

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



Re-Create

the Fourth International

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Porn, Feminism & The Meese Report

After spending a year collecting garbage, Attorney General Edwin Meese's Commission on Pornography released its final report in July and was applauded by reactionary forces throughout the country -- as well as by an influential wing of feminist activists. Predictably, the report demands tougher laws against pornography, the supposed cause of violence against women.

Despite a patina of pro-woman rhetoric borrowed from the feminist anti-porn campaign of recent years, the Commission report is thoroughly anti-woman. It defends the sexist ideology and social relations of capitalism, above all the male-dominated bourgeois family. Chairman Henry Hudson, assigned the task because of his success as a Virginia prosecutor in shutting down "adult" bookstores, stated: "In the final analysis [pornography] appears to impact adversely on the family concept and its value to society."

In reality, the oppression of women is inseparable from the bourgeois family as an economic unit. "Strengthening the family" has nothing to do with improving personal relationships; it means reinforcing the capitalist division of labor that condemns

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Gorbachev's "Revolution"

Can Russia Be Reformed?

A quarter of a century ago Nikita Khrushchev brimmed over with confidence in the future of the USSR. "We will bury you," he told the United States, boasting that the Soviet economy would far outproduce the American. "Your grandchildren will live under



communism."

Although Khrushchev was ousted by his fellow bureaucrats for "harebrained schemes," such official optimism still flourished under Leonid Brezhnev. But now, two Kremlin generations later, Mikhail Gorbachev

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Editor's Note:

The Fedayeen and the Counterrevolution in Iran

A passage in the article, "Theses on the Agrarian Question in the Neocolonial Countries" printed in our last issue, turns out to have been based on misinformation and must therefore be withdrawn. Since it contains a serious slander against a working-class organization, we offer the comrades of the OIPFG and our readers our profound apologies.

The passage in question read:

"The Organization of Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerrillas ... claimed to stand for the 'democratic revolution,' including the complete division of the land by the peasantry. However, when the Turcoman peasants seized and divided the land and then adhered en masse to the OIPFG, its Stalinist and nationalist leadership took the side of land-owning reaction and Farsi chauvinism: it assassinated their leaders and betrayed the masses to the IRP [the Islamic Republican Party]."

This account tallies with the version of events circulated by reactionary petty-bourgeois Iranian organizations like the Mojahedin-F-Khalq, closely tied to Iran's then-president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, the notorious Butcher of Kurdistan, and the pro-Soviet Tudeh party. But it does not match the facts. Four principal leaders of Turcoman Sahra did disappear and are generally presumed assassinated. But the responsibility lies not with the OIPFG, which was the only political force organizing resistance to the regime's ultimately successful attacks upon the Turco-

man Sahra Peasants Councils.

The killings were carried out by forces directed by Bani-Sadr, who waged a ruthless war against the Turcoman peasants out of fear of the implication of their revolutionary actions for Iran as a whole. In this he was strongly backed by the Mojahedin and Tudeh, who later added to their own treachery by blaming the OIPFG.

At the time of these events the OIPFG was still led by a Stalinist, class-collaborationist wing. The group's main mistake was not to draw out the Iran-wide significance of their events in Turcoman Sahra and not to link up the revolutionary struggles of the Turcoman peasants with other struggles, especially those in Iranian-held Kurdistan. The OIPFG of today is bitterly self-critical of these failures. The organization split seven months after the events in question. A majority of its membership, supported by a minority of one on the central committee (hence the misleading title "OIPFG Minority"), was determined to defend the revolution against betrayal.

Today the surviving organization is heterogeneous and left centrist. The OIPFG today insists that any coalition with bourgeois forces is totally excluded in Iran. It has stood firm against popular frontist schemes like the 'National Council of Resistance' proposed by the Mojahedin and supported for a time by Bani-Sadr. The comrades talk of a "democratic" stage

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The Democrats:

Capitalism's Graveyard Shift

With its electoral takeover of the Senate and the presence of a lame duck Republican president in the White House, the opposition Democratic Party ought to be in great shape. Instead it presents an image of division, dithering and deceit. The Democrats attribute their problems to the personal gifts of Ronald Reagan, the "Great Communicator" who, they claim, bamboozles millions of voters, even working people -- seemingly despite his programs rather than because of them. In fact it is the Democratic Party that communicates brilliantly. No wonder Reagan is popular.

The only time Democratic politicians look strong is when they echo the President and sound tough on foreign policy, protective of "the family," conservative on government spending and bellicose in whatever anti-drug or anti-terrorist crusade is current. Reagan, on the other hand, seems confident of his pathway out of a troubled and fear-ridden world.

Reagan's success is due to the real differences which underly the "me and my shadow" appearance. Jimmy Carter, with the support of a Congress controlled by his own party, gave American workers an austerity program and growing unemployment. Walter Mondale could not even promise more social spending -- only higher taxes. In contrast, Reagan insisted that a buoyant economy was possible. And after a few years of recession, his program "worked" just in time for 1984, not because of any magical Reaganomics but through international bullying and the sky-high interest rates that sucked in capital from abroad. A few, mainly the rich, prospered; others still held out hope. The public, uneasily aware that the U.S. economy is living on borrowed time, chose unsteady recovery over certain austerity.

Underneath the surface recovery the capitalist crisis worsens. Hence there are deepening differences within the bourgeoisie, which the Republican and Democratic policies reflect. As we have pointed out since the beginning of his reign, Reagan's assertiveness reflects the optimism of the more competitive sectors of U.S. capital. The Democrats represent the beleaguered bosses of decaying industries as well as some financiers who have a more realistic understanding of the troubled world than the Reaganites.

Neither party, of course, derives its votes from the upper bourgeoisie. The Republican base consists of petty bourgeois trying to reach the top (as well as unorganized and backward workers), people who feel themselves blocked by alleged government favoritism toward minorities and unions. The Democrats serve as the party designed to incorporate organized urban workers and the potentially volatile poorer layers (blacks above all) whose demands must be propitiated to some degree by the state. This aspect of Democrat-

ic politics also attracts middle-class elements dependent on liberal government concessions.

Thus the Democrats are caught in a trap. To maintain capitalism, especially the obsolescent heavy industrial sectors of the U.S., they have to demand that workers tighten their belts. But they cannot win office without seeming to favor some social programs. They cannot raise these in a clear platform, even demagogically; to do so would offend not only the Republican capitalists whom they have to collaborate with but their own bourgeois allies as well.

The Democrats always have to work overtime, in and out of power, to reassure their masters that they



New York Republican gubernatorial candidate with dummy of Mario Cuomo, his victorious Democratic rival. Cardboard cutouts can't hide both parties' support for cutbacks.

won't give away the store. Hence their dithering and division when out of office. But they remain American capitalism's party of second resort. In office they unswervingly make use of their credit with the masses to impose on them the austerity capitalism needs.

Democratic Nationalism

There is one issue, however, that the Democrats think will appeal both to the bourgeoisie and their base, and so they run hard on it. And here they also consistently oppose Reagan. As Martin Frank, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's executive director, said in June:

"It's a tremendous issue, particularly for Democrats, because Reagan has so effectively wrapped himself in the flag for the last three years. He has appropriated the flag issue for himself, all

the America-first type issues. This is one where the Democrats can seize the high ground, a chance to stand up for America."

Reagan's vaunted "free enterprise" line means government deregulation and subsidies in the interest of the gigantic corporations. Abroad it stands for "free trade" that actually has little to do with freedom. Instead it means that certain U.S. industries are to be forced to modernize and to drive down wages -- by being thrust up against up-to-date foreign competition. Some American companies still expect to do well if trade barriers are kept down. In other spheres the government is desperately trying to prevent its imperial rivals from completely wiping out the home side.

If Reagan's "free trade" means that workers in general will lose jobs and income, it means that doubly for black and other minority workers -- still the worst paid and first fired. This meshes perfectly with Reagan's racist social program that places the burden of cutbacks on the poor. Thus Reagan indeed "communicates" to his own base that he is insulating them from the worst effects of the crisis.

The Democrats head in the same direction by a different path. They are increasingly identifying themselves with protectionism, Frank's "tremendous issue." This is a popular cause among chauvinist and

ers -- above all racism, like demands to hang on to "white jobs" against the "black threat."

Whichever party is in office, capitalism's drive towards job cutting and wage slashing will inevitably victimize the entire working class. International trade wars likewise cannot be prevented; they already flourish, under the pressure of Japan and Germany's higher productivity. And these are inevitably the prelude to real wars of missiles, bullets and blood.

The Democrats' Usefulness

For many years this journal has predicted that the alignments of the major imperialists would be redrawn as the capitalist crisis deepened. Japan and Germany were becoming more dangerous rivals to the U.S. than the USSR, with its retarded economy, could ever be. Now it is no longer a long-term question. The realignment has already begun, and the Democrats (even more than the recognizably reactionary Reagan) have been leading the chauvinist and racist ideological offensive against Japan. In this sense the Democrats are preparing themselves to become the party that best represents the coming nationalist development of U.S. capitalism. If the Democrats lead us into the next war, that would only be a continuation of the role they have played as the U.S. War Party since the beginning of the century.

Jesse Jackson accepted \$10,000 from members' dues to speak for corrupt Doris Turner regime in Local 1199. Jackson is not different from other Democratic hustlers -- just cheaper.



backward layers in the middle and working classes. It seems to promise more jobs and higher incomes, but in reality it makes goods more expensive, directly sacrifices jobs in import-related industries, and -- to the extent that the protected bosses succeed in investing in labor-saving equipment -- accelerates unemployment in those fields as well. The super-patriotic sentiment awakened by protectionism bolsters a whole panoply of right-wing social causes. It deepens sectoral chauvinism at home as well as against foreign-

Despite all their present difficulties, the Democrats are the party of the future for American capitalism on the domestic as well as the world stage. Although Reagan and Carter before him have done their part to batter the working class, a lot of capitalist dirty work remains undone. Consider: the smashing of PATCO did not lead to the crushing of any major industrial union. For all the attacks on employment and living standards, only part of the working class has been really pushed to the wall.

Although all politicians and virtually all the capitalists say that the federal budget cuts have been far too small for the health of the economy, they can't do more. Everyone now knows that the Gramm-Rudman law, which "mandates" deep slashes, is a fraud. They are dealing with the social wage, the services and benefits wrested from government over the years ostensibly through liberal largesse but in reality by mass struggles. Cutting the budget much further, withdrawing the promised social wage (Social Security is the outstanding example) would mean not only a loss of votes but a social upheaval.

As well, despite all the war moves, war is still unpopular. For all the racist measures this administration has taken, they still have to be covered by anti-racist rhetoric (and even hostility of sorts to someone else's apartheid). For all the anti-woman sentiments expressed and actions taken, important gains like abortion rights still hold.

The reason for the ruling class's hesitation is hardly that the leaders of the working class and the oppressed groups have fought so well. On the contrary: the labor bureaucrats and the middle-class black leaders have been pushovers for years. The real reason is that the capitalists know something that most working-class people don't: the working class has enormous power and, if pushed too far, will explode.

It would be especially risky for Reagan to take the drastic steps capitalism needs. The more militant and hard-hit workers, above all the blacks, could never think of supporting a politician so obviously their enemy. Reagan does not have long-standing ties to the union officials and big-city black mayors who serve as safety valves to channel the workers' explosive potential into electoral passivity.

But the Democrats are another story. Despite the decades of betrayals by these "friends of labor" and "staunch allies of the black community," the fact that the labor bureaucrats and civil rights spokesmen always back them lends them a legitimacy that Reagan could never have.

Rainbow Reaction

The Democrats' key role as capitalism's Rescuer of Last Resort would be impossible to play without the active participation of the party's left wing. This is the assortment of New Leftovers, radical black leaders and even self-described socialists who regularly insist, election after election, that the Democratic Party is the place to be because that's where the masses are.

The most radical elements even claim that their purpose is to lead the masses out of the party, but of course you have to get in before you can get out. In fact since the early 1970s the working class has been getting out: turning its back on the Democrats when it votes, and in general voting less and less. Still the Democratic Party is the lodging place for many of the exploited and oppressed sectors of U.S.

society, or at least of their leaders. But it is the graveyard of social movements, not their powerhouse.

These days the main expression of the Democratic Left is the Rainbow Coalition, inherited from Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign. Jackson, despite the avowals of the radical leftists who tout him, has always made clear his intention of sticking with the Democrats through thick and thin (see "Left Sinks into Democrats' Swamp" in our Spring 1984 issue). And when the Coalition was formally founded as a national organization last spring, he said the same: "We have too much invested in the Democratic Party. When you have money in the bank you don't walk away from it." (Guardian, April 30.)

As with the Party as a whole, the Rainbow Coalition also fears saying too much on concrete issues; it too could be driven asunder if positions were taken on contentious questions. Its hesitation took astounding shape at the founding convention. The question of abortion rights was sidestepped, despite the raging national controversy on this issue so critical to all women and especially women of the working class. And although the convention took place a few days after the U.S.'s killer bombing of Libya, the delegates took no position against that blatant imperialist attack. It's a shameful Rainbow whose only colors are Red, White and Blue.

The Guardian apologized: "Still, the political scope and thrust of the convention, as indicated by the statement of purpose and in speeches by Jackson and others, was overwhelmingly progressive." Sure, there were pap pronouncements calling for "healing the nation," "human priorities at home," "peace and human rights abroad" and "social, political and economic justice" -- nostrums just as nebulous as those of the Democratic Policy Commission. Lenin once observed that the truth is always concrete. And on key concrete questions the Rainbow Coalition stood silent -- offering no opposition to Reagan.

The Guardian also observed that "the goal is to create a significant left force in the Democratic Party, one that will reverse the party's rush to the right." It's a thankless goal in the first place, but leftists who themselves are swarming rightward are hardly the people to accomplish it.

The main attraction of the Rainbow Coalition to leftists is Jesse Jackson's influence among blacks. But the black reformists who have served to restrain the mass response to the system's outrages are losing their clout. A case in point is the recent congressional primary election in Atlanta, where John Lewis defeated Julian Bond for the Democratic nomination. Every account noted that Lewis got the majority of white votes in the district. But he also won the black working-class vote, while the black middle class went for Bond. One Lewis supporter noted that the reason was a revolt against the city's "black establishment." He explained:

"The black community can't point to anything that Atlanta's black leadership, including two black

mayors over 14 years, has done for us. Our community needs jobs and economic development, and we don't have anything to point to for all this black power we have." (In These Times, Sept.17.)

The black leadership has served as wardens for the black masses imprisoned in the Democratic Party, even during Reagan's reign. Like Atlanta's Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young, mayors Coleman Young of Detroit and Wilson Goode of Philadelphia have trampled on strikes of mainly black city workers. (Goode went even farther to demonstrate his ruthlessness to the ruling class when he ordered a bomb dropped on the house of the radical MOVE group, killing a dozen people and burning down the neighborhood.)

Left Capitulations

In the labor arena, the Rainbow represents not the mainstream AFL-CIO bureaucrats, who are actually on the right wing of the Democratic Party, but mainly the self-categorized "rank and file" activists. It also includes two big-time union leaders, William Winpisinger of the Machinists and Kenneth Blaylock of the Government Employees. Blaylock has presided over an unbroken series of capitulations on wage and work issues to the Reagan and Carter administrations. Winpisinger is even more renowned for having his union cross PATCO's picket lines, allowing Reagan to smash their strike. Lest anyone think he has lost his touch, he again "permitted" picket-line crossing during the Flight Attendants' strike against TWA. Such qualifications make him a major figure, not only in the Rainbow Coalition but in the sewer-socialist DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) as well.

Jackson is no stranger to capitulation himself. At the close of his 1984 candidacy he kowtowed abjectly to the Democratic Party convention, pledging his wholehearted backing to Mondale after gaining none of the key demands of his black supporters. The net effect of his campaign was to lead yet another movement into the Democratic dead-end. Rather than radicalizing the Democrats it Democratized a good number of radicals. Meanwhile the party moved ever further to the right, and the movement that spurred the Jackson effort has been dissipated.

But the historical record is no obstacle to the herd of leftists trampling over one another in their stampede to tail something popular. Characteristic was their concession of all power in the "Coalition" to a single leader. As the Guardian reported,

"Jackson and his aides chose most members of the [governing] board, — whose composition reflects the coalition's fundraising needs as much as its Rainbow diversity. The board must approve each state group seeking to be chartered, and Jackson must approve each state chairperson."

Some "coalition." Indeed, its political waverings appear to reflect fundraising needs too. Capitalists with funds to offer don't go for forthright campaigns that might help expose the reality of both parties' austerity programs. A Rainbow so dependent on its pot

of gold won't be of any use to the ordinary working people it might attract. And it will be sure to plunge right in behind whoever the next version of Mondale turns out to be.

We don't know who the Democrats will put up for president in 1988. But we do know what his program will be: austerity, protectionism and jingoism. Of course, it will be sweetened with a large dose of "concern" for the poor and oppressed and very likely flavored with family-boosting rhetoric which also is useful for promoting rightist campaigns against abortion, gay rights and free speech. Mondale's program last time around has been termed "Reaganism with a human face," and next time will be little different. The Democrats may succeed in winning the confidence of the bourgeoisie overall, especially if there is an upsurge in popular unrest against crises and cut-backs. In that case they may try to mount a Bonapartist "man on a white horse" crusade to swing masses behind the leader without having to spell out the real issues.

If this scenario develops, many Rainbow types will be on hand to help make it work. Left pretensions won't keep them away, not if there's a suitably blow-dried Kennedy retread to fall in behind. Their disdain for critical political questions is already established, as is their willingness to hand all power to a suitable Bonapartist figure if he's popular enough. At bottom it is the leftists' elitist contempt for the working masses and their potential consciousness that allows them to move from left-wing radicalism to opportunist "reality" politics in no time at all. If nothing else is learned from the endless succession of efforts to reform the Democratic Party, at least the measure of the opportunist left has been taken. When the working class builds its party it will know whom to leave out. ■

Fedayeen

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for the Iranian revolution. What class party will rule over what class state in this democratic stage is left open, but they add that it must entail "expropriation of big capital and recognition of the controlling councils of the workers in the production units and establishments." (OIPFG Platform.) They also advocate the complete smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus in Iran, the arming of the workers and poor peasants and the rule of Iran by soviets (workers' and peasants' councils).

Although our present analysis is incomplete, it appears that the OIPFG has not completely broken with the counterrevolutionary Stalinism of its traditional orientation. Their program is clearly contradictory, but it is also clear that they did not commit the murders attributed to them. We hope that the deepening revolutionary events in Iran will force the Fedayeen to come to Bolshevik conclusions. ■

Porn, Feminism, Meese

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women to domestic labor and thereby denies their equality at home and on the job.

What the government's great solicitude for women really means is shown by its deeds. In the summer of 1985 when the Commission was beginning its dirty work, Meese withheld a financial grant from the Justice Department to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. This decision was inspired by a letter from 24 congressmen calling the Coalition a "pro-lesbian, pro-abortion, anti-family, anti-Reagan, radical feminist group." While the Commission spent a year scapegoating pornography as the root of all evil, funding for battered women's shelters and rape counseling went from little to nothing, and legal protection for women against domestic violence remains a nightmare.

Moreover, strengthening the family today requires a national effort. Commissioner James Dobson moaned that "latchkey kids by the millions are watching pornography on cable TV." Since mothers aren't tending hearth and home like in the good old days, the strong arm of the bourgeois state has to intervene. To boost the repressive power of the state, the Commission has already wielded its authority to intimidate 17,000 commercial outlets from selling sex magazines.

The standard liberal argument that pornography cannot be defined and therefore should not be censored is weak; there is of course a grey area, but most people have no trouble recognizing porn when they see it. Pornography is mass manufactured by an industry that has no more trouble "defining" its product than do the producers of romantic novels, soap operas or any other formula genre. And in this society pornography is generally as reactionary as are the stereotypes of women in the romances and soaps.

Capitalism on the Offensive

The Meese Commission report has to be viewed in the context of the generalized attack on the working class that the capitalists have been waging since the early 1970s. Women are among the leading casualties; the trendy notion of the "feminization of poverty" reflects this fact but it also disguises the reality that poverty is a class question. Working-class women are doubly oppressed because they are forced to provide both domestic slave labor and cheap wage labor. As well, capitalism has always used women to rob the working class: their lower wages today replace higher wages paid to men workers, and their domestic labor reduces the social wage paid to the working class.

Specifically, women's earnings still average less than 60 percent of men's. With one out of three marriages now ending in divorce, the average ex-wife's standard of living falls 73 per cent during the first year after divorce while her ex-husband's rises by 42

percent. No wonder 39 percent of all households headed by women live below the poverty line. In this context the renewed ideological stress on the family is meant to justify both the cutbacks in social services (child care, health care, educational funding, etc.), which dump more of the social burden onto working-class women; and continued lower wages for women, at a time when their wages are not "auxiliary" but necessary for the working-class family's survival.

Oppression is never limited to economic hardship. Reinforcement of the family is crucial for social control. Hence the right wing's defeat of even such a seriously flawed demand as the Equal Rights Amendment (see our analysis in the November 1978 Socialist Action). Terrorist attacks on abortion centers meet with government acquiescence.

As well, defense of the "family" inevitably means increased attacks on homosexuality. Hence both the efforts to quarantine AIDS victims and the Supreme Court decision upholding sodomy as a criminal offense was a vicious attack on gays. As well, the anti-sodomy laws will inevitably be used to attack all "free" sexual relations, virtually granting the state the right to enter the bedroom.

For Patriotism's Sake

Behind all this is the deepening crisis of world capitalism and of U.S. hegemony within it. The gains made by working people during the long-gone prosperity period must be sacrificed, and even deeper inroads will be demanded in the interest of profits. The American ruling class needs to raise high the banner of God, country and family in order to shore up mass support for a failing system.

As the attacks on the working class intensify, the bourgeoisie steps up its rhetoric of "outside enemies" in order to undermine working-class consciousness and unity. The sacrifices demanded of workers must be seen not as an attack by one class on another but instead as a question of "national interest," so that all line up behind our bourgeois leaders. We must unite to win the war against inflation, said Gerald Ford. Some of us must suffer austerity, added Jimmy Carter, explaining that "life" -- not of course capitalism -- "is unfair." Ronald Reagan smashes unions and slashes social services further so that "we" will stop being suckered by "them."

For patriotism's sake, the threat to American jobs must be seen to come from foreign workers, not profit-hungry U.S. imperialists. And "foreign" is taken to mean anyone who is not a "real" American: blacks, Hispanics, working women and other oppressed groups, who are portrayed as the problem, not the victims of capitalism.

The cumulative impact of such campaigns weakens all working-class struggles. Divisions within the masses are exacerbated; one group is whipped up and set against another in a fight for crumbs. And while once the crumbs could be material, now they are increasingly "spiritual" and ideological. The system

stirs up racism, chauvinism and sexism, it nurtures every reactionary force in society. This is not a plot, it is just the way the system operates. Now the operation is going into high gear.

The Family Beleaguered

Capitalism needs the family, but as Marx pointed out long ago, it destroys family life. The economic expansion and contraction since the 1960s has undermined the traditional male-dominated family. On the one hand, working-class women have been forced into factories and offices. Both opportunity and necessity allowed middle-class women to move into professional jobs; for them especially, the achievement of equality and wider aspirations seemed very real. Women's liberation flourished; tangible gains were made.

On the other hand, the enormous social changes in America had a threatening effect on women of the tra-



Radical feminists ally with pro-family attacks on porn. Feminism in theory, patriarchalism in practice.

ditional petty bourgeoisie and the labor-aristocratic layers of the blue-collar working class. Ethnic patterns broke up, old neighborhoods were destabilized, suburbia grew. Churches were no longer bastions of changelessness giving solace and purpose to housewives. The women's movement and the very idea of independence, self-direction and choices seemed to destroy everything that had given many women a sense of worth. Were lives spent devoted to serving a husband and raising children wasted? Profound social anxiety awaited a resolution.

The collapse of prosperity brought renewed vigor to the anti-feminist forces. As possibilities for women in society shrink, the reassertion of their "true" role grows louder. Rather than targeting the crisis of capitalism, reactionaries point in horror to destruction of the family, rampant abortion and open homosexuality. The socially distraught petty bourgeoisie, caught up now in the woes of an economic

crunch, provides ready pawns for the reactionary rollback. Wiping out pornography seems an important way to restore the role of motherhood to its previous mythical stature.

But with family values decaying, the current reactionary drive requires more than just an attempt to reconstitute individual patriarchal authority. The "anti-government" Reagan administration is perfectly willing to nationalize the paternal function when the family can't do the job. State power is brought to bear against women and young people whom traditional family values can no longer control. That is the aim of the legislative anti-abortion crusade, the sodomy decision, the Rehnquist appointment, the demand for "creationism" in schools, etc. Anti-porn is an ideal ideological cornerstone, because reinforcement of the family pushes women back into the conservative socializing role once played by the domesticated housewife.

A wing of middle-class feminism also sees pornography as a menace to its hopes. Women's gains are being eroded, and inequality, degradation and the alienation of bourgeois life worsen. Man, not capitalism, is seen as the enemy, and porn is his weapon.

The Tacit Coalition

The Meese Commission not only borrowed rhetoric from the anti-porn feminists -- it owes them a greater debt. Without them it might not have existed. In 1980 feminist Judith Bat-Ada had called for a coalition across political and class lines:

"A coalition of all women needs to be established, regardless of race, color, creed, religion or political persuasion ... Women have been divided; we must reunite throughout the nation on this one basic issue ... Disagreements on other issues can be dealt with when fewer of us are being murdered, beaten, tortured, and raped." (In the collection Take Back the Night, edited by Laura Lederer.)

The far right was enthusiastic about such a bloc. For example, North Carolina State Representative Coy Privette, a director of the anti-liquor and anti-pornography Christian Action League, commented, "When you've got this kind of coalition, that is a politician's dream." (Off Our Backs, June 1985.)

The Pornography Commission was the fruit of a common effort. As leading anti-porn feminist Andrea Dworkin and her ally, law professor Catherine MacKinnon, said in a statement approving the Commission report, "For the first time in history, women have succeeded in convincing a national governmental body of a truth women have long known: pornography harms women and children." Likewise Dorchen Leidhold of the organization Women Against Pornography (WAP):

"We commend the Commission for being the first federal government body to report on the systematic campaign of abuse, terror and discrimination being waged against over half the citizens of this country. ... We also endorse the Commission's publication of the names and descriptions

of pornographic publications and films. A simple reading of the list of titles it compiled says more about the sexualized bigotry that is pornography than the most impassioned speech any feminist could make."

Indeed it does. For one thing, among the many titles is the gay magazine The Advocate. That a significant sector within radical feminist circles would endorse censorship of left-wing gay material by a conservative administration illustrates a serious problem with the ideology of radical feminism. Of course, the conception that "women" have turned the government around or brought it into the fight against sexual bigotry is ridiculous.

The Feminist Anti-Porn Campaign

The campaign against pornography gained strength within the feminist current in the mid-'70s, a period of retreat for the women's movement when abortion rights were being eroded by the Hyde Amendment and the ERA was on the way to defeat. In the beginning the campaign used direct action. In 1976 mass protests were staged against billboards in Los Angeles which showed a bruised and chained woman saying, "I'm black and blue from the Rolling Stones and I love it"; the sponsors were forced to take down the ad. Actions against the movie "Snuff," where a woman was purportedly actually killed during the climactic sex scene, also met with some success.

The increasing "sexiness" of violence in the media was alarming. The outrage that women felt at seeing themselves displayed as pieces of meat signified that a rebellion against the objectification of women was called for. The problem was that the protests focused attention on particularly horrible images, not the underlying reality that women are treated as commodities by capitalism itself.

The campaign took a decisive move to the right with the introduction of an ordinance against pornography in 1983, first in Minneapolis and later in Indianapolis. Co-authored by Dworkin and MacKinnon, the proposed laws attacked pornography as a civil rights violation. Women could sue the makers, sellers, distributors or exhibitors of pornography much as they would sue a company for discriminatory hiring practices. Ordinances modelled on the Dworkin-MacKinnon legislation were introduced by both feminists and right-wingers in Los Angeles, Suffolk County, NY, Cambridge, MA., and other places. WAP, with over 10,000 members nationwide, backs the campaign.

Dworkin and MacKinnon were hired by city officials in Minneapolis who were worried that zoning regulations against porn shops weren't holding up. The city council, lobbied jointly by liberals, feminists and right-wing religious and political groups, approved the Dworkin-MacKinnon ordinance, but it was vetoed by the mayor. In Indianapolis support for the bill came almost entirely from the right. New Right Mayor William Hudnut III backed it, and Beulah Coughenour, a Stop-FRA activist who introduced the bill,

hired MacKinnon as a consultant to the city. (It was appealed all the way up to the Supreme Court, which recently declared it unconstitutional.)

Dworkin both denied and welcomed her right-wing support:

"There hasn't been any institutional support from the right wing, no money, no political support and no intervention in litigation. On the other hand, when Jerry Falwell starts saying there's real harm in pornography, then that is valuable to me." (New York Times, August 26, 1985.)

The feminists involved have always championed their civil rights approach as a way to empower women and have generally denied that they were asking the bourgeois state to impose censorship. They stress that their ordinances gives individual women the right to press civil suits, and that pornographers wouldn't be subject to criminal penalties or lose their rights to due process. But Dworkin's approach, even if adopted, would still empower the courts to issue injunctions against the distribution of pornography, and its censoring impact would be severe.

Dworkin and MacKinnon also pointed to the male bias of existing law to deny the importance of defending First Amendment rights. At the March 1985 National Conference on Women and the Law, MacKinnon said:

"Pornography is historically defended in the name of freedom of speech. I am here to speak for those, particularly women and children, upon whose silence the law, including the law of the First Amendment, is built. Their inequality ... has never been taken into account in the First Amendment. The First Amendment was written by those who already had the speech ..."

Dworkin too justifies reliance on the repressive forces of the state:

"The Bill of Rights was never intended to protect the civil or sexual rights of women and it has not, except occasionally by accident. The Equal Rights Amendment, which would, as a polite afterthought, extend equal protection under the law such as it is to women, is not yet part of the Constitution. There is good reason to doubt that it will be in the foreseeable future." (Take Back the Night.)

According to Dworkin and MacKinnon, the civil rights approach heralded a new dawn in the fight against sexism, supposedly totally counterposed to traditional obscenity laws. This claim gained their bills a lot of support among feminists bred in the anti-censorship milieu of liberal and left circles. Dworkin argued that pornography could be defined objectively as material discriminating against women -- in contrast to obscenity, which required a value judgment and which traditionally identified sexuality itself with filth.

The fact that the Meese Commission endorsed the civil-rights approach gave feminists an excuse to back it. Dworkin and MacKinnon, after enthusing over the report's endorsement of their formula, admitted,

"The Commission's report is flawed, however, by recommending extension and escalated enforcement of obscenity laws." But when over half of the report's 92 recommendations involve stricter obscenity laws, there's more than a "flaw" at stake. Such criticism is a fig leaf designed to cover their evident support.

Theory Behind the Campaign

The slogan coined by feminist Robin Morgan, "Pornography is the Theory, Rape is the Practice," is the weightiest argument for a legal ban; appropriately enough, it was quoted by Meese's Commission. It sums up the reductionist illogic that pornography causes rape and other violence against women.

Violent pornography is more than symbolic, since there are real victims used and abused by the pornography makers. As well, it adds to the general social atmosphere that accepts violence against women. But to recognize this is the opposite of labeling pornography as the cause of male abuse of women. Rather than seeing that the link connecting all forms of such abuse is capitalism, these feminists have created a domino theory that views the male/female sexual relationship as the source of danger. Their first step is to condemn all pornography, not just that which demonstrates or advocates violence against women. In the writings of Dworkin and others the trauma of viewing pornography is equated with experiencing a physical attack. Laura Lederer of Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media said:

"Not all pornography is violent but even the most banal pornography objectifies women's bodies. An essential ingredient of much rape and other forms of violence to women is the 'objectification' of the woman. This is not just rhetoric. It means that women are not seen as human beings but as things. Men are reared to view females in this way, pornography thrives off this and feeds it, and rape is one of the consequences." (Take Back The Night)

But why focus only on sexually explicit material? What about the earlier feminist opposition to the more pervasive sexism of media like advertising? The anti-porn feminists claim that because women are oppressed at root on the basis of their sex, the way that women are depicted as sexual beings is fundamental. Pornography is held to determine the male view of women. And because it is sexual, misogyny is said to become imbedded in the man's deepest psychology. MacKinnon says of pornography:

"It is [a] specific and compelling behavioral stimulus, conditioner and reinforcer. In this way it is unique; in particular it makes orgasm a response to bigotry. ... Pornography is a social force in making sexism sexy." (National Conference on Women and the Law)

This simplistic behaviorism isn't the end. The domino theory goes on to condemn practically any expression of sexual activity, not just pornography. Dworkin, for example, recognizes no distinction

between pornography and erotica: "Feminists have made honorable efforts to define the difference. ... But in the male sexual lexicon, which is the vocabulary of power, erotica is simply high-class pornography ..." (Pornography: Men Possessing Women.)

In a society which insists that sex is a male domain, ruling out erotica means denying women the possibility of expressing or publicly admitting to enjoying their sexuality. The indictment of sex itself continues with Robin Morgan:

"I claim that rape exists any time sexual intercourse occurs when it has not been initiated by the woman out of her own genuine affection and desire -- It must be clear that, under this definition, most of the decently married bedrooms across America are settings for nightly rape." (Take Back The Night)

If this cynical view of men were really true, could legal restraints on pornography really change them? The anti-porn feminists generally concede that restrictive laws would just push porn underground. Their writings imply that all that can be hoped for is control of man's inherent violence, not real change. Dworkin, for example, insists that men's nature is unchanging:

"In the intimate world of men and women there is no mid-twentieth century distinct from any other century. ... It is ancient and it is modern; it is feudal, capitalist, socialist; it is caveman and astronaut, agricultural and industrial, urban and rural. For men their right to abuse women is elemental, the first principle, with no beginning unless one is willing to trace origins back to God and with no end plausibly in sight." (Pornography: Men Possessing Women.)

This "all men are beasts" argument is the mirror image of the reactionary religious view of woman as the eternal temptress. Yes, all relationships under capitalism are affected by male chauvinism. But the chauvinist males who are sexist in their behavior, in bed and out, are not the same as Jack the Ripper -- although all degrade women. Dworkin's history and Morgan's theory abandon all perspective; by equating all acts by all men in all societies, they let what is horrendously criminal off the hook.

Feminists Against Censorship

There are many feminists who have been actively opposed to the anti-porn campaign. FACT (Feminists Against Censorship Taskforce) filed a brief against the Indianapolis ordinance and has consistently opposed the Meese Commission as well. Repressive laws will be used against women, they point out accurately, since in general censorship is used against the oppressed. The definition of pornography will be determined by those in power.

On the theoretical level, FACT opposes the idea that pornography is central to the oppression of women and even says it can be useful in breaking the link between women and domesticity. This is spelled



Clerical patriarchs enlist in the 'moral' struggle with porn merchants over which anti-woman perversion is best.

out by three leaders, Lisa Duggan, Nan Hunter and Carole Vance in the book Women Against Censorship:

"Not only does pornography not cause the kind and degree of harm that can justify the restraint of speech, but its existence serves some social functions, which benefit women. Pornographic speech has many, often anomalous, characteristics. One is certainly that it magnifies the misogyny present in the culture and exaggerates the fantasy of male power. Another, however, is that the existence of pornography has served to flout conventional sexual mores, to ridicule sexual hypocrisy and to underscore the importance of sexual needs. Pornography carries many messages other than woman-hating: it advocates sexual adventure, sex outside of marriage, sex for no reason other than pleasure, casual sex, anonymous sex, group sex, voyeuristic sex, illegal sex, public sex."

However, in the context of a capitalist culture the attitudes portrayed in pornography are overwhelmingly sexist.

The FACT theorists do make a contribution in pointing out that the basis for the anti-porn campaign is biological determinism, the notion that the behavior of men and women is dictated by biological differences. Because this is the ideological justification for sexism in the first place, even when feminists glorify the peaceful Woman and denigrate the aggressive violence-prone Man they are treading in dangerous waters.

Feminists like those in FACT hope to resurrect the earlier radical feminist thought of the 1960s which they believe showed the opposite: that sexism is rooted in gender roles imposed by a sexist society, not in the biology of sex. Thus Ann Snitow

praises "other theorists such as Shulamith Firestone [who] were saying the opposite, that gender and sexuality were separable, that sex could be set free from the old gender boundaries, that birth control and the chance of economic independence outside the family were going to make a tremendous difference, were going to change what being a woman is." (Women Against Censorship.)

But these writers are on shaky ground too, because the theorists they champion never really broke with biological determinism in the first place. Hester Fisenstein observes that the rightward shift in radical feminism had its seeds in the '60s; the "classical" authors emphasized sex difference as the source of women's oppression. Firestone, for example, pointed to the childbearing function and said that only technology for producing test tube babies could free women from their unequal status -- although she claimed to have a materialist, not biologically determined, theory.

Later the concept of "woman-identified woman" became prevalent within radical feminism, meaning that the distinct characteristics identified with women (warm, nurturing, understanding, peace-loving, etc.) should be accepted as a source of pride. By the late '70s, biological determinism (or essentialism -- the notion that women are spiritually, not just biologically, superior) had become the dominant current. Fisenstein, herself a woman-identified feminist, notes "three elements of continuity" throughout two decades of radical feminism: "a divorce from Marxism and the political left; a consistent emphasis on psychology at the expense of economic factors; and a false universalism that addresses itself to all women, with insufficient regard for differences of race, class, and culture." (Contemporary Feminist Thought.)

Fisenstein's three points really amount to one:

feminism's intrinsic hostility to Marxism. Radical feminism didn't "divorce" itself from Marxism because feminism was always counterposed to the Marxist view that women's liberation could only be realized through the class struggle to overthrow capitalism. While definitions of the various strands within feminism can be debated, feminism as a whole calls for an alliance of women based on their common oppression across the class line. Radical feminism, implying an analysis that women's oppression is at the root of all oppression, sees all women as oppressed by a universal system of male domination -- "patriarchy" -- of which capitalism is only one form. Liberal feminists tend to view women's oppression as rooted in the denial of bourgeois democratic rights, and they believe these can be achieved under capitalism. Socialist feminists hold that women's oppression comes from both capitalism and patriarchy; they attempt to reconcile socialist and radical feminist thought.

Fisenstein is one of several critical feminist theorists who see the problem with rightward-moving feminism but do not recognize its source in feminist theory as a whole. Therein lies the paradox. Once one starts with the notion that the root of woman's oppression is male domination -- that patriarchy is a trans-historical fact embracing every form of society -- it is virtually impossible to break with the reactionary biological determinist ideas that underpin chauvinism and the oppression of women. If men have always oppressed women, and if that oppression doesn't change qualitatively with the introduction of class society or its eradication (feminists point to "communist" societies as equally oppressive), then it is either an immutable fact of biology or an act of God. The attempt to disavow biological determinism can't succeed when it is based on sheer willpower.

Feminist theory is not just flawed thinking; it is the product of a middle-class view of the world. In the prosperity of the 1960s, radical feminism was marked by its extreme utopian nature. Demands like "smash sexism" and "abolish the family" abounded -- with absolutely no program that could win them. Since feminists rejected Marxism and with it the one class that actually has the power to revolutionize society, their utopian maximalist rhetoric dissolved inevitably into the most pragmatic minimalism. In fact, because the reformist strategies of the '60s -- above all the overwhelming support of feminists for the Democratic Party -- failed to bear ample fruit, a fertile ground for cynicism was laid. The root of the current feminist support for the thoroughly capitulatory Dworkin is the cynicism born of defeat.

Likewise sexual liberation, a goal closely linked to the women's movement, has been a disappointment for most women: it could not mean liberation from oppressive sex roles. Yet the anti-censorship feminists generally refuse to acknowledge that the women's liberation movement has really failed. Thus Ann Snitow writes:

"In spite of backlash and our own failures, the women's movement has made enduring changes in how everyone thinks about women. Instead of recognizing that the new visibility of women's sexual victimization is a great leap forward, some feminists are drawing energy from the assertion that women's situation is fast deteriorating. They have, I believe, lost sight of the larger historical truth: the women of the nineteenth century belonged to their husbands or fathers. Under such conditions, wife beating and marital rape could barely be conceived of as crimes. Our situation is profoundly different. Women are flooding into public space." (Women Against Censorship.)

If everything is pretty dandy for women despite a little nasty "backlash," there is no need to reassess fundamental strategy. No wonder these women are able to look on the bright side of pornography, weighing evenly its sexist content against its facade of rebellion against traditional mores. This attitude sounds like the standard lecture by union hacks about all the "progress" the unions have made since the bad old times of 14-hour days. It doesn't wash with workers who know they're going downhill now. In response to the demagoguery of the Dworkins, such words of reassurance -- generally accompanied by calls to relaunch the fights for abortion rights, day care centers, equal pay, etc. -- don't wash either.

There's nothing wrong with such demands. But the capitalist ruling class with its Pornography Commission and a myriad of other acts has sent the masses of women a message which these feminists refuse to heed: the system can no longer afford the democratic reforms (never mind serious economic and social gains) that would help the great majority of women. If capitalism survives, the victories fought for so bitterly in the past will continue to be overturned. Remember that abortion rights were first won in 1973, and only four years later came the Hyde Amendment to bar public funding for poor women. The joy of coming out for gays -- and of open assertion by women that they were sexual beings of whatever preference -- lasted but an historical instant.

However, the failure of the movement to win true liberation should not blind us to the fact that the struggle did bring about real accomplishments. That shows that struggle against oppression is worthwhile, that women can fight and win victories. But it is another thing to use those victories to conceal, as does Snitow, the fact that "women's situation is fast deteriorating." If the struggle does not transcend the system all gains will be lost.

Socialist Feminists

The main split over the pornography question has been within radical feminist circles. Liberal and socialist feminists, like the left, generally oppose censorship. But because socialist feminists have the added burden of trying to reconcile socialist and radical feminist thought, their position is particu-

larly problematic. In the end, socialist feminists inevitably capitulate to feminism, and their "socialism" goes out the window.

A case in point is Radical Women (RW), a socialist feminist organization affiliated with the Freedom Socialist Party. RW rightly attacks the porn industry for promoting misogyny. But it accepts the radical feminist notion that porn is somehow more dangerous than other cultural images propagating anti-woman beliefs and behavior.

"Porn appeals to the growing number of men already dehumanized by capitalism and deepens the divisions between men and women, and between races, through the use of stereotypes. The porn industry leads the assault. The mainstream media and advertising follow with their own slightly watered-down images of anti-female violence."

(*Guardian*, March 21, 1984.)

The singling out of sexually explicit expression as opposed to all anti-woman material is a dangerous aspect of the anti-porn campaign. It feeds directly into the repressive ideology of the right. In fact, there is no reason on earth to believe that the "the porn industry leads the assault." Yes, those who reap profits from arranging to have women beaten in order to sell photos are the scum of the earth. But whatever happened to the other hateful institutions of capitalism? Religion and the family are all the more insidious because they don't just reflect or accept women's oppression, they sanctify it.

As well, the anti-porn campaign conducted by the feminist leadership attempts to divert women from understanding the role of the capitalist state in keeping women down. By calling for court intervention against pornography, it fosters dangerous illusions that the bourgeois authorities can be allies of women fighting oppression. RW ends up doing the same thing:

"Another not-so-legitimate objection to the ordinance is the lack of positive proof establishing pornography as a cause of sexual violence. Women know there is an intrinsic relationship between pornography and sexual violence. (For instance, last year's rape of a woman on a New Bedford pool table was preceded by a *Hustler* magazine photo spread of a gang rape on a bar pool table.) Proving this in a court of law, however, is another thing.

"The Minneapolis ordinance's civil rights approach to pornography, as distinguished from older obscenity and zoning laws, is a new one and may well have some legal potential."

Women are justifiably outraged by misogynist pornography, but that doesn't prove that it is the real cause of sexual violence. The absence of proof is no argument, and RW's arbitrary and subjective assertion is hardly the scientific method of Marxism. If pornography as a whole engenders violence as RW "knows," then it is hard to resist enlisting the bourgeois state to crush it. And that is precisely what they do in approving the civil rights approach, circumventing the need to prove the connection.

Radical Women testified before the Meese Commission last fall. While it called the Commission a "tool of the Reagan Administration" and denounced the use of feminist concern to cut back women's gains and impose censorship, they also advocated anti-pornography legislation that would "guard against the attacks on feminist gains, and guard the free speech so necessary to protect and extend those gains." RW proposed an amended version of the Dworkin approach that would target only violent porn, protect the material of gays and other sexual minorities and incorporate other safeguards. "Radical Women, quite clearly, is proposing legislation that would specifically prevent rightwing abuse," they say.

Really? This supposedly socialist organization capitulates totally to the legalist fantasy of bourgeois feminism, whereby a law simply does what it says it will do, independent of social forces. Worse, it succumbs to the deadly illusion that the "right wing" is some entity separate from the bourgeois state, the latter being a neutral body to which women and other oppressed groups can go for protection.

For all its concern over right-wing reaction, RW can't hide the fact that it holds the same position on pornography as the right: fight it through censorship by the capitalist state. The very fact that RW and other feminists call for censorship only against porn is also a concession to right-wing forces. Why not demand censorship of fundamentalist and Catholic propaganda against abortion and birth control? That suggestion would help show that they have nothing in common with the right. But that kind of censorship the bourgeois state will never impose.

RW's *Guardian* article concludes that "Porn, a fitting expression of the decay of U.S. society, must be obliterated along with its socioeconomic roots." But it will not be obliterated by censorship. In this regard it is similar to those bastions of sexist oppression, religion and the family. The family is one of the few hopes for economic security and, together with the church, the only place for love, intimacy, and pleasure that the masses have under capitalism -- women especially, who are doubly oppressed by them. People in general will not give up on these things unless a real alternative exists.

Communism vs. Feminism

A workers' state can begin to lay the material basis for an alternative but it requires time. Religion and the bourgeois family will wither away; they can not be "smashed" or obliterated through legislation or fiat. Likewise, pornography is reactionary and sexist, but men will not stop using it, or change sexist behavior, because of moral dictates. As class society disappears under the revolutionary worker's state and as the division of labor becomes transformed, the cultural sexism rife among the masses can be successfully fought and will disappear into the garbage pail of history, where it belongs.

Any failure to stress the need to overthrow capitalism in order to achieve liberation is also a capi-

tulation to backwardness. As communists we align ourselves with the most oppressed sectors of society and join in united actions with feminists and other reformers for defense against attacks on women and gays. But we state as well that only the socialist revolution can provide a lasting defense and genuine human liberation.

Feminists reject the centrality of the class struggle and the fight against capitalism. The cross-class alliance of all women they call for would inevitably result in the domination by middle-class interests. Having rejected the working class, the one class that has the power to bring about necessary, fundamental changes, even the best-intentioned feminist must capitulate in one way or another to the powers-that-be. That is why the "second wave" of feminism has repeated the history of the first, increasingly calling on the state for protection. The 19th century feminists, in fact, took much longer to collapse into the reactionary "social purity" campaigns; the early movement's longer span reflected an ascending capitalism that could offer a lot more.

While working-class men do not suffer the special oppression of women, they too are exploited by capitalism. Therein lies the basis for a common struggle against this system, the only way out for the working class as a whole. Many men involved in revolutionary struggle will recognize that their material interest lies in the fight against the oppression of women. The real "privileges" that capitalism affords working class men are small compared to the value of the sexual division of labor and sexual oppression for stepping up exploitation and lowering the social wage.

No genuine communist, however, waits until after the revolution to attack male chauvinism, nor do we treat it as some quaint habit of the unenlightened. To do so would keep politically conscious women from the revolutionary cause. If communism did not mean the triumph and liberation of all the oppressed it would be a lie. To laugh off or to accept sexism means to adapt to backward bourgeois consciousness. The fact that sexism cannot be eliminated overnight is no reason to postpone the struggle against it, a crucial aspect of the fight for socialism.

If particular imagery is used to whip up violence against women, blacks or other oppressed groups under

capitalism, communists fight side by side with all allied forces to halt such efforts instead of relying on the bourgeois state. Of course, smashing any particularly heinous material must be done under tactical considerations as to the balance of forces, who is aided, etc. Trashing even the most obnoxious porn stores in the context of today's growing reaction could have reactionary consequences; the same act in a period of rising workers' or women's struggles could be a progressive blow.

Although there are feminists who oppose the analysis that porn is central to women's oppression, only the communists explain the source of this oppression and how to get rid of it. One of the chief tasks of a workers' state is to free women from domestic labor through the collectivization of kitchen, laundry, child care and other oppressive tasks and to eradicate the sexual division of labor. The short-lived Bolshevik revolution in backward Russia made more changes in women's lives than the entire history of feminism. The reversal of these gains under Stalinism was an essential part of its counterrevolutionary restoration of capitalism.

The experience of socialist revolution would already represent an enormous advance in consciousness. The great resources of the workers' state would be used in the struggle against sexism in culture and politics. For the first time women would have the resources through their state to make their free speech a reality. In contrast, the bourgeois-democratic right of free speech is largely a myth under capitalism. Oppressed groups such as women do not have the power and money to counter the "free speech" of the capitalist media, which maligns and degrades them daily.

A worker's state would have the weapon of censorship at its disposal -- although it would generally be a defensive weapon of last resort. If the same sort of offensive imagery were being used against the oppressed or to threaten the workers' state, the workers could well use their state to ban it as a stopgap measure. In that case the imagery is viewed for its political content; whether it is "art," "erotica," or "pornography" neither protects nor condemns it. The question of censorship would have to be weighed in each case from the point of view of the defense of the working class and the oppressed, unlike now.

Free speech is maintained by capitalism as a disposable luxury, to be cast aside when property is endangered. It must therefore be defended, but not to create illusions that women and other oppressed sectors can really have a say over the bourgeois media.

The revolutionary workers' state can empower women; capitalism can only enslave them. It would be utopian to ponder what genuine sexual liberation will look like; we don't know. But we do know that when people have the material basis for really free, non-oppressive relations, they will begin to have them. Feminism, starting with promises that are impossible under capitalism, can only end in despair. ■

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Can Russia Be Reformed?

continued from page 1

tells a different story. Since coming to power in March 1985, the new General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, has been proclaiming that the beleaguered Soviet economy must be revamped. "Our "prime task," he said at the party congress last February, is "to resolutely reverse the unfavorable trends in the economy, to restore its dynamism." At first he called for a mere "acceleration." Then he used the term "reform," later "reconstruction." Now he insists on nothing less than a "revolution."

The USSR's economy has indeed lost its dynamism. The long-term decline in growth rates has become especially intense since 1970; relative to the West and Japan, productivity is faltering in all the Soviet-model economies. Since Khrushchev's day a number of Stalinist states -- Yugoslavia, Hungary, and most recently and spectacularly, China -- have increasingly adopted capitalistic market methods in the hope of escaping stagnation. Now it appears to be the Soviets' turn. Moreover, Soviet theorists are no longer using the formula "developed socialism," the standard label for the USSR under Brezhnev. "Really existing socialism" is taking a harsher, more realistic look at its real existence.

Gorbachev's "revolutionary" reforms have the backing of economists of both East and West. Interestingly, spokesmen on both sides, as we will see, agree that Khrushchev's grandchildren can no longer afford to live under "Marxism." This is surely a question that Marxists have to investigate more closely.

The Siberian Solution

For background, consider the secret "Novosibirsk Report" issued in 1983 in that Siberian city by an economics institute connected to the USSR Academy of Sciences. Written by Academician Tatyana Zaslavskaya, the report has obviously become a blueprint of what Gorbachev wants. And the institute's head, Abel Aganbegyan, an advocate of Western-style management techniques, has been appointed Gorbachev's major economic adviser.

Zaslavskaya's main point was that "The present system of production relations has substantially fallen behind the level of development of the productive forces. Instead of enabling their accelerated development, it is becoming more and more of a brake on their progressive advancement." (*Survey*, Spring 1984.)

These exact words could well have been written by a revolutionary Marxist. Indeed, they are a direct echo of Marx's own theory:

"At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production come into conflict with the existing relations of production ...

within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters." (Preface to the Critique of Political Economy.)

Zaslavskaya's terminology also harkens back to Lenin, who showed that the productive relations have actually become a brake on the development of the productive forces of capitalism in its epoch of imperialist decay. This is equally true of Soviet-style statified capitalism, as we have argued in these



Gorbachev's Marxism: To each according to his profitability.

pages for over ten years. Few enough Western leftists agree; for a high-ranking Soviet theorist to confirm our analysis is unusual to say the least.

Zaslavskaya's Marxist verbiage, however, is fraudulent. If taken seriously her conclusion would demand a proletarian revolution as the only way out. It would require the abolition of the existing mode of production in the broad sense, the social-economic system as a whole. In this spirit Marx continued the passage cited above: "Then comes the period of social revolution."

In contrast, Zaslavskaya meant "relations of production" only in the narrowest sense of personnel management relations -- how to discipline the workers. In no way is she challenging the existing class relations, of which she is a prime beneficiary. Thus she goes on: "One outcome ... is the inability of production relations to provide modes of conduct for the workers in the socio-economic sphere that are needed by society."

In the guise of blaming the system for the workers' faults, Zaslavskaya is really blaming the workers for the system's faults. She lists the following problems: part-time effort, absenteeism, passivity and disinterest in work, alcoholism, even unspecified "stoppages" (that is, strikes). Workers lack discipline. She does exonerate the aristocracy of Soviet labor, "the main nucleus of skilled workers," who,

she claims in her elitist fashion, "work honestly." Clearly her belief is that the great majority of Soviet workers are giving the state less than an honest day's work.

We can already see Zaslavskaya's major blind spot. As observant as she is about the bureaucratic mismanagement that is rife in the Soviet system, she has no conception of what makes proletarians tick. That the problems she lists might just be a manifestation of the class struggle, the day in and day out resistance that workers put up against the impositions and demands of their bosses, is unseen by our academician. Whether or not the bosses' demands are made in the interest of efficiency, the workers fight back. It is not dishonesty that makes them do it, but capitalist relations.

Why should the situation be as bad as she describes? Why can't the workers' lack of cooperation with management, be controlled? Zaslavskaya recalls the old days under Stalin, when workers were disciplined not only by a strong police state but also by concealed economic pressures:

"Although formally speaking there was no unemployment in the country, in many areas and branches there were hidden structural labor surpluses. Fear of losing his job and difficulties in finding a domicile hampered the workers's mobility and firmly bound him to the enterprise. Migration of the rural population to the towns was limited by the inexistence of passports ... Therefore the main body of workers did not have a choice between work and leisure: the majority strove to work at full capacity ..."

But now things are different. In a June 1985 interview with *Izvestia*, she explained:

"The overall level of well-being in the country has risen significantly, This has lessened the economic necessity of working hard in order to earn one's living. Many people have the opportunity to choose: if they want to, they dedicate themselves to their work, and if they don't want to

their participation in social production is very limited." (Current Digest of the Soviet Press)

So what is needed is more and better discipline, order, regulation and control. The Novosibirsk report uses all these terms, saying nothing, naturally, of workers' power as a mechanism for increasing workers' "participation in social production." But it does not leave the matter there. Discipline as it has hitherto been applied -- centralized orders from above -- does not really work. Centralized regulation is ignorant of specific, local conditions; arbitrary rules that obviously don't apply are flouted both in letter and in spirit; the proliferation of contradictory rules gives malingersers the choice of which ones to obey.

Bosses Undermine Discipline

Above all, it turns out the bosses also undermine the economic discipline needed by the system. Here Zaslavskaya is treading on treacherous ground. Whereas under capitalism, she argues, the conflict between productive forces and productive relations leads to an intensified class struggle; under socialism, on the other hand, well, there is of course nothing of the kind yet things are pretty much the same. Citing the prevailing view "developed in political economy textbooks" that improvement of outmoded production relations can take place "without social conflict," she carefully responds: "we must express doubt."

"The process of perfecting production relations under socialism runs a more complicated course than is commonly suggested, to the extent that the reorganization of the existing system of production relations is given over to social groups that occupy a somewhat more elevated position within this system and accordingly are bound to it through personal interest."

There are no privileged classes, of course, just a few groups in "a somewhat more elevated position within this system" -- who have the power, moreover, to organize production in their own personal interest, and if necessary even prevent the "perfection" of the productive methods.

Dealing with this problem calls forth Zaslavskaya's most ingenious efforts. The way to enforce economic discipline on the workers, and at the same time get around the obstacles created by self-interested bureaucrats, is to make discipline itself a matter of workers' self-interest. It should be regulated not by distant officials but, on the one hand, by local managers whose individual interests will in theory coincide with the need to make their own enterprises work productively; and, on the other, by the central state planners who genuinely have the interests of all of "socialist society" at heart. The tools these layers are to be given are called "economic methods of management" or incentives -- both carrots and sticks.

"It is in the interests of socialist society, while regulating the key aspects of the socio-economic activity of the workers, to leave them a sufficiently wide margin of freedom of individual

CAPITALISM IN THE SOVIET UNION

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The Rise and Decay of Stalinism

behavior. Hence the necessity for directing behavior itself, i.e., the subjective relationship of the workers to their socio-economic activity. Administrative methods of management [that is, orders from Moscow] are powerless here. The management of behavior can only be accomplished in an oblique fashion, with the help of incentives which would take into account the economic and social demands of the workers and channel their interests in a direction which would be of benefit to our society."

(Zaslavskaya's prose is itself an illustration of "management of behavior ... in an oblique fashion." When she speaks of altering the behavior of her fellow "group"-mates in a "somewhat elevated position" — the bosses — her bureaucratic/academic jargon gets a bit thick and indeed as oblique as that of her labor relations counterparts in the West.)

Russia and Marxist Theory

What Zaslavskaya proposed concretely was 1) to eliminate layers of intermediate bureaucrats in the ministries and departments ("which patently suffer from hypertrophy"), officials whose squabbling and interference get in the way of efficient planning and production; and 2) to set up forms of economic incentives for workers. In her *Izvestia* interview she spelled this out, again paraphrasing Marx:

"First of all, most of [the forms] are in full accord with the economic laws of socialism. That's the most important thing. When things are organized efficiently, people receive remuneration according to their work. In the process, of course, pay differentiation increases, as a rule. But that is a direct and natural result of the rising labor productivity of active people."

All wrong. The formula "to each according to his work," based on Marx's analysis of communist society in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, has nothing in common with increasing pay differentiation. For Marx it required the revolutionary abolition of money, wages, classes and the other remnants of capitalism; it was a preliminary step toward the full communist goal, "to each according to his needs." "To each according to his work" describes distribution under the lower stage of communism (or socialism), a classless society based on common ownership and collective production, but where scarcity of material goods still rules out distribution according to need. Here the ultimate of bourgeois equality can be achieved: equal amounts of labor would yield workers equal amounts of goods, with no differentiation or incentives.

Under a labor-commodity system, which the USSR still is, the formula "to each according to his work" means something entirely different. It is an essential part of the law of value, a means for one class controlling another. The only thing "natural" about Zaslavskaya's increasing pay differentiation is that it naturally occurs in capitalism, under whose economic laws workers are compelled to compete against one

another for jobs in industries owned by the privileged classes.

In mimicking Marx's words Zaslavskaya really echoed Stalin's content of the early 1930s, when he expunged the Bolsheviks' communist opposition to privilege. Marxism stands for the abolition of classes as a replacement for the bourgeoisie's original goal of equality. Stalinism, under the guise of disdaining bourgeois aims, created a vast gap between privilege and deprivation — a necessary step for the counter-revolutionary reestablishment of classes and of capitalist relations. However, in recent years the gap has narrowed, because of the resistance of Soviet workers manifested in on-the-job resistance punctuated by important strikes — and reinforced by the proletarian upheavals in allied East Europe from the 1950s to today.

Thus the current reforms are aimed at restoring, at least in part, a particularly anti-proletarian aspect of the good old days. The wiping out of past working-class gains is the same process that is taking place in the West for similar reasons but by somewhat different methods. We can also note the views of Vadim Zagladin, the representative of the Soviet leadership at an Italian Communist Party conference this year. Commenting on the link between economic and political reforms, he said:

"We are not thinking of becoming social democrats or of introducing the market economy, but we are raising the problem of enabling each class to make its voice heard clearly. ... We have given greater autonomy to the unions, but the union organizations don't yet know how to use it." (*In These Times*, October 8)

Where Zaslavskaya only hints at the class nature of Soviet society, Zagladin doesn't even bother to cover it up. The working class needs a "voice," obviously because it has no say in running society. Like Western "quality of life" programs in the factories, giving workers some verbal safety valve is only an accompaniment to an overall crackdown on their living standards and working conditions. Under both systems some such outlet is necessary because workers are central to production. The stick needs a carrot, however minimal, lest the workers explode in a replay of the Polish Interfactory Strike Committee movement of 1980. Giving "autonomy" to the Soviet company unions is about the least that can be done.

Gorbachev's Reforms

In his first year in office, the new Communist Party leader made his name through two campaigns. One of these has been the dismissal of hundreds of high-level officials, ranging from Brezhnev's cronies in the Politburo to party and state leaders of national, regional and local bodies. In theory he is carrying out the Novosibirsk plan of eliminating unnecessary and inefficient middle bureaucrats. Shortly after taking office, "He called for expanding individual enterprises' control over money and perquisites, in-

cluding some say over levels of pay, incentives and bonuses. He also talked of expanding the state planning committee into a source of broad directives and ideas." (New York Times, June 14, 1985.) The change from the sleepy standpattism of Brezhnev was so sweeping that poet Andrei Voznesensky wrote:

"Rejoice rejoice, rejoice, rejoice at the new spirit over the land!

Rejoice in the storm that is blowing away those perched in exalted ranks!"

Gorbachev, however, was not targeting only the exalted. His most publicized effort has been the campaign against alcoholism in the workplace. The Soviet system has been notoriously uninterested in the production of consumer goods. (For a Marxist explanation of this counter-preference, see Proletarian Revolution No.24, pages 20-21.) The exception that proved this rule had been vodka, the production of which has long been a Soviet state monopoly bringing in great profits. For this reason it was one of the few consumer products encouraged by the Soviet rulers, despite its well known harmful effects, and has always been plentifully available.

Drinking Discouraged

When Gorbachev took over as party leader, alcohol consumption was drastically reduced. Supplies were cut back, hours of sale reduced and prices hiked. According to reports, Soviet economists had calculated that the cost to the state from industrial and traffic accidents, worker absenteeism, disease, etc. was about 40 billion rubles annually, more than the revenue from vodka. So a capitalistic cost-benefit calculation -- not concern for workers' health and safety -- caused the policy shift. (Detente, Spring 1986, and Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, May 1986.)

Zaslavskaya's incentive wage schemes have also been officially promulgated, although it is too early to tell how deeply they have been carried out. According to the Soviet news agency Tass, echoing Zaslavskaya echoing Stalin distorting Marx:

"The main aim is to enhance the entire pay system, to create a direct dependence between the amount and quality of work and pay, and to make the growth of pay dependent on the increase of labor productivity.

"The restructuring of the pay system is aimed at insuring that the wages of each person are strictly in accordance with the volume of his or her contribution to national wealth." (New York Times, September 2.)

Another Gorbachev policy has been to advocate productivity improvements in outmoded plants through new technology. This is meant to overcome the long-standing inbuilt Soviet tradition of introducing new techniques only in newly constructed factories. This method was forced on the system because industrial managers and construction firms resisted any change in the processes they ran that might temporarily re-

duce their assigned ("planned") output and therefore their expected bonuses. However, so far this Gorbachev goal has not taken effect; the only improvement in productivity has come through increased pressure on the workers. In a heavily publicized speech in Vladivostok in August Gorbachev himself complained,

"A qualitative change that would really consolidate the trend for accelerated growth has not yet taken place. -- It is inadmissible to give in to the difficulties and to the resistance of those accustomed to drifting by their own momentum and working in the old manner." (New York Times, August 4.)

Soviet agriculture has been a notoriously stagnant sector since Stalin's violent destruction of the private peasantry in the early 1930s. Among his proposals, therefore, Gorbachev has included a "tax in kind" for collective farmers along the lines of Lenin's New Economic Policy of the 1920s. Through this the farmers can sell on the market all produce above a certain amount going to the state. Of course, when Lenin made his move the Soviet Union was a workers' state, so it was possible that the strengthened market could still be controlled by and for the workers.

Gorbachev is reportedly also interested in studying the reforms of the Czarist minister Stolypin, whose policy was to bolster the regime by creating a strong class of capitalist peasants. His revival of NEP is taken by some as a hint of a general turn to a free market along Western lines. But he hasn't gone this far -- and he can't, as we will see.

Foreign Trade Demonopolized

Very recently, the USSR has made a remarkable opening in the sphere of foreign trade toward the world capitalist market. It reduced its oil exports, crucial for obtaining Western currency, in order to avoid undercutting OPEC's oligopolistic but decreasingly effective price controls; it has offered to join GATT, the capitalist trading group; it paid up ancient Czarist debts that had been repudiated on principle by the revolutionary Bolsheviks; and it has called for joint production arrangements with Western firms interested in operating in the USSR.

Most startling of all, it was announced in late September that 20 ministries and 70 large industrial firms will soon have the right to trade directly with foreign enterprises -- thus in effect cancelling the state-centralized monopoly of foreign trade that has been in effect since Lenin. Over the years this monopoly has served opposite ends. Under workers' revolution, its purpose was to allow the backward Soviet economy to control its own internal development, with a minimum of external capitalist pressure. Only that way could it hold out until the world revolution toppled imperialism.

But since Stalin's counterrevolution the monopoly has served only Russian nationalism. The ruling upper bureaucracy has tried to construct an autarkic economy -- a utopian "capitalism in one country." As with

all protectionist schemes, this project aims to expand the national, state-owned capital at the expense of the workers as well as to fend off rivals abroad. The consequence for the USSR has been disastrous: overprotected Soviet enterprises now prove incapable of competing productively with the West. Gorbachev's partial opening is an attempt to force internal reforms upon the reluctant wings of the bureaucracy, whose resistance is increasingly being made public by both sides.

Bourgeois Interpretations

Basically there are two bourgeois attitudes towards the reform campaign. One says that it means nothing. Nothing ever changes for the good behind the Iron Curtain; totalitarianism by definition can't be reformed; you are a communist dupe for thinking so; and besides, the Soviet economy, especially its military, is growing by leaps and bounds so we all have to sacrifice our living standards to profits in order to induce patriotic businessmen to rev up the U.S.'s

economists recognize these needs, because they too have come to understand that the law of value is no way to set prices.

With the latter point Marxists would certainly agree. Marx expounded the law of value in order to trace the development and decay of capitalism, which it does with respect to both traditional and statified variants. It is not a device for telling a capitalist or bureaucrat what prices to set. Moreover, capitalist firms do not set prices according to marginal utility either; this is really an ideological justification for bourgeois inequality in the guise of a theory that claims to explain prices.

In both East and West prices are determined by much the same formula: cost plus mark-up for profit. In the West profit is based on what you think the market will bear; in the East official profit is set by decree. The main difference is that in the West, because of its fewer restrictions on competition, costs are a better approximation to the true cost of a commodity in labor hours; there is less arbitrariness than in the East.



Soviet banners proclaim: 'We will fulfill the 1985 plan and successfully complete the 11th Five-Year Plan,' and 'Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of the Communist Party.' In fact, under the banner of Stalinism planning has meant more empty propaganda than real production.

slackening economy, discipline laggard workers, and build weapons. That's the same line that calls the Moscow manifesto a Kremlin fabrication.

There are also those who say the reforms mean something but not much, because the only real solution to the USSR's economic crisis would be to model itself after the West; partial steps won't do. Only a fully free market will suffice. The reasons given are: 1) that real incentives are needed, not just bonuses allocated from above but genuine profits that automatically reward success; 2) an accurate price system is equally essential, one based on marginal utility theory. The argument goes that even Soviet

ness than in the East.

The Eastern concept has nothing to do with Marx's understanding of the law of value, which figures the value embodied in a commodity on the labor time socially necessary for its current production, not on what a firm or industry may actually have spent under wasteful and obsolete conditions. But that doesn't prevent our experts from asserting the opposite. Here is one typically uninformed interpretation:

"Price-setting in the USSR derives from Marx's labor theory of value, with prices determined on the basis of labor expenditure (direct and indirect) going into a given product rather than from

some calculation of its quality and utility. It makes badly operating enterprises look good, and it justifies excessive expenditure of resources. Such an approach acts as a barrier to technological progress." (Boris Rumer, "Realities of Gorbachev's Economic Program," Problems of Communism, May-June 1986.)

In the same article, Rumer quotes Soviet economists who also claim that the Soviet "law of costs" as the basis for pricing is derived from Marx. However, if any of these experts had read even as far as the fourth or fifth page of Marx's Capital they would have had to invent a different lie. "Some people might think that if the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labor spent on it, the more idle and unskillful the laborer, the more valuable would his commodity be, because more time would be required in its production." And then follows Marx's explanation of socially necessary labor time.

Their differences apart, Eastern and Western academics agree on the principle that anything, however foreign to Marx's thought or however much he may have insisted on the exact opposite, can be ascribed to Marx -- as long as it discredits Marxism as a scientific theory. "Socialism" amid misery and "value" based on backwardness are only the most common such lies.

Gorbachev vs. Reality

Whatever the misrepresentations by bourgeois propagandists, they do share the triumphant feeling that the Soviet authorities are being forced to transform their economic system to make it more like the West. The Soviets, of course, deny any such thing.

A Soviet comparative view of the two systems would argue that although the Western system doesn't encourage obsolete enterprises to proliferate, this "efficiency" has grave consequences. Backward steel plants in the U.S. are shut down because they're unprofitable (due to the competition from super-exploitation of workers in countries like South Korea, etc.); but then America is short of steel, so housing, highways, railroads and industry decay and unemployment skyrockets. What a tremendous waste of resources! We, on the other hand, have no wasted lives through unemployment, crime stemming from desperation for money, etc. We have no wish to emulate you. And despite our old-fashioned technique, we are the world's greatest steel producers.

The last point is true, but it is also true that the USSR produces so much steel because so much of it is wasted through overuse, lack of use and poor quality. Thus Soviet steel doesn't get to housing and other consumer uses either. As for unemployment, there may only minuscule amounts in Russia due to overmanning in the factories, but there is plenty in China and Yugoslavia under the same system. There was none in Nazi Germany either; up to a point it's a matter of choice of what methods the ruling classes use to police the workers. The Soviet bureaucracy is openly drooling for it today. Fear of the workers'

response is more of a consideration for the Soviet rulers than for the Chinese. The example of Poland still sits on Russia's doorstep.

What the Eastern and Western variants of modern capitalism have in common is the organization of the economy into separate capitals. In the West the capitals are relatively independent of their specific location or use-values they are invested in; they can pack up and move after a period of time, or invest elsewhere. This "freedom" is symbolized by the stock market, through which capitalists take out shares in each others' capitals.

East vs. West

In contrast, in the East the capital belonging to the various enterprises is tied to specific plants and machinery: fixed capital is fixed, not only in the technical sense that it doesn't circulate, but also in its ownership. Hence there is institutional resistance to the abandonment or destruction of any existing machinery or plant; some baronial bureaucrat's fiefdom is always at stake. And since power over the enterprises is exercised in hierarchical fashion -- firms are subject to ministerial and regional authorities, which in turn are subordinated to the national center -- there are autocrats at all levels interested in defending each fiefdom.

This is the system created by Stalin in the 1930s; its aim was to build up the nation by tying each bureaucrat to some specific capital, either locally or further up the hierarchy. It was a necessary step in separating the privileged bureaucracy from its original base in the working class, and therefore in ultimately wresting state power from the proletariat. Its principle, the maximization of the national capital, means the conservation of every last molecule of value. This parochial protectionism inheres as well in each separate part of the economy. No wonder the barons are continually at odds with the kings and the kings are at odds with each other.

In the West, each capital seeks to maximize its value independently and at the expense of all others -- and uses its mobility to do so. Hence the permanent anarchy, periodic crises and imperialist profiteering that characterizes traditional capitalism. In the East each tied-down capital also seeks to maximize its value and is likewise perfectly happy to let the others go to the devil. Hence the unconcern for quality of output and disdain for consumer needs -- and therefore the stagnant overall growth -- that typify Stalinism. The ultimate absurdity is the competition and even shooting warfare that breaks out among the "comrades" of different national persuasions.

In both East and West, surplus value is extracted by exploiting proletarian labor, and bosses are rewarded by how well they do this. Hence bosses' interests are always sectoral, tied either to some specific capital or fraction in the West or to some local enterprise or grouping in the East. In neither vari-

ant is there a force to press for overall social well-being, not even the well-being of the bosses as a whole. Not only is there gross class differentiation, but also intense competition among the bosses and systemic crises.

The real need for the Gorbachev reforms, the widening of the gaps between and within the classes, arises from the worldwide crisis of capitalism. The workers have to be compelled to produce more with little more reward, or none. Unemployment, growing in the West, is now demanded in the East. In the Soviet system where the crisis is deeper, the workers are all the more dangerous. Both more deprived, of modern commodities and more concentrated in large factories and workplaces, they are a powerful, explosive force. That is why "democracy" is impossible, despite the Moscow manifesto and the hopes of Western liberals. Gorbachev's incentives are aimed at getting each bureaucratic baron to crack down on his workers without triggering a national movement in response as in Poland.

On the surface, Gorbachev's reforms are directed against the waste in the Stalinist economy that results from its nationalist, baronial nature -- but they are not at all intended to overthrow this sectoralist structure. In China, where the reforms have already gone much further, stock market trading has been introduced in order to allow enterprises to invest spare capital and thereby to transfer financial backing to profitable firms -- not to raise individu-

al entrepreneurs (who flourish on a small scale) to the commanding economic heights. Likewise, the less far-reaching Soviet reforms, both disciplinary and restructuring, have strengthened certain sections of the bureaucracy at the expense of others -- but bureaucratic rule survives intact.

Nevertheless, it is indicative that all the reforms of "socialist" society lean in the direction of traditional capitalism. So much so that all the essential criteria that would-be Marxist analysts have set up to distinguish these allegedly proletarian states from capitalism -- centralized planning, state ownership, the monopoly of foreign trade -- have been abandoned. The theoretical point is this: a system that can reform itself into a variant of capitalism without a violent counterrevolution must have been a variant of capitalism to begin with.

No possible solution to the problems of capitalism in its epoch of decay can be found by reforming one variant in the direction of the other. Substantive change is possible only through the agency of the working class, the one class in capitalist society which has no fundamental local or sectoral interests. After an internationalist proletarian revolution the key to economics will be genuine equality and centralization, so that the interests of the workers as a whole are paramount. This is an outcome hateful to capitalists of every denomination: Western bourgeois, bureaucratic reformers and their Stalinist opponents alike. But it is the only way out. ■

Healyism Dies, Its Roots Live

A year ago the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) of Great Britain blew apart, along with the "International Committee of the Fourth International" (IC) it dominated. The explosion of the organization ruled for decades by Gerry Healy was accompanied by sensationalist charges involving sex, thuggery and theft. But Healyism was scandalous not only in death. During its life it had brought shame to the banner of Trotskyism which it falsely claimed as its own. Moreover, the roots have not been destroyed: Healy's corruption was only a grotesque and criminal outgrowth of politics which at the basic level are held in common throughout the entire left socialistic "family."

The WRP had been a relatively influential group. These days a thousand members counts as a major force on the left; and a daily newspaper, no matter how dubious its value, is hardly a commonplace achievement even for fake Trotskyists. Many fine young workers had joined the WRP seeking not the cynicism they met but leadership for the proletarian socialist revolution. Indeed, at significant stages in its history Healyism had styled itself as the left wing of Trotskyism in combat against political opportunism.

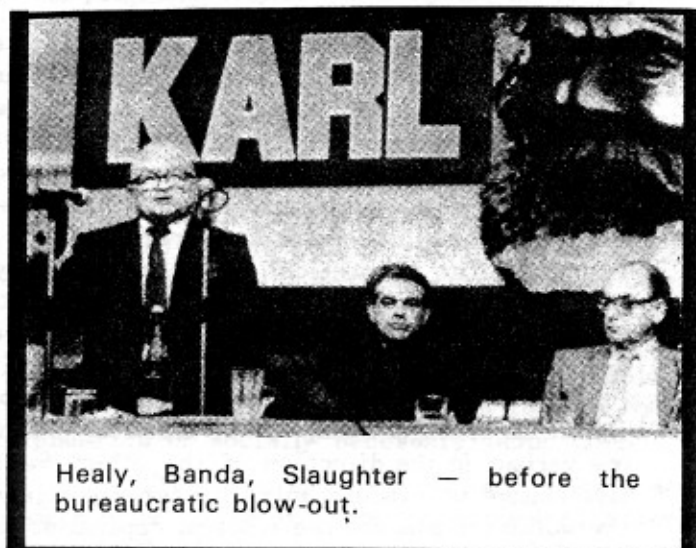
However, for years life with Healy featured the beating up of dissidents and members who sought to leave the group, as well as violence and slander

against political opponents. Notable were the savage attack in 1966 on Ernie Tate, an activist for the rival "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" and the CIA-baiting of Tim Wohlforth, once Healy's lickspittle leader of the Workers League (WL), the WRP's American colony. Joseph Hansen, until his death the leading theoretician of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP), was continually smeared as both a tool of the FBI and an accomplice of the GPU implicated in the murder of Trotsky.

There is worse. According to Healy's former henchmen in the IC, it is highly likely that the IC did more than applaud the killing of 21 Communist Party members by the Iraqi regime in 1979. There is strong evidence that it fingered CPers for their bourgeois executioners, and there are believable claims that money was paid for this service. Additional evidence has also emerged reinforcing the widespread belief that the WRP financed its daily press with the help of Libya's oil-based treasury, at the price of servile prettifying of Qaddafi's anti-communist, anti-proletarian Islamic "people's" revolution.

On top of his corruption, Healy's hypocrisy was truly stupefying. To illustrate: in 1973 Sy Landy, now National Secretary of the LRP, met Healy in London. During the course of a long monologue Healy

mentioned that he had differences with Wohlforth -- and then remarked with a knowing air that such disputes often led to a parting of the ways. At the time Comrade Landy was merely taken aback that Healy would speak of internal matters before a political oppo-



nent. Later, when Wohlforth was expelled because of his purported contact with the CIA, it became obvious that the charge was a deliberate fabrication meant to permanently discredit an out-of-favor lackey.

No one will pity Healy for his expulsion from the party to which he devoted his energies. But it is equally difficult to weep for the lieutenants and hit-men who helped bring him down and who now, dressed in the raiment of victims and heroes, attempt to salvage the shards of the WRP and IC. Prominent among Healy's courtiers were Mike Banda, the executioner-in-chief; Cliff Slaughter, resident intellectual high priest; and Vanessa Redgrave, who played the role of crown jewel. The WRP explosion resulted from a coup started by Banda, who sought, with the aid of Slaughter, to forcibly retire the 73-year-old emperor.

Healy was accused of sexually exploiting 26 women comrades over the years; the bourgeois press feasted on headlines about reds and beds. Internally, power plays and counterplays were launched from these charges until the party shattered. Then the splits split; court suits followed; and Healy faded from sight, leaving his minority fragment in the hands of Redgrave and friends. David North, Healy's post-Wohlforth flunky-in-charge at the American WL, grabbed a chunk of the flotsam for his very own. Banda also abandoned ship, so now Slaughter stands alone at the helm of a rudderless, disintegrating wreck. It is this group which contains not only the best cadres but also the most promising political ferment.

Healyite Pragmatism

How could such cynical corruption occur within a movement nominally committed to communism? The answer most often given by leftist commentators on the WRP/IC split is that Healyism was a cult. This is the conclusion, for example, of two U.S. groups which

have had ties to Healy and are infected with the same cynicism, the SWP and the Spartacist League. But while Healyism was indeed a cult, that alone explains nothing. There are many cults in the world today; few call themselves Trotskyist.

Today's leftist cults, naturally, are dominated by authoritarian and frequently charismatic leaders. But they are also bureaucratic in nature. Healy's provides a case study.

There has been a general trend toward bureaucratism in organization and outlook within the far left. The number of splits on the left in which (aside from political differences) believable charges of bureaucratic behavior have been raised is enormous. Our own experience in being thrown out of the Revolutionary Socialist League in 1976 was not untypical: not only was the expulsion handled brutally and undemocratically, but all the members of the leading committees that expelled us were paid apparatchiks of the RSL.

The Healy variant of bureaucratism was different from others in its depth and forms. Healy's WRP was a blowfish party: wrapped in its daily newspaper, it puffed itself up to look impressive enough to rival the larger Communist Party and even the Labour Party. Thus in the talk with Comrade Landy cited above, Healy mused over a policy of James P. Cannon, the American Trotskyist pioneer, who used party money to fund organizers. Why not instead raid Fleet Street for professional journalists, as Healy did? Hadn't Lenin, after all, said that the party must organize itself through its press?

Lenin, of course, had meant that the party press, expressing the program and ideas of the party based on truthful analysis and the actual material interests of the proletariat, would help organize a structure and guide the workers to Marxist consciousness. For Healy, in contrast, the party aimed to "intersect" with the workers' movement through journalistic crisis-mongering. Harangued daily about the final crisis of capitalism, the workers were to be whipped up to provide the party with its battering ram.

This attitude toward workers mirrored the internal relation between members and leaders. No Healyite publication was complete without its lesson on the virtues of dialectical materialism as counterposed to empiricism and pragmatism. Not designed to educate either genuinely interested workers or even cadres, these articles were the Holy Writ of a doctrine un-

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fathomable to ordinary folk and interpretable only by certified experts. So too the leadership became the sole judges of "security"; without their vigilance, devils from the CIA, FBI and KGB would seduce and destroy the workers' movement. Thus a fake "dialectical materialism" was put to work for the most pragmatic of purposes: the care and feeding of the party bureaucracy.

Left Bureaucratism

Bureaucratism has a history. The takeover of the Soviet workers' revolution by the Stalinist apparatus led to defeats for revolutions abroad in the 1920s and '30s as well as the bureaucratization of the Communist International. Later the counterrevolution was victorious. Contrary to Trotsky's analysis that the USSR on the eve of World War II was a highly contra-



dictory degenerating workers' state, Stalinism turned out to be strong enough to play a major role in the defeat of workers' revolutions at the end of the war. This enabled a collapsing world capitalism to regenerate itself under the hegemony of the U.S. empire.

Its new lease on life granted imperialism an unprecedented period of prosperity. Accompanying this prosperity bubble was the expansion everywhere of the "new middle classes": state bureaucrats, private professionals, managerial functionaries, trade union and party staffers, academics, literati and other members of the intelligentsia. Likewise the labor aristocracy expanded within the working class, providing a stable base for the union bureaucracy. An influx of leftists from the intelligentsia and the aristocracy (especial-

ly but not solely its white-collar segment) allowed left party and other organizational bureaucracies to flourish as well. Bureaucratism, including bureaucratic cultism, not only expanded within social democracy and Stalinism but infected the far left as well. It has its roots in the defeats suffered by the working class and the growth of the new middle strata.

Middle-class leftists, themselves rooted in the bureaucratic expansion, overlook such material explanations. They prefer theories of power-mad, devilish conspirators, not only to account for Reaganism and other varieties of bourgeois criminality, but also to analyze each other. The gamut runs from the Healyites with their secret-police plots to the more staid and responsible anti-cultists. Good guys are defined by their sincerity in cajoling or otherwise maneuvering the benighted workers into action. Bad guys are labeled cultists, agents and madmen. In this scenario the workers, given their lack of revolutionary consciousness, are not seen as real actors on the stage.

The Lost Fourth International

Healy's cynicism towards the proletariat and its capacity to generate revolutionary class consciousness out of its own struggles was not an individual aberration, nor was it confined to his tendency. It was only one variant of the general trend among Trotsky's epigones after the world war. The multitude of "Fourth Internationals" today should not blind us to the fact that all the warring factions had in common a rejection of proletarian leadership in the struggle for revolution.

The difference between today's pseudo-Bolsheviks and the party whose heritage they claim is all too apparent. As Russian Bolshevism developed through all its contradictions, Lenin sloughed off the vestiges of the petty-bourgeois politics the movement had learned from its international leader, Kautsky. Instead of attributing revolutionary consciousness to the intelligentsia (a view still commonly attributed to Lenin), the Bolsheviks increasingly understood that the party and its leadership were products of the workers' experience itself (see Proletarian Revolution No. 23, page 6).

The Bolsheviks stressed their program's international character, as opposed to bourgeois nationalism, and the independence of their party, as a reflection of the proletariat's class independence. Later the Bolshevik-Leninist faction led by Trotsky was likewise based upon internationalism in its struggle against Stalinism's counterrevolutionary conception of "socialism in one country." And so central was the matter of the vanguard party's independence that it was made the first principle of the International Left Opposition when it was founded. Hatred of class collaborationism and the popular fronts based upon it was a hallmark of the Fourth International (FI) from the start.

Nevertheless, in the 1930s when workers reacted against fascism and capitalist depression by stream-

ing into the mass reformist parties, Trotsky advocated a policy of "entrism" into these parties as a tactic for reaching the advanced workers. He pointed out the dangers in such a move: staying too long, or abandoning a clear oppositional role, would mean capitulation to the left-reformist and centrist forces within the social democracy who would inevitably betray the left-moving workers they led. Trotsky's short-term entry tactic was designed to put forward an honest and open program in order to break the working class from its social-chauvinist misleadership. In several key countries the Trotskyists did succeed in winning numbers of advanced workers to their ranks and re-establishing their revolutionary pole. The principles of internationalism and class independence were kept.

In the post-war period Trotsky's followers moved away from these principles. The defeat of the workers throughout Europe, largely engendered by Stalinism, took a heavy toll of the already war-weakened Fourth International. The FI's confidence in the workers ebbed, and the process of adaptation to petty-bourgeois forces accelerated, especially after capitalist prosperity achieved its Indian Summer. Once a democratic centralist body, the International degenerated into a collection of national groupings (often with more than one per country), each giving its main concern to its own work. The large social democratic and Stalinist parties looked ever more attractive.

At first the FI, despite its outdated theory of Russia as a degenerated workers' state, was still able to produce a Marxist analysis of events that meshed with reality. When the Russian Army occupied Eastern Europe, the International concluded correctly that state capitalist societies had been set up by the Stalinists. By the late 1940s, however, led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, it retrospectively decided that Tito had led a genuine proletarian revolution in Yugoslavia; it even asked the Yugoslav Communist Party to join its ranks. This particular adaptation to Stalinism cooled when Tito supported Western imperialism in the Korean War; but their disappointment did not prevent them from inventing further "deformed" workers' states in Eastern Europe, and later in China, Vietnam and Cuba.

A "third camp" current of epigones, founded by Max Shachtman in the U.S. and Tony Cliff in Britain, was able to refrain from admiring the Stalinist counter-revolutions. But under the guise of "rank and filism" (reflecting in reality the labor aristocracy's sectoralist backwardness), they, like the Pabloites, adapted to reformist politicians and bureaucrats.

Pablo & Co. also began advocating "entrism sui generis" (of its own kind) into the reformist parties. Unlike Trotsky's, this was not a short-term tactic but a long-term strategy, and it meant not oppositional work but cooperation with the "progressive" leftist leaders within both social democratic and Stalinist parties. By 1952 the centrist degeneration became irretrievable when the strong Bolivian section, with the International's agreement, support-

ed the left bourgeois nationalists in that country and thereby betrayed a living revolution. All the major wings that were soon to emerge share the guilt.

As for Healy, in 1953 he and others split from the majority under Pablo and Mandel. But the break was not over fundamentals. For example, he adopted the Pabloite conception of "deformed workers' states" although he objected to calling the parties that created such states "Stalinist." He came to disagree with Pablo's entrism policy, declaring it a "tailist" capitulation to reformism, Stalinism and "third world" nationalism that would inevitably liquidate the independence of the revolutionary parties. In this he was right, but he did not perceive that defining the East European and Chinese revolutions as "socialist" (he quirkily drew the line at Cuba) doomed the perspective of an independent workers' revolution and therefore of the need for an independent party.

Together with the Cannon-led SWP in the United States, the Lambertists in France and several smaller adherents, the Healyites created the "International Committee of the Fourth International" in order to prevent Pablo from interfering with their national organizations and tactics. This was a nationalist schism, not a revolutionary one; the dispute was not over tailism but over which tail to grab. Lambert chose the social democracy over the Pabloites' French CP; the Cannonites soon became enamored of the middle-class Stalinoid milieu in the U.S. Healy himself had a history of entrism into the Labour Party and a close alliance with the left reform leadership of Aneurin Bevan; he even served in Bevan's "brain trust."

The collapse of Bevanism in the mid-1950s brought Healyism out of its entry and into an independent existence. This modified its form but not its centrism. In fact, Healy's blowfish effect and organizational sectarianism were all the more necessary over the years for maintaining independence: how else defend organizational boundaries when the political differences with left reformism were insufficient? Like much of the British left the Healyites have tailed the Labour Party and left unionists like Arthur Scargill (whose capitulatory course during the great British miners' strike of 1984-85 they, like the other centrists, shamelessly cheered). Healy's particular distinction was to anoint Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Libya's Qaddafi and Iran's Khomeini as genuine progressives, with the treacherous consequences already mentioned. However, in a milieu where many embraced Pol Pot's murderous Cambodian state as proletarian, Healy's favorites are not even especially bizarre.

The IC had always been a non-aggression pact between national sections that were (justifiably) mistrustful of each other as well as their Mandelite rivals. In time the Cannonites and Lambertists deserted, and Healy became the sole proprietor of his ragtag empire. He did not so much degenerate from the original politics shared with all the rest as consume them. Today the fragments of the WRP are no long-

er able to maintain the illusion of competing head-to-head with Labour. Many drift back into that swamp in order to bolster Bevan's lineal descendant, Anthony Wedgwood Benn. There they join forces with the panoply of other fraudulent Fourth Internationalists: Mandelites, Grantites, Matgammaites, etc. ad nauseam.

It is no accident that all these forces are drifting deeper into the camps of social democracy, Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism. The conscious catastrophe-mongering of the Healyites should not deter us from recognizing that world capitalism is suffering a crisis from which there will be no rebound without a smashing defeat of the proletariat. One consequence is the disintegration of the middle classes and the labor aristocracy, who flourished as never before during the post-war prosperity bubble. The blows against these layers as well as the laboring masses have punctured illusions that democracy, egalitarianism and national independence can flourish under capitalism. As societies polarize along class lines, many intermediate elements yearn for the restoration of the old illusions and drift to the right, towards the capitalist pole of power.

The working class too is beginning to stir once

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

The WRP will not be the last bureaucratic centrist outfit to crack apart between the rightward impulsion of anxious petty-bourgeois strata and the impending workers' eruption. The whole centrist network will polarize. There is serious ferment within the Healyite milieu, with many attempting to find out what went wrong and what is now to be done. Despite the repulsiveness of the past, there are cadres seeking a way out of cynicism and towards communism. Two things are necessary: one is to move the discussion onto fundamentals, not just peripheral questions.

The other is a new seismic explosion of the working class. This coming renewal will extract genuine revolutionists from the cynical "vanguards" of petty-bourgeois decay like that of Gerry Healy. ■

More Spartacist Thuggery

At a September 19 Spartacist League public forum in Berkeley, California, several members of another left organization, the Bolshevik Tendency, were assaulted and beaten by SL goons. This is hardly the first time that the Spartacists have used unprovoked violence against other working-class organizations (for example, see Socialist Voice No.14). It is a contemptible and cowardly policy by an outfit that finds itself increasingly unable to distinguish its allegedly Trotskyist politics from Stalinist thuggery.

The BTers were attacked as they were leaving the meeting room under protest right after the forum was officially over. According to the SL's "democratic" regulation, groups it doesn't like have to absent themselves from the informal discussion that normally follows any public event. The SL's own account (Workers Vanguard, September 26) admits that the BT's "provocation" occurred only while SLers were "ushering them out" -- a modest euphemism for the manhandling the SL traditionally employs (when it has a clear numerical advantage) against those whose political arguments it prefers not to hear.

The Spartacist account is remarkably vague about the details of the fight. But more detailed reports by both the BT and the San Francisco-based "Left Trotskyist Tendency" show that the SLers kept up the assault even after all their opponents were out of the meeting room. As well, the SL's charge that the BT was to blame for the arrival of the college police after the fight is a smokescreen. The Spartacists started the pushing and shoving, escalated it deli-

berately into a brawl -- and so bear full responsibility for the cops, who were summoned by another group meeting across the hall.

We have our own experience of Spartacist cop baiting. At a New York SL forum in July 1985, their guest speaker accused one of our supporters present, who had spoken critically of the SL, of being a police "plant." The Spartacists allowed this slander to pass unchallenged, and their goon squad "ushers" prevented our comrade from replying afterwards. The slander was printed in the July 26, 1985 Workers Vanguard, along with the SL's implicit endorsement of it. We protested by letter, and in their reply the SL suggested that they knew the police charge was unfounded -- but they made no public retraction of the published slander. Interested readers may obtain copies of the full correspondence from the LRP.

The BT is a grouping of ex-SLers retailing a sanitized version of the Spartacists' pro-Stalinist politics. As for the Spartacists, they create such incidents for a purpose. They adopt positions designed to outrage middle-class opinion as a way of breaking the ties of their young members on campus to the intelligentsia. Likewise they draw a line of blood between themselves and their left opponents in a desperate attempt to solidify loyalty to their dwindling organization. Nastiness of style and behavior substitute for political understanding and differentiation. The result is inevitably a corrupted, anti-proletarian cadre in an atmosphere that can readily be used for counterrevolutionary purposes by the bourgeoisie. ■

Labor

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militants, the demoralized and the scabs, have voted for the contract in a bureaucrat-controlled election. They have yet to see a written version of the contract they voted to accept, but the terms that have been publicized indicate a rotten deal.

The contract doesn't obligate Hormel to rehire striking workers; wages are to start at \$10 an hour and rise to \$10.70 in the third year, the end result (after previous givebacks) amounting to a one-cent increase since 1982. The two-tier system is to be phased out -- over four years. Escrow pay for Austin workers, deferred pay based on previous concessions, will be eliminated. Other plants will get three-year contracts, but Austin's runs to 1990 with the promise of common expiration dates postponed to the future.

Meanwhile, Jim Guyette and the rest of the ousted P-9 leadership are desperately trying to regroup behind the newly created North American Meat Packers Union (NAMPU), which wants to replace the UFCW in Austin and other plants. The mass mobilizations of last winter and spring have given way to a struggle directed entirely to the courts and the NLRB -- institutions with a well established anti-union bias -- along with the hopeless boycott effort. Despite all the talk about solidarity and the "rank and file," in the final analysis this strategy shows that the Guyette leadership has cynically concluded that mobilizing workers in mass action to defeat the bureaucrats and bosses is the wrong way forward.

The P-9 strike led by Guyette was a real revolt. Everyone who visited embattled Austin was struck by the radicalization in this conservative community. It electrified not only other meatpackers but workers throughout the Midwest and the country. Yet the revolt never spread very widely; much less did it reach its potential of a full-scale rebellion by the working class. It was confined and strangled within the confines of narrow trade unionism, with its dependence on the courts and the bourgeois state -- not only by its enemies without but by its temporizing leadership within. Even now when the ex-P-9ers turn to dual unionism they accept the official limits of trade unionism.

P-9's long struggle has won the respect and attention of other meatpackers, but now, when all

meatpackers are under attack, its effort to build a new union continues the leadership's policy against waging an all-out fight against the UFCW international. The Guyette team never launched a struggle for an industry-wide or even a Hormel-wide strike. It held itself to moral appeals to other Hormel workers to honor pickets, instead of calling on them and others to join in a united strike against the concessions demanded by the bosses against all the workers in the industry. If forming NAMPU frees the fragments of P-9 from William Wynn's control, the decertification drive means cutting the most advanced militants off from the UFCW ranks and from united action. It means abandoning thousands of workers looking for a way to fight to Wynn's sellout leadership.

The Left and the Strikers

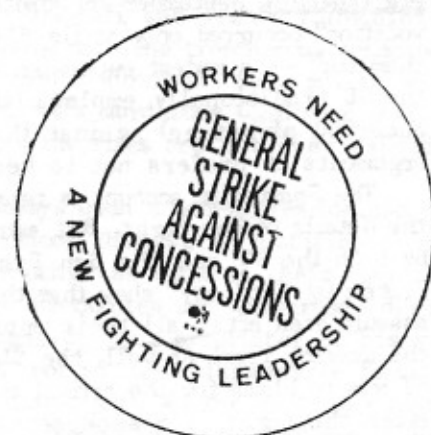
Some leftist supporters of P-9 like the Socialist Workers Party are so steeped in cynicism toward workers that they ignore every dual unionist disaster of the past in favor of ballyhooing the chosen policy of a leader they embrace. Others have held back from the dual union venture out of fear of alienating their moderate friends in the AFL-CIO hierarchy. The left labor monthly Labor Notes, for example, supports NAMPU reluctantly. Given its style of fudging the alternatives in the interest of a spurious unity between bureaucrats and pseudo-socialists, a precise description of Labor Notes' views is out of the question. However, the Guardian Fall Labor Supplement is accurate in concluding that Labor Notes "cautiously endorsed the plan, while stressing that in general such breakaways are not advisable." Of course, neither the radical Guardian nor Labor Notes explains what makes this breakaway "advisable" or offers any strategy to overcome P-9's defeat.

Much of the left even now cannot criticize Guyette's leadership because their cynical cheerleading during the strike has only been deepened by the defeat. While socialistic organizations lacked forces among the strikers, they did have influence among the leaders. For example, the left-dominated National Rank and File Against Concessions (NRFAC) did play a key role as a brake on the struggle. NRFAC's support brought money, food and other material assistance to

SHOW WHERE YOU STAND!

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

Buttons are \$1.00 each. Order from: Socialist Voice, 170 Broadway, Room 201, New York NY 10038.





The Emperor Jackie. Teamster heavy Jackie Presser being lugged into IBT convention by 'centurion' toadies. To fight the bosses you have to fight the bureaucrats — they can't be thrown aside lightly.

the workers, but it also meant tailoring P-9's struggle to the agendas of left-talking bureaucrats like Jan Pierce (vice president of the Communication Workers) and Henry Nicholas (president of the 1199 Hospital Workers Union).

The interests of the P-9 strike demanded mass action against a common enemy, the bosses as a class. Whatever gains American workers have ever won have come through mass struggle or the threat of it. P-9's strength was its ability to mobilize its own ranks and to attract tremendous active interest by other workers. Tragically this power was dissipated.

NRFAC, the Labor Notes types, the SWP and most other left outfits went along with Guyette's insistence on channeling P-9's appeals to other workers through "friendly" labor officials. But the Pierces and Nicholases did nothing to save P-9. The last thing any bureaucrat wants, however militant his posture, is a mass struggle. Unhappy though these "progressives" may be about Kirkland and Wynn's feeble response to the bosses' attacks, they are more frightened by any attempt to mobilize the ranks against the mainline bureaucrats and their strategy.

For years leftists have blamed their reluctance to go beyond the left wing of the labor bureaucracy upon the backwardness of the workers. The left may stand for mass struggle, even socialism -- it's just

that the workers aren't ready. Yet in the P-9 strike we see that when the workers rapidly advance to the left it is the leftists who are not ready. Their advice to P-9 was to play the game inside the AFL-CIO. They failed to provide leadership and alternatives that would give P-9 a real chance at victory over the bosses, courts, police and National Guard.

Throughout the strike the most corrupt leftists, above all the Communist Party, openly attacked P-9's militancy and sided with Wynn and Kirkland. Now other former P-9 supporters on the left have also decided that the problem was that Jim Guyette went too far. For example, David Moberg, writing in the influential social-democratic newspaper In These Times (September 24), criticized P-9's "grandiose bargaining objectives": "It had a tough battle ahead simply attempting to hold what it had, but it chose to make overly ambitious demands and open up topics that ultimately backfired against it." Unfortunately, Moberg doesn't spell out what demands were "overly ambitious." The one to keep their wages? Their seniority rights? Their limbs?

Moberg goes on to argue that an even more serious mistake was to continue the strike when the company made it clear it would bring in scabs and when the National Guard was called in. He has adopted a version of Wynn's "suicide" charge against P-9. Indeed

he writes that critics of P-9 and "the UFCW leaders are correct in saying that 'total victory or total defeat' is a misguided standard for a labor dispute that inevitably ends in a compromise -- for slightly better or slightly worse." While he blames the UFCW for the war between the international and the local, he criticizes P-9's tactic of "spreading attacks on the UFCW at other organizing drives."

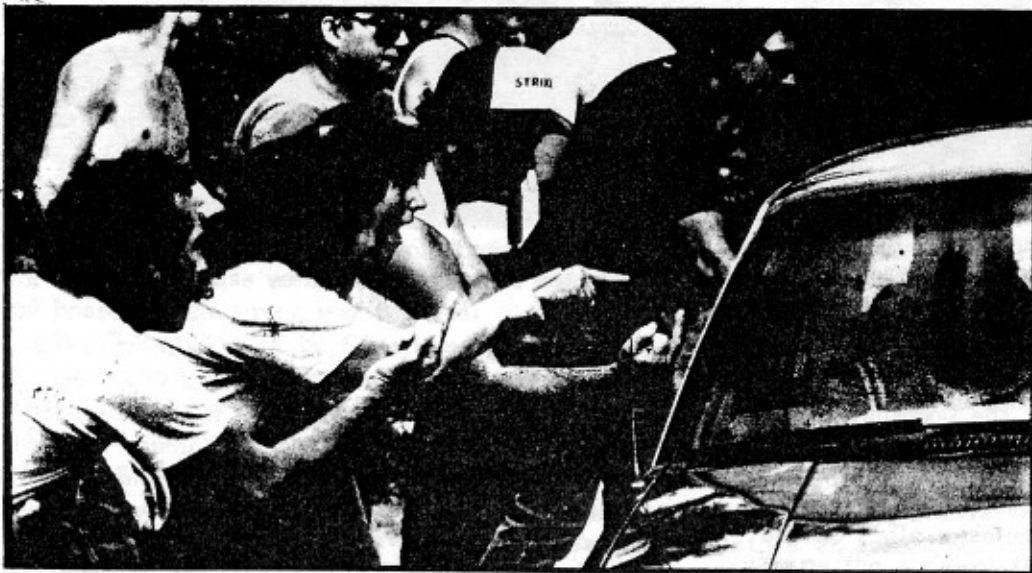
From the point of view of practical trade unionism P-9's course was indeed suicidal: an isolated strike in one plant during a period of concessions and high unemployment and with active opposition from the international. The P-9 strike did go beyond the wisdom of Moberg and others on the left. But it never reached the proper conclusions, it never found a strategy to match the militant spirit of the strikers. The Guyette leadership vacillated and wavered in face of the radical nature of the strike.

Moberg is right when he says the strike was doomed because of the scabs and the National Guard -- unless P-9 adopted a radically new strategy. Rather than going too far, P-9 didn't go far enough. It didn't shut the plant down when it could. Thousands

an atomized response within the working class. Workers are angry and tired of concessions and beginning to reject the "realistic" approach of accepting give-backs until things get better; they are questioning whether things will get better. As in Austin, we see even very conservative workers angered to the point they are ready to risk their jobs rather than submit to further extortion demands by capitalists.

These strikes look almost like small defensive guerrilla actions in the face of the massive offensive by the bosses against the working class. The failure of the unions has left workers to engage in isolated and often desperate struggles. What cynical leftists overlook is that struggles like P-9's are taking place because workers are willing to take risks rather than face a bleak future. The "no concessions" battle line drawn by P-9 was not the product of an ordinary narrow trade-unionist calculation. It was the eruption of workers willing to fight against unbelievable obstacles but was killed by the limits placed upon it.

The chief lessons of the P-9 battle were the



Striking Boise Cascade workers greet scabs in Oxford, Maine. Scab plague threatens workers across the country.

of other workers were ready to help, but it's hard to ask others to close their plants if you don't close your own. That would have been the catalyst. P-9 didn't fight for leadership of all meatpackers: rather than go back to work and wait for a unified strike in the fall, as Moberg argues, P-9 should have attempted to turn the strike into an industry-wide strike against concessions. It failed to tackle the AFL-CIO bureaucracy in Minnesota (which didn't raise an objection to Democratic Governor Perpich's use of the national guard) or nationally. It didn't point out the way to stop the police, courts and Guard -- a massive general strike.

The lessons of the P-9 strike take on greater importance as we see growing signs of working class militancy. A series of strikes -- by city workers in Detroit and Philadelphia, paperworkers in Maine, casino workers in Atlantic City, steelworkers in Chicago, meatpackers in Iowa and Illinois -- point to

strikers' refusal to accept that they were powerless to resist and the welcoming response by so many other workers. The chief negative lesson is the need to fight the domination of the class struggle by the official bureaucrats and their cynical left hangers-on. When struggles break out the left is revealed as a dead weight on the working class. New, bigger and deeper explosions are coming, and in the present discussion the left is serving notice that it will continue to straitjacket workers' efforts. In contrast, communists fight for organization that enables the workers' movement to fulfill itself: factory committees, workers' and unemployed councils -- and above all a new leadership in the form of a mass revolutionary party. We fight for the general strike not only to unite isolated struggles but because it sets the stage for the overall struggle for political power, class against class. Cynicism has no part in the proletarian struggle for a human world. ■

South Africa

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transportation and arms for the vigilantes, known as the "fathers" or "white cloths"; it then shot and arrested "comrades" and their supporters who tried to resist the thugs' shack-burnings. The regime thus achieved two long-term goals: dismantling the radicalized Crossroads settlement (a reported 50,000 homes were destroyed), and mobilizing its black pawns against the liberation struggle.

One reason for the ruling National Party's aggression was to pre-empt the growing rightward swing of the white petty bourgeoisie and labor aristocracy. Not fascist themselves (despite the rhetoric of demagogic leftists); the Nationalists are merely racist swine swilling on the profits of near-slave labor. However, they fertilize the ground for the fascist Afrikaner Resistance Movement and similar elements. But the pre-emption will not succeed in the long run.

The Nationalists feel pressure from the revolutionary struggle as well as from the relatively liberal English-speaking mine-owners and industrialists and their foreign imperialist friends; thus they continue to make cosmetic changes in the apartheid structure. The most recent of these were the scrapping of the pass laws, the promised restoration of South African citizenship to residents of the black "homelands" and vaguer promises to set up an advisory council elected by blacks. (The citizenship promise was later reneged on for most of the 10 million people affected, thus in effect continuing the hated pass law restrictions.) Such changes solve nothing for the black masses and add fuel to the fascist fire among whites.

More important, by itself the Nationalist program of armed repression is failing to stem the revolt. Black unions are growing in number and strength, the comrades win adherents and become more radical, and increasing numbers of older, less political blacks are joining in active struggle. The only hope to preserve apartheid is the mass counterrevolutionary mobilization of the entire white population, through fascism.

The white population of South Africa is more divided than at any time in recent memory. Many English speakers, in general better off than the Afrikaners, lean toward making concessions. Its big bourgeoisie, linked to British and American capital and facing an increasingly organized black work force, has held discussions with the African National Congress (ANC), the middle class-led black liberation force. At the same time, middle-class English-speaking whites, without industrial property to tie them to South Africa, are starting to flee abroad.

There are of course Afrikaner big businessmen who share the outlook of the English-speaking bourgeoisie, but on the whole they depend on the privileges of apartheid to stay afloat. The combination of economic depression and the growing black revolution is driving many Afrikaans-speaking workers and small

businessmen into unemployment and bankruptcy. The threatened loss of their racial privileges and the Afrikaner pioneer tradition of self-sufficiency makes an autarkic fascism look viable.

The Sanctions Avalanche

The Western powers, with substantial interest in maintaining capitalist exploitation in South Africa, are pressuring the regime to give up a little to save a lot. Until recently apartheid has provided world capital with ideal conditions for investment: advanced manufacturing and mining and a super-exploited



June anti-apartheid rally in New York. Liberal peace-mongering is a filthy betrayal of South African black workers. 'Peace' with Botha means more massacres. Blacks need guns for defense and revolution.

working class. But the world economic downturn since 1984 has hit the South African economy hard; raw materials exports have declined, and the rand, South Africa's currency, has lost half its value in just under three years. Combine this with the prospect of revolution by the mightiest working class in all Africa and the imperialists start to panic. Not only will a prime source of profits be lost, but so will be Western imperialism's most effective counterrevolutionary bastion on the continent.

There are divisions and disputes among the imperialist powers, but these concern not whether to abolish apartheid -- only how to make the South African government modify it, in order to preserve the system before it's too late. Adding to the pressure on the imperialists are appeals by the bourgeois neo-colonial regimes in Asia and Africa, notably India and Zimbabwe. Even Malcolm Fraser, the right-wing

former prime minister of Australia (a secondary imperialist power in its own right), was convinced by a visit to South Africa that the whites would have to be saved from themselves. "Time is fast running out for major Western powers," he commented. Indeed, the "sanctions movement" in the West is designed precisely to salvage capitalist chestnuts from the flames of revolution.

The movement for imperialist sanctions and divestment is becoming an avalanche; France has joined, Japan is about to do so, and the only major holdouts at this moment are the conservative governments of the U.S., Britain and West Germany. Here too the pressure is mounting. Despite Prime Minister Thatcher's opposition (out of concern for the black workers, she says, not British capitalists' billions of pounds of investments in apartheid!), it is an open secret that the ruling Tories are moving toward sanctions in some form. Likewise for the German Christian Democrats.

In the United States the Reagan administration still stands fast against what are called "meaningful" sanctions. Reagan himself made a speech during the summer renewing his friendship with the apartheid regime. But he is almost isolated, even in the Republican Party; politicians who have to run for re-election understand that defending apartheid will not be to their credit. The sanctions advocates have found an appropriate leader in the person of Senator Richard Lugar, reactionary Republican from Indiana and sponsor of the bill (passed by Congress over Reagan's veto) calling for an end to new investment in South Africa and a few other mild measures.

All this conservative parliamentary concern for aiding the oppressed is possible only because it is a farce. Many bourgeois spokesmen -- British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe as well as Reagan -- make the point that sanctions won't work. And they won't, especially given the power of the imperialist forces that openly oppose them. There is as much chance of sanctions being obeyed as there is for the laws restricting CIA aid to the Nicaraguan contras.

Western radicals who genuinely support the struggle of South African blacks -- as opposed to those who merely wish to have "their" country or their college purified of evil -- will note how easily the imperialists' self-sanctions can be circumvented. There are several trading countries that are determined to keep doing business with South Africa at whatever moral cost: South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Israel, and the countries of Eastern Europe (see the Proletarian Revolution Supplement No.9).

A New York Times article (August 17) quoted a South African executive: "There are always ways and means of getting things through. It just may cost a little more." And with all the super-moralist chest-puffing by U.S. politicians, there are mighty few who have said a word critical of Israel's ever-closer alliance with apartheid. Israel is the chosen pipeline for U.S. commodities evading whatever sanctimonious sanctions are adopted anywhere.

As for the growing spate of divestment moves by U.S. firms, because of the South African depression many firms are happy to pull out; honoring sanctions gives them a cheap moral halo in return for a routine business decision. The pro-sanctions Times noted:

"Often, it is only the name of the owner that changes, with the same workers assembling and selling the same products from abroad. Indeed, many companies that have disinvested have the same cash flow from South Africa as before, but no longer face either political pressure from anti-apartheid groups or financial losses resulting from the South African economy. And in some cases, the new owners have made the business more profitable by cutting wages -- and dropping social spending programs." (October 22.)

And if the new local owners can cut their costs at the workers' expense, then the continuing revenues for the parent company will be all the more secure.

Instead of waging a solidarity campaign that sows illusions in capitalist sanctions, communists fight within the unions for a labor embargo on goods being sent to South Africa. (As for imports from South Africa, we favor only those protests in which the growing protectionist sentiment in the U.S. does not predominate.) A workers' embargo is an important step in building class-conscious internationalism. The most effective support for the South African revolution is to build for upheavals by American workers against the capitalists who are the common enemy of workers in both countries.

Black Workers -- the Alternative

Despite the widespread illusions in sanctions fostered by Western liberals, South Africa's black workers in practice are learning to rely on their own potentially revolutionary strength. Botha's state of emergency set back the struggle but did not stop it; if anything it is more resilient and deeper-rooted than ever. Polls taken this summer of members of the new black workers' union federation COSATU show that three-quarters of the members oppose capitalism and favor socialism. The growing demand of the comrades in the townships is: give us guns! The ANC leadership has given out a few, but nowhere near the numbers needed. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, now the top Anglican churchman in the country, testified to the growing radicalization of the black masses. So little faith do they have in his program of non-violence, he said, that "If I were a young man, I would not even listen to that Tutu!"

With this level of feeling among the masses, the only factor that capitalism can rely on, barring a fascist "solution," is the moderation of the current black leadership. But all that the accommodationist whites can offer is a dappling of black faces in the government and a few sops for the dependent black bourgeoisie -- nothing for the black masses. Thus despite the spread and deepening of the black struggle, there is no guarantee that it will win unless it

moves beyond its present leadership. The masses are already taking steps to do just that.

The key is for the millions of black South African workers to take the leadership of the struggle and direct it in the internationalist interests of the proletariat. Everyone, even their enemies, recognizes their power. According to Bobby Godsell, the chief labor specialist for Anglo American, the giant liberal corporation that hopes for a deal with the ANC, "A general strike could bring the country to its knees in a couple of weeks."

General strikes have been called in the past two years of intense struggle. But the moderate leaders have ensured that none lasted more than a couple of days. They are afraid to bring the struggle to a head and allow the workers to challenge state power, claiming that they first have to consolidate strength in the shops before plunging into big battles. Although COSATU is new it is already bureaucratized. Its leaders know how to take advantage of the members' stake in their jobs, wretched though their conditions are. They hold the workers back in order to mediate between them and the bosses, especially the "enlightened" ones.

Proof of the workers' powerful class consciousness came after the deadly Kinross gold mine fire of September 16, which killed 177 miners (172 of them black) and injured hundreds more. Mineworkers' union head Cyril Ramaphosa demanded a one-day work stoppage — by the companies! A few days later angry miners boycotted and disrupted the mine bosses' hypocritical memorial service, accurately calling them murderers. Later thousands attended their own memorial rally and planned their own one-day general strike in protest. At the rally Ramaphosa spoke:

"From today onwards we are not going to tolerate any more accidents caused by a white miner who earns more than the black miners killed at Kinross. The time has come now when we workers have to take control of all the mines in the country." (New York Times, September 25.)

He and his fellow bureaucrats have done nothing to carry out this threat. The fact that he feels compelled to talk this way at mass meetings nevertheless indicates the mood of the rank and file workers.

Winnie Mandela of the ANC also addressed the rally:

"There may well come a time when your leaders will ask you for greater sacrifices than a one-day strike ... The moment you stop digging their gold, their diamonds, that's the moment you shall be free. You dig the wealth. You hold that golden key for our liberation."

These words are absolutely true, but the ANC is not interested in workers' power. It welcomes the pressure of the mass upsurge (now two years old) in order to maneuver for a Zimbabwe-style deal to gain a token share of power. Their hoped-for solution is to allow domestic and imperialist capitalists to retain much of their economic power in return for putting

middle-class black leaders in charge of political affairs. The bourgeois radical ANC is an obstacle to the masses seeking liberation from apartheid and the exploitation it serves.

On the other hand, the young "comrades," mostly students without jobs who have been boycotting school, have little to lose by taking immediate action against the system. They have organized community councils that can meet and move at a moment's notice. They can mobilize at any time to patrol the streets, shops and train and bus stops to enforce consumer boycotts and "stayaways" (i.e., strikes). Although their politics are to the left of the ANC, they still look to it for guidance. And without a working-class social base they have often taken authoritarian attitudes toward the masses.

In early September, when the government forcibly broke up mass funerals of people killed by the army in Soweto, the comrades declared a stayaway. It was 85 percent effective in Johannesburg, but many workers were reported to have resented the fact that the strike was called and enforced by the comrades' patrols, not by their own unions. And again the stayaway was for one day only.

Within the black liberation struggle, the existing alternative leaderships to the ANC are different versions of middle-class radicalism. One is the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO), which despite its socialist claims is averse to independent working-class activity like general strikes. The South African Communist Party, which works within the ANC and serves to moderate its radicalism, is totally committed to a capitalist "mixed economy" after apartheid is negotiated away. A genuine workers' communist party is missing.

Such a party would be a pole for the small but growing number of workers and other people who not only want socialism but are determined to work full time to build the proletarian revolution. It would fight for practical steps to place the working class at the head of the struggle and united all South Africa's oppressed behind the workers.

Any assessment of the state of the black liberation struggle has to take into account the forces of counterrevolution in the hands of the arch-collaborationist Zulu chieftain Gatsha Buthelezi. His fascist-like Inkatha organization has periodically had bloody encounters with the ANC, UDF and COSATU.

When COSATU was founded, president Flijah Barayi announced that his members would collectively destroy their pass cards if the apartheid pass laws weren't abolished in six months — in effect he threatened a general strike. The general strike didn't happen, despite Botha's doublecross on his promises. But it must. It is the vital action needed to mobilize against the state of emergency — not for two days but until the regime caves in. It would train the advanced workers for the seizure of power, and thereby show the way to workers, "comrades" and all fighters against exploitation and oppression. ■

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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South Africa: Reform or Revolution?

This summer the South African regime took actions that should have killed any remaining illusions in the possibility of the peaceful reform of apartheid. Unfortunately there are still many who urge South African black people to forsake armed self-defense in favor of a negotiated "solution" with their enslavers — not only the Reagans and Thatchers but also self-styled supporters of black liberation, the Tutus and others who insist on the disinvestment strategy because it allegedly allows peaceful change. They share the blame for the continued existence of the apartheid regime.

In June President Botha declared a new state of emergency and authorized the arrest without warrant or trial of all those held to be enemies of public order. In addition to police-inspired murders, as many as 2000 black unionists, young radical "comrades" and others were picked up immediately; as of this writing more than 10,000 have been detained for varying periods. The regime has forbidden the press and other media, domestic and foreign, to report directly on any police actions or "disturbances." In totalitarian style, the only permitted news of the many clashes between blacks and the security forces comes from the racist government itself.

The new state of emergency is providing the cover needed for the police and army to step up their invasions and massacres in the black townships. Soweto outside Johannesburg has been under virtual military occupation for over a year; since September, the army has been evicting selected families from their houses for non-payment of rent, the first such action against the rent strike that hundreds of thousands began in 1985. Near Capetown the army organized assaults by right-wing blacks against squatters' neighborhoods organized by the "comrades." It provided

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Elijah Barayi, COSATU president, is sitting on a powderkeg. South African workers will move beyond hesitant positions of their leadership.

Labor in the Wake of P-9

Local P-9's strike against the Hormel meatpacking company in Austin, Minnesota earlier this year was one of the major labor battles of the 1980s. In it a militant work force took on not only the capitalist bosses but their conservative international union leaders as well. In the wake of the strike's defeat a discussion has broken out in labor and left circles attempting to determine what went wrong. Its outcome could have a lasting effect on whether the working class struggle will win or be crushed in the coming years. (For a full account of both the strike and our

views, see "The Battle of Hormel," Proletarian Revolution No.26.)

The fire of the Austin workers rose so high that even after their defeat the bureaucracy is still trying to stamp out every last spark. They know that the ranks of labor are a tinderbox that can flame up in action at any time. Having placed Austin Local P-9 in trusteeship, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) International has now reached an agreement with the Hormel bosses. Austin workers, including the

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