers. Despite some particularly blatant betrayals of their struggles by union bureaucrats, trade unionists continue to act to defend their jobs, conditions, wages and basic rights. The corner is beginning to be turned against a decade of working class retreats.

The Labor Party has gone out of its way since the election to continue its dirty job of disciplining the Australian workers' movement to accept Depression-standard wages, conditions and unemployment — as the unavoidable prelude to another inter-imperialist war. The Laborites have made it quite clear that they will not stop short of attempting to physically dismantle trade

unions which resist their anti-working class vendetta.

This is the background to the raid by the Victorian ALP government's paramilitary Special Operations Group upon the offices of the Builders Labourers Federation on October 13. When the cops attacked, they bashed unionists and smashed anything they could not carry out of the building. But they paid special attention to union records and assets — which are still held by the government, which can return at any time to take over the offices themselves.

### MAOIST POPULISM

Building workers walked off building sites, as news of the raid reached them. "Left" union leaders talked about widespread industrial action, in solidarity with the BLF. Three days later, hundreds of members of several building unions fought on the streets with police, in an attempt to reach the offices of the scab ALP State government minister responsible for initiating the raid. As cops were carted off to hospital, the BLF bureaucrats counselled workers to cool it. The sad fact is that the BLF bureaucrats are incapable of defending the union they lead. Their idea of "self-defense" is to place their trust in Labor MPs who refused to vote against legislation retrospectively legalizing the raid (which was illegal, even under previous bourgeois law).

The BLF leaders are mostly members of the Beijing-loyal Maoist Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), who push the populist treachery of a popular front with "patriotic businessmen" and "honest policemen," to achieve an "independent" (mini-imperialist) Australia. Since Australia's capitalists (like North America's) are particularly agitated these days about competition from Japanese capital, the obliging Maoists also engage in racist anti-Japanese demagoguery. Apart from Workers Revolution, only one other tendency on the left — the Communist Left (Leninist) — has denounced this treachery.

The Maoists' scheme is also shared by the equally Stalinist Moscow-line Socialist Party of Australia and the neo-Stalinist (ex-Pabloite) Socialist Workers Party. In fact, this outlook is either shared or tailed by virtually the entire Australian left. These right-centrist groups have consistently opposed a general strike. Even when the cops smashed their way into the BLF offices, most of the Pabloites and both Cliffite groups could only suggest that workers write protest notes to the State government!

*Proletarian Revolution's* fraternal Australian paper, *Workers Revolution*, has spelled out the alternative to this treachery:

**"Time and again over the past couple of years, workers fighting back have come up against a sinister ALP/ACTU/capitalist alliance. Time and again, individual groups of workers have been impelled into intense struggle in defense of basic rights, only to be beaten back to work with little or nothing to show for their efforts, due to this reactionary united front.**

**"As Workers Revolution, alone among labor move-**

**ment papers, has consistently argued, the only remedy is a general strike, to beat back the bosses' attacks. Otherwise, the struggles of our class will continue to be atomized and isolated by the bosses and bureaucrats.**

**"While partial actions (even national stoppages by individual unions) continue, the only result in current circumstances can be further tactical setbacks and mounting demoralization.**

**"Workers in struggle against the bosses' attacks are fighting in the interests of our class as a whole. They must not be forced to battle on alone."**

The vehement opposition to this class struggle perspective by what passes for the left in Australia fits into a pattern. Politics is becoming more obviously a serious business these days, as the class struggle warms up again. The bosses have begun their offensive, the working class is responding ... and the petty-bourgeois left scuttles as fast as it can to the right!

The most obvious example of this is the Socialist Workers Party — which formerly modelled itself on the U.S. organization with the same name. These days, the Australian SWP doesn't pretend to be Trotskyist and even denounces Barnes' corrupt regime of the heinous crime of "Trotskyism." In the June 1987 Federal elections, the Australian SWP combined general support for Labor with practical support for the openly bourgeois Australian Democrats. SWP members even distributed "how-to-vote" cards for the Democrats!

Heartened by developments such as this, the social democratic Communist Party of Australia is now considering a form of organizational unity with the SWP. Ironically the SWP of today is probably more Stalinist than the CPA. The SWP has declared Gorbachev a revolutionary and recently invited a representative of the Soviet embassy to be the keynote speaker at the function commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Russian revolution.

### TROTSKYIST PARTY NEEDED

In their own sick style, the Spartacists are not far behind in discovering the virtues of Soviet state capitalism. And, as in the USA, one practical result of this political degeneration is vile thuggery against left-wing political opponents. From Melbourne to Moscow, Stalinism equals anti-working class violence!

Most of the rest of the groups claiming some relationship to the Trotskyist tradition have not yet degenerated as far as the SWP and the Spartacists. But all of them continue to rush rapidly rightwards. Nothing horrifies centrists so much as a fight for principle when the action gets a bit hot!

It is due to these two factors — the working class upsurge and the fake left's treachery — that the tendency organized around the journal *Workers Revolution* has emerged. As a proletarian socialist political tendency, WR thrives on proletarian struggle; we are committed to organizing the best worker militants who come to the fore in the struggles to come, into the Trotskyist party so badly needed to lead those struggles. ■

## Polish Workers Erupt

# Will Reformism Save Stalinism?

Once again the Polish working class has asserted its tradition of militant struggle. Defying threats of arrests and firings by the military regime, it erupted in a widespread strike wave this spring — the first major action since General Jaruzelski crushed Solidarity in 1981. In the end, the state resorted to armed force to smash one major factory occupation in Nowa Huta, while a long process of threats and negotiations ended in stalemate in Gdansk.

The strikers faced not only open opposition from the government but also discouragement from their alleged supporters: the Catholic Church, Western bourgeois politicians — even the leadership and intellectual advisers of Solidarity itself. All rushed to tell the workers that their efforts, however heroic, were doomed; they would have to give in to the regime's austerity drive.

### ECONOMIC CRISIS

Despite seven years of military rule, Poland has not begun to recover from the economic disaster that the Stalinist policies brought about in the late 1970s. The immediate cause of the strike wave was the government's price hikes, aimed at shoring up a crisis-ridden economy. According to the chairman of the Polish National Bank, the inflation rate in 1987 was 26-27 percent; this year it is expected to be 42-44 percent. In contrast, workers in the state sector were granted wage increases averaging only 20 percent.

A special Politburo meeting in April also announced that Poland will soon abandon its guaranteed free health care, a hallmark of East Europe's "socialist" pretensions. Hospital services and drug supplies have long been miserable, but now patients will have to pay.

The price hikes were enacted in consultation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a condition for Poland's readmission in 1986. These imperialist outfits always require sharp cutbacks in living standards from any country deemed eligible for loans, and the Polish state still owes \$37 billion to Western capitalism. The World Bank issued a report last August demanding that the government "speed up the pace of economic change and enact even tougher austerity measures." (*New York Times*, October 27.)

The regime actually submitted its austerity proposals for approval in a referendum last November. Solidarity, whose own economic ideas coincide to a large extent with the government's decentralizing reforms, was unable to oppose them consistently and therefore urged abstention. Although a majority of voters supported the proposals, enough abstained so that they failed to win a majority of the electorate. But the government then announced it would carry them out anyway.

When the inflationary moves hit in February, demonstrations and work stoppages broke out around the country. In April, groups of workers throughout Poland battled in isolation for wage increases. Many small gains

were won through unpublicized strikes or strike threats. The struggle burst to the surface when a wildcat strike by transit workers in Bydgoszcz won a 63 percent pay rise. This victory inspired a walkout by a majority of the 32,000 workers at Poland's largest enterprise, the steel mill in Nowa Huta near Cracow. Two other large plants in southeast Poland were also struck. The govern-



*Workers mass at Lenin shipyard in Gdansk on second day of strike.*

ment seized several Solidarity leaders, but it also had to grant major wage concessions in order to settle strikes.

On May Day, tens of thousands of demonstrators in a dozen cities chanted support for the strikers and carried the banned banners of Solidarity. Police and government thugs attacked the protesters and arrested many. In response, workers took over the Gdansk shipyard, since 1980 the symbol of class struggle. (Both the shipyard and the Nowa Huta mill are named "Lenin," an ironically appropriate designation for centers of working-class rebellion.)

Unfortunately for the regime, the strikes disrupted Poland's talks with the IMF and further undermined the state's economic relations. At one point the government announced that each lost workday at Nowa Huta cost 900 million zlotys (3 million dollars) of output, amount-

ing to hundreds of automobiles and thousands of washing machines, refrigerators and television sets. This proclamation was treated as a joke by workers for whom such commodities have been long unavailable.

## MEMORIES OF 1980

The 1988 struggle echoed 1980. That summer a nationwide strike movement culminated in the creation of the Gdansk Interfactory Strike Committee — a genuine workers' soviet that raised the question of workers' power in the spirit of 1917. The shipyard's example spread throughout the country. But the reformism of the workers' leaders deflected the movement into trade unionism; Solidarity was the result. Always under mass pressure to play a wider social role, Solidarity wavered for over a year before collapsing under military repression. (For an analysis of the events of 1980-81, see *Socialist Voice* Nos. 10, 15 and 16.)

This year's reawakening of class struggle made the government — and all the world's rulers — shudder. The strikes were led by a combination of underground Solidarity veterans and younger militant workers. As the strikes spread, their demands escalated to include the reinstatement of workers and leaders fired for union activity, both recently and years ago. In Gdansk the workers also demanded the legalization of Solidarity and the release of all political prisoners. These political demands were added by the militant workers *against* the wishes of Solidarity's leaders.

Eventually all the strikes were settled through wage concessions — except for those at the Lenin Steelworks and the Lenin Shipyard, where the regime refused to consider the workers' political demands.

## SOLIDARITY WITH GORBACHEV

The Polish regime's attempt to reorganize the wage and price structure to the detriment of the working class is a test of the East European policy of *perestroika* (restructuring), championed by Soviet chief Gorbachev. Poland even before Gorbachev had moved towards a market economy by reducing central economic controls and offering greater autonomy to both public and private enterprises. The inflation that the workers were protesting was an attempt to make prices of commodities reflect their costs of production more closely by reducing state subsidies.

As the strikes spread, a government spokesman appealed to "the good sense of the Poles." "What will come of our country and the reforms if the strikes continue?" he demanded. "The strikes today are a blow to the policy of reforms, democratization and openness. Is this the beginning of the end?" (*Liberation* [Paris], April 30.)

Solidarity's advisers made similar nationalist and reformist appeals, except that they blamed the government as well as the workers. *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis (May 1) interviewed two prominent dissident intellectuals, Bronislaw Geremek and Adam Michnik. Lewis concluded that "everyone understands that inflationary wage increases will do further damage"

to the Polish economy. "There is no money in the Government's pockets" for higher wages, said Geremek. Michnik added, "We are ready for compromise. We are in Solidarity, but the most important thing for us is the interest of our country: the interest of Poland." Such touching concern for the financial interests of the ruling class is a symptom of the same reformist poison that brought the workers down in 1981.

In a like spirit, the London *Financial Times* (May 3) noted approvingly that Solidarity's economists, "highly critical of the government's halfhearted implementation of reform, recognize that wage rises, even those forced by strikes, can only aggravate economic weakness."

"Strategists behind the scenes, such as the veteran dissident Jacek Kuron, contend that the future sketched out by Mr. Gorbachev and his progress so far, albeit limited, have placed Eastern Europe on the verge of profound change which an outbreak of dissent in Poland could only jeopardize."

The line is that workers had better not upset a ship in danger of sinking. Adviser Geremek said likewise, "The majority of the Polish opposition is looking with tremendous interest and sympathy to the realization of Gorbachev's policy." (*New York Times*, May 5.)

Despite their authority among the workers, Solidarity's national leaders did not inspire the strike wave. Founding father Lech Walesa admitted that his organization had been tardy in answering the price hikes, and "people did not want to wait." But he continually vacillated. On May Day, once the strikes began Walesa called for "action" in support of the Nowa Huta strikers. "If you have an army," he pronounced, "General Lech Walesa is at your disposal." But he also specified that he did not necessarily mean further strikes. "It's up to you to decide what to do." (*Times*, May 2.) Torn between the "reasonableness" of his advisers and the need to give nominal support to the mass struggle, no wonder Walesa wavered.

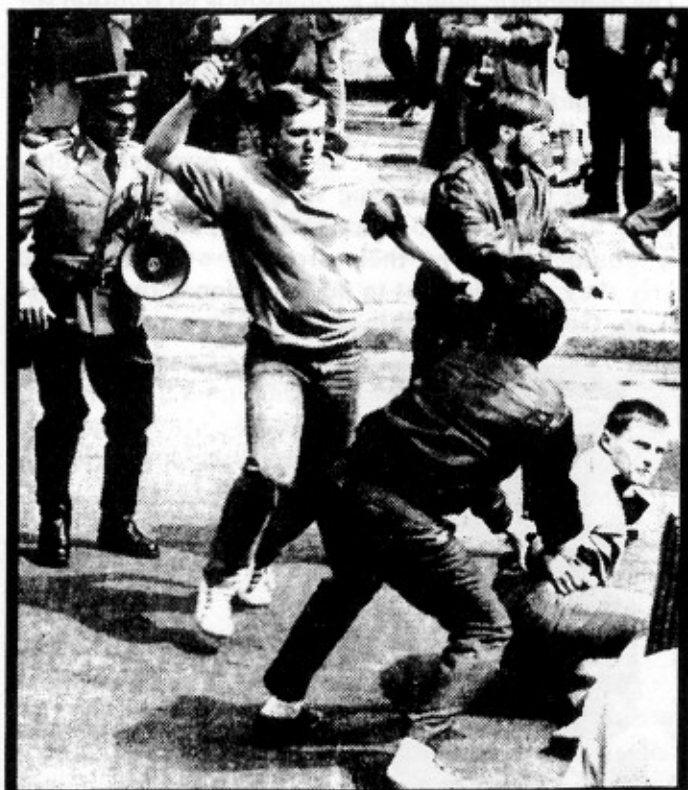
Walesa's imprecise strategy allowed the most militant sectors of workers to take strike action while others hung back. Thus his home base, the Gdansk shipyard, went out, but no other major workplaces did. This divisive leadership is what led to the workers' defeat in 1981. In 1988 it allowed some of the most powerfully placed workers to win wage gains in compensation for the inflation. But other workers, not to speak of retirees and other people on fixed incomes, will still have their living standards sharply cut back. Most crucially, the political aims of the struggle were derailed.

The trouble with the opposition's strategy of tailing Gorbachev is that Premier Jaruzelski is carrying out precisely Gorbachev's line; he is proving in action that *perestroika* will only occur at the workers' expense. Solidarity agrees with the regime's appeal to the workers on the basis of Polish nationalism — adding only that reforms must be carried out more thoroughly. The workers' "independent trade union" shows itself just as independent of the workers' interests as the pro-capitalist union leaders in the West.

The reason for the inevitable anti-worker character

of self-reform programs in the allegedly socialist countries is that these societies are in reality capitalist in statified form. The workers' ironic label for their bosses in 1980, the "red bourgeoisie," was accurate. The bosses in the state bureaucracy and state-owned industries exploit the workers through the wage system as in ordinary capitalism. Capitalist rulers everywhere have to squeeze profits out of the workers, and the pressure to do so intensifies in times of crisis.

As for the allegiance of the reformist intelligentsia, it was never with the workers, even in the heady days



*Pseudo-socialism in action: plainclothes Polish cop defends state property by beating Warsaw demonstrators.*

of 1980-81 when Solidarity was on the rise. Then, the advisers saw the workers' movement as a battering ram for change; now they see it as an obstacle to feathering their own beds. Daniel Singer reported in the *Nation*:

"'The Poor and the Rich.' This is the title of an article published in January in *Polityka*, the weekly representing the 'liberal' wing of the establishment, which has created quite a stir: 'Winter skiing in the Alps, summer on the Riviera, a BMW, jewels from Gucci, children in a French kindergarten and an American school, provisions from West Berlin.'"

This describes the Western-oriented "acquisitive intelligentsia" for whom "egalitarianism ... now seems to be the favorite target." Singer, an admirer of the Kurons and Michniks in 1980, now wonders:

"Will the professional intelligentsia throughout Eastern Europe now forget this lesson and sell this collective gain for a mess of pottage, aligning itself in overwhelming numbers with either of the two

sides, the apparatchiks or the managers, who are fighting among themselves for privileges?"

The answer seems clear.

### THE CHURCH CHIMES IN ...

Officials of the Catholic Church, regarded by many workers as a force on their side, took the same line as the pro-Solidarity liberals. Offering to mediate the labor unrest, the Polish bishops said that they, "as shepherds and sons of the Polish nation, share the fears and concerns of all society and also the concern for the state of the nation, which is the common good of all Poles." People who call themselves shepherds tend to get upset when workers don't behave like sheep.

Thus the bishops' statement went on: "Citizens who have a feeling of responsibility for the fate of the country must view with concern the disturbances and strikes in some of the industrial centers. The bishops are able to understand the motives and determination of some of the workers who undertook protest action," they continued patronizingly. But "society cannot lack the readiness to do hard and honest work and even make indispensable sacrifices for the entire nation's good." Calling on the masses to sacrifice "for the nation" is exactly what priests everywhere are paid for.

### ... AND THE PRESS PREACHES

Western commentators, allegedly sympathetic to the Polish workers, also know which side their bread is buttered on. Here is the *New York Times* (May 4):

"The party needs to acknowledge the legitimacy of the workers' movement and grant its leaders a voice; in turn, workers need to recognize Poland's precarious situation and moderate their economic demands. ... The workers, for their part, will need to make good on their rhetorical acceptance of reform. Inevitably, that will involve material sacrifice."

How typically capitalist. The workers must suffer material losses in return for "a voice" — and that by their "leaders," those whose views jibe with the class interests of the rulers.

### THE "DEMOCRATIC" STRATEGY

The advocates of more "democracy" — including Western pundits, the church and Solidarity — accept the Stalinist system that rules Poland. What the spiritual and intellectual agents of capital really want is that the regime incorporate the workers into the system rather than simply repress them. In a speech to the Gdansk workers on May 3, Walesa proclaimed:

"If we do not carry out *perestroika*, if we do not make reforms peacefully together with the nation and with compromises, then we are threatened with a revolution, and a bloody one."

Despite official complaints, Walesa was not agitating the workers but warning the government that it ought to introduce "pluralism" — that is, some institutional structure in which the masses can sound off, a safety valve for keeping explosions contained. The church likewise wants more access to power for itself, so that

it can help keep things calm.

Since 1981, Solidarity has been advocating an economic policy of "self-management" to solve the Polish crisis. This entails two things: relative independence of the individual enterprises, so that management is not directly beholden to the ruling party; and an elected council to represent the workers. The regime has put forward, and partially carried out, a similar policy, with less of a role for "workers' democracy." In either case, the councils would be little more than tools used by the managers to legitimate their decisions to the workers.

The most explicit version of the "democracy" line came from the U.S. government via John Whitehead, the State Department's second-ranking official, who critically endorsed Jaruzelski's austerity policy:

**"The Polish Government evidently feels that it can impose an economic program on the country without any kind of participation of the people in developing the program. We have felt all along it is not possible to do it in that way, and now the evidence begins to appear that it is not possible.**

**"We are urging the Government to establish a dialogue with the workers of Poland, including members**

sky-high. In the U.S., which manipulates its currency and interest rates to suck in capital from abroad, official unemployment rates are down, but living standards continue to decline. As columnist Tom Wicker noted, **"Sooner or later, a falling living standard will be political dynamite, too. When it dawns on enough Americans that they can no longer expect to do better economically than their parents, or even as well, their reaction is likely to be outraged, even dangerous."** (*New York Times*, August 17, 1987.)

## LESSONS OF THE STRUGGLE

The democratic model of capitalism is no solution for the workers of the East, and it is not palatable for the Eastern bosses either. The rulers of statified capitalism differ from their individualist class cousins in the West mainly in that they do not own the individual enterprises directly. They exercise their ownership only through the property-owning state, which they do run directly. If they were to share political power, in effect they would be sharing their property ownership, and clearly they are reluctant to do that. Hence the opposition to Gorbachev within the Soviet establishment.



*Warsaw university students demonstrate for independent organizations. Workers and students must reject leaders who, like Jaruzelski regime, honor pre-war reactionary general Pilsudski.*

of Solidarity. We believe until that happens that the economic program of the Government, which strikes us as being a basically sensible program, will not be able to become effective." (*New York Times*, May 8.)

That the Reagan Administration openly endorses the anti-worker program of a Stalinist government exposes the brotherhood-under-the-skin of all the capitalist forces. Washington and Warsaw, church and state, share a common class interest: the working class must pay for the crisis of capital. Later, they say, the workers too can share in the "beneficial effects."

But it is a lie everywhere. Workers in the statified capitalist East need only look at the "democratic" capitalist West. In Western Europe unemployment is

Hence likewise the apparent thick-headedness with which the Polish bosses impose their program. At most the Stalinist ruling class will allow some greater democracy for itself and its intellectuals; that will help them decide how better to delude the workers.

The Polish events confirm that the economics of capitalism dominate the East as well as the West. They also show that the political methods of incorporating the working class long practiced by reformism in the West have a necessary role under Stalinism as well.

The Polish workers' struggle proves once again that there is nothing progressive about the Stalinist system. It has failed miserably to overcome the barriers to the advance of the productive forces imposed by capitalism



in its epoch of decay. Now it is clearer than ever that its economy is subordinate to Western capital. The Polish regime is happy to carry out what its creditors demand, insisting only that it stay in power.

Secondly the events establish beyond all doubt that Solidarity is a reformist organization. Like the church, the union leadership has made its peace with the ruling class and only demands that its voice be legally heard. In 1981, in contrast to the regime's hard-liners and some on the left who argued that Solidarity was planning a violent overthrow of the government, we demonstrated that the radical posturing by elements in the leadership was empty. As we wrote at the time, "The quandary facing Solidarity's leadership is classic for reformism. In order to reform society and fulfill some of the masses' expectations and thereby effect a new stabilization, reformism depends upon

## South Africa

*continued from page 1*

direct challenge to the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). Mayekiso has accurately called its principal platform, the Freedom Charter, "a capitalist document." Mayekiso and NUMSA represent an openly socialist, vitally democratic and tumultuously militant mass of workers who have begun to rebel against the failure of the ANC's divestment and sanctions strategy; they are even moving against the thin layer of COSATU bureaucrats who defend it.

### GROWING ROLE OF THE UNIONS

The debate within COSATU over the Workers Charter and the Freedom Charter points to the growing role of the unions as a central political force. NUMSA's leadership comes out of the old Federation of South African Trade Unions, which normally avoided political issues and focused on immediate economic interests of the workers. However, the mass upsurge since 1984 has forced the unions to take a greater political role.

With the imposition of the State of Emergency in 1986, the workers had to take the lead in the battle against apartheid as the township struggle withered under massive repression. Thus in the first eight months of 1987 over 5.5 million workdays were lost to strikes and stayaways — four times the number for all of 1986.

Clearly the focus of the struggle had shifted to the unions. The formation of COSATU reflected this development and the workers' demand for united action. It also reflected a shift by the ANC, which up to that point had little direct influence in the unions. The ANC had been content to allow others to build the unions as long as its political dominance over the anti-apartheid struggle went undisputed. Because of the major role the Stalinist South African Communist Party (SACP) plays in the ANC, its trade union facade SACTU in effect handled the labor front for the petty-bourgeois ANC.

But now the unions cannot be treated routinely; they are the only force powerful enough to challenge the

the mass movement. Without it, the state has no reason to change, concede anything or share power. But the very existence of the movement is a threat to orderly transformation. So reformism always has the task of trying to curb the mass movement without completely killing it." (*Socialist Voice* No. 16.)

In 1980-81, ours was the only analysis that showed how *all* the forces of reform — West and East, church and state, labor and management — were ganged up in holy alliance against the working class's revolutionary movement. Today the movement has so far been smaller and less far-reaching, but the forces of containment are more openly united. It remains for the workers' movement to create a leadership that understands the class forces arrayed against it and can show the way forward to proletarian revolution and authentic communism. ■

### PRINCIPLES OF THE WORKERS' CHARTER

1. That only the working-class masses, under the leadership of organized industrial workers, can truly liberate our country from the chains of capitalist exploitation and apartheid oppression;

2. That organized workers and their allies have a common interest in the creation of a worker-controlled, socialist society where there will be no exploitation, oppression or discrimination of any form;

3. That the national democratic struggle against apartheid oppression and the socialist struggle against capitalist exploitation are complementary parts of the uninterrupted struggle of organized workers for control over the industry and government of a liberated South Africa;

4. That only under the leadership of organized workers over the mass democratic struggle of today and the government of tomorrow, will the demands of the Freedom Charter be fully and completely exercised in the lives of the working masses of our country.

regime's emergency regulations. Thus the ANC played a major role in forming COSATU — to try to prevent the further development of an independent working-class alternative to its bourgeois nationalist strategy.

### LIMITATIONS OF SYNDICALISM

A clash inside COSATU between the syndicalists and the petty-bourgeois supporters of the Freedom Charter was inevitable. Despite the fact that it was insignificant in initiating the union movement, the ANC was victorious in getting COSATU affiliates to adopt its Charter. While the left syndicalists were given legitimacy and allowed to discuss a Workers Charter within COSATU, they nevertheless accepted the Freedom Charter and thereby ANC hegemony over the political struggle.

In effect, the ANC cashed in on the work of the syndicalists. The ANC's strategy is not to overthrow apartheid through workers revolution but rather to use the unions to pressure the apartheid regime. Its stagist

plan is to first achieve a bourgeois state governed by blacks with the aid of the big "moderate" capitalist exploiters like Anglo American. Thus in 1987 it called on the workers to carry out a general strike and stay home — not to mobilize the unions but to influence the whites-only elections.

The ANC victory in COSATU shows the limitations of the syndicalists. In the past they avoided a confrontation with the ANC by staying clear of political ques-

the same danger faces the campaign to free Moses Mayekiso. Initially the Stalinists and the ANC sought to block efforts to build the campaign, but this failed in Britain and elsewhere. Now their strategy is to coopt the campaign in order to bury the implicit counterposition to ANC politics that Mayekiso reflects.

A good example was the March 29 rally for Mayekiso in New York. Organized by Labor Against Apartheid, which lists many of the major labor bureaucrats in



*South African chemical workers launch strike at platinum refinery. Black working class must lead revolution to smash apartheid.*

tions. When the political struggle shifted to their own turf, this was no longer possible. They could avoid a confrontation with the nationalists only at the cost of accepting the Freedom Charter.

They attempt to cover their retreat with the argument that the Freedom Charter is acceptable at this stage and that they will fight in COSATU for the Workers Charter in the future. This is a capitulation to the ANC's stagism. When they backed off from counterposing the Workers Charter, their program was reduced to an abstract call for a working class alternative at some future stage rather than the practical solution for today, a role ceded to the Freedom Charter.

To their eternal credit, the syndicalists led heroic battles for the unions, but they are undermining their own positions. Their idea of building unions today and postponing a revolutionary party is identical to accepting ANC leadership today: it is based on the hope of bourgeois toleration. The South African regime and big capitalists have accepted unions, expecting them to be safety valves for rebellious workers. But as the international economic climate worsens, South African industry is feeling the pressure, and toleration will evaporate. Failure to build the revolutionary party today paves the way for the regime to crush the unions tomorrow.

#### THE MAYEKISO CAMPAIGN

Just as the failure to counterpose revolutionary working-class politics to those of the bourgeois nationalists has led to concessions to the ANC in COSATU,

New York among its sponsors, the rally was dominated by the ANC and its liberal reformist supporters clustered around the UAW. Although the reformists are wary of the Stalinists, they both agree on the need to submerge independent working-class politics.

Thus the real Mayekiso was hidden under mountains of pro-ANC rhetoric. None of the banners around the hall even mentioned him, and the main banner over the podium, "Hands Off COSATU," carried the slogan advanced in Britain by ANC supporters to *oppose* a separate campaign to free Mayekiso.

#### GENERAL STRIKE

Despite the ANC's success in COSATU, the fact that it has to recognize the syndicalist elements and accept the legitimacy of the Workers Charter points to the revolutionary potential of black workers in South Africa. The June general strike, the most massive in South African history, is further evidence that the key to the struggle against apartheid lies with the working class.

Revolutionary workers must break with the ANC and even with those syndicalists who fail to challenge petty-bourgeois nationalism. The Workers Charter is a bold first step. The key task is to form a revolutionary party which will lead the working class in mass actions such as general strikes — not to pressure the regime for a deal with the ANC but to overthrow apartheid capitalism and establish a workers' state. This is the lesson revolutionaries must bring to the struggle in COSATU and to the campaign to free Moses Mayekiso. ■

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# Democrats' Dilemma

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*continued from page 1*

a choice, both parties strive to say as little as possible. The Democrats have written a platform of only 3500 words, around one-tenth the size of their 1984 document. The best candidates appear to be those who stand for nothing and pledge to do nothing. In the words of Theodore Sorenson, the chief architect of this year's Democratic platform, "brevity is the soul of victory."

Besides the ever-present fear that a candidate might open his mouth and blow the election, there are good reasons for such political evasiveness. The truth is that the capitalist system faces a serious economic and political crisis — as evidenced by the Iran-contragate affair, the October 1987 stock market crash and Reagan's attempt to win a place in history by negotiating with the "evil empire." On the world scene U.S. imperialism is still king of the hill, but its grip has loosened considerably. None of the candidates for bourgeois leadership have any answers to the crisis, and the ruling class fears that open discussion of the real situation would arouse the frustrated U.S. working class.

For the Republicans, the only question is how much can George Bush grovel before the Reaganite conservatives at the convention. For Michael Dukakis and the Democrats, it's time to get down to the "Let's Make a Deal." The big problem is how to deal with Jesse Jackson. Does Dukakis come to an accommodation with Jackson and antagonize those whites who have been voting more against Jackson than for Dukakis? Or does he give Jackson nothing and antagonize blacks and left activists into sitting out the election?

## IT'S JACKSON'S DILEMMA TOO

Jackson's success in the primaries presents a problem to him and his backers as well. He has a large bloc of delegates, and the expectations of his primary base among black voters are much higher than in 1984; a sellout like last time will be much more difficult to carry off. Jackson is afraid to use his clout to lead a fight that would split open the convention. He has worked too hard at being a good Democrat, even to the point of turning the other cheek when attacked by the racist Mayor Koch, to throw his new-found respectability away.

However, if Jackson plays the role of the loyal party man and doesn't make a fuss at the convention, he may well come away empty-handed again. And at this point there is little to indicate that Dukakis will yield much. Unlike Mondale, who had the support of the black political establishment and who contested Jackson for the black vote in 1984, Dukakis is winning with virtually no black support and little effort to appeal to black voters. The Democratic strategists take the black vote for granted; their concern is to win over or neutralize the more conservative and racist white voters, particularly in the South.

Faced with this situation, Jackson has played with

efforts to put his name forward for vice-president. He knows his chances are slim to none, and most observers doubt he even wants the position. Nevertheless, he is using it as a bargaining chip to try to force Dukakis into making a deal that will allow him to save face with his supporters.

Dukakis is more than just a liar when he says he makes no deals. Such statements represent an appeal to racist whites who don't want to see deals involving blacks and other minorities who they claim "are getting everything handed to them." Concessions to Jackson, who ran a strong campaign as a loyal Democrat, are called deals, while the deals proposed to the conservatives to nominate a Southern politician like Albert Gore or Sam Nunn as vice-president are labeled good politics. Does anyone not believe that if Jackson were white he would be offered a deal with no questions asked? The more boosters point to Jackson's success as proof that the country and the Democratic Party are not racist, the more the exact opposite is revealed.

At best Jackson will get only the crummiest of crumbs. He has already indicated that there will be no fight over the platform that commits the party to nothing. Except for some changes in party rules and a proposal to place South Africa on the "terrorist" list (which normally includes only Nicaragua, Libya and other countries that challenge U.S. imperial domination), Jackson has little to show for his efforts. His allies downplayed their defeat on issues like Palestinian self-determination, which "were not considered matters of principle by most Jackson delegates." (*New York Times*, June 27.) The reason is that dereliction on genuine matters of principle will never chase away the leftist Jackson activists, who are committed to the Democrats no matter what.

Dukakis wants to move in an even more conservative direction and aims to show the ruling class that he is not giving in to the demands of blacks and the oppressed. Like all the Democratic candidates — and this includes Jackson — Dukakis's real program is austerity. Echoing what used to be considered traditional Republicanism, the Democrats expound fiscal conservatism. Jackson even boasts that he and not Dukakis has a plan to balance the federal budget. (Not surprisingly, the cutback in military spending ballyhooed by Jackson's left tails became a mere "freeze" when they got down to business.)

Where Jackson and Dukakis differ is that Jackson attempts to give austerity a more populist appeal. He emphasizes that the stockbroker and the worker are both on the same footing, so "we" all must sacrifice. Jackson throws dust in the eyes of the working people in order to blind them to the reality that capitalism itself is based on exploitation.

## JACKSON'S REAL ROLE

Jackson will of course tell blacks and other oppressed groups to vote for Dukakis because the main task is to defeat the Republicans. He will show the Democratic establishment that he places the interests of the party

above the interests of his supporters — that he will stab his own followers in the back to preserve party unity.

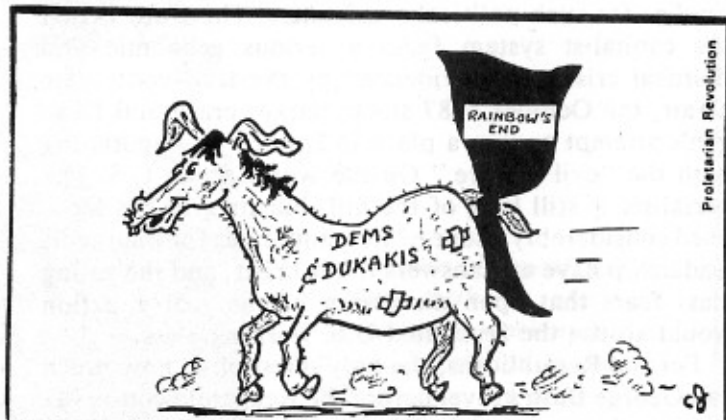
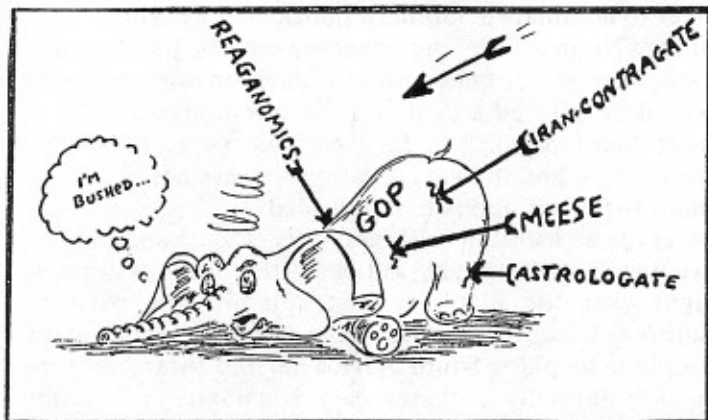
Jackson's leftist supporters will inevitably follow their messiah into the Dukakis camp. Much of the left has loyally backed him as he sinks deeper into the role of a regular Democratic politician. As their hope that Jackson will lead a break with the Democrats becomes more and more absurd, the leftists will have little alternative but to follow the leader.

Indeed, support to the Jackson campaign by labor and

experience struggling for empowerment in the electoral arena."

What a combination of cynicism and muddleheadedness! These "leftists" are not the least bothered that Jackson supports the bourgeois Democrats or that he will sell out at the convention. However, to make reality a bit more palatable, they argue that there is a class contradiction within the Democratic Party. This really signifies that the party is multi-class and not bourgeois in essence, and that it can do better than betray its mass following.

## ANSWERING THE CALL OF IMPERIALISM



left spokesmen only helps them deliver workers and oppressed people to the Dukakis fold. A *Times* article pointed to the role of one black union official, Al Murchison, first vice president of Local 731 of the United Automobile Workers in New Jersey. "Mr. Murchison said his support for Mr. Jackson in the primary would make it easier for him to bring Jackson supporters to Mr. Dukakis's side." (June 5.)

Already elements like the *Guardian* newspaper have adapted their politics to justify capitulation:

"Because Jackson is running as a Democrat, some on the left have argued against supporting his campaign, saying it reinforces the 2-party system that has impeded the development of working-class politics in the U.S. But the Jackson campaign has already shown its potential for rocking the foundations of the Democratic Party that takes working-class and minority support for granted while representing bourgeois interests. Some have also stressed the possibility that Jackson will 'sell out' at the convention and support a conservative Democrat. But for most of the left this concern is clearly overshadowed by the campaign's profound progressive potential.

"With its working-class perspective and constituency, the Jesse Jackson campaign is certain to sharpen the class contradiction within the Democratic Party as the candidate continues to rack up primary votes and delegates. This process will help lay the basis for the left's longer-term goal: the development of an independent, anticapitalist political movement. In the meantime, Blacks and other oppressed groups, workers and their allies are gaining important

Of course, the leftists' long-term goal is an independent "anticapitalist" party. But in the meantime, the workers and oppressed can gain "experience" inside a pro-capitalist party. Presumably this holds true for the *Guardian* types as well.

On the one hand the left tells the masses to work inside the Democratic Party until an independent party is built. On the other, it justifies its own subservience to the Democrats by arguing that that's where the masses are to be found. Yet as the mockery of the Rainbow Coalition demonstrates, what these leftists mean by an independent party is only a more left, populist version of the Democrats.

Ultimately, the left is confronted by the logic that if it is going to confine the struggle to reformism, why build a third bourgeois party if the Democratic Party is open to reform? Only by fighting for a revolutionary communist alternative can the stranglehold of the Democrats over the workers and oppressed be broken.

Unfortunately, the masses have had more than their share of "experience" with the Democrats. There is no class contradiction in the party's role. But there is a class division within the black movement between the oppressed workers and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leadership, including Jackson. A necessary task in the struggle to build a revolutionary party will be to free the most critical section of the working class — the black workers — from their pro-bourgeois leaders.

When that occurs the working class will gain a new experience: political power pointing to the end of exploitation and oppression. It will be a gigantic step toward what society really needs: not a new capitalist paint job but a total socialist reconstruction. ■

# Palestine

continued from page 2  
state of Israel.

The heroic struggle of the Palestinian masses on the West Bank and Gaza has exposed the bankruptcy of the PLO guerrilla strategy. It also points to the potential for a genuine socialist revolution in Palestine and throughout the Middle East. In the absence of a revolutionary working class leadership, the nationalists attempt to contain the struggle of the masses to the task of putting

Palestinians, while the pre-condition for even limited autonomy is recognition of the state of Israel by the Palestinians.

Schoenman and *Socialist Action* are to be credited for opposing the mini-state solution as a sham. However, Obenzinger is correct in pointing to the ad's failure to address the PLO and its current strategy by name. While Obenzinger raises the issue in order to demagogically demand that the left accept PLO politics as the only legitimate line on the Palestinian question, he nonetheless has shown that Schoenman and his supporters avoid directly confronting the PLO.

Even in the interview responding to Obenzinger,



pressure on the imperialists for a deal. Thus, the PLO attempts to cash in the greatest mass upsurge of Palestinians in decades for a ticket to an imperialist "peace" conference!

Obenzinger's polemic drew a response from the executive director of the Campaign to End All Aid to Israel/For a Democratic and Secular Palestine, Ralph Schoenman. In the May issue of *Socialist Action*, Schoenman argues that an independent state on the West Bank and Gaza would be a rump, like the Bantustans in South Africa. He notes that no part of the Zionist movement is in favor of true self-determination for the

Schoenman only reluctantly attacks the PLO and in rather mild terms:

"At one time the entire Palestinian resistance movement considered it a betrayal of their struggle to acknowledge the legitimacy of the colonial-settler state. It is a measure of the retreat of the political orientation of the P.L.O. that this policy, once scorned, is now viewed as the politics of practicality." (*Socialist Action*, May 1988)

This is nothing but a cop-out. From a revolutionary socialist perspective it is necessary to confront the PLO not simply as an organization with a flawed political orientation but as a bourgeois-nationalist force with class interests different from those of the Palestinian workers. Schoenman, the *Socialist Action* group, and other leftists cannot take on the PLO's bourgeois nationalist character because they themselves fail to raise the class question in Palestine. Rather than call for socialist revolution they pose a left nationalist solution.

What is meant by a "democratic and secular" Palestine? While revolutionaries give support to this

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*Palestinian fighter gathers rocks for struggle in Nablus.*

democratic demand, it is necessary to state that under capitalism this goal is as much a fiction as a two-state or mini-state solution. The only force that can achieve real self-determination is the working class, through its struggle for a workers' Palestine and a socialist federation of the Middle East.

#### **LEFT ACCEPTS PLO HEGEMONY**

Unwilling to raise class politics, the majority of the left is forced to accept the hegemony of the PLO. Ultimately, Obenzinger's argument is based on the claim that the PLO represents the Palestinian people and therefore its positions are identical to those of the Palestinians. Far from it: overwhelmingly, the Palestinian masses have made clear their desire to free *all* of Palestine. It is the PLO leadership and not the masses who are betraying the struggle.

The task of revolutionaries is to help the workers and oppressed masses free themselves from the PLO misleaders who held back the struggle. The failure of Schoenman and Socialist Action to counterpose the working class alternative to the PLO is a gross retreat from this necessary task of revolutionary socialists. ■

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## **Central America**

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*continued from page 32*

tillery at the masses and instead shooting itself in the foot. Since this country has controlled or overthrown every government since Panama was created with U.S. help early in this century, the Reaganites thought they could stomp all over Panamanian sovereignty and oust an unpopular tyrant with impunity. Instead, they alienated the workers further from the bourgeois opposition and its anti-Noriega "Civic Crusade."

Not only has the opposition proved to be bankrupt, but U.S. economic attacks forced the regime to take over some businesses, strengthening Noriega even more. Now it appears that the U.S. may have to back down ignominiously to Noriega. From all this, the Panamanian masses will sooner or later learn to struggle in their own right against all factions, civil and military, of the bourgeoisie.

#### **SANDINISTAS' BALANCING ACT**

In Nicaragua, just when Reagan's contras were faced with a military collapse, the Sandinista government invited the leaders of the CIA-organized opposition to Managua for negotiations that could alter the future of the revolution.

The petty-bourgeois Sandinistas had swept into power in 1979 amid a revolutionary wave of armed workers' uprisings and peasant land seizures. Their first acts in power were to disarm the workers and move the peasants off the land taken during and after the revolution, thereby showing their good faith to the imperialists, landowners and industrialists. But these concessions by the Sandinistas could not buy peace. In the deepening

world economic crisis, the capitalist rulers cannot afford even a breath of revolution, let alone the real hurricane.

The Sandinistas find themselves caught in a balancing act between the workers and peasants on one hand and the imperialists and the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie on the other. Given the economic sabotage and the mercenary contra war organized by the U.S., the Sandinistas had to use the workers and peasants to balance against the counterrevolutionary opposition. They grudgingly let some peasants take some land from the big landowners and allowed a partial and carefully controlled rearming of the workers by setting up a militia. But every blow at the right has been coupled with even harder blows against the masses to their left.

While the imperialists hooted and hollered about the closing of the pro-contra, CIA-funded newsrag *La Prensa*, the main result of the State of Emergency laws has been to prohibit strikes and other mass struggles. While the Sandinistas have now eased up on their attacks on the openly counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie and allowed *La Prensa* to reopen, the attacks on the workers and peasants continue. The balancing act had to end, and the Sandinistas have now fallen with a loud thud on the side of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists.

The opening of negotiations with the contras coincided with the biggest wave of workers' unrest in Nicaragua in years. Workers at vegetable oil and plastic bag plants have elected new union leaderships to the left of the Sandinistas. Dockworkers and especially construction workers have struck against the National Wage and Salary Table (SNOTS), which basically sets maximum wages while prices continue to rise. The construction workers' union is led by the Socialist Party of Nicaragua (PSN) and its trade-union front, the CPT. The PSN is

one of two pro-Moscow formations; it is not only non-revolutionary but is seriously compromised by its alliance with a number of bourgeois parties in the "bloc of 14." The CPT is numerically dominated by the PSN's labor federation, the CGT(i).

*La Prensa* and the bourgeois parties in the "14" demagogically support the construction workers' strike — though they are themselves against paying minimum



*Panama's Noriega and his puppet president just say "No" to Reagan after CIA alliance cracks.*

wages to the workers. This allows the Sandinistas to accuse striking workers of being "agents of the contras," conveniently ignoring the fact that it was not the workers who invited the contras to Managua, and who have been making major economic concessions to the contra-loving capitalists all along.

#### "ANTI-INTERVENTION" IN THE U.S.

The attitude of the Sandinistas and the FMLN to the anti-intervention movement in the U.S. is of a piece with their attitude to the mass struggles in their own countries. Rather than call for a revolutionary movement of workers and oppressed against U.S. intervention, they advocate a pressure group approach to place demands on the "real power," the imperialist bourgeoisie. They therefore advise the anti-intervention "movement" to cater to and back up liberal Democrats in Congress.

The anti-intervention leaders need little convincing on this point: cynical and contemptuous toward the working class, they are fond of talking about "realistic" strategies — that is, writing Congress and electing liberals. To bolster such bourgeois swine it is necessary to avoid "alienating" them from the "movement."

But the liberal capitalist politicians have been abandoning the fight all along — with the anti-intervention leaders right behind them. After all, the liberals' aim is

to preserve and strengthen U.S. imperialism. They differ with the conservatives in thinking that this end is best attained by a few more concessions to Central American nationalism and fewer invasions. Given the anti-intervention leaders' relationship with the liberal capitalists, they are champions of U.S. imperialism at one remove. The brilliant success of their "realistic" strategy is best demonstrated by the contra aid bill fiasco of February-March of this year.

#### CONTRA AID, COMPROMISES!

That bill was sponsored by liberal Democratic House members. It would have provided up to \$48 million of "humanitarian aid" to the contras, including more than \$26 million in military-related aid. The argument of the bill's supporters was the ancient "lesser of two evils" scam: pass this or the right wing will enact something worse. Though the bill was eventually defeated by eight votes, the affair revealed the depths to which the "movement" has sunk. The Days of Decision coalition, whose slogan is "No Contra Aid, No Compromises," was unable to reach a decision to support or oppose this contra aid compromise bill! Meanwhile, the Nicaragua Network took a "neutral position." Though the outcry from member groups caused them to "clarify" this position, they urged that there be no retaliation against "traditional contra aid opponents" who backed the bill.

As the Sandinista misleaders continue to give the revolution away to the contras, the middle-class, radical leadership of the anti-intervention movement will become even more capitulatory and even less willing to let the communist viewpoint be heard. They must be politically exposed and ousted by the building of a working-class revolutionary party. The change of leadership will take place only through joint action and open discussion and debate, through long-term hard work and patient and persistent explanation.

That the basis exists for a more radical level of struggle is evident from the mass response to the U.S. troop movement to Honduras in March. Within a few days of that movement thousands of North Americans in many cities across the country went into the streets demonstrating against U.S. intervention — and many of the demonstrators were not that worried about "alienating" liberal imperialists.

In Minneapolis and the Bay Area, demonstrators marched militantly and fought back against the cops. These demonstrations played a role, however small, in making the U.S. imperialists back down and remove troops from Honduras, though thousands remain. The government feared that there would be more massive and more militant responses in the U.S. if these troops stayed or invaded Nicaragua. That small victory shows not only that significant portions of the anti-interventionist movement are more advanced than the pacifist and other unelected pro-capitalist leaders — it shows potential for the future. The League for the Revolutionary Party will build on that potential, on the desire of many to fight both the liberal and conservative wings of imperialism in the U.S. and Central America. ■

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 1988

## Left Yields in Central America

Once again U.S. imperialism is taking the offensive in Central America. The reactionary forces have received additional momentum from the betrayals by the left-posturing misleaders of the masses.

Nicaragua and El Salvador still represent the leading centers of the Central American revolution. Right wingers in the U.S. claim that the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the FMLN in El Salvador are unshakable communist revolutionaries who will not stop till all of Latin America is red. But the truth, as the Sandinistas and the FMLN insist and their actions show, is that they are seeking a better deal from U.S. imperialism and Central American capitalism, not their abolition.

### RIGHTIST THREAT IN EL SALVADOR

In El Salvador, the elections for the National Assembly and municipalities gave a majority to the extreme right-wing ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance), a party known for its ties to the death squads. ARENA is not the party favored by the imperialists who would prefer to maintain a democratic facade to mask the oppressive character of the regime. But the exhaustion and depoliticization among those workers who see no alternative from the FMLN except endless guerrilla war has shifted the balance of forces in favor of the bourgeoisie. While the left demoralizes the reawakening masses with the Arias Peace Plan charade, the ARENA victory means that the bourgeoisie and military are preparing to drown the revolution in blood.

The electoral success of ARENA is the bourgeoisie's response to the revival of the workers' movement, as evidenced by the frequent strikes and demonstrations against the bosses and the government by tens of thousands of workers. Unfortunately, the masses of workers still retain confidence in the FMLN guerrillas. The latter urge the workers on to struggle and even sacrifice their lives, but for what? A workers revolution? No: for a "national dialogue" to establish "a national government of broad participation," i.e., a coalition with some of the same people who are torturing and killing the masses today.

Nevertheless, it is a mistake to believe that imperialism has the situation under control. Far from it. Despite its capitulatory leaderships, the workers' and peasants' struggle erupts again and again, sometimes where the U.S. least expects it. In Honduras' capital city of Tegucigalpa, thousands of students rioted and burned a U.S. embassy building, protesting the kidnapping to the U.S. by the Honduran police of a Honduran citizen under indictment for drug-trafficking. This was a flagrant

violation of the Honduran constitution which forbids the extradition of citizens. Having used Honduras as a military outpost against the Nicaraguan revolution for more than six years, the imperialists were genuinely surprised by the fury of the masses' response.

In Panama, the imperialists' open attempt to impose



*Wounded Nicaraguan war veterans and supporters protest at U.S. embassy in Managua during Congressional contra aid debate.*

a puppet bourgeois regime served only to convince the masses *not* to rise up against a hated, repressive government. It has been no secret that the Panamanian dictator, General Manuel Noriega, has ruled through figurehead presidents and was on the CIA payroll for many years. When Noriega's drug-dealing became too flagrant and his occasional anti-U.S. demagoguery too loud, the imperialists brutally punished the masses of poor and working-class Panamanians with repressive economic measures. As Panama has no currency of its own but uses the U.S. dollar, by cutting off all loans, grants, trade, tax payments and dollar transfers to Panama, the U.S. aimed to bring all economic life to a halt and force Noriega to yield power.

This is another example of the U.S. aiming heavy ar-

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