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German metalworkers demonstrating earlier this year for higher wages, despite losses of 600,000 jobs in their sector.

## Joblessness: Capitalist Crime

by Dave Franklin

With each passing day the working class confronts more starkly the inability and unwillingness of the capitalist system to provide jobs. We are not talking of "creative" or "meaningful" jobs where workers can actually find self-fulfillment; except for a tiny minority, such an expectation is out of the question in this society. We do not even mean unionized factory jobs that earn good money full-time (and give workers the illusion of having reached the middle-class). As jobs disappear, the basic right to sell one's labor and eke out even a minimal subsistence gets harder and harder to claim.

Most working people are aware of this state of affairs. The key questions are, why is it and what can be done to change it? We will show that the crisis is a product of capitalism and cannot be solved within this system. As Marxists, we believe it demands a revolution and the creation of a workers' state. For that, the critical task is to organize the most politically advanced workers into a revolutionary vanguard.

### THE U.S. CRISIS

A brief survey reveals the outlines of the crisis. In the United States, serious unemployment has been chronic since the end of the postwar boom, roughly twenty years ago. The official rate has at times been near 10 percent and today is 6.4 percent. Such figures do not include part-time jobs and habitually undercount those who have given up looking for work: even the Bureau of Labor Statistics admitted last October that the number of unemployed was 16.6 million, double the government's figure. Rates are much higher for Blacks

(twice that of whites), other oppressed people and youth.

Today there is supposed to be an economic upswing. The Gross National Product, the official measure of recessions and booms, is rising. In a number of areas, most critically labor productivity, U.S. capital has been improving its position in the world economy.

But this "boom" has produced no rise in employment rates or wages. Mass layoffs continue, as major corporations like IBM and ATT continue to downsize. There were about 600,000 layoffs in 1993, doubled from 1990, the year the recession supposedly ended. While some high paying jobs appear, of those created recently 16 percent are temporary and over 60 percent of new jobs are part-time. (Part-timers' hourly wages are barely 60 percent of full-time, and only 15 percent get health benefits.) There has also been an expansion of overtime: up to 4½ hours in 1993. Even the number

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# COFI and LRP Report

## COFI

Members of the LRP-U.S. attended the festival of the Lutte Ouvrière group in France in May, an annual forum for the European left. Despite the rise of worker and student struggles in the past year, the organized far left presence was tiny compared to the past, apparently because of demoralization over the collapse of Stalinism and social democracy. Nevertheless, as a result of our interventions and discussions, we sold a record amount of revolutionary literature from the U.S., Australian and Swedish sections of the Communist Organization for the Fourth International to leftists looking for a way back to Marxism.

During the same period, comrades from both the U.S. and Swedish sections visited Australia for the LRP-Australia's conference.

## NEW YORK

Our forums at City College continued. As well, we organized a well attended meeting for the City College Committee to Defend James Frazier (see p. 21), addressed by Frazier and LRP transit worker Eric Josephson. The CCNY fraction is also holding a study group for readers and friends of the LRP; many of these discussions concern topics in our magazine. If you are interested in attending this study group or our public forums and are not on our mailing list, please get in touch.

At a meeting of the Citywide Coalition To End Police Brutality (endorsed by a long list of liberals and a few left groups like ISO and Solidarity), LRPers moved successfully for the Coalition to support Frazier's defense. As well, we alone argued against the coalition's claims that police brutality could be ended through panaceas like police monitoring and

independent review boards. (See the article on p. 16.) ISO supporters refused to defend such basic communist politics, striking their best no-one-here-but-us-activists pose.

ISO's political behavior was also strikingly bad at an anti-cop demonstration they called in Harlem in May. Their litany of speakers made no basic connection between cop racism and the



James Frazier speaking at City College support meeting.

class nature of capitalism. In their disdain to mention class issues at all, they even went so far as to refuse to join in on an LRP chant, "Cops and Bosses Work Hand in Hand, Workers Fight Back, Take A Stand."

ISO's politics could also have endangered the participants. Despite their placard "PBA = KKK," they let the supposedly fascist cops surround their group and pen it in. We had warned the ISO in advance that this could be avoided but were ignored. The LRP and friends refused to let ourselves be caught in this trap and encouraged others to act likewise: police playpens are for more than just play.

Still on the cop question: the Labor Militant group held a forum in New York for their British leader, Peter Taaffe, in May. In the course of his cheerleading for workers' struggles around the globe, Taaffe insisted that cops were part of the working class. In response to a protest from the floor by an LRP comrade, he allowed that this might not be true in New York, which he was not personally familiar with — he only meant Britain and South Africa!

At the Socialist Scholars Conference in April, LRPer  
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## Proletarian Revolution

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# Bosnia and Social-Imperialism

by Walter Daum

The wars over the corpse of Yugoslavia have been taking their bloody course for three years, the Bosnian conflict for two of them. In all this time, most of the phony socialist left has added to its rich tradition of capitulation to imperialism backed up by an equally rich variety of excuses.

After NATO made a few token attacks on the Serbian forces this spring, an interventionist wing of the left called for more: it wants the Western powers to bomb more heavily and send troops to "defend" Bosnia-Herzegovina. An alternative pseudo-pacifist wing condemns all sides in the conflict and refuses to demand an end to the United Nations arms embargo, in effect against Bosnia alone. Both exemplify what Lenin labeled "social-imperialism": pro-imperialist policies in the name of socialism and the working class.

The background to this capitulation is the hypocritical posturing of the Western European powers and the U.S. government, under both Bush and Clinton. While deploring the "ethnic cleansing" practiced mainly by the Serbian nationalist forces, the U.S. has aimed all along to force Bosnia to accept the hopelessness of its fight for independence and swallow defeat without further resistance.

After NATO planes bombed Serbian attackers near the besieged town of Gorazde, a pro-interventionist former U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia observed:

**After all, we're not asking a lot of the Serbs. We're asking them to go back to the table and negotiate an agreement that will allow them to keep much of the territory they've taken, their illegal gains.** (Warren Zimmerman, quoted by Anthony Lewis in the *New York Times*, April 15, 1994.)

In contrast, Western media repeatedly denounce the Bosnians as "inflexible." Clinton announced in advance that the U.S. had no intention of reversing the Serb conquests. He said NATO's role was "to be firm but not provocative and not try to change the military balance." Even after Serb forces downed a U.N. jet over Gorazde, killed a British officer and captured other U.N. personnel, the U.N. promised not to retaliate.

Bush had initially supported Yugoslav unity against the separatist wishes of Slovenians and Croatians. Alongside the distrust of the right to self-determination that comes naturally to imperialist rulers, the U.S. and other Western leaders, in the grand tradition of Henry Kissinger, were also motivated by their hopes to establish a local power or powers to keep the region stable for capitalist exploitation.

The breakaways by Yugoslavia's non-Serbs were stimulated by the "Greater Serbia" campaign revived by Milosevic — at first against the oppressed Albanian population of Kosovo. This was the Stalinist ruling class's trump card for staying in power as their economy faced collapse. Under pressure from their heavy debts and the squeeze from Western bankers, Yugoslavia's bosses ferociously stepped up austerity from 1987 on. This triggered a massive working-class fightback: over 1500 strikes in 1987, almost half a million strikers in 1988. The nationalist poison administered by Serbia's Milosevic and Croatia's Tudjman was meant as an antidote to the prospect of proletarian revolt.

Milosevic has thus proved his value to world capitalism. Despite his crimes (indeed, because of them), he remains the West's prime candidate for Balkan strongman. U.S. policy has vacillated — but only between backhandedly supporting Serbia alone or encouraging some concert of interests be-

tween Serbia and Croatia. At the moment the latter prevails: hence the U.S.-brokered deal in February between the Bosnian government and the right-wing Tudjman regime.

Increased talk in Washington and Europe about "teaching the Serbs a lesson" reflects the pressure of public opinion; it is not likely to lead to a Western military assault as in



*Serbian terrorists, slapped on the wrist by U.S., U.N. and NATO, will be allowed to keep their conquests.*

the 1991 Gulf War. The imperialists are morally capable of flattening Belgrade as they did Baghdad, but they act on their interests. Against Iraq there was great-power unity over the war; not so in the Balkans, where the U.S. still needs Serbia to fill a power vacuum so that Russia and Germany stay out. If Milosevic can keep his Bosnian underlings in line, he will still serve as the West's Balkan strongman.

## THE WORKING-CLASS ANSWER

As we have explained in previous issues, there is no nationalist solution to the disasters wracking ex-Yugoslavia. Nationalist ideology, even the nationalism of the oppressed, is bourgeois and inevitably betrays the struggle for freedom. All nationalist leaders have in common the need to more efficiently exploit "their" workers and others. Especially in an epoch when capitalism offers no way out of its deepening decay, nationalism points straight to reactionary conclusions.

Thus the leaders of the richer republics of Slovenia and Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia to stop having to share surplus value with the central government. In Serbia, both the ex-Stalinist and the anti-communist leaders stand for crushing self-determination in order to expand their sources of surplus value. The difference is that the Serbians, inheriting the Yugoslav armed forces, have the power to

enforce their capitalist drives.

Even justified resistance to national repression cannot free the masses unless it is transformed into an internationalist workers' struggle against capitalism. Otherwise, whether through Serbian domination or through a new set of tiny nations, imperialism will inevitably milk the region for every ounce of surplus value it can yield.

Proletarian internationalists advocate the right to self-determination because we side with people fighting against their oppressors. We strive to break the masses of the oppressed nationalities from their nationalist leaders. When it comes to war, therefore, this means a policy of military and technical — not political — blocs with nationalists.

Defense of self-determination is also necessary for proletarian unity, which can only be based on recognizing the equality of peoples. The many Serbs who have opposed the invasions of Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia plus the oppression of Kosovo prove that the Serbian masses are not the enemy.

In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, defending self-determination means support for the struggle against oppression, not recognition of a formal national status. We favor self-determination by the Bosnians as a whole: Muslim Slavs, Croats, Serbs, Jews and those who reject an ethnic designation by calling themselves "Yugoslavs." (That includes tens of thousands of Serbs who stayed in Sarajevo when the Bosnian capital came under siege and joined in its defense.) But nationalist war and imperialist hypocrisy have strengthened religious Muslim forces. The forging of a Muslim nation would be a setback for internationalism, but communists would nevertheless defend its right to self-determination.

The only force that can crush Milosevic and help Bosnia is the working class. There is strong opposition to the war in Serbia, and independent trade unions have been formed in protest against the austerity measures for which the war is partly responsible. According to European left reports, Bosnian workers' detachments like the miners' brigade in Tuzla, an industrial town, are committed to a multi-ethnic republic.

If the imperialist powers find it in their interest to attack Serbia, authentic communists will defend Serbia from imperialism — as we did when the U.S. invaded Iraq in 1991: any imperialist intervention is an attack on the international working class. We will withdraw support for Bosnia if its fight for independence turns into a mere tool of imperialism.

Communists oppose the arms embargo, not to pressure the imperialists to send aid (which they would do only with unconscionable strings attached), but to allow workers' organizations abroad to send arms to their Bosnian counterparts — as in the Spanish civil war of the 1930's. As well, we fight against the sanctions on Serbia, which, like all imperialist embargoes, chiefly harms the workers. We also oppose Greece's blockade against independent Macedonia.

### SOCIAL-INTERVENTIONISM

Despite the West's evident aims, the interventionist wing of the left promotes the view that U.S. imperialism really wants peace and internationalism in Bosnia but just lacks the backbone to impose it. The endless appeals to President Clinton to "intervene against genocide" are sickening, given his own war crimes against Iraq and Somalia and his coddling of the military butchers in Haiti. Spreading illusions in imperialist good will only prevents a real fight against genocide and ethnic "cleansing."

The most militaristic stance is that of the Democratic Socialists of America, in a May 1 resolution:

**DSA supports . . . massive air strikes against military targets by multilateral forces to prevent Bosnia's military**

**force from being overwhelmed; and the destruction of Serbian armor, artillery, and munitions dumps.**

Likewise, social democrats Bogdan Denitch and Robert Jay Lifton, among others, wrote to the *New York Times* (March 20) urging U.S. intervention under the same fraudulent guise that served peace so well in Somalia:

**The United States should be involved in making and keeping the peace, including providing ground troops and taking its fair share of refugees from the fighting in Bosnia.**

As for the refugees, of course the U.S. and all countries should open their doors to people fleeing for their lives, not just from Bosnia, and not just some limited "fair share." The U.S.'s murderous, racist policy towards fugitives from Haiti demonstrates the lie his enthusiasts are purveying.

An especially bloodthirsty attitude was expressed by Paul Hockenos, the *In These Times* reporter in East Europe:

**A quick, decisive invasion of Bosnia-Herzegovina — on the scale of Operation Desert Storm — is an option that the left should rally around as forcefully as any issue since opposition to the Vietnam War. (Oct. 28, 1992.)**

Of course, any real leftist sees that opposing the U.S.'s savage war against Vietnam is consistent only with opposing its gruesome assault on Iraq and any similar invasion.

### FAR-LEFT INTERVENTIONISM

We expect this sort of behavior from social democrats. But there are also sections of the pseudo-revolutionary left that have asked for imperialist action. *International Viewpoint*, the magazine of the United Secretariat, an international collection of nationalist pretenders to Trotskyism, called for the "downfall" of Milosevic through measures including:

**an economic and political isolation of the regime in Belgrade by Europe as a whole. (Sept. 16, 1991.)**

Since then *IV* has opposed Western military intervention and demanded an end to the arms embargo against Bosnia — but it has not retracted its early call for imperialist economic sanctions against the Serbian masses.

More aggressively, *Against the Current* (Nov.-Dec. 1992), the magazine sponsored by the Solidarity organization in the U.S., suggested that the Bosnian war

**could have been stopped by a decisive European response (even a threat to bomb Serbian warships.)**

The excuse given for this proposed imperialist militarism was that the great powers were already intervening, notably through the arms embargo. That amounts to support for imperialism — as long as it stands on the right side.

### SOCIAL-PACIFISM

On the other side are leftists who oppose imperialist militarism — but also don't want Bosnia to defend itself, on the grounds that all sides in the war are reactionary. This line leads to social-imperialism by other routes. For example, Alexander Cockburn in the *Nation* (May 23) opposes a direct U.S. role but instead calls for U.N. "peacekeeping" — as if that is anything but imperialist intervention in disguise.

Further left, the International Socialism tendency led by the British Socialist Workers Party often fails to defend self-determination, especially when British imperialism is at work. On Bosnia their excuses are absurdly far-fetched.

The May 1993 *Socialist Review* began the silliness parade: **Far from being a clear cut war, it is a multi-sided conflict over which ex-Stalinist gangsters preside — Milosevic of Serbia, Tudjman of Croatia and Kucan of the Bosnian Muslim state.**

Milan Kucan, a Stalinist bureaucrat indeed, happened to be president of Slovenia, which is not the same as Bosnia.

The article continued with an ingenious reason for not ending the arms embargo:

**The simple reason why the Bosnian Muslims are under-armed compared to the Serbs or the Croats is that they are landlocked.**

True, Bosnia has no seacoast, but if that's decisive why should the embargo matter? Geography alone will do the job. Besides, now that the Bosnian-Croatian alliance has been signed, the Muslims are no longer landlocked.

The nonsense continues in the September SR:

**The act of conscience salving that is involved in calling for the arming of the Muslims does not begin to deal with the oppression of the Muslims of the Sandzak, the Hungarians and Croats of the Vojvodina, the Serbs of the Croatian cities, the Albanians of Kosovo or even with the question of Macedonia. This is especially important. If a Balkan civil war breaks out over the right to self-determination of Macedonia, pulling in Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and Turkey, it will be both impossible and reactionary to look for good guys and bad guys.**

This appears to mean that it would do no good to take sides in Bosnia because 1) there are other conflicts in the Balkans; and 2) one of them, in Macedonia, is too complicated to think about because of the large number of interested parties. On the contrary, political logic says that if Serbia's expansionist nationalism is defeated in Bosnia, it will have a harder time interfering in Macedonia and suppressing Kosovo. All the more reason to stop it now.

The IS is hard-pressed to find a plausible justification for its social-pacifist line. As usual, it betrays its underlying contempt for the national aspirations of small peoples — in this case so blatantly that its excuses read like a garbled crib sheet for a junior high school geography exam.

#### SELECTIVE ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Also claiming neutrality in the Bosnian war is the fake-Trotskyist Spartacist League, as it often does in struggles for self-determination. In reality the Spartacists favor the nationalism of the strong. So they often invoke the intractable problem of "interpenetrated peoples," where "self-determination" can only mean a joint state — i.e., no right to independence for the oppressed.

At first the Spartacists side with Serbia not only against imperialism but also against Croatian independence. They wanted a unified Yugoslavia and offered a left cover for imperialism's concern for stability:

**The only force still holding Yugoslavia together is the federal army . . . . A document issued by the army's Central Political Commissariat vowed: "Neither in Yugoslavia is socialism finished and brought to its knees. . . . A real possibility has been kept "to preserve the country as a federal and socialist society." At the present time, proletarian internationalists would give military support to the Yugoslav federal army against the counterrevolutionary Croatian regime. (*Workers Vanguard*, May 10, 1991.)**

The fiction of "socialism" has often been used to defend Stalinist oppression and exploitation. But it provided only a passing excuse for the Spartacists. A few months later they realized that Milosevic and the Yugoslav army were not interested in any workers' state but rather in making their own deal with imperialism. So they switched lines and declared neutrality.

The constant in the Spartacists' attitude is contempt for the Leninist strategy of defending the right to self-determination by the oppressed. Today the Spartacists claim that opposing the current form of imperialist intervention amounts



to calling for intervention. Quoting left groups that say "Lift the arms embargo," *Workers Vanguard* (June 18, 1993) says: **This is nothing but a call on Yankee imperialism, the Fourth Reich and Belgian merchants of death to arm the bourgeois-nationalist Bosnian Muslim leadership.**

Obviously a demand to end the imperialist embargo is not the same as a call for imperialist arms. If it were, the long Bolshevik-Leninist history of fighting against such embargoes was objectively pro-imperialist. In any case, the Bosnians have the right to get arms from wherever they can. But even the pro-imperialist Izetbegovic regime would be foolish to rely on its false friends when weapons are available from many sources — if the U.N. would let them pass.

The Spartacists correctly denounce those who oppose the arms embargo without opposing the blockade of Serbia. But they are the opposite face of the very same coin: they just prefer a different choice of imperialist embargoes.

#### MORE TRAMPLING ON TROTSKYISM

Another Marxist attempt at neutrality comes from the Trotskyist League, affiliated with the International Trotskyist Opposition (ITO). The TL claims to support self-determination in general but opposes it for Bosnia:

**To call for the self-determination of Bosnia is meaningless, since the machinations of the nationalists . . . , the intervention of the imperialists and the civil war have created a situation in which the three national populations of Bosnia are struggling for three different national outcomes. (*International Revolution*, January 1994.)**

Not quite: the Serbian and Croatian nationalists are fighting to annex their regions to Serbia and Croatia (often wiping the territories they rule clean of other ethnic groups) and to strangle an independent Bosnia. Moreover, imperialists and oppressing nationalists *always* intervene and conspire against self-determination. That doesn't stop communists from choosing the side of the oppressed. With "support" like the TL's, self-determination needs no enemies.

The article continues:

**The only possibility for real defense against the nationalist marauders is multinational workers' militias, which would defend all the communities under attack. This may seem**

far off, but in some cities Muslims, Serbs, and Croats still live side by side, struggle for existence side by side, and die side by side.

So they do, and these multinational communities are struggling for their existence concretely against Serbian (and sometimes Croatian) nationalist forces. If you support their fight, you have to take their side!

In fact, the TL takes the opposite side. The next *IR* asks: **Is the ITO in favor of self-determination for the Bosnian Serbs and Croats?**

And it answers:

**Yes. Just as it is wrong for the Serbs in Belgrade to attempt to forcibly keep the seceding republics in a Yugoslav federation, so it is equally disastrous for the Bosnian government to forcibly keep the Serbs and Croats in a Bosnian state if they do not want it.**

But the Serb nationalists have been fighting precisely to "keep the seceding republics in a Yugoslav federation." But the TL denies this and grants self-determination to them rather than "meaninglessly" to Bosnia. That puts it squarely on the *opposite* side from the multinationalists who "still live side by side, struggle for existence side by side, and die side by side." The TL doesn't take the line of backing the Serb attackers — but it should, given its own warped reasoning.

Like the Spartacists, the TL at first defended Serbia on the grounds that it was a progressive form of society:

**The primary question is that of defense of the deformed workers' state of Serbia against the sanctions and attacks by imperialism. . . . Out of purely conjunctural, bureaucratic motivations — protecting their personal power and privilege in the face of imperialist assault — the Serbian government for the time being is defending the collectivized property of Serbia and Montenegro against imperialism. (*IR*, September 1992.)**

In subsequent issues of *International Revolution* the workers' state argument disappeared without a trace. The March-April 1993 issue printed an ITO resolution on Yugoslavia affirming that by the 1990's, the leaders of all the successor republics, including Serbia, were advocates of capitalist restoration. And it attributed the Yugoslav wars "above all to the policy of the Serbian regime" — not to imperialism. Moreover, far from claiming that the "primary question" was to defend Serbia from attack by the U.S. and Germany, it perceived which side the U.S. has been favoring:

**That threat still exists, but today there are signs that the imperialist powers are reorienting towards a settlement which would essentially recognize the status quo created by the war, and which would therefore be to the advantage of Serbia and to a lesser degree of Croatia.**

This belated recognition of the imperialist role, however, did not convince the ITO/TL to defend imperialism's victims. So it is left backing "self-determination" for the Bosnian Serbs and Croats, even though this is the imperialist strategy for stabilizing the Balkans. The original anti-imperialist justification for the TL's "defend Serbia" line has turned upside down.

In April, when Clinton organized NATO's feeble military strikes against the Bosnian Serb nationalists, the SL and TL both demanded "Imperialists Out!" which is correct, but also "Defend Serbia," which swallows the imperialist line. As communists we welcome any defeat for imperialism. But calling for the defense of Serbia when the U.N. is supporting Serbian conquests means backing imperialism's designated victor. Communists should be exposing the slap-on-the-wrist "defense" of Bosnian rights, not taking it at face value and playing the imperialists' game.

## PSEUDO-WORKERS' STATES AND PSEUDO-THEORY

Under the guise of neutrality, the SL and TL both take positions that effectively favor the Serbian side. They also both thought that Yugoslavia was a workers' state, and that notion provided the original excuses for their pro-Serbia line. But the "theory" is worse than useless, as we have often pointed out in this magazine. (See "Death Agony of a Deformed Theory," *PR* No. 38.) It saw "workers' states" having been created by the Stalinist armies that in reality crushed workers' uprisings at the end of World War II. The theorists took years to notice that somehow "workers' revolutions" had nevertheless taken place.

Now the pseudo-theory is running the film of its own history backwards. The "workers" regimes collapsed without a workers' finger lifted to defend them. And the theory's proponents cannot figure out when or how their favorite states got overthrown. (For the Spartacists' efforts to deal with the Russian "workers' state," see *PR* 43.)

As to Yugoslavia, the Spartacists blame the demise of the "workers' state" on the 1992 Serbian constitution:

**Accepting the secession of the counterrevolutionary Slovene and Croatian regimes, it defined the new Yugoslavia as consisting of Serbia and ethnically Serbian Montenegro, and removed the word "socialist" from the state's former name . . . . Days later, the Serbian nationalist strongman Slobodan Milosevic carried out a sweeping purge of the Yugoslav military . . . . (*WV*, June 12, 1992.)**

The military purge is irrelevant to the supposed social transformation, since the Spartacists admitted a year before that the military was pro-capitalist. So all we are left with is the dropping of the word "socialism." This reflects Milosevic's opening to imperialism, but it says nothing about a change of ruling classes. A counterrevolution is a social turnover, not an act of name-dropping.

The TL/ITO took a more discreet course. The ITO resolution that abandoned the "primary question" of defending the Serbian workers' state, said nothing about whether any of the Yugoslav successor states were still proletarian. Subsequent articles referred to "capitalist-restorationist" regimes on all sides, suggesting that capitalism is not yet restored. Whatever it thinks, the TL has avoided this key issue.

The "deformed workers' state" theory, advanced by the long-discredited ex-Trotskyist Michel Pablo, has disoriented would-be Trotskyists for four decades. It still befuddles its proponents from beyond the grave. But the real reason for the rampant social-imperialism discussed in this article is the left's underlying contempt for the working class, its revolutionary capacities and its life-and-death interests. "Deformed workers' states" are a reflection of the middle class's retreat from revolutionary politics, not the source.

The corruption of Marxism by both Stalinism and social democracy has left much of the left with the impression that the day of the proletariat is ended. That is hardly the case. The collapse of Stalinism, and the headlong retreat of social democracy, were not defeats for the workers but rather openings for revived revolutionary proletarian consciousness.

The centrist left drips with contempt for the working class; hence all the anti-anti-imperialist lines on Bosnia. The Leninist strategy of defending the right to self-determination is a weapon of the revolutionary party. It shows revolutionaries how to establish a relationship with masses fighting for liberation, allowing us to point the way forward through proletarian independence and socialist revolution. Only through the struggle against imperialism will the working class learn its true interests. The "left" that abandons this struggle disarms the revolutionary cause. ●

# Joblessness

*continued from page 1*

of full-time workers living below the poverty line is growing.

An overview of capitalism around the world only confirms the bleak situation. According to the International Labor Organization (a U.N. agency), thirty percent of the world's labor force — 800 million people — is either out of work or underemployed.

## A JOBLESS WORLD

Western Europe is mired in deep recession with official unemployment well over 10 percent. European capitalists are increasingly convinced that "their" workers have had it too easy — wages are too high, social benefits too generous. Their prescription is to cut still more jobs and slash benefits.

The ex-Stalinist countries of the ex-USSR and East Europe have undergone a transition toward the "free market" that has meant the wholesale closing of industries and layoffs for millions. Of course, their pseudo-socialism had nothing to do with a genuine workers' economy. "Full employment" was always partly fiction; there was hidden unemployment, particularly in the countryside. And the Stalinist societies retarded the growth of the productive forces even more than traditional capitalism did. Still, the right to a job was a concession to the working class that has been cruelly overturned.

Japan for decades has been the juggernaut of world capitalism. But in the last several years it has faltered, and unemployment, still low by world standards, has risen. Even the more privileged layers of workers, supposedly guaranteed lifetime employment, have been shocked to see this promise reduced to ashes.

Other Asian countries like China, Taiwan and Malaysia, along with selected areas of the "third world," have seen dramatic rises in industrialization and industrial employment. But this has occurred largely because capital has shifted its operations around the globe, seeking to super-exploit the mass of labor available. Capital in this epoch develops in one sector only at the expense of another.

Africa, unlike Asia, has been written off by imperialism as a source of industrial exploitation, with some exceptions like South Africa. Instead it is subjected to a plundering of resources. Meanwhile agricultural land is despoiled, throwing more peasants into overcrowded cities. Proving the system's inability to utilize people willing and able to work, Africa exemplifies the most grotesque failures of capitalism.

## THE CAPITALIST BASIS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

For workers, the availability of jobs is central for existence. Work is the primary if not exclusive means of income, it occupies a great portion of time and is a source of dignity and achievement.

But its importance goes far beyond this in considering workers as a whole, their role as a class. Workers form the key productive component of modern society. They run and maintain machinery, build factories and homes, work up the various products for the market — in short produce and reproduce society. But the tragedy is that a growing percentage are not being allowed to do that, even though there is a crying need for more services and products for the masses.

What is behind this madness? It is the nature of the capitalist system itself. To understand it, we turn to its greatest critic and the founder of scientific socialism, Karl Marx.

Marx holds that unemployment results from the basic

drives of capitalism. Labor power is a commodity brought to market by workers. To keep its costs down capitalism can either raise the supply by forcing new layers (e.g., peasants) onto the labor market, or it can lower the demand by mechanizing labor-intensive production processes. It does both.

Thus capitalism has an inherent drive to introduce new technologies, to revolutionize production. The chief result is accumulation by reducing the proportion of living labor to "dead labor": machinery and materials. Marx made the striking observation that while generals win wars by recruiting



*Paris, March 1994: After angry protest by French students against sub-minimal wage for youth.*

armies, capitalists win their competitive wars by firing them. Under the impact of mechanization, workers are thrown into the street to form what he called the "industrial reserve army," a mass of disposable labor.

Marx noted that this "army" could be used in several ways. One is to supply masses of labor when and where the need arises without disrupting production elsewhere. Another is as a club against the employed workers, a constant downward pressure on wages and combativity. Thus factors that result from capitalist production become key to its success.

**But if a surplus laboring population is a necessary product of accumulation or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus-population becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalistic accumulation, nay, a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production.**

Among Marx's other observations are: 1) the size of the reserve army depends on the needs and conditions of capitalist production; it does not indicate absolute overpopulation; 2) it varies with the cycles of capitalist development —

smaller at the end of the boom period, larger in times of crisis — but its existence is constant; 3) it has an active element that Marx termed the “floating” section (including part-timers), a more destitute “stagnant” part, and a “latent” element composed of a population rendered superfluous by productive developments in agriculture and other spheres where capitalist methods were being newly introduced.

### CAPITALISM'S EPOCH OF DECAY

Marx analyzed capitalist production in its progressive epoch. At the start of this century capitalism entered its epoch of imperialism and decay, characterized by the concentration of capital among cartels, trusts and monopolies, the growing role of the state, and world domination by imperialist powers. A key change involves the relationship between two tendencies in capitalism. One is the tendency to revolutionize the productive forces, already discussed. The other is to preserve and increase the value of existing capital. In the epoch of decay these tendencies come into sharper conflict.

In the progressive epoch, the first tendency dominated; individual capitals were relatively small, and each had to expand to survive. In the present epoch the second prevails. Giant monopolies ensure that the investments they have made in existing technologies and methods of production do not become outmoded. Cartels block the entry of new firms; states set up trade barriers to defend their national capitalists from more advanced competitors; imperialist powers control weaker countries, militarily or economically, to keep their production dependent. Destructive wars fought for imperial dominance have characterized this century as no other.

The so-called business cycle, the periodic ups and downs of production, has been transformed. In the past, if even a large firm failed, its assets and production would be taken over by the survivors once the crisis passed. Crises served to heal and renew the system: weaker firms were wiped out, the working class was forced to accept less for its labor. Production became profitable once more.

Today, capitals are so immense that the collapse of one threatens to bring down more. That's what produced the Great Depression of the 1930's, which was ended only by the Second World War, the most destructive in history. Since then governments have learned to intervene heavily to keep their economies functioning. Even Ronald Reagan, ideologue and champion of private property, presided over the nationalization of banks and credit institutions in the Savings and Loan scandal of the 1980's.

In general, efforts to prevent crises mean that outmoded firms are kept alive by subsidy. The excess of this practice in the Eastern bloc, forced on the Stalinist regimes by their need to placate rebellious working classes, bears the main responsibility for their economic collapse. But the same occurs in the West. Not daring to allow the healing catharsis of an all-out crisis, capitalism pours funds into economic self-preservation, thereby creating ballooning funds of “fictitious capital” not backed by real value — and signalling that the crisis when it comes will be even more cataclysmic. The mortal crisis of Stalinism shows also the future of the West.

### THE RESERVE ARMY AND THE EPOCH OF DECAY

Faced with an even greater need for the industrial reserve army to discipline the growing and ever more powerful proletariat, capitalism has benefited from a variety of new methods, particularly automation. Since innovation was the original source of recruitment, the dampening of this drive retards the reserve army's growth. But this countertendency is overwhelmed by opposing factors. Innovation still occurs,

albeit at a reduced pace. Work can now be transferred to different parts of the world with much greater ease, in order to seek cheaper labor or force workers to accept less. The result, along with a further concentration of capital, is the internationalization of the reserve army.

Increased intervention of the state in the economy also affects the reserve army. The capitalist state may attempt to alleviate unemployment and provide some welfare services. But it also ensures that the reserve army remains a fact of life. For example, the Federal Reserve decided to raise interest rates three times this year. The reason was all but blatant: **Neither the Federal Reserve nor the Clinton Administration, which has endorsed the Fed's anti-inflation policies so far, would say they are in favor of bolstering unemployment. That would be damaging politically and contrary to the job-creation goals of the Administration. . . .**

**The higher rates are intended to discourage borrowing and spending. They force business activity, and the economy, to slow down. Fewer jobs are created and unemployment rises. (New York Times, April 24.)**

Clinton's campaign talk about creating new jobs proved to be hot air. His chief economic goal, as befits the leader of a capitalist party, is to boost profits at all costs, even worsening unemployment.

### ECONOMIC DECLINE

The combination of economic decline, automation and capital shifts brings new wrinkles to Marx's conception. While noting that the growth of capital reduced the relative living labor of any given capital, Marx saw this compensated by the growth of total capital: the proletariat continued to expand. Now, in key industries in the imperialist centers, the proletariat is being decimated. “De-industrialization” of the workforce boosts the contention of middle-class ideologists that the proletariat is disappearing or ceasing to be a key force.

Of course, there are a number of countertendencies, including the growth of the proletariat in new areas; a new sector of production dealing with automated goods; the creation of battalions of unskilled jobs based on the new technologies; the proletarianization of previously professional jobs.

Most important, capitalism relies on the working class to produce its source of profit — surplus value. By its nature, it cannot transform the productive forces in a fundamental way to overcome this dependence. Automation has brought big-time changes, but an isolated look at its dazzle can leave a misimpression of just what is being achieved. A look at capitalist society *as a whole* reveals the limitations.

Alongside the automated factory, the sweatshop has re-emerged. Great strides have been made in modernizing the auto industry, but the product itself is a dinosaur that continues to move people inefficiently, waste energy and spew pollution: there is no automated *transportation* system. Private monopolies computerize swiftly while the public infrastructure crumbles. Pundits and politicians rhapsodize about the “information superhighway,” while whole continents fester in backwardness. Imperialism builds higher and higher-tech weaponry, yet it cannot rescue masses from horrors its own depredations have brought about.

Capitalism is still driven to innovate but in a haphazard, sectoral manner. Behind a glittering facade it conserves dated production methods and resurrects older ones. The result is an uneven development that projects the dream of an automated world without being at all able to carry it out.

Exploitation of the proletariat remains absolutely central to the capitalist order, but the bourgeoisie must rely ever more heavily on the reserve army. People must be kept from



working to keep wages low, just as farmers are discouraged from growing too much, to keep prices high. These are vicious absurdities, symbols of the inhumanity of this system.

The only solution is to replace capitalist rule with workers' power. Only the proletariat established as the ruling class has the interest and ability to organize the economy on a world scale and thereby tackle the problem.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY SOLUTION

Workers have no vested interest in maintaining a reserve army of labor. On the contrary, a workers' state would immediately adopt a full employment policy. And in contrast to decadent capitalism, it would advance technology as fast as possible, particularly in production. It has no interest in preserving existing values at the expense of growth, as do capitalist enterprises. Above all, it aims not to drive workers from production into poverty but to advance workers' creativity and strengthen their role as rulers of society.

A central means for doing this is the "sliding scale of hours": dividing the necessary work up among all available

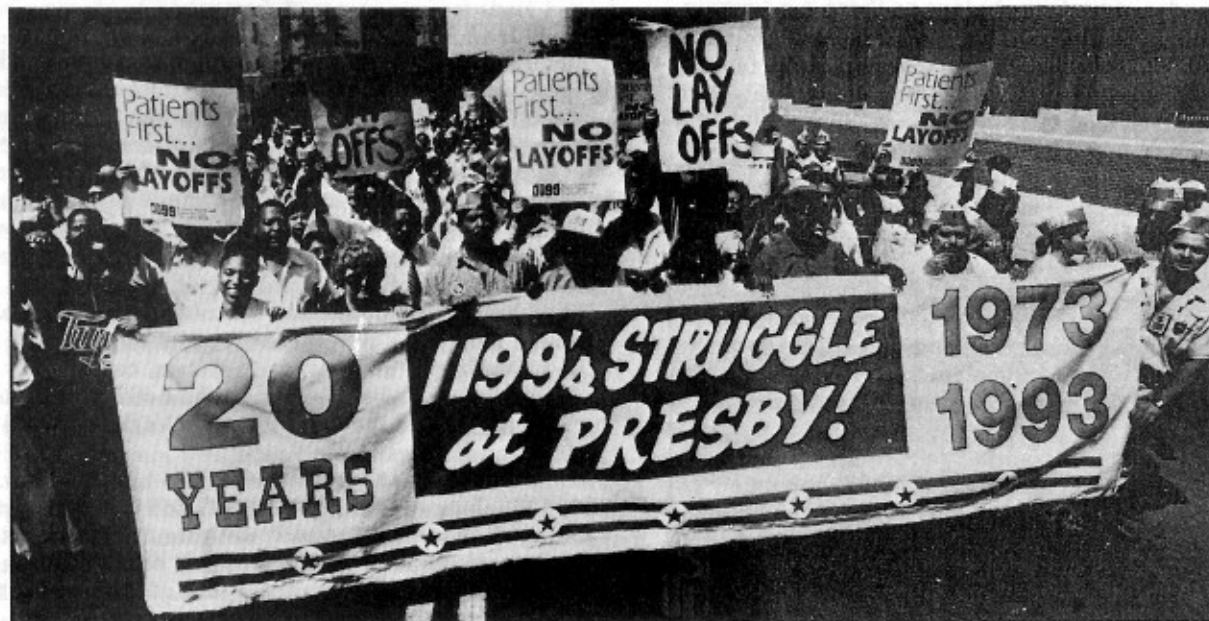
explain the socialist program in order to prove to the most advanced workers the need for socialist revolution.

To this end, Trotsky outlined his "Transitional Program" — a system of demands that shows how the needs of the masses can be met. The transitional demands are expressed in a form understandable by workers whose horizons are still limited to reforms under capitalism; the mass struggle itself will prove, under the guidance of revolutionaries, that capitalism has to be ended and a workers' state created.

### THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Such a demand is the "sliding scale of hours." It was popularized in the 1930's as "30 for 40" — 30 hours work for 40 hours pay. It was raised by working-class militants against the liberal capitalist proposal for sharing work *and wages* — less work for less pay. Trotsky responded forcefully to those who said "30 for 40" was unworkable.

Property owners and their lawyers will prove the "unrealizability" of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists, in addition will refer to their account ledgers. ...



*New York hospital workers demonstrate against threatened layoffs. Only a revolutionary workers' state can guarantee Jobs for All and make "No Layoffs" and "Patients First" possible.*

workers (of course, at full pay for all). That way everyone works and everyone gets ample leisure time. "Necessary work" means not just what is profitable under capitalist formulas but an enormous expansion of public works to build housing, schools, hospitals, industries, transit systems — whatever working people require to fully utilize human potential. The resources for paying all workers decent wages would come not just from expropriating the private holdings of the parasitical capitalist class, but from the vastly increased production that these new projects would provide.

The sliding scale of hours makes eminent practical sense: it puts people to work to produce necessary things. But under capitalism it runs frontally up against the prerogatives of the bosses, whose rule is based on unearned property income, not fulfilling human needs. A struggle for jobs that stays within the ground rules of capitalism cannot win. This does not mean that temporary gains cannot be achieved or that defenses against further attacks cannot succeed.

Revolutionists participate in all such fights. Through joint struggle for working-class interests we can spell out and

The question is not one of a "normal" collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization and ruin. The question is one of life and death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish.

"Realizability" or "unrealizability" is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.

That is, Trotskyists do not hide the significance of our transitional demands. We do not raise them as if they can be won in everyday, business-as-usual contract negotiations. No, in explaining the "sliding scale" to advanced workers, as in this article, we emphasize their revolutionary significance. When mass struggles break out, we raise them as the desir-

able goals of the workers' movement. Some workers will believe that such demands can be won under capitalism. The class struggle will prove what capitalism can and cannot do; it is indeed a question of the relationship of forces.

Trotsky's explanation has not prevented whole layers of socialists, including supposed Trotskyists, from gutting the revolutionary consequences of the transitional demands. In their hands, the transitional program takes on a reformist meaning, posed purely as a struggle within capitalism.

To be sure, the transitional program was not a finished product; it needed fleshing out, and like all social programs it must be modified by experience. Our tendency took a big step toward this end in our article, "Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program," (*Socialist Voice* No. 8).

The transitional program, we showed, was not the revolutionary program itself but rather a bridge to revolutionary consciousness. Transitional demands are agitational demands, meant to be addressed to masses of workers in motion. They in effect call for a united front — between revolutionary workers and those less advanced who think the program can be achieved under capitalism. As long as there is a working-class movement, through revolutionary leadership the joint struggle will show that the transitional demands can only be won by the overthrow of capitalism.

We advance transitional demands in selective agitational situations today. We also put them forward today as propaganda to show the more advanced workers how to address their co-workers. But this is as a direct preparation for use as

mass slogans in the coming period of mass upsurges, in effect training other advanced workers and ourselves in their use. Our goal in this is to build the nucleus of the future mass proletarian revolutionary party.

We raise no illusions in the depth of struggle required to win socialism. The capitalists will fight back with all means at their disposal. For this the workers must be prepared, and the transitional program accordingly explains the need for armed self-defense guards and an armed working class. These slogans are discussed in the article on page 16 of this issue.

In this spirit the leading slogans for solving the jobs crisis are *Jobs for All!* and *A Full Program of Public Works!* How the sliding scale of hours is best posed concretely will be decided by the movement itself, possibly as *A Six-Hour Day with No Cut in Pay!* As well, in countries where inflation is endemic, the *Escalating Scale of Wages!* is a demand that fights for wage increases proportionate to prices. These slogans are linked with those openly advocating socialism: *The Workers' Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution! Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!*

#### REFORMIST DECEPTION

The jobs crisis is so fundamental that anyone with the slightest pretension to working-class leadership has to address it. Various leftists, under militant dressing, offer strategies that argue, openly or otherwise, for a reformist solution.

Consider the Workers World Party, which has led many demonstrations demanding jobs. Its line is presented in the pamphlet, *Everyone Must have the Right to a Job*, which catalogues the ills unemployment has produced and cites the "failures of the profits system." It even says:

**When bosses and politicians tell us that there just aren't enough jobs to go around, they're right — but only from the viewpoint of their economic system, capitalism.**

This appears to be a lead-in to the need for revolution. But it is nothing of the sort. Instead, Workers World promotes great illusions in the system:

**Actually, the right to a job is already a matter of law. The 1946 Employment Act and the 1978 Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act legally obligate the president and Congress to use all available means to achieve full employment. It's time the government is made to enforce these laws.**

These laws, however, are just electoralist claptrap written to derail workers' struggles and tie them to the capitalist system. Of course, workers often resort to tactical use of bourgeois laws, as in the courtroom, to protect themselves. But appeals to paper legalistic promises are worse than pointless in dealing with the basic dynamics of the system. Instead of prattling about a fake legal "right" awarded by the capitalist government, genuine revolutionists ram home that the real government plan is to maintain unemployment.

Workers World knows that the president and Congress care not at all about enforcing the so-called full employment laws. As they say,

**The politicians have shown time and again that they serve big business first. . . . If it were up to the bosses and their government, there would be no minimum wage at all, and no eight-hour day. . . .**

And they conclude:

**These things were won because workers, unemployed and poor people fought for them. First comes the struggle, then comes the law. And if we struggle, we can win.**

A noble sentiment. But the great gains of the past were won because capitalism feared something greater: workers' revolution. And even these gains are eroded: the eight-hour

## REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Vol. 5, No. 2, Spring 1994

Germany 1918-23: From the November Revolution to the Failed October

This issue of *Revolutionary History* contains a wide range of material relating to the revolutionary upheavals in Germany during 1918-23. Some articles appear in English for the first time: an account of the establishment of the Communist International by one of its key operatives, Jakob Reich; an account by the leading German Communist August Thalheimer of how his party successfully used the united front tactic in the early 1920's to forge working-class unity; some striking vignettes by Victor Serge of Germany in 1923; the preface to Trotsky's *Lessons of October* by the dissident German Communist Paul Levi, and a political appraisal of Paul Levi.

Price (including postage): UK: £3.50 each; Europe £4.00 each; elsewhere: £5.00 each.

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day is a fiction for many workers who face forced overtime, or work two jobs — and depend on the extra income to survive. The only government that can be trusted to enforce laws in the workers' favor is a workers' state, our own.

"If we struggle we can win" is a deceit if the aim is only to persuade bourgeois politicians to act, if the struggle does not make workers conscious of the need for all-out confrontation with capital. There are plenty of workers' struggles that do not win. Leftists who claim to know the truth about capitalism and its state and who still raise reformist illusions are lying to the working class.

#### 'PERMANENT REVOLUTION' UPSIDE-DOWN

Another group pushing reform is the Socialist Workers Party. Here is how the SWP answers the need for jobs in a recent editorial:

Workers must reject the employers' framework of linking working people's standard of living to the profits of the bosses, and instead fight to defend their own interests. The capitalist bubble will burst regardless. Workers need a sliding scale of hours and wages, to protect their income from the ups and downs of the bosses' fortunes, along with a shorter workweek. . . . Fighting for 30 hours work with 40 hours' pay would immediately open up the possibility of jobs for millions of workers. (*The Militant*, Jan. 31.)

This sounds radical: after all, it raises the sliding scale of wages and seems to reject the capitalists' needs. But nowhere is it mentioned that capitalism can't allow this; in fact, the editorial hints the opposite:

The labor movement needs to organize around demands like these, which increase working-class solidarity internationally and take the brunt of the capitalist economic crisis off the backs of working people.

As if capitalism — with its economic bubble burst, no less! — could afford to generously relieve workers of the burden of its crisis. The system doesn't work that way.

The SWP is not obliged to raise transitional demands in a Trotskyist manner; more forthright than many on the left, it has stopped calling itself Trotskyist. But its editorial reflects a typical pseudo-Trotskyist method: raise transitional demands without warning and goose workers into action.

This method goes as follows: we and Trotsky in his heaven know that revolutionary struggle is necessary; the workers will soon learn so, the hard way. But don't tell them now or they'll be scared and won't fight at all. In contrast to this cynicism, Trotsky taught revolutionaries to "say what is" to their fellow workers, because success in the class struggle depends on the level of consciousness, not blind militancy.

Further, the SWP's method is a total reversal of Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution. This states that capitalism in its epoch of decay can no longer fulfill the fundamental goals promised in the name of democracy and reform. These tasks can only be accomplished by the proletariat in the course of carrying out the socialist revolution.

The SWP long ago twisted this to mean that socialists merely have to advocate reform and democracy; the struggle itself will turn them automatically into revolutionary demands. Even though the SWP has abandoned its pretense to Trotskyism, it did not have to alter its programmatic method to do so — in reality it repudiated Trotskyism long ago. Readers of the left press will find myriad example of similar distortions by surviving pseudo-Trotskyist groups.

#### THE SHORTER WORKWEEK, CAPITALIST STYLE

In Western Europe agreements have been negotiated between unions and employers calling for reduced work hours

— with proportionate cuts in pay. Elegantly labeled as "work-sharing," they are presented as alternatives to layoffs. Perhaps they are — for a while. But they are also capitalistically acceptable alternatives to the sliding scale of wages.

This has not stopped some leftists from dressing them up in fancy clothes. Stanley Aronowitz, the social democratic academic and self-styled champion of the working class, cites the advantages of work-sharing for New York City in dealing with its public employees:

Work-sharing is no panacea for the city's financial woes. But it would prevent the demoralization that discourages productivity, which the Giuliani administration wants to boost. . . . The simple fact is that people who are waiting for the ax to fall are not going to feel like putting in their best efforts. (*New York Newsday*, Feb. 10.)

That is, work-sharing not only keeps wages down, it stimulates productivity. And Aronowitz actually suggests pay cuts: Until after World War II, American labor responded to hard times by agreeing to shorter hours, even if it meant a pay reduction, in order to keep fellow workers on the job.

Well, times are hard again, and the only history our scholar tells us is that of solidarity in defeat. There were also struggles for "30 for 40" — a far better model to recommend. That's if you're speaking to workers, not the bosses.

#### RANK-AND-FILIST RHETORIC

Similarly, Kim Moody of the rank-and-filist *Labor Notes* magazine (December) wrote about job losses in the "growing and highly profitable" communications industry and the union's strategy for "various forms of labor-management cooperation." He concluded:

The shorter work week just might be the idea that inspires union members and motivates the unorganized to fight for unionization. CWA's position at the core of the "interactive information infrastructure" gives it a strategic platform from which to broadcast that vision.

Who does he think he's kidding with that Madison Avenue rhetoric? Nowhere does the "socialist" Moody point out that the shorter work week is being used to cut wages. As a former Trotskyist, he might think he is alluding to the "sliding scale of wages" demand. But he too omits the "no cut in pay" corollary, thus falling into a purely capitalist scheme.

The basic drawback of such work-and-pay-sharing plans is obvious — workers will bring home a lot less. The fact that workers in the German unions that pioneered these schemes are among the world's highest paid does not make it a step forward. It is a dangerous concession, and even less a model for lower paid workers who may not survive such cuts at all.

The whole idea amounts to a tactical opening for the more vicious attacks the bosses need: it softens up workers still organized in powerful unions by proposing a "reasonable" concession. But "cooperation" is just a facade. European capital is under pressure to slash its workers' past gains; it needs layoffs, part-timing and overtime to raise the rate of exploitation. Aronowitz's milk-from-contented-cows justification reeks of elitism and social engineering; it has limited utility in a world where rank coercion will always be a more important instrument of bourgeois rule.

In sum, this shorter workweek scheme meets the needs of neither workers nor bosses. Moody and Aronowitz champion useless anti-worker panaceas at a time when workers need to prepare for the greater attacks on the way.

Even during the postwar boom, substantial sections of the working population were unemployed. Moreover, the boom itself was based on the preceding period of war,

depression and world-wide defeats of the working class. Nonetheless, masses of workers, particularly in the imperialist centers, obtained a relative sense of job security. From the gains won through struggle, unionized workers came to expect their jobs would last — along with substantial pensions or at least decent unemployment benefits.

Over the past two decades, job security for even these workers has eroded, along with much of the benefits and wages. Layer upon layer have been peeled away from stable employment. This basic human right now exists for a relatively lucky and privileged few.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL

In the immediate sense this has had a conservatizing impact. Workers tossed on the streets are often confused and demoralized, while those with jobs have become defensive. Of course, a main aim of the reserve army of the unemployed is to create such situations. But it was allowed to happen because the official leadership of the working class, the trade union bureaucracy, has stifled any fighting alter

native and keeps labor chained to a strategy that accepts the rule of capital.

Alongside this defensiveness there are also ingredients for a revolutionary movement. There is a heightened awareness, particularly among workers of color in the U.S., that this system will never grant the needs and demands of the masses. This understanding can be transformed into a militant movement that is less co-optable than those of the past, because reformism simply has so much less to offer.

The League for the Revolutionary Party is attempting to give political direction to this arising advanced consciousness. The creation of a revolutionary vanguard is necessary, not the least to counter the treachery of the reformist and "leftist" misleaderships. Even if the objective base for reformism and general illusions in capitalism is eroding, it doesn't mean the misleaders won't fight tooth and nail to preserve capitalism and their niche in it. It is a long and difficult struggle, but a fight for a socialist future is worth the winning, particularly knowing the bleak capitalist future. That is why revolutionary-minded working people should join us in this effort. ●

## New York Workers Under the Gun

by Bob Wolfe

The deepening crisis of U.S. capitalism is most clearly revealed in the collapse of America's cities. Not surprisingly, New York is in the forefront. From the immense wealth of Wall Street to the poverty and decay of the South Bronx, New York is a city divided. Facing ever greater polarization along class, race and ethnic lines, it is waiting to explode.

The trends outlined in our article on the jobs crisis are readily apparent in New York, where unemployment in 1993 hit a monthly high of 13.4 percent. In the recessionary past four years, 750,000 jobs were lost in the region. Overall, the main loss has been in manufacturing: in two decades, employment fell from over 750,000 to under 300,000.

Even though recent headlines claim New York is finally escaping the recession with unemployment under 8 percent, official figures are deceptive. Only one seventh of the jobs lost have been restored. And big companies are still laying workers off: Nynex plans cuts of 17,000 in the next two years.

#### LOW WAGE CITY

Increasingly New York has become a low wage city, even though it is a bastion of wealth at the top as a leading international finance center. While Wall Street salaries rose 49 percent in 1992 (with the average broker making \$90,000), jobs in the financial sector fell by 15,000 in 1992. Today over a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line. Manufacturing wages average only \$9.10 hourly, 63¢ below the U.S. average. Over 1.3 million people get local or federal welfare.

When you add up the unemployed, those working part-time or temporary jobs, "discouraged" workers who have quit looking for jobs, uncountried immigrants and people on public assistance, the picture of unemployment and poverty is staggering. A sign of the times is that the fastest growing section of the economy is underground sweatshops.

An otherwise pollyannaish *New York Times* article noted: **New York, never an easy place to live under the best of circumstances, has become even meaner and harder as the gap between the rich and the poor ... widened to a point far in excess of anywhere else in the nation.** (June 12.)

In a scenario that recalls the ruthless attacks of the 1970's, Wall Street and its new henchman, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, are demanding their pound of flesh from New York's workers. Pointing to an anticipated budget gap of \$2.3 billion, Giuliani calls for a drastic reduction of the municipal workforce. Fifteen thousand jobs are slated to be cut by June 1995 as part of a projected thirty thousand over four years. Those fired will be largely Black, Latin and female, people earning an average \$25,000 per year.

#### GIULIANI STEPS UP ATTACKS

In addition to the attack on city workers, Giuliani outlines a series of budget cuts aimed at reducing social services for workers and the poor. Among his targets are housing, child care, AIDS services, hospitals and schools.

In a desperate move to avoid confrontation, the municipal unions swallowed the mayor's "buyout" scheme. Workers with 25 years service can quit and get \$15,000; those with less time will get less. In return, the city gets the right to redeploy workers to other jobs. And the buyouts offer no guarantee of averting layoffs: at best, firings are postponed for months.

Now that the unions have backed down, Giuliani is pushing for even more concessions. He wants to force city employees to pay for their own health insurance and to work harder to make up for the reduced workforce.

Giuliani's role is to step up the austerity attacks begun by David Dinkins, New York's first Black mayor, who ousted the racist Ed Koch in 1989. Koch's growing inability to contain working-class anger, particularly the fury of Black workers, had undermined the austerity program the capitalists had prescribed. But trying to play two roles — "friend" of the workers and oppressed, and pointman for Wall Street — made Dinkins a consistent vacillator.

#### RUDY THE RACIST

In 1993 the bourgeoisie decided that Dinkins wouldn't do. They turned to former federal prosecutor Giuliani, a Republican. Given New York's overwhelming Democratic voting base, Giuliani's only hope for victory was a racially polarized vote that would see white Democrats cross party

lines to support him. And that's what happened.

Dinkins' hesitancy in attacking the working class is replaced by Giuliani's blunt assaults, accompanied by a more openly racist, anti-working class rhetoric. He denounces people on welfare, the homeless, immigrants, "squeegee-men" (street car-window cleaners), Black youth and panhandlers.

The mayor's strategy is to win the white middle class to a program of vicious austerity by whipping up racist hostility against Blacks, Latinos, and immigrants. This also means pitting the groups under attack against each other.

ment rate over 10 percent, Giuliani and his gang attack the unemployed and those on welfare as lazy, good-for-nothings, living a life of luxury on city handouts.

Police Commissioner William Bratton called the squeegee men "bums" who "should get off the booze, get off the drugs, and get off their asses." Deputy Mayor John Dyson accused those on welfare of not wanting to work and proposed they be forced to "spruce up New York" to get their checks. Given the proposed layoffs and job cuts, this is a prescription for replacing unionized, city workers with non-



*Staten Island, April 30: New York cops charge Black youth protesting murder of Ernest Sayon.*

Giuliani pictures himself as a man of zeal and action (in contrast to the do-nothing Dinkins) to cover his racist appeal. Playing on populist themes of opposition to bureaucracy and waste, he undermines his Democratic and reformist opponents by portraying them as defenders of the establishment. But his real victims will be the working class as a whole.

While the idea of a career bureaucrat and white conservative parading as a reformer may seem absurd, Giuliani nonetheless is getting mileage with a population sick and tired of the lousy services, dirty streets and bureaucratic waste of city government. When he rails against the bureaucrats at the Board of Education, for example, he strikes a responsive chord with parents fed up with terrible schools, with teachers fed up with ridiculous paper work and rules and with taxpaying workers simply fed up. That his real program is more cops and jails and less money for education for the majority Black and Latino school population is not yet entirely apparent even to many workers of color.

#### **ATTACKING THE POOR**

As the city's economy continues to collapse, middle-class fears of being overrun by the mass of poor has turned many former liberals into law-and-order conservatives. Sympathy for the poor and homeless has given way to growing sentiments to clean up the streets and send the poor elsewhere.

Indeed, the Giuliani administration would love nothing better than to drive the poor out of New York altogether. They hope to do this by making conditions so unbearable that many will be forced to leave. Hence his effort to blame the victims of capitalism for their own misery. Despite the loss of 400,000 jobs under Dinkins and an official unemploy-

ment rate over 10 percent, Giuliani and his gang attack the unemployed and those on welfare as lazy, good-for-nothings, living a life of luxury on city handouts.

Police Commissioner William Bratton called the squeegee men "bums" who "should get off the booze, get off the drugs, and get off their asses." Deputy Mayor John Dyson accused those on welfare of not wanting to work and proposed they be forced to "spruce up New York" to get their checks. Given the proposed layoffs and job cuts, this is a prescription for replacing unionized, city workers with non-

union, welfare workers paid at slave wages. That shows Giuliani's key strategy: attacks on the poor set the stage for knocking down the better-off workers as well.

#### **POWER TO THE POLICE**

Dyson is the same jerk who boasted that "two white guys have been running this city of immigrants for over 200 years." Giuliani himself responds to the fears of Blacks and Latinos with statements about how life is hard even for the rich. He told one Black teenager, "ask not what somebody else can do for you, but what you can do for yourselves."

Dinkins had also called for law and order and hired a record number of new cops. Giuliani has now given the cops the green light. While a Dinkins-created commission recommended the 30,000 layoffs — more than one of every eight city workers — Giuliani is pushing them through, with no police reductions at all.

Giuliani's rhetoric has been backed by swift and brutal police repression. Violence against Blacks has stepped up. Right after Giuliani took office in January, there was a highly publicized attack on a Nation of Islam mosque in Harlem and the slaying of the unarmed son of a Muslim cleric in Brooklyn. Most recent was the murder of a Staten Island man, Ernest Sayon, in police custody.

Giuliani is counting on fear of crime and violence to lead to greater toleration of police repression, even among Blacks and Latinos. He calls the fight against crime "the single most important civil-rights struggle in the last decade of the century." According to the mayor, freedom means placing your trust in the bosses' repressive state apparatus.

**Freedom is about authority. Freedom is about the willing-**

ness of every single human being to cede to lawful authority a great deal of discretion about what you do.

Thus, after the death of Ernest Sayon (which the official medical report called a homicide), Giuliani and Bratton argued that this is the price for public safety. Pointing to the victim's police record and the complaints from the community about crime and violence, Giuliani and Bratton made it clear that people have no real choice:

**They [the community] need to make a decision as to what they want. We're going in aggressively. Unfortunately, these situations arise.**

That is, choose between street crime or police repression, up to and including murder. The official Mollen Commission report found that New York cops were systematically

**assisting and profiting from drug traffickers, committing larceny, burglary and robbery, conducting warrantless searches and seizures, committing perjury and falsifying statements, and brutally assaulting citizens.**

And even under Giuliani and Bratton, dozens of cops had to be arrested or disciplined for rampant corruption. The growing misery and brutality could easily trigger a new round of street explosions. If the latest cop killing had occurred in a more central location than Staten Island, that outrage could have been the spark.

But much of the Black leadership is compromised by its support to Dinkins and his law-and-order rhetoric. Indeed, Giuliani's talk about "freedom from crime" as a civil right is little different from the line of Dinkins and Jesse Jackson. The idea that we need to accept increased repression and the loss of rights to be safe from crime is also the basis for the Clinton administration's efforts to permit illegal searches and seizures in housing projects in Chicago and elsewhere.

New York has seen numerous protests against police atrocities. The LRP has joined these actions, although we oppose some of the main slogans. For example, the Coalition Against Police Brutality (sponsored by the Center for Constitutional Rights, and endorsed by the International Socialist Organization, among others) calls for an "independent" civilian police review board.

This demand only creates the illusion of a solution. Such boards amount to giving a layer of would-be bourgeois Black or Latino politicians new titles; they do nothing to prevent cop brutality. Likewise, Senate candidate Al Sharpton's call for more Black cops is another step backward: it was Black cops who killed Ernest Sayon, perhaps trying even harder than whites to prove their usefulness.

#### LABOR COLLABORATION

Meanwhile, despite some whining when their prerogatives are challenged, the trade union bureaucrats have cooperated with the rampaging mayor. Their acceptance of Giuliani's buyout mimicked the capitulatory strategy of their predecessors in the 1970's, when the workforce was allowed to drop by 20 percent while wages were frozen, and workers' pensions were grabbed to shore up the city bond market.

The union chiefs' main concern is their image, which means above all hiding the truth from their members. Stanley Hill, head of District Council 37, the largest city union,

exemplifies the bureaucrats' stance:

**We're not going to take the whole brunt here of balancing the budget. We're not accepting any kind of concessions or any kind of program unless it's negotiated. (New York Times, Feb. 1.)**

In other words, the unions will accept givebacks — as



Mayor Giuliani with his real friends: opening New York Stock Exchange.

long as the bureaucrats get to sign off on them. What angers Hill most was that layoffs were openly discussed in the press; he called not for no more layoffs but for "No More Leaks," stating that "you can't run government this way." A few months later, Hill placed an ad suggesting ways Giuliani could reduce the budget gap. One was:

**Work with the unions, who are experienced partners in helping the city balance the budget. (Times, May 13.)**

They sure are. And union leaders are happy to be partners in cutting working-class throats. Hill just wants Giuliani to play by the rules of previous sellouts and not embarrass him and his friends by exposing them in public.

The leading "progressive" union leader in New York is Dennis Rivera, head of the hospital workers union, Local 1199. Even before Giuliani's layoff proposals were revealed, Rivera too advised city workers to accept concessions. In an op-ed article in *Newsday* (Jan. 14), he wrote:

**One direction for cooperation between the mayor and the municipal unions would be a quid pro quo in which the unions come up with very specific, cost-effective methods of improving their work efficiency. In return, the mayor would agree not to lay off city workers but to downsize, where necessary, by attrition.**

On the one hand, the unions must realize that business as usual will not play well in this fiscal environment, and that they need to involve their membership in solid efficiency improvements. On the other hand, the mayor must recognize that laying off municipal employees in a city where unemployment already stands at 11 percent is cruel and only compounds our human and fiscal dilemmas.

Rather than call for a fighting strategy against the capitalist attacks, Rivera tells workers they must be realistic and accept job losses. Clearly Rivera thinks the needs of the working class are subordinate to the interests of capitalism.

Rivera's talk about increased productivity and "efficiency improvements" covers the fact that job losses are

accompanied by reduced services. Giuliani simply wants the working class to get by with less. The money saved from cutting jobs is going to pay off the capitalists who hold city bonds, not improve service.

The labor leaders' sellout comes at a time when workers could fight back. The city transit union's contract expires this summer, and a strike against concessions by the powerful TWU could lead to an all-out working-class explosion. But that's just what the bureaucrats are trying to forestall.

### THE BUDGET CRISIS SCAM

In calling on workers to sacrifice to save the city from a budget crisis, the politicians and labor bureaucrats hide the real nature of the crisis. New York has a permanent budget crisis because of conscious ruling-class policies. Not only does the city hand out generous tax breaks to capitalists, especially real estate interests, but the whole financial structure of city government is based on selling tax-free bonds to the rich.

While Giuliani and other bourgeois politicians scapegoat welfare mothers, the truth is that the city provides a welfare bonanza for investors. Despite ever-increasing taxes on working people, the budget continues to collapse under the weight of accumulated debt: debt service is now \$2.7 billion annually, four times the savings to be gained from city job cuts.

The budget crisis is a club that can be used at any time to attack the working class. But it is used selectively, since capitalism is heavily dependent on government deficit spending and the huge debt-service income. Conveniently, when the city gives tax breaks to financial and real estate interests, the politicians manage to forget the budget crisis.

### NO CAPITALIST SOLUTION

Given the growing misery and high unemployment, it is absurd for the working class to accept more layoffs or job losses by attrition as "realistic." Concessions and givebacks, whether promoted as buyouts or productivity schemes, will not avert layoffs and even harsher attacks. Unless workers mobilize to fight back, conditions will only grow worse. The crisis of international capitalism means the capitalists must try to save their system by attacking the working class. Massive unemployment, slashed wages, cuts in pensions and social services, union-busting and racist violence are the bosses' solution to save their system.

There is no solution but to do away with capitalism. The only way for the working class to defend itself is for all workers and oppressed to make a socialist revolution — to build a workers' state to organize production and run society in the interest of the working class.

As revolutionaries, we strive to win the best working-class fighters to understand the need to make the building of the revolutionary party the central task of the moment. Without a party raising class consciousness in each and every struggle, the inevitable explosions will dissipate.

The LRP has advanced the idea of a general strike to mobilize the working class in struggle against the capitalist attacks, for two main reasons. One, the general strike is the minimal response necessary to defend our class from the bosses' attacks. Based on the organization and power of workers in industry, a general strike can stop the rotten system of oppression and injustice in its tracks.

As well, the general strike is an action that shows the working class its own power and therefore aids the fight for the revolutionary party of the working class. Even though most workers currently are skeptical of revolutionary ideas, under worsening conditions many will be forced to use revolutionary means to wage even limited, defensive battles. A

strike of all workers not only can defeat the bosses but will show who really makes society run. It will pose the need for the working class to fight for its own political power. It will point the way to the only real permanent defense of the working class — socialist revolution.

If today revolution appears far out, tomorrow it will be understood as the inevitable logic of the workers' struggle. A massive fightback by the working class is inevitable, whether it first takes the form of industrial strikes or urban explosions. Either way, revolutionaries join in the struggle to fight for the program such struggles need if they are to win all-out support from the working class as a whole and thereby make victory possible.

### REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM

The slogan *Jobs for All!* is discussed in detail in the lead article of this magazine, along with the whole method of transitional demands. A separate article deals with the strategy of mass armed self-defense. One slogan especially appropriate for New York is *Repudiate the Debt!* The debts that cities owe the capitalist bankers are not the workers' responsibility; our class must reject the notion that it should sacrifice to pay the capitalists' bills, which drain the resources needed for vital jobs and services.

Our goal is not to beg for a reform of an oppressive system, as did the populist *Tax the Rich!* slogan raised by some New York unions during the last budget crisis three years ago. (See PR 38.) We aim to challenge the foundations of capitalism. Workers can see the justice of the demand, and in the course of a mass struggle they will learn that it has inevitable revolutionary implications.

Through its interventions in the working class struggle, the revolutionary party trains a cadre of fighters prepared for the coming confrontations with capitalism. The working class in New York and elsewhere will be forced to fight for its very survival. It is not that today we fight for reforms and tomorrow for revolution. No, we need a revolutionary party today or we will never get to the second "stage." The question is, when the growing anger and frustration turn into a working class rebellion against capitalism, will the workers have a leadership prepared to take the struggle forward? ●

## Correction

Two lines were left out in the article "Gun Control No Answer to Crime" in our previous issue. The first paragraph on page 8 should have read as follows:

**At the moment the U.S. ruling class is trying to build support for a major attack against the working class at home. But unable to take on the whole class frontally yet, it uses the old divide-and-conquer tool of racism. It first heats up its crusade against Blacks and Latinos who have fought capitalist immiseration through rebellions against capitalist police and property from Los Angeles to Washington Heights.**

## Letters Welcome

We invite readers of *Proletarian Revolution* to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write to us at: P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008.

# Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program

*This is the last article in a series on mass armed self-defense and the Black struggle in the U.S. The first article, in PR 45, linked specific cases of racist police brutality, like the Rodney King beating, to the overall role of the cops as thugs hired by the capitalist state to enforce systemic exploitation. The second, in PR 46, detailed efforts within the Black movement to champion armed self-defense. Knowing their militant legacy, we are confident that Black workers will play a critical role in opposing pacifist illusions within the working class.*

## BLACK WORKING-CLASS LEADERSHIP

Racism is used to divide the working class in order to maintain the capitalist system. It is the central prop of the American ruling class. But the racism of the system has also forged a layer of Black workers who will continue to play a key role in the struggles and the revolution to come.

Given our understanding of the need for socialist revolution, Trotskyists stand for a specifically *working-class* revolutionary party and the overwhelming advantages of working-class organization in every aspect of the struggle, including the military. Because of the history of racism in the U.S. and the understandable suspicion of Blacks toward whites — including working-class whites — revolutionaries have to be absolutely clear: genuine unity has nothing to do with subordinating Blacks to whites or suppressing the needs of the specially oppressed. That would be a continuation of racism in the guise of working-class rhetoric.

Our revolutionary class strategy stems from a scientific approach that distinguishes the permanent racism of the ruling class, fascists and hardened reactionaries from the mixed attitude of the bulk of white workers. We must make every effort to convince white workers that they need to fight racism as part of defending their class interests.

The past two decades in this country have been the quiet before an explosive storm. Workers in this country have a long history of violent conflict with the cops and other thugs — in forming industrial unions in the 1930's and in decades of strikes and other struggles for economic and social gains. Because of this history and the certainty that workers will inevitably fight back against the deepening capitalist attacks, we are optimistic that there will be a united workers' defense and a revolutionary response.

## UNION LEADERS' HISTORIC BETRAYAL

The huge historic gulf between Blacks and whites, plus the lack of mass movement at this moment, means that working-class unity is difficult for many to imagine. But this gulf results not only from the capitalists' dividing the working class: they couldn't have succeeded without the continual collaboration of leaders with working-class credentials. It has always been central to the work of the LRP to point out that the chief blame for the divisions in our class lies with the trade union leadership. The labor bureaucrats have controlled powerful working-class organizations, capable of playing a key role in unleashing wide struggles. Instead they have tied them to the service of capitalism.

Aristocratic ideology in the working class has been an

important factor in restraining militancy. The labor bureaucrats have fostered a layer of skilled white workers who believe that the way to defend their jobs is through conservative identification with the system, including its racism. When times were relatively prosperous, this layer could be used to dominate the white working class politically. But this will not be so easy as the economy keeps plunging downward. The influence of the labor bureaucrats is weak and the economic base for a large labor aristocracy is shrinking.

The negative side of this history is that under this rotten leadership the working class has lost much of its organizational strength. Unions have shrunk greatly in size as well as with combativity.

## COMMUNITY CONTROL VS. CLASS ORGANIZATION

Given the limitations of the unions, while workers continue to use them they will also need to build vital new organizations. The exact relation between the unions and new forms of organization will be forged in struggle: it cannot be predicted in advance. What we do know is that the only viable organizations for the armed self-defense of the working class will come as part of the mass mobilization of our class.

In the past, armed self-defense bodies have been created to respond to immediate situations in communities. As one example of many, in answer to the serial killings of Black children in Atlanta in 1981, the Black working-class residents in a number of housing projects created armed self-defense guards. (See "Stop Atlanta Murders!" in *Socialist Voice* No. 13.) In that situation the upper and middle classes became hysterical at the thought of people in the projects arming themselves instead of depending on the cops.

There will undoubtedly be more attempts at community defense. Blacks, like anyone else under siege, cannot wait for the rest of their class before taking action. But in such cases we urge working-class Black activists to make their initiative part of a strategy to inspire the whole class to join in.

Every genuine attempt at armed self-defense must be supported. But experience shows that self-defense groups cannot last long if they are based solely on neighborhood organization. This is because what is called a "community" today is not really a neighborhood where people are bound together in tight solidarity. Rather, it is the place where our class is separated into households and divided by fear, suspicion of crime and the plague of drug addiction. Community defense, even when initiated with the best intentions, also has a strong tendency toward political infiltration by the class enemy; often it is organized by the cops. If not structured on clear class terms, it attracts elements interested in becoming vigilantes or adjuncts to the cops rather than an opposing force. These elements then tend to dominate as the immediate action recedes.

In contrast, at our workplaces workers are brought together in cooperation, producing collectively (although for the bosses) and functioning as a disciplined unit. This is where workers can exercise their prime power to shut down profit-making and hit the capitalists where it hurts the most. As the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, an important





1990: Cops charge striking Los Angeles janitors, mainly Latin immigrants.

Black force in the auto industry in the late '60's, argued: In one factory we have 10,000 people who are faced with the same conditions. ... When you go out into the community, the interests of the people ... are going to be more dispersed. ... The kinds of actions which can be taken [in the communities] are not as effectively damaging to the ruling class as the kinds of actions which can be taken in the plant. ... When you close down Hamtramck assembly plant ... for a day you can cost Chrysler corporation 1,000 cars. (Quoted in James Geschwender, *Class, Race and Workers Insurgency*, p. 138.)

The working class is the only class capable of challenging the power of the ruling capitalists; its organization in production creates the basis for class consciousness. It flows from this that it is the appropriate base for the effective organization of self-defense.

### TROTSKY ON ARMED SELF-DEFENSE

Slogans for mass armed self-defense are an integral part of the Transitional Program, drafted by Leon Trotsky for the founding conference of the Fourth International in 1938. This is an internationalist program stemming from the basic, universal interests of the working class in the face of capitalist attacks in this epoch.

The Transitional Program calls for *armed workers' self-defense guards* to defend every strike and working-class struggle. It also advances the slogan of the *workers' militia* to unite local and factory defense guards. The working class cannot stop at the level of local defense if it is to confront armed capitalist thugs. It must build up and centralize its forces.

Third, the program broadly calls for the *arming of the proletariat* as an necessary part of its struggle for liberation. While not counterposed to conscious centralized organization, the straightforward call for arming the proletariat emphasizes the mass nature of our demand for arms. It stands in contrast to the elitist guerrilla units so popular among leftists who have no trust in the working masses.

In discussions before the founding conference, Trotsky discussed these concepts and contrasted the revolutionary

and reformist attitudes in the situation facing the working class in the depression of the 1930's. Workers had built mass industrial unions through violent pitched battles and sit-down strikes; there were important cases of workers fighting the bosses across race and ethnic lines. As well, important new leaps forward were made by united action of employed and unemployed workers. Now they had to defend their unions against the bosses and police, and they had to deal with the rise of fascism and a looming world war. Trotsky noted:

The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed. The duty of the Fourth International is to put an end to such slavish politics once and for all. The petty-bourgeois Democrats — including Social Democrats, Stalinists, and Anarchists — yell louder about the struggle against fascism the more cravenly they capitulate to it in actuality. Only armed workers' detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands.

The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory — and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure.

In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers' groups for self-defense. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organize groups for self-defense, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms.

What Trotsky said in 1938 is in essence applicable to the current situation. We are now at the beginning of a period, like the 1930's, where capitalism will expose itself most brutally against all workers.

Today fascism is not yet on the agenda, but revolution-

aries advocate taking every possible step to dismantle the small Nazi and KKK groups that currently exist. (For example, see "NWROC'S Militant Action Vs. Workers Revolution" in *PR 46*.)

### SELF-DEFENSE NEEDED TODAY

Racism and fascism are gaining ground even faster in Europe. In Germany alone, there have been 7500 attacks on foreigners by far-right hoodlums, including 30 killings. The racists feed on the wave of millions of refugees who have fled the turmoil triggered by the fall of Stalinism and the "free-market" looting and nationalist bloodbaths in the East that followed. When all the politicians, including fake socialists, blame the victims for capitalism's crisis, it is no wonder the fascists get a hearing.

Our case for self-defense in the U.S. today often starts from the immediate struggles our class is engaged in: against the racist cops, who attack and threaten Blacks and other minorities on an increasing basis. (Read about the James Frazier case on page 21.) We also point to examples like the recent Teamsters' strike in Chicago, where the cops lost no time in beating up strikers (the majority white) and putting the picket lines under a state of siege — in order to protect the scabs' right to steal jobs and lower wages and conditions.

Throughout the history of the LRP, we have faced opposition from the majority of phony socialists, who say it is far too early to raise propaganda for a general strike. Likewise most leftists say it is too early or too dangerous to start raising the call for armed defense. Authentic Trotskyists have a rich heritage of fighting against the stream on this question.

For example, in France in 1934, fascism had already triumphed in Germany and threatened the French workers. The Trotskyists fought for a policy of arming the workers. Trotsky himself answered objections from leftists who said it was premature to campaign for armed defense:

**"But the arming of the workers is only opportune in a revolutionary situation, which does not yet exist." This profound argument means that the workers must permit themselves to be slaughtered until the situation becomes revolutionary. ... The question of arms itself has come forward only because the "peaceful," "normal," "democratic" situation has given way to a stormy, critical and unstable situation that can transform itself into a revolutionary as well as a counterrevolutionary situation. (Leon Trotsky on France, page 45.)**

Our situation today is not yet pre-revolutionary, but it is also not quite peaceful and normal. The fact that so many working-class people feel the need to own guns for self-defense is indicative.

### THE WORKING CLASS AND THE ARMY

Back to Trotsky. When some on the left said that arming the working class was a good idea but unrealistic, he replied:

**To invoke the absence of arms or other objective reasons to explain why no attempt has been made up to now to create a militia, is to fool oneself and others. ... The principle obstacle — one can say the only obstacle — has its roots in the conservative and passive character of the leaders of the workers' organizations. The skeptics who are the leaders do not believe in the strength of the proletariat. They put their hope in all sorts of miracles from above instead of giving a revolutionary outlet to the energies pulsing below. (Same book, page 50.)**

Trotsky points out that the working class exists everywhere in capitalist society and has no lack of resources or ability to get arms if it is determined to do so. This is all the

more true in the United States today. In fact, that is what's behind the media and politicians' efforts to tighten gun control: they want the working class disarmed.

The question of the army is particularly important as a military resource for the working class. As the LRP has often explained, Trotskyists prefer the ruling class to have a drafted rather than a hired army — because then a large part of the working class gets trained in the use of weapons. (See "Marxism and the Draft," *SV 9*.) The fear of rebellion within the working-class army during the Vietnam War led the ruling class to switch to the "volunteer" army of today. Radicalized soldiers returning from Vietnam played a big role in both the Black movement and the wildcat strikes and other militant actions in the workplaces in the late '60's and early '70's. (See "Vietnam: the Working-Class War," *PR 45*.)

Nevertheless, we recognize that the current force is not a classical mercenary army. There are mercenary sections — specialized forces and elite units which, like the cops, are thugs of the ruling class despite their sociological origins in the working class. There are also many working-class recruits, including a high proportion of Blacks and Latinos, who joined the army for economic benefits with no intention of sacrificing their lives for this system.

It was already obvious in the short-lived Gulf War, for example, that the bulk of "volunteer" forces were not interested in long-term battles to defend American imperialism. In other historical cases, soldiers have been neutralized by a strong armed working-class movement, and there are many who can be won to actively oppose the army in social crisis.

### POLITICAL PREPARATION IS KEY

Military strategy is a subordinate aspect of overall political strategy. The critical need in preparing for the inevitable struggles ahead is to build the revolutionary leadership. The mass working-class party will not be built overnight. But the maximum number of politically advanced, trained revolutionary cadre need to band together *now* to be able to lead these mass struggles; that way the mass party can be built. The struggles themselves will *never* lead to revolution if a revolutionary party is not created in the process.

A key part of political preparation for the American revolution is to sharpen the method for overcoming divisions in our class on which the enemy depends — none deeper than the division created by racism. This in no small part means preparing to connect the two seemingly separate battlefields — the "inner city communities" which of course means many of the Black and Latino workers, and the workplaces — into one struggle against capitalism, using the power of the working class at the point of production. To this end, revolutionaries must link together the struggle for armed self-defense and the proletarian solution to the capitalists' economic crisis, summarized in transitional demands like *Jobs for All!* and *A Full Program of Public Works!* (See the lead article in this issue.)

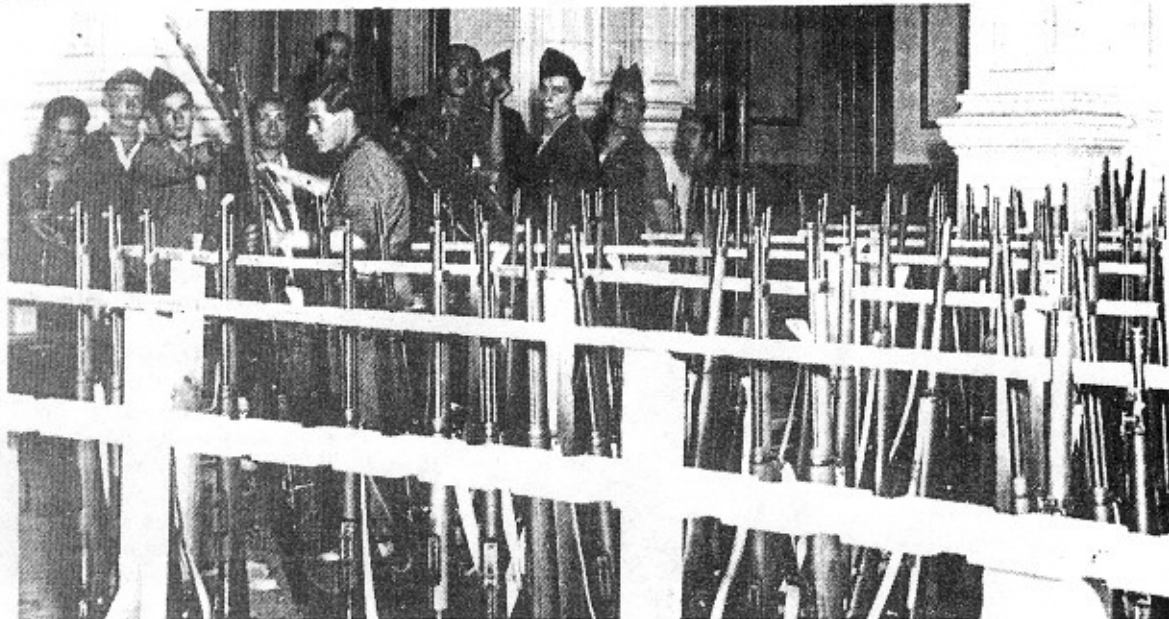
### LESSONS OF LOS ANGELES

Take for example the Los Angeles riot of 1992. Imagine if there had been several hundred proletarian revolutionaries active in the uprising. We would have sought to gain leadership of the street riots, to transform and mobilize the maximum number of largely unconscious working-class fighters into a class-conscious force. We would have fought for the idea of the general strike within the ranks of the rioters, as well as among working people at large. We would have popularized the "Jobs for All" demand to show the entire working class that the social explosion was on their side.

Our aim would be to convince, in the course of struggle, larger and larger numbers of advancing workers, Black, Latino, Asian and white, of the necessity to build and support a genuine working-class revolutionary party as the instrument of socialist revolution. That guides us in fighting for the general strike. All along we would explain the need for a revolutionary solution to the whole range of racial and economic attacks.

Of course, united proletarian action doesn't require political agreement as a pre-condition. Protesters could be

pained for armed self-defense guards to defend street actions against police attacks. Councils of action, created in the actual battle scene, would be the means for taking on key tasks, including the spreading of the struggle to other sections of the working class and the creation and spreading of defense guards. At all times it is critical to remember that the struggle is fundamentally political. In winning over the mass of workers, the class-wide transitional demands are central. If the protesters can capture widespread support within the working class, the ruling class will have a much harder time



Barcelona workers' militia in Spanish civil war, 1936.

won to fighting for a general strike because it is the most powerful effective massive action as an immediate defense. Defensive demands such as *Stop Racist Police Brutality!* and *Stop Cutbacks and Layoffs!* are a fine starting point for united struggle. If we are clear about our revolutionary politics, many workers will become convinced in the course of struggle of the revolutionary goal.

In the case of L.A., many protesters were outraged over the Rodney King beating. Not just Blacks: Latino janitors who had recently endured cop attacks in their union struggle showed a strong identification with King. But would many workers have wanted to strike indefinitely in protest of the King beating alone? Not all, not yet.

But all workers have been under the gun economically and socially, if not yet physically. Even the bourgeois press understands that the L.A. rebellion was a class action, not a race riot. All the anger and frustration that poverty-threatened workers and unemployed felt against the system poured into the eruption. That is why revolutionaries arm ourselves and the emerging new layer of vanguard workers with a class-wide program with which to win over other workers.

#### FOR WORKERS' ARMED SELF-DEFENSE!

Participants in mass eruptions will immediately see the obvious need for organized defense. The L.A. riot resulted in the death of 54 people, over 2000 serious injuries, the arrest of 15,000 and their detainment under inhuman conditions, as well as the roundup of masses of working-class immigrants and their deportation. The riot was quelled only after a full-scale occupation by LAPD cops, state highway patrolmen and 2000 national guards. The White House ordered Army troops and Marines to L.A. after the riot had subsided.

From the beginning, revolutionaries would have cam-

bringing the army in to quell the explosion.

As the struggle for a general strike spreads in the workplaces, strike committees and other councils of action will inevitably arise. Here revolutionaries will also press for armed self-defense guards to defend the strike from inevitable state attack, and to move to the defense of vulnerable working-class communities. As the various strike committees and other organizations join together, revolutionaries will urge the various self-defense guards to link up in an armed workers' militia under the command of the workers' councils.

Phony socialists contemptuously hide their aims from working people. Revolutionaries openly explain to our fellow workers that *our* goal is to turn the defensive struggle to the offensive when the class is prepared for revolution. The militia can then become the armed base for the workers' revolutionary seizure of power and the backbone of the proletarian armed force that defends the new workers' state.

Within mass struggles, revolutionaries advocate a fight for a series of demands which unite the interests of all workers and point to the need for the working class to make its socialist revolution. Starting from the simple demand of "Jobs for All," workers will learn that the defense of their living standards can only be made by a systematic assault on the power of the capitalist class — and they will learn that they have the power to accomplish such an "assault." Revolutionaries intervene all along to prove that the needs of the workers, crystallized in these transitional demands, cannot be granted in any lasting way by capitalism: *The Workers' Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!*

#### HOW TO FIGHT FOR THE GENERAL STRIKE

Our Transitional Program is aimed at its heart at guiding the industrial proletariat. But it is not a program that

expresses the interests of the industrial proletariat alone, but of the whole working class and oppressed. This is an important part of its significance. Rioting and demonstrating workers can be won to the fight for jobs and other class-wide demands, and for seeing the need to spark the working class to fight for them via a general strike.

How do we raise the general strike during a working-class riot in order to spark the organized working class? We would agitate for political actions, like the demonstration that took place at police headquarters in Los Angeles. We would fight for marches at selected government offices, calling for the workers at those sites to come out and join the fightback. Demonstrations at factories, hospitals, schools, etc. would urge the workers to come out and join the rebellion, emphasizing "Jobs for All" and other transitional slogans. We would call for demos at union headquarters and the central

Blacks, Latinos and the unemployed. And to be successful, any "community"-sparked riot must find its class roots in industrial action or, given the increased mobilization of police power, it will be drowned in blood and defeat.

We must begin to prepare the way now — in the unions, in colleges and schools and wherever advanced workers are to be found. Showing advanced workers that we have the means and the methods to reach the less advanced is part of the way to draw potential revolutionary cadres into the party-building work of the LRP today.

The opposite point of view is expressed in a document from the Militant Tendency's international grouping:

**The campaign against racism and fascism is in general 90 percent political, above all explaining to workers the danger and providing answers to the arguments of the racists and fascists, and only 10 percent 'physical.' ...**

**False comparisons, based upon quotes from Trotsky from the 1930's, must be avoided. We are not at the stage of Germany, or even France, at the time when Trotsky wrote . . . . (A World in Crisis, Committee for a Workers' International, 1993.)**

True, there are as yet no Hitlers in power. But in Europe they are marching, and in the U.S. the cop forces (a breeding ground for fascist scum) are being unleashed. Should communists wait until fascism takes state power somewhere before taking a stand for armed workers' self-defense? Yes, the fundamental answers are political. But that means showing the advanced layer of workers how to lead, not lowering our campaigns to the backward level of those still swayed by racist and fascist arguments.

As Marxists we are dedicated to the survival and fruition of the human race. We take no joy in violence. However, as proponents of that which is noble in humanity, we refuse to bow to the degradation and violence the system already inflicts upon us, much less the horrors it has in store. As long as capitalism exists, anti-human violence will not only exist but will inevitably

grow. Unarmed masses invite armed violence against them. Armed masses make the oppressors think twice. The more organized and politically prepared we are, in fact, the more their violence and brutality can be minimized. The choice for workers is: shall we submit to the terrorism of the system, or shall we fight back?●

**Armed Working Class Defense Against Cop Attacks!  
Workers Unite in a General Strike!  
Jobs For All! No to Cutbacks and Austerity!  
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!**

***I Would Like More Information  
About the LRP***

Name .....

Address .....

Send to: League for the Revolutionary Party  
P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008-3573



**1969: Black Panthers at Manhattan courthouse. Defeating the cops requires proletarian revolutionary program, not just guns.**

labor council as well.

In pursuing such actions, we have to judge the concrete balance of forces to know whether our demands can be placed on the union bureaucrats or not at the given moment. The concrete situation tells us how to raise demands in the trade unions. However, it would be a terrible act of misleadership not to stress the absolute truth that we have to work in the unions and challenge the bureaucrats at key points in the class struggle.

With strategic and tactical intervention by revolutionary forces in a situation of working class upheaval, then challenges to the unions, pressure on the oppressed organizations, actions at government buildings, calls on other workers to join the masses on the streets — all become possible. And the fight for a general strike becomes much more powerful.

We cannot predict whether the coming explosions will find their initial sparks in the workplaces or the streets. However, we do know that the decisive struggle for leadership of our class will occur within the blue-collar, industrial and urban-concentrated proletariat. When the next class explosion comes, revolutionaries must direct our efforts to see that it inflames both sites. In the coming days, if any serious strike in America has any hope of real success, it must become mass, it must be prepared for ruling-class violence and it must spill out into the other struggles of

# James Frazier Case Goes to Court

The case of James Frazier was briefly discussed in PR 46. Frazier, a young Black man, was shot by the New York City cops without warning or provocation last October 24. His "crime"? Driving his car without permanent plates. (It had a temporary license sticker.)

After shooting out his left eye, the police pressed a phony charge of illegal weapons possession. Next, the New York City Transit Authority, Frazier's employer, fired him. On April 19, Frazier appeared at Brooklyn Criminal Court to face the phony charges of possessing an illegal firearm.

A hearing scheduled for June 17 to challenge the constitutionality of the police search that "found" a gun was postponed. Depending on the judge's decision on that question, the case may then go to jury trial.

The fight to win Frazier's job back also continues. The TWU union heads up until now have refused to mobilize for his reinstatement until after the legal charges are resolved. The bosses have made it clear they don't want him back, and it will take a major fight, inside the union and outside, to restore James' job as well as his freedom from jail.



Support rally for James Frazier, Brooklyn, April 19.

## INTERVIEW WITH JAMES FRAZIER

The Frazier case shows how a worker can change his ideas as a result of direct experience. This was not the first time that James has been a victim of police violence, but previously he had accepted police abuse as a "natural" result of being young and Black. He himself almost became a cop!

Now he has been transformed into a person who has profound questions about the system, who sees the need to fight back and who is open to socialist ideas. Eric Josephson, a supporter of the League for the Revolutionary Party actively involved in the defense, interviewed Frazier for *Proletarian Revolution* readers.

Question: I know you're aware of our [the LRP's] point of view. But do you yourself think the cops and courts can serve justice?

Answer: No. The courts and police are capitalist. I recently read an article about the cops killing Eleanor Bumpurs which shows this.

Q: What do you think are the chances for you to get justice in this case?

A: Unless you're rich or well-known, or you have friends who are, there's no justice for ordinary working people. My only chance comes from getting a whole army of people to stand by me, from not having to face the court alone.

Q: How long have you felt that capitalism was the reason

for injustice?

A: Since I was nineteen years old I've questioned the system. I felt rebellious, in a way. I saw how the cops and courts work, and I thought it was not fair. But I figured, what can you do? I thought you can't beat them, you can't join them, so leave them alone and hope they leave you alone. I

think a lot of people feel that way.

Q: But they didn't leave you alone. After you had already been shot by the cops and suffered a false arrest, what was your reaction when the TA bosses fired you?

A: I thought, now I've got nothing to lose but my freedom. They took my eye, my job, my car, my income — they almost took my life. In a way, they did take my life, because it's

changed so much.

We urge readers interested in helping in the Frazier case to contact us. It is clear from this case (as from many others) that the police, district attorney Charles Hynes and Mayor Giuliani are using James Frazier as another "example" — to make clear that minorities and especially young Black men are the enemy, whether they've done anything wrong or not. ●

## Liars' Vanguard

The Spartacist League has added to its long list of lies about the LRP. *Workers Vanguard*, reporting on the April 17 Transit Workers Union demonstration in support of James Frazier, deliberately falsified the speech by Eric Josephson of the LRP. *Liars Vanguard* said he was "beseeking the bureaucrats to create a sandbox committee that will serve as a diversion from the necessary task of mobilizing the power of the entire union behind James Frazier."

This is ridiculous. In reality, Eric argued for replacing the bureaucrats with a revolutionary leadership. "Beseeking" them indeed!

A union hack, Track Division Vice-Chair Joel Fredericson, tried to prevent Eric from speaking. Fredericson had spoken in favor of trusting the "good, hard-working cops." The LRP stepped up to challenge this line, exposing the treacherous role of the cops and the need for mass self-defense, which the leadership did not want discussed.

For the LRP, a united front of all forces who want to defend James Frazier means both uniting in common action with workers of varying political views and keeping our revolutionary politics clear. Winning fellow workers to the cause of building the revolutionary party doesn't contradict the need to mobilize the maximal forces needed to win Fra-

zier his job and complete freedom.

In the Frazier case we have argued that a fight in the union against the do-nothing bureaucracy is necessary to unleash broad forces for his defense. This hardly means rolling over and playing dead until the union moves. We've brought out as many workers and students to Frazier defense activities as we can — but we don't hide the fact that our forces are tiny compared to what the union could do.

While the Spartacists should be credited for their active work in this defense case, they can't be applauded for the politics they bring along. On the one hand, their practice consists of a series of sectarian maneuvers designed to pose the Partisan Defense Committee, their politically-controlled front group, as the only force defending Frazier. The perennial use of such a front group is the classic manner of fudging the meaning of the united front.

On the other hand, their other front group, the Commit-

tee for a Fighting TWU, has in fact raised motions in the union calling on ("beseeching?") the local leadership to hold a press conference. We supported their motions. We argued that a union committee could actually take such a bold move as calling — a press conference! And we posed the union committee as a potential step in the fight against local leaders like Fredericsen, who cover for the refusal of the central leadership to do anything for Frazier.

In contrast, they opposed our fight for a union committee in the Track Division with their phony "beseeching" excuse. Really it's because a union committee, especially if there were enough forces to make it successful, would threaten the primacy of *their* Committee, open only to those who agree with Spartacist politics.

The SL, unable to defend the contradictions in their own sectarian-opportunist practice, resorts to endlessly stupid and petty slanders. It's the best defense they can come up with. ●

## Staley after One Year: Bosses' Offensive Deepens

by Guy Lindsay

June 25 marks the anniversary of the lockout of 760 Staley workers — the kind of anniversary nobody ever wants to celebrate. One year later, the scabs are working and demoralization among the locked-out workers is deep. The courts and cops, recognizing the weakness of the fightback, have increasingly seized the opportunity to arrest and harass Staley workers and their supporters. (See "The Class War in Illinois" in PR 45 for analysis of the Staley lockout.)

In recent years, workers in the central Illinois "war zone" have been fighting back against the capitalist offensive. These experiences show the futility of a single union attempting to fight "its" battles in isolation from the rest of the class struggle.

Illinois miners joined the wave of militant wildcats which erupted during the UMW strike against Pittston in 1988-89: their struggle was shut down by the union bureaucrats. Two months ago, miners in central Illinois ended a protracted struggle with BCOA when their union leaders accepted another concession-ridden contract.

The UAW at Caterpillar plants in southern Illinois sparked a nationwide walkout last fall after a union steward was fired at Peoria. The ranks were sent back to work by the same leaders who had sandbagged their strike in 1992. UAW workers at CAT plants throughout Illinois and the nation are now working without a contract.

Finally, URW rubber workers at Firestone have been working without a contract since April. Yet their "leaders" too refuse to fight.

### IF IT'S WAR, LET'S WIN IT!

We are revolutionaries, not cheerleaders. The union leaders and their hired publicity hack, Ray Rogers, have foisted a dangerous reformist strategy over the struggle from the start. As an LRP leaflet distributed in March stated:

**A turnaround for workers at Staley could begin to turn around the class war in Illinois and all across the country. That's why the situation in Decatur requires more than traditional union solidarity which, however well meaning, does not meet the all-out nature of the attacks ...**

**What's happening now at Staley? Materials are going in. Products are coming out. The scabs go to work, and they go home — safely and with paychecks. The plant will slowly but surely return to full capacity. ...**

**The bottom line is that there will be no victory at Staley unless the workers *Shut the Plant Down!* Militant mass pickets are needed to seal off access to the plant and its inventory. The Staley workers and their supporters must fight for a class-wide mobilization to stop the scabs, including occupying the plant if necessary. But rather than an isolated battle, the turnaround of the fight at Staley must be understood and fought for as part of a general strike strategy.**

Given the generalized attacks on workers in Illinois, there remains potential support for this strategy. But the leadership from the start argued instead for a boycott, coupled with a massive publicity campaign designed to shame Staley into taking back the workers. They stuck to this line even though it had proved a failure in past struggles. So we didn't pretend that the pro-capitalist leadership could be convinced to adopt our strategy. Rather, we argued that the central question in this and other struggles is building the revolutionary party leadership to carry out the class strategy.

The Decatur Solidarity Committee formed in February represents industrial unions in Decatur: on its face, it appeared to be the perfect launching pad for united workers' action. But it was comprised mainly of various low level union bureaucrats who have differences with the tops but not on any fundamental politics or strategy. They organized rallies and symbolic blockades of the plant gates. This allowed workers to let off steam — but avoided mobilizing the power of Illinois labor for real blockades — let alone anything more.

### 'SUPPORT COMMITTEE' ANTICS

Chicago LRP supporters have participated in solidarity activities for the Staley workers from the onset. As usual, the struggle for leadership is not just between reformist union leaders and revolutionaries: centrist leftists play their role. In Chicago, the Staley Workers Solidarity Committee consists of leftists who follow the politics of the local bureaucrats.

We've seen this kind of committee before, often. They all work something like this:

Rule No. 1: The purpose is to support the union leadership — called "the struggle," the "rank and file" or the "labor movement." No bona fide approved support committee can stray far from the line of the local officials.

Rule No. 2: Therefore there can be no talk of socialism or anything else that sounds too far out, like a general strike.

To illustrate, the Chicago committee held a forum and benefit meeting on March 9 to raise funds for the Staley workers. It was the feel-good hit of the season: the city's "labor-left" milieu turned out to show its loyalty to the union officialdom. The bureaucrats' remarks from the podium glossing over the objective situation in Decatur were accepted without challenge and uncritically echoed from the floor. The "discussion" began an hour late and was terminated after 20 minutes — an obvious sop to the bureaucrats.

Rule No. 3: Self-censorship should be generously extended to include censorship of others, not limited to but including genuine revolutionaries and workers at variance with the official bureaucratic line.

For example, at the April 9 Labor Solidarity March in Decatur, our "left" opponents reacted with horror to the LRP slogan, "War Zone Workers Must Unite — Organize a General Strike!" The ISO leadership went into convulsions and tried to drown us out with the trite, popular-frontist "The People United Will Never Be Defeated." The Solidarity types, too "non-sectarian" to even march as a contingent, could do little more than sneer.

Rule No. 4: Since they serve to make the bureaucracy look good, support groups typically spread the illusion that a hell of a lot more is actually happening to win than is true. Thus they take on more and more of the role of the bureaucracy itself, while the actual struggle may go down the drain.

Such committees do fundraising and publicity, activities which all workers should back as much as possible. But the success of working-class struggle depends not primarily on aid but on the level of consciousness and action workers achieve. The political barrier built by the so-called support committee is more decisive than their benevolent activities.

We object to censorship not out of any libertarian principle but because of its practical effects: it means capitulation to the union bureaucrats and, through them, to the bosses. Censorship that begins by simply "omitting" radical conclusions leads to actual lying to the class. Thus the Chicago committee distributed without comment literature containing outright capitalist propaganda: a Decatur clergy statement urges class peace between company and union and supports the bosses' demand for "changes" to "enable a company to compete successfully in world markets."

Even worse, the SWSC in its most recent leaflet gave this analysis of the strike and the increased cop attacks and arrests of Staley workers and their supporters:

**The closer Local 7837 (the Staley workers' local) gets to victory, the more desperate the company gets — using the police and courts to issue phony charges.**

Closer to victory? This is just a lie. Genuine working-class morale comes from facing reality and recognizing that the workers have the power to transform the situation — that is, overcome the balance of forces now in the bosses' favor. If the Staley struggle continues on its present course it will end not in victory but in another material defeat. That's why revolutionaries tell the truth.●

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## COFI

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*continued from page 2*

Walter Daum analyzed the state capitalism theory of Black revolutionary C.L.R. James. He noted that James's politics included firm opposition to imperialism, an ironic clash with the interventionist politics of the DSA Conference sponsors (see "Bosnia and Social-Imperialism," p. 3). In analyzing

James's insights and errors on the Russian question, Walter showed the link to James's later abandonment of a fundamental Marxist principle, the need for a revolutionary party.

Contract negotiations have recently started in the Transit Union. The LRP has been intervening with revolutionary politics in demonstrations and meetings, much to the chagrin of the union hacks and "left" oppositionists. We have been calling for a transit strike as a minimal united front action needed to defeat a concessionary contract. But we also refuse to pretend that trade union struggle alone is the answer. Our leaflets and interventions have openly posed the need for a struggle against the union bureaucracy and the perspective of a political general strike as part of a revolutionary strategy.

Further information and sample leaflets are available to readers interested in many of these activities.

## CHICAGO

Our Chicago group has centered its work around the Staley lockout and the emerging dissident movement of Illinois workers (see page 22). We were also the revolutionary pole at two recent demonstrations against the KKK in Springfield and Rockford.

In contrast to the liberal, popular-front orientation of the ISO, the Workers World Party and their respective front groups, the LRP stressed the need for a workers' united front. Only the working class has the power and organization to fight the Klan and their armed cop escorts. As against the sectoralist notion of uniting workers and various oppressed behind their respective middle-class misleaderships, LRP propaganda explained the need for a class-wide fight against the system which breeds racist maggots like the KKK.

As in New York, at these events various centrist groups (PL, RWL, ISO and WWP) led their supporters into police-controlled "protest pens." In addition to feeding illusions in the capitalist state, this cynical policy places their supporters in physical danger.

At Rockford, where there was multiracial, working class turn-out (in sharp contrast to the ISO-led fiasco in Springfield), supporters of the LRP and Spartacist League, in a momentary tactical bloc, chanted "Cops and Klan Work Hand-in-Hand, Police Pens are a Trap!" While lacking the forces to sustain a real fight for leadership in this situation, our aggressive intervention presented a clear pole for militant workers and youth. As this confrontation died down, our leafleters were approached by demonstrators who wanted to know more about revolutionary politics.

Please note that our Chicago address was misprinted in PR 46: it is: POB 256523, Chicago, IL 60625.

## Fund Appeal

Our urgent appeal in the last PR for financial donations was generously answered by an unusually large number of readers. We are very grateful to all who contributed.

As a proletarian organization with modest resources, we must count on the help of readers and friends. Bear in mind that our publications are priced below their cost of production in order to encourage working-class people to read them.

Please send whatever you can afford to: **Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York NY 10008.**

# The Chiapas Uprising and the Mexican Revolution

On January 1 the United States imperialists and their Mexican junior partners were celebrating the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The capitalists proclaimed the global triumph of the "free market" over the working-class struggle to defend itself against their assaults of privatization, growing unemployment, wage cuts and violence. Now, the imperialists and their local client bourgeoisies figured, we can beat up on the workers and peasants unopposed.

That same New Year's Day saw the imperialists self-congratulatory smugness explode in their faces. With careful timing and preparation, thousands of Indian peasants rose up and took over the main cities of Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost and poorest state. Under the banner of the then little-known Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), they held the cities for several days, armed with a few old rifles and pistols, knives and clubs — against the tanks, artillery and bomber airplanes of the Mexican Army. The whole world saw their valiant struggle against poverty and oppression.

The link between NAFTA and the Chiapas uprising was no accident. The sole public EZLN leader, "Subcomandante Marcos," declared that "The free-trade agreement is a death certificate for the Indian peoples of Mexico . . ." The Chiapas rebellion was a reminder that the real meaning of NAFTA was to dismantle the few remaining gains of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920.

As we noted in *PR 42*, NAFTA's chief purpose was to permanently undo Mexico's traditional nationalist protectionism. From the point of view of Mexican capital, both indigenous and U.S.-owned, it aimed to extend the cheap-labor, tariff-free, border-industry maquiladora program to all of Mexico. NAFTA is also meant to guarantee that future Mexican regimes will continue the "liberal" pro-imperialist program of President Salinas. It represents a sharp attack on the living standards of Mexican workers by subordinating them more directly to imperialist capital.

## MEXICAN AND RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS

In contrast to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that created the Soviet workers' state, the Mexican Revolution was a negative proof of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Like its Russian counterpart, the Mexican bourgeoisie was a weak class unable to carry out the bourgeois democratic revolution and develop Mexican capitalism. Under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, Mexico's economy was completely dominated by foreign imperialists.

As a result, the leading role in the Revolution was played by the workers and peasants who rose up in rebellion against foreign domination and centuries of oppression. Because of the heroic mass struggle, the Revolution led to a number of gains, including the distribution of land to the peasants and the reduction of imperialist economic domination.

However, in the absence of a revolutionary party of the working class that could carry out the tasks of the bourgeois democratic struggle through the socialist revolution, Mexico failed to overcome its backward capitalist legacy and complete the break with imperialist domination.

Since the Revolution, the Mexican bourgeoisie has sought to free itself from its weak position towards both the U.S. and its own workers and peasants. During the 1930's, Lázaro Cárdenas carried out a series of reforms and reorganized the ruling party to incorporate the trade unions and peasant organizations into the party and state apparatus.

Gains like trade union rights came with a high price, the loss of working-class independence from the capitalist state. For example, under new labor laws workers were allowed to form unions and strike, but the government retained the right to decide whether to declare strikes legal or illegal. Such laws allowed Cárdenas to play a Bonapartist role, acting as power broker of the class struggle.

During the early period of his rule, Cárdenas permitted strikes and attempted to coopt the mass struggles to use as a stick to discipline local caudillos and landowners in order to concentrate power in the hands of the state. Given the weakness of the Mexican bourgeoisie, state intervention in the economy was necessary for Mexican capitalism to develop without direct foreign domination.

However, by the late 1930's, with the ruling party firmly entrenched in power and the Revolution "institutionalized," Cárdenas began putting the brakes on the strike movement and peasant struggles.

Cárdenas used the pressure of the masses as a weapon against the imperialists — in order to carry out his strategy of strengthening the Mexican bourgeoisie through economic nationalism and protectionism. When massive worker and peasant mobilizations threatened to seize the imperialist-run oil industry, Cárdenas made a preemptive strike, nationalizing foreign oil holdings. While this was a victory over imperialism, the gains that resulted from the mass mobilizations were turned against the masses. Workers were told that since the nationalized industries belonged to the Mexican people, they must sacrifice for the good of the nation.

Since the 1940's, the ruling PRI has relied on nationalism and its tight control of the mass organizations of workers and peasants to maintain its one-party regime. Nevertheless, Mexico continues to be a fragile capitalism dependent on U.S. imperialism. Unable to develop Mexico's productive forces, the capitalists have led the nation into an abyss of poverty and debt. Each day starving peasants flee the countryside only to find cities without jobs or hope. Without the safety valve of migration to the U.S., Mexico would have exploded long ago.

Faced with a huge foreign debt, the bourgeoisie has returned to the pre-revolutionary period's open embrace of imperialism. Mexico is one big fire sale, with foreign capitalists invited in to take over the economy. Under IMF-dictated terms, Mexico began selling off state-owned industries, breaking up the collective ejido farms, changing laws to permit more foreign investment and eliminating social programs.

Despite these efforts, the ruling class has been unable to escape the legacy of the Revolution. The Chiapas rebellion is a warning that the workers and peasants will fight to defend the remaining gains of their past struggles, limited though they are.

At the same time, the Chiapas uprising has global significance, given the internationalization of the debt crisis. As capitalism attacks the working class in country after country to resolve its debt crisis at the expense of the masses, its vulnerability to mass explosions grows ever greater.

## MEXICO'S ELECTIONS

The Chiapas events sent Mexico into a serious political crisis. In response to the brutal repression of the insurgent peasants, including the bombing of cities, towns, and villages and the summary execution of captured rebels, massive demonstrations of workers and students rocked Mexico City. Two months after Chiapas, PRI presidential candidate



Donaldo Colosio was assassinated under circumstances hinting at a conspiracy involving police officials.

As Mexico's workers and peasants turn on the ruling PRI, the bourgeoisie calls in the reserve troops of Mexican capital, the pro-capitalist left. The latter comes already assembled in different regiments — radical Catholic, Stalinist, even the "Trotskyists" of the Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT; there are now three organizations using that name) — the better to mislead and disarm the masses. They all employ the same basic ideological weaponry: constant artillery barrages about "democracy" with little or no mention of socialism. And they are all forming ranks behind one general, Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, presidential candidate of the openly bourgeois Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), which split from the PRI before the outrageously fraudulent elections of 1988.

Cárdenas, the son of Lazaro Cárdenas, comes nowhere near the radicalism even of his father. Until six years ago he was part of the anti-working class PRI leadership, and his program represents the section of the Mexican bourgeoisie who want to return to PRI's old policies of economic nationalism. In order to win some mass support to counter imperialist pressure, bourgeois nationalists offer to throw a few welfare state sops to the workers and peasants.

However, when the masses rise up and threaten capitalist property and the state, Cárdenas and the PRD run for cover behind the army. Though he mumbled some words of sympathy with the EZLN, at the time of the uprising he condemned "violence, wherever it comes from" and attacked the EZLN for killing soldiers. PRD legislators signed a joint declaration with PRI and the conservative bourgeois National Action Party (PAN) members against the breaking of "the legal order in the state of Chiapas."

For anyone who claims to stand for the working class's interests to give any support whatever to the bourgeois PRD is shameful and treasonous. But Mexico's left is not alone in this regard. In El Salvador, South Africa, and Brazil, the "far left" pursues similar electoralist strategies. In each case, phony socialists argue that the struggle for socialism is not on the agenda, so the masses should support the reformist bourgeois nationalists. The disastrous lessons of this approach were taught in blood in Chile twenty years ago.

Those who delay the fight for socialism in order first to get democracy will get neither. Capitalism can hardly afford democracy, especially in the neo-colonial countries. Only a working-class-led socialist revolution offers any solution to the crisis of Mexican and international capitalism.

Revolutionaries defend the struggle of the peasants in the EZLN against Mexican capitalism. But the EZLN fighters are following radical middle-class, not revolutionary working-class, leadership. As a peasant movement they cannot overthrow the capitalist order. Only the urban working class has the cohesion and power over the means of production to seize power and reconstruct society on a socialist basis. A classic example of the need for revolutionary proletarian leadership was the Mexican Revolution: then the peasant based armies of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa captured political power and then handed it back. Mexican workers fought in the Revolution but lacked a party with an independent class program to fight for leadership.

The EZLN has a distorted understanding of this. They wisely hold on to their arms and military organization but they have the dangerous illusion that they can successfully pressure the PRI and the bourgeois state for significant concessions. They point to the failed revolutions in Latin America as evidence that their aim ought not be the revolu-



*General Emiliano Zapata during the Mexican Revolution.*

tionary seizure of power. They want "socialism like the Cubans have, only better."

Indeed, the revolutions in Latin America failed to bring prosperity to the masses and to build economies independent of imperialism. The peasants and workers of Mexico do need better than Cuba, for Cuba is not and never was socialist. As we explained in "Cuba: Socialism in One Country Again?" (PR 39), the workers never took state power. Pressured by the masses to deliver concessions and by the U.S. imperialists to keep letting them loot the country, the middle-class guerrilla rulers carried out far-reaching nationalizations. They attempted to maximize production in state industry and agriculture and retain profits in the hands of the state bureaucracy. This was Stalinist statified capitalism.

The attempt to duck the world market while building "socialism" in isolation failed: modern production is worldwide, and any attempt to cut a country off from the world market sooner or later leads to breakdown, with increased privation and misery for the masses. Today, the Castroite rulers invite the imperialists back in with the promise of all kinds of concessions paid for by exploitation and oppression of the Cuban masses.

Chiapas signals the coming Mexican socialist revolution. There is no return to the welfare state and economic nationalist Mexico of the past. The attempts by Cárdenas and the phony left to derail the mass struggles into the hopeless avenues of reformism will spell doom, as capitalism sinks into further crisis. In saluting the revolutionary heroism of the Chiapas Indian peasants, we must rededicate ourselves to the historical task of the revolutionary working class: the building of the workers' international to lead all the exploited and oppressed in the fight to create a new world. ●

## South Africa

continued from page 32

oppressive regimes, what about the future "Government of National Unity"? Moreover, Buthelezi's slaughter of ANC supporters in the townships and migrant workers' hostels has been an indispensable part of the ruling class's strategy. A serious fight against Buthelezi and Inkatha's violence would have forced the ANC to break off the negotiations and undermined efforts to form a coalition government. (For analysis of Inkatha and the township violence, see PR 42.)

So Mandela offered Buthelezi a "silver bridge" over which to retreat and join the elections. Buthelezi accepted, and it soon became clear the payoff was a guaranteed win in Natal/KwaZulu. Buthelezi's "victory" was the result of naked fraud. As the *New York Times* reported (May 6):

**Internal reports sent by electoral poll-watchers to the commission in Johannesburg detailed scores of ballot boxes from mysterious origins, thousands of unaccounted ballot papers, and witness reports that monitors were ordered to leave polls in Mr. Buthelezi's jurisdiction.**

Having had many electoral monitors chased out of the province, Buthelezi's Inkatha functionaries stuffed fake ballot boxes with votes for Inkatha, "assisted the illiterate" at polling stations by marking the electoral cards for them, and sabotaged polling in pro-ANC regions. So pronounced was Inkatha's fraud that the electoral commission declared that in some areas, 850 percent of the electorate had voted!

Low level ANC officials immediately protested the results, and official observers called for an annulment of the vote. But in spite of all this, after secret negotiations between ANC, National Party and Inkatha leaders and the electoral commission, all quickly declared the Natal elections "free and fair." They admitted numerous and widespread "irregularities" but denied any evidence of significant fraud.

The electoral commission chairman initially denied that the election results came not from the voters but from secret political agreements. But after a couple of days he could no longer deny what was obvious. Under the headline "Were the Vote Totals Cooked?" *Newsweek* magazine reported:

**The nation's top electoral official admitted that the final voting margins resulted at least partly from backroom negotiation ... "Let's not get overly squeamish about it," said Johann Kriegler, chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission. The parties, he said, "are in a power game with each other, and if they want to settle [claims of vote fraud] there's nothing wrong with it ethically or legally." (May 16.)**

London's *Financial Times* (May 10) not only acknowledged that the elections were a fraud but approved:

**Perhaps that was just as well, for it gave the political leaders the excuse to do their own kind of reconciliation: sharing out power more as they thought the voters ought to have done, than as they probably did; providing what one political insider called a "designer outcome"...**

Top ANC leaders supported all the moves to give de Klerk and Buthelezi an effective veto over the new government. Bourgeois commentators explain this by pointing to Mandela's commitment to end the violence in Natal and elsewhere. But the move will increase such violence by leaving those responsible for it (Inkatha, the NP's police and defence forces, and even white fascists) with entrenched power.

And Mandela had an even more cynical reason. He made it absolutely clear that the ANC did not want to win

the two-thirds majority in the parliament, and explained why: **I feel very relieved we did not get the two-thirds majority, because already tensions were building up that we were going to write our own Constitution. (New York Times, May 7.)**

That is, the ANC wanted to avoid sole responsibility for the government and constitution; that way it would have no excuse for not putting into effect the demands of the black masses — redistributing the wealth of society, eradicating unemployment, building schools and hospitals, crushing the instruments of counterrevolutionary violence, and the like. Mandela stole from tens of thousands of blacks votes which they had struggled and suffered for and for which many more had died, and handed them to the National Party and Inkatha in order to sabotage the demands of the masses.

Mandela's comment points to the essence of the negotiations process and the new Government of National Unity: the bloc of Mandela's ANC with the Nationalists and even Inkatha against the struggles and demands of the masses of black workers and poor. Only a revolutionary Marxist analysis can explain this and chart a course forward in the struggle. (See "South African Revolution in Danger" in PR 44 and "Black Workers vs. ANC" in PR 46.)

### THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

Now the ANC has to hope that after all the suffering and struggle against apartheid, the masses can be forced to accept a "democratic exploitation" by a ruling class obscured by a haze of black parliamentary figures. But the masses threaten to use any democratic gains against the capitalist system itself. They wanted voting rights in order to choose leaders who would alleviate their exploitation and misery through the far-reaching reforms listed above.

This leaves the ANC caught in a contradiction: it must present some social and democratic gains to the black masses if it is to have any hope of reconciling them to a reformed capitalism, but the capitalist system to which it is wedded cannot afford such gains. Thus the black working class is being forced onto the road of its socialist revolution.

Mandela sees the ANC's greatest task in government as providing a sound environment for capitalist profit-making and investment. He first had to make clear to the capitalists that the ANC will resist the demands of the black masses. During the negotiations, the ANC dropped one after another of the promises of economic justice it had made in its Freedom Charter: nationalization of big industry and finance to enable popular democratic control of the economy, land to the tiller, and redistribution of the wealth of the country.

In fact, enshrined in the constitution is the right of the big capitalists to maintain control of the factories, mines and other property. The ANC has guaranteed the positions of the top bureaucrats who head the state-run industries, and also promises to repay the huge 62 million Rand debt to international banks that was accumulated under apartheid. At Mandela's urging, the Reserve Bank has been made independent of government control, so that the masses are not encouraged to think they can pressure the new ANC-led government to seize any of its wealth.

Responding to fears that an ANC government means a "communist takeover" and the seizure of the economy by the workers, one of Western imperialism's leading voices, the *Economist* magazine (Feb. 5), said "that is nonsense." It cited the ANC's chief economist Tito Mboweni, who "declares triumphantly" that in the ANC's program there is no mention of a minimum wage or nationalization. No wonder a survey of 100 top white business leaders in South Africa by

the *Weekly Mail* showed that 68 percent supported Mandela for president. (*U.S. News and World Report*, May 2.)

### EMPTY PROMISES

The ANC's economic policy is spelled out in its "Reconstruction and Development Programme." This document pledges a million new homes, electricity for 2.5 million households, ten years of free schooling for all and the creation of 2 million new jobs — all while paying back the apartheid debt and not increasing the current budget deficit.

While these policies promise to improve the conditions of the masses, they are no answer to the social crisis. Racist capitalist exploitation has left over 80 percent of the land and over 90 percent of the country's productive wealth in the hands of the white caste, 13 percent of the whole population. It has impoverished the black masses, leaving half of the black working class unemployed and 3 out of 5 blacks living in rural areas where over 80 percent have no electricity and over 90 percent no working sewage.

Moreover, the crisis-ridden economy cannot even pay for these inadequate reforms. The ANC and its partners know this and understand that the greatest threat to the Government of National Unity will come when militant black workers and the poor mobilize to demand that their needs be met. With a decades-long tradition of struggle, with the continued presence of the fighting organizations the black workers built during that time (particularly the unions) and with huge expectations of the new government, mass struggles against the new government are guaranteed.

Believing they have finally won, the masses now expect a swift delivery of the fruits of victory. Their expectations are tremendously high and, given their years of suffering, their patience is low. The attitude of the more militant and politically advanced workers is one of suspicion and cautious distrust. After the numerous broken promises and capitulations by the ANC in the negotiations, they are wary of the new government and eager to test its character. A significant minority already understand that the ANC has sold out and are searching for an alternative. These explosive conditions will inevitably produce sharp outbursts of struggle. Already Black civil servants have launched wildcat strikes demanding equal pay with their white counterparts; they have been threatened with mass dismissal by ANC provincial premiers.

Aware of the threat, the South African bourgeoisie has

been openly debating the coming dangers in the press. Democratic Party leader Frederick Zyl Slabbert commented on the ANC's demand for a moratorium on strikes:

Mr. Mandela said this weekend that the days of protest are over. "You must wait three to five years before we can really see to it that your needs are met," he told his followers. I like what he says, but if he can pull it off it will be a first . . . . Strikes will threaten a new government. What happens, for example, if the new government says, "We now demand wage restraint" and [COSATU head]



Armed supporters of fascist-linked Inkatha stage show of strength during election campaign.

Sam Shilowa says, "You can go and jump in the bloody lake, what do you mean wage restraint?" This moratorium on strikes is a unique thing and may not survive.

The moment you are in government there is a fundamental difference. How do you raise funds, how to authorize them, how to prioritize. And very soon the rank and file who have been toy-toying themselves into the future say, "Mandela is the old guard. De Klerk has him under his wing; he has been coopted." (*The Star*, April 27.)

More ominously, *Business Day* pointed to the problems of pressure from below on the ANC's governmental coalition:

The front, already an unnatural coalition held together only by an opposition to apartheid rule . . . will not long survive. It will fractionate . . . . The only way the ANC can keep its painstakingly constructed popular front together is through repression. (Quoted in *The Organizer*, May 1994.)

While the new government will have to use armed repression against any independent workers' upsurge, it will only do so as a last resort. This is because repression would make clear the class struggle between the government and the black masses and so threaten to stir up greater uprisings.

### SACP KEY TO MANDELA/DE KLERK FRONT

Rather, in seeking to subordinate the black workers, the government will rely mainly on the masses' own leaders to hold back and derail their struggles — just as it did during

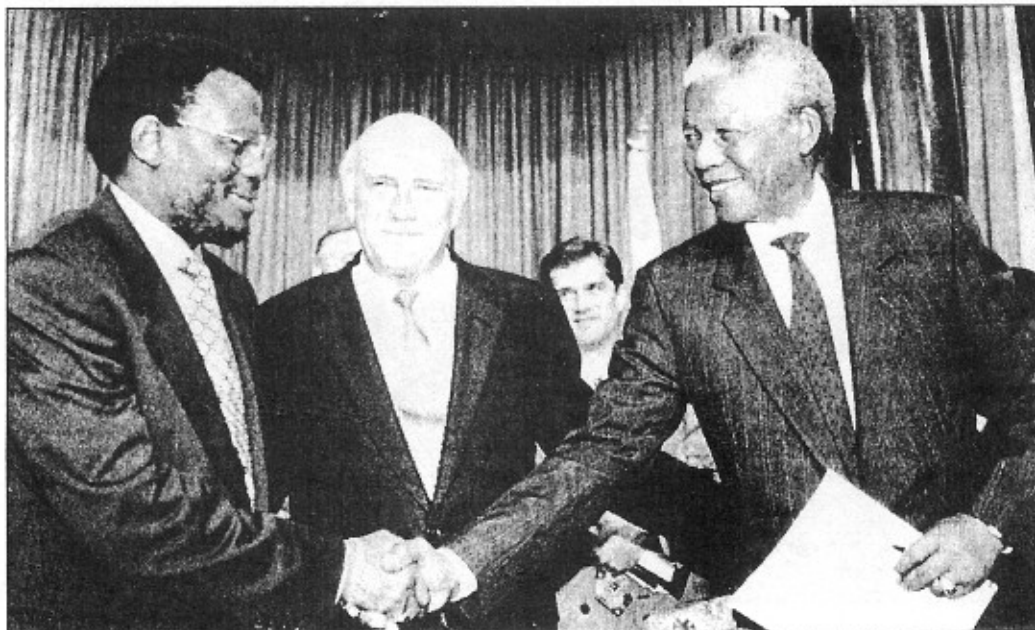
the negotiations. The key to this strategy is the South African Communist Party (SACP).

The SACP boasts tens of thousands of black worker members and many more supporters. Its leaders are prominent in the ANC's leading bodies and hold numerous posts in the new government. SACP tops control all the popular organizations from the massive union federation, COSATU, to the township civic associations.

The SACP has long claimed to be for the workers' revolution and the overthrow of capitalism. But, in the Stalinist tradition, this has been nothing more than an empty promise used to attract the most militant workers and trap them behind the ANC. It has encouraged militant workers to have faith in the ANC's devotion to democracy, and to see the SACP as the guarantor in the ANC of workers' interests.

organizations to the bourgeoisie. However, while the Popular Fronts were based upon independent workers' parties forming coalitions with bourgeois parties, the working-class party in South Africa, the SACP, is present in the government not as an independent coalition member but as part of the ANC.

In this sense, the GNU is to the right of a popular front. The SACP does not dare independently enter into the coalition because it would then be open to its worker supporters demanding that it break with its bourgeois partners. The SACP does not have the strength of a huge and tested bureaucracy and the direct support of a state power as the Stalinist CP's did in the 1930's. The populist ANC/SACP role in the new government reflects the weakness of their bloc with the National Party against the workers.



*Buthelezi, de Klerk, Mandela seal the deal for a coalition regime.*

Already, the ANC/SACP "left" leaders have been promising the workers that they will lead a struggle against any sell-out by the ANC. Winnie Mandela declared in one of her last electoral speeches that if the ANC government does not deliver on its promises, "I will lead the fight against my own government." And COSATU General Secretary Sam Shilowa has spoken of "taking to the streets" if the ANC "moves out of line with us." (*Socialist Action*, May 1994.)

Behind their rhetoric, these "radicals" aim only to tie the most militant workers to the ANC when they no longer listen to the promises of the mainstream leaders. They will only split from the ANC under tremendous pressure from the masses, and then they will do so because it is the only way to head off the struggle. Like the ANC's need to share power with the National Party in order to avoid the black masses' demands, the SACP needs its ties to the ANC in order to resist the revolutionary-minded workers' demands for it to lead an independent struggle for working class power.

The Government of National Unity is the bourgeoisie's answer to the revolutionary threat posed by the black workers. In the tradition of popular frontism inaugurated by the coalition in 1917 between the Menshevik socialists and the bourgeois Cadets against the revolutionary workers in Russia, and raised to new heights by Stalinism's Popular Fronts with bourgeois parties in the 1930's (which aborted a series of revolutions), the GNU attempts to bind the workers'

#### WORKERS' PARTY

The key to the success of the black workers' struggle will be whether they can break from the grip of these misleaders and find their way onto the road of independent class struggle. At each key juncture during the negotiations, when ruling-class provocations exposed the ANC's treacherous dealings with the National Party, the militant workers led attempts to break from the negotiations with struggles for general strikes, mass demonstrations and the organization of armed self-defense. But they were held back each time by their leaders' alliance with the ANC.

The militants' search for a working-class alternative to the ANC took an explosive leap forward late last year when a conference of the metalworkers'

union, NUMSA, voted for COSATU to break with the ANC and take the lead in building an independent workers' party. Other unions (including the chemical, transport and catering unions) swiftly passed their own motions echoing NUMSA's call. (See PR 46.)

Despite this step forward, the NUMSA delegates who voted for the motions, mostly SACP members, revealed an ambivalent attitude toward the ANC. On the one hand, they expressed the desire to free themselves from their leaders' compromises. But at the same time they accepted the SACP's stagist line that the struggle for socialist revolution must be postponed until after the "democratic revolution" brings the ANC to power. That is why the same NUMSA conference also supported NUMSA voting for the ANC in the elections.

The struggle for a workers' party suffered from the militants' failure to break decisively from the SACP/COSATU scheme of putting pressure on the ANC. The militants' call for a workers' party was, for many, a call to push the ANC government to the left. It was a demand by the militants for their leaders to be prepared to defend their class's interests against an ANC-led government. But the negotiations experience proves this is a dead end: the ANC opposes workers' independent struggles and will betray them.

These past betrayals, however, could have provided a rich learning experience for the workers had there been a leadership warning of the dangers of the situation and point-

ing to an alternative to the misleaders' disastrous strategy. The struggle to build a workers' party independent of the ANC can now provide a great opportunity for the workers to learn through their own experience how the ANC/SACP blocks their struggle, and that they must begin an independent fight for power with a truly revolutionary leadership.

This can only be done by a revolutionary party built by the most militant, courageous and tested working-class leaders on the basis of a definite revolutionary program. Only if such workers forge a disciplined party nucleus can they fight to wrest the leadership of the workers' movement from the betrayers. This work cannot be put off for one more moment in South Africa. Trotsky's summary of all Lenin's work, between the February revolution of 1917 and the April Days when the workers solidly went over to the Bolsheviks, is a precise guide for revolutionaries in South Africa today:

**Separate the party from the masses, in order afterwards to free those masses from their backwardness.**

### REVOLUTIONARY POLICY IN THE ELECTIONS

The whole focus of revolutionary policy in South Africa must be to fight for the independence of the workers' organizations from the bourgeois ANC and its Government of National Unity — and in doing so, prove to the black workers that their current leaders (chiefly the SACP) are opposed to an independent political struggle of the working class.

In the elections, this meant opposing a vote for the ANC. The most basic principle of Marxism is to draw the class line between the working class and the bourgeoisie. The ANC is not a workers' organization (even though most South African workers' support it) but a bourgeois party. While it has working-class members, the ANC does not base itself on any workers' organizations, but on its own *independent* bourgeois political apparatus. The mass of active working-class support for the ANC is to be found in the SACP, which despite its leaders' positions at the top of the ANC and its formal alliance with the ANC, is a distinct working-class organization on which the ANC does not dare to base itself.

Through the immediate lead-up to the negotiations, revolutionaries would have continued their propaganda for the SACP and COSATU to break from the ANC, and used any opportunity to agitate for that demand. Revolutionaries would have run their own candidates on an openly communist platform in the elections if they had the opportunity. We would not have boycotted the elections, as did some organizations, like the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO) and the Non-European Unity Movement.

The black masses had a great desire to test out the "democratic" power of their vote, and the only way for them to learn that their vote was in fact powerless was to go through the electoral experience with them. Revolutionaries only call for boycott of bourgeois democratic institutions when they can be replaced — that is, when the masses have lost their illusions in them and are ready to overthrow them and replace them with institutions of proletarian democracy.

### WOSA AND THE WLP

If there had been a clear movement of a decisive layer of workers away from the ANC and towards one of the workers' organizations running against it, revolutionaries would have advocated *critical support* to these candidates. The purpose of critical support is to support the workers' movement towards independent struggle in order to win an audience among them and counter the leaders' underlying reformist politics. Critical electoral support to a party does not mean political support for its program. Lenin described

it as the sort of support a rope gives to a hanged man: it aims to show the workers the political crimes of the leadership and thereby lead them to become its executioners.

This tactical approach at first seemed possible towards the Workers' List Party (WLP). The main force behind this campaign was the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA), primarily responsible for the WLP's program for building a "mass workers' party." In the early stages the WLP showed some popular support: it collected signatures, names and identity cards of 13,000 supporters in a two-week period and thereby earned state funding for its campaign.

The WLP was in part a continuation of the movement for an independent workers' party started at the NUMSA conference last year. We dealt with WOSA's politics in the last *PR*, showing that WOSA sought to use the workers' party movement to *avoid* a confrontation with the SACP and its reformist program. WOSA, in its own words, sees the workers' party movement as an opportunity for "all socialists" (namely the SACP and those to its left) to "put aside those differences of approach and of historical association" which have separated them in the past. That means accommodation to, not struggle against, the treacherous SACP. This assessment was sharply confirmed by the WLP.

The WLP failed to raise a real working-class alternative to the ANC. It ran as a left pressure-group on the ANC, giving organizational expression to the militants' illusions in the reformability of apartheid capitalism through the ANC. In putting forward the slogan "Socialism Is Democracy," WOSA/WLP adapted its politics to the SACP's stagist strategy and sustained the myth that socialism can be achieved without proletarian revolution and a workers' state. The seriousness of the WLP's campaign must also be questioned, especially since their primary candidate was on a speaking tour of the United States at the time of the vote!

Officially, the WLP received only 4100 votes, well below the number of signatures it had collected, suggesting that the vote was possibly tampered with by electoral officials. In the end, it appears that many workers decided that if the task of the moment is to push the ANC to the left, then the thing to do is vote for the ANC to give it the two-thirds majority needed to rewrite the Constitution. For these reasons we withdraw our previously announced tentative critical support.

Since the elections we have learned that a tiny group, the Workers for the Recreation of the Fourth International formed shortly before the elections, received 5500 votes. As of now we lack information to evaluate this result and the WRFI's program. Most importantly, we don't know whether this vote indicated genuine motion by workers toward class independence. And we don't trust the politics of the WRFI's mentors, the British Workers Revolutionary Party (see "Healyism with a Human Face," *PR* 37).

In the Namibian elections of 1989, the WRP's affiliate there ran in a bloc with a bourgeois formation, the UDF, in order to keep SWAPO, the main bourgeois-nationalist party, from getting a two-thirds majority. (See *PR* 36.) This maneuver was undertaken by the WRP because of SWAPO's Stalinist backing — plus the unprincipled idea that workers can fight Stalinism by crossing the class line.

### SOCIALISTS FOR THE ANC

The elections provided an acid test of all those groups to the left of the SACP which claim the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism. The Marxist Workers Tendency is aligned with the Militant Labour group in Britain. The MWT operates as a faction of the ANC, holding the perspective of turning the ANC into a revolutionary party of the working class. While

the MWT claims to be Trotskyist, by subordinating themselves to the ANC they have violated the first principle of Trotskyism. As Trotsky wrote:

**Never and under no circumstances may the party of the proletariat enter into a party of another class or merge with it organizationally. An absolutely independent party of the proletariat is a first and decisive condition for communist politics. (Leon Trotsky on China, p. 403.)**

Opposing the movement for a workers' party because the mass of workers support the ANC and because the ANC "has not gone over to the bourgeoisie," the MWT argued for workers to vote for the ANC. With its paper's headline declaring "Kick out the Nats!" the MWT explained:

**The elections give us the chance to crush the party of apartheid and dictatorship. Every vote must be used to close the door on the old South Africa. (Congress Militant, February-March, 1994.)**

But this exposes the counterrevolutionary essence of the MWT's program. It was clear well before the elections that no matter how many votes the ANC got, it would share power with apartheid's National Party. Not only was a vote for the ANC impermissible because of its bourgeois character — it also meant a vote to keep the party of apartheid in power! As against the MWT, revolutionaries understand that the ANC's role is to save the "old South Africa" of capitalist exploitation from the struggles of the Black masses.

Another pseudo-Trotskyist group that capitulated directly to the ANC was the International Socialists of South Africa, co-thinkers of Tony Cliff's International Socialism Tendency worldwide. The ISSA also opposed the workers' party movement, saying that it represented a sure road to a "reformist swamp" — and proposed instead a vote for the ANC! Leading ISSA member Terry Bell wrote:

**Arguments to boycott the April 27 election ... equated the liberation movement with the National Party. ... But it is nonsense to equate the ANC alliance, which is based on the hopes and aspirations of the working masses, with a party which is the overt champion of the ruling class. This does not mean accepting or encouraging illusions in either the alliance or parliament. In this particular battle, the working class is lined up behind the ANC alliance against the NP. (Work in Progress, February/March, 1994.)**

However, with his own words Bell proves that in voting for the ANC the ISSA is creating illusions in the ANC. The ANC alliance is not based on the hopes and aspirations of the masses in the way that the ISSA implies. Rather, it relies on its ability to limit the struggles of the black masses: otherwise, the National Party would not be negotiating with it. The ANC is really based on fighting at every turn the hopes and aspirations of the working masses.

The ANC is a bourgeois party: given its dependence on

capitalism, in the end it is no less counterrevolutionary than the Nationalists. In these elections the ANC was lined up with the National Party and even Inkatha against the working class. This is the real alliance the ISSA enlisted in.

The Comrades for a Workers Government group, aligned with the Workers International League of Britain, has run far to the left of both the MWT and ISSA throughout the negotiations. It played an important role in the NUMSA conference that voted for the break from the ANC and the creation of a workers' party, and reportedly initiated the discussions on the left over running workers' candidates. But after initially supporting a workers' list, the CWG rejected the WLP and encouraged workers to vote for the ANC.

Explaining the position in an interview in *Workers Power*, the CWG's Tony Kgobi explained that regarding the WLP: **The danger is to discredit the project [of building a workers' party], because then you would go to the elections with a party which would not show well . . . . We say we vote for the ANC critically and openly say that the ANC is a bourgeois party. But in this case no one should be indifferent to an ANC victory over the National Party, or Inkatha . . . . Because you find that the majority of progressive militants are in the ANC, it is this majority of the militants that you have to get on your side.**

In voting for the ANC, the CWG crossed the class line. While they say they are supercritical of the ANC, they echo the illusions raised by the MWT and ISSA that a vote for the ANC was a vote against the National Party and Inkatha. It was not possible to vote for an ANC victory, as the CWG says — only for a sharing of power with the apartheid parties.

Moreover, it just is not true that the leading layers of workers that revolutionaries must win are in the ANC. The workers' party movement last year showed that most of these workers are in the SACP and are fighting for their party to break from the ANC. While most would have voted for the ANC, what was necessary from revolutionaries was the courage to explain that putting the ANC in power really meant power-sharing with the Nationalists and Inkatha — and that this reinforces the need to rally around the demand for the workers' organizations to break from the ANC and build an independent party. Instead, the CWG lent a cover to the SACP's campaign to derail the workers' party movement and restrain the workers to voting for the ANC.

The outright betrayal of working-class principles by the MWG, ISSA and CWG, along with the refusal by WOSA/WLP to sharply counterpose itself to the ANC/SACP, proves that the revolutionary leadership of the working class remains to be built. But the basis is there. The inspiring decades-long struggle of this powerful proletariat has not ended. Forward to the South African section of the re-created Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution!●

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# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Summer 1994

## S. Africa: Black Liberation Betrayed

by Matthew Richardson

South Africa's first all-race elections are complete, and a new ANC-led Government of National Unity is in place. But most partisans of the long and heroic anti-apartheid struggle are left with a bitter taste in their mouths. The agreements made between Nelson Mandela's ANC and F.W. de Klerk's National Party always meant that these elections would be undemocratic and would allow an effective white veto over the inevitable ANC-led government. But the elections did not even live up to these perverted and unjust "democratic standards."

Before the voting, Mandela and de Klerk adopted a constitution and election regulations designed to make it impossible for the ANC to govern without day-to-day approval from the National Party. All opinion polls suggested that the ANC would receive around 60 percent of the vote, so de Klerk and Mandela agreed to a law making endorsement by two-thirds of parliament necessary for any change in the constitution. They also agreed that for five years, every party with over 5 percent of the vote would receive a seat on the supreme decision-making body, the cabinet. In this way, the old apartheid parties as well as the counterrevolutionary Inkatha were guaranteed an effective veto power.

South African capitalism's mainstream *Business Day* (May 28, 1993) bluntly summed up what this deal means:

... South Africa will remain the last country in Africa with entrenched white power. Whites will not rule, but they will effectively share power in a cabinet where major decisions require consensus, giving whites an effective veto.

But the polls underestimated the desire of the Black masses to put into power the party they look to as theirs — the ANC. Polls in the first days of the April elections showed a steadily increasing percentage of ANC votes, indicating that the ANC would just exceed the two-thirds necessary to give it unrestricted power. With formal agreements and guarantees having proved not enough to maintain the power of the white capitalists, the most blatant electoral fraud was adopted — and was approved by the ANC leaders!

### THE RIGGED ELECTIONS

The grossest electoral fraud was in the Natal/KwaZulu region. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of the Inkatha movement and the dictator of KwaZulu, had agreed to run

in the elections only weeks before they were held. No political commentator expected Buthelezi to win, and with good reason. Buthelezi has never had the support of the majority of the Natal/KwaZulu population, relying for his power on the financial support of the apartheid government and the reign of terror conducted by his death squads and official



South African unionists protesting against apartheid ruler de Klerk. ANC's coalition with apartheid parties promises counterrevolutionary rule.

police. His support dwindled even further during the negotiations, as he was openly associated with the right wing of the apartheid bureaucracy. He even joined with the Afrikaner neo-fascists in the so-called Freedom Alliance, advocating among other things the creation of a whites-only state.

In fact, in the lead up to the election, there was much talk of a popular uprising overthrowing Buthelezi. After a civil servants' strike set off an uprising which toppled Lucas Mangope, the dictator of the Bophuthatswana "homeland," there was a swelling sentiment in Natal to do the same to Buthelezi. At a meeting in Natal just days after the overthrow of Mangope, COSATU Vice-President George Nkadi-meng reflected the ranks' militancy when he said that if the people could overthrow Mangope in Bophuthatswana, "Why can't we do it here?"

There was a tremendous potential for a mass mobilization against Buthelezi, but this was a great threat to the ANC's plans. If the masses thought they could overthrow

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