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Colin Powell: Savior of U.S. Capitalism?

by Walter Daum

As skirmishing for the 1996 U.S. presidential election gets under way, sections of the bourgeoisie and much of the media are going gaga over retired general Colin Powell and his possible candidacy. The open willingness of political insiders to dismiss both President Clinton and his Republican challengers — in favor of a non-candidate who has not yet even declared his political affiliation — shows the depth of the ruling class's leadership crisis.

According to polls, the public is scornful of the candidates of the two major parties. Clinton and his leading rival, Senator Dole, are both seen as the political panderers they are and have pathetic approval ratings. For its own reasons, the big bourgeoisie itself is unhappy with the current choices. It needs a president with enough popular respect to carry out its agenda. The *New York Times* recently noted:

Big business now looks like a constituency in search of a party — culturally alienated from the Democrats, perpetually frustrated by the Republicans. (Sept. 24.)

Its problem is more than alienation and frustration: behind the capitalists' political crisis is the class struggle.

The crisis of bourgeois leadership is coming to a head because U.S. capital is being forced to deepen its long-term attack on the proletariat. As we explained in *PR 49*, the bourgeois austerity program aims to produce a "contained depression" to qualitatively shrink the workers' share of the national income. The ruling class wants to achieve this without provoking a social eruption; it is well aware of the frustration and anger of workers and oppressed minorities raging just below the surface of everyday life.

That is why decisive elements of the "establishment" ditched the bellicose Bush in 1992 in favor of Clinton's more restrained response to the Los Angeles riots. Before that, Washington's careful build-up of overwhelming military force



Generals Powell and Schwarzkopf plotting imperialist Gulf War.

before launching the Gulf War was due in large measure to its awareness that the war's popularity would turn to popular rage if it dragged on and demanded economic sacrifices.

WHY THE BOURGEOISIE NEEDS POWELL

To carry out the bourgeoisie's classwide siege, workers have to be kept divided. As the initial reaction to the police beating of Rodney King revealed, white workers have a deep sense of democracy and fairness intermixed with more backward consciousness. Whites have to be stirred up against Blacks, Latinos and immigrants; hence the attack on already low minority wages and government "welfare," which in reality drags down wages and conditions for all. Likewise the attacks on women's health care, welfare, and related social services, which also lower benefits for all workers.

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COFI and LRP Report

Over the summer LRP comrades made an extensive visit to South Africa (see page 24). Public reports are planned for both New York and Chicago in the near future. Interested readers can phone or write for information. (Chicago: 312-463-1340; New York: 212-330-9017.)

In October we intervened at a meeting in New York featuring South African speaker Ben Peterson, a representative of WOSA and leader of the Turning Wheel union. We pointed to the failure of the WOSA-backed Workers List Party to win a significant vote in the past elections and tied this outcome to the fact that they ran against the ANC on a reformist program, underestimating the advancing revolutionary consciousness of a significant layer of workers.

LRP comrades in both New York and Chicago participated in a variety of activities against the racist frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal. While virtually every group in the pseudo-Trotskyist left calls for a labor party as a leading slogan in the fight to free Mumia, the LRP fights for the revolutionary party and socialist revolution. Cross-class Black nationalism, which inevitably leaves leadership in the hands of the middle class, was the politics of one wing of the Mumia defense. But this cannot be countered by a slogan that pushes the union leaders as the alternative. The notion that any wing of the current labor bureaucracy stands for a fight against racism is reformist fantasy.

In the light of the mounting enthusiasm for a reformist labor party among middle-class centrists, our Chicago group also organized a talk entitled "Was Trotsky a Labor Party Advocate?" The talk looked at Trotsky's development of the

tactic historically; it counterposed his understanding of the labor party as a tactic for building the revolutionary party, in the context of a mass class-struggle movement, to the timeless use of the labor party slogan by centrists today from Labor Militant to the Spartacist League.

In October, LRPers joined striking newspaper workers on the picket line in Detroit. While it was great to meet with fellow workers fighting union-busting, we saw that the union bureaucrats' efforts to demoralize and split the ranks, including a red-baiting campaign, had a substantial effect. As our leaflet on the strike pointed out, workers' fighting spirit had been resurrected in Detroit, but the bureaucrats' capitalist politics led them to erode the struggle.

In New York labor, we intervened in meetings over the issue of "rollbacks" for a sector of 1199 workers in public hospitals. Union president Dennis Rivera had sold his last contract deal to the members with a promise of no layoffs. This lie has been exposed in recent months. With the mounting attacks on health care, transportation, and education, a revolutionary leadership to fight for a general strike in this city is central. Leaflets on these cutbacks and massive attacks on workers in New York are available on request.

Chicago comrades attended the Midwest Anti-Fascist Network conference in Columbus, Ohio, in October. In a milieu dominated by petty-bourgeois anarchism, we emphasized the need for a class understanding of fascism and the state, and for working class tactics such as mass armed self-defense. We also took up the practical questions of how to organize anti-Klan confrontations, highlighting our opposition to the dangerous practice of allowing the cops to file protesters into fenced-in "piggens." Despite the sharp divide between our politics and the conference panelists evident in every discussion, we generated a good amount of interest in our literature among the youth present.

In late October we joined the New York march against the U.S. blockade of Cuba, timed to coincide with Fidel Castro's U.N. visit. The LRP felt it important to oppose imperialist attacks on the Cuban people. The mushy left notion that defense of Cuba against imperialism means political support to Castro and the Cuban ruling class must be countered. Castro's activities during his visit demonstrated his concern to make deals with U.S. imperialism, not to overthrow it.

INTERNATIONAL CENTRIST SPLITS

In recent months the international centrist left has been plagued by increased fracturing. Factional splits can be productive if they spur new ideas and programmatic clarification. But what seems to be happening now is the further spread of the ideological rot already rampant in these circles.

The death of Ernest Mandel occurred at a time when his
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Bosnia: U.N. War Imposes Imperialist 'Peace'

The new U.S.-led Western diplomatic offensive, linked to the NATO bombing campaign against the nationalist Serb forces, has changed the balance of power and the nature of the Bosnian war — and demonstrated once again the imperialists' indifference to human life and suffering.

The bombing signalled the great powers' determination to establish their right to intervene militarily wherever and whenever they like. What made this possible was their agreement on a consensus plan for Bosnia. The scheme is to set up a balance of power between the two regional strongmen, Milosevic of Serbia and Tudjman of Croatia, with a semi-independent Bosnia remaining as a rump state between the two. And even then Bosnia will be divided into two "sub-states" tied to Croatia and Serbia.

In the months before the bombing, NATO and the U.N. had colluded in the Serb conquest of the "safe haven" Muslim towns of Srebrenica and Zepa, as well as in the Croatian takeover of Serb-populated Western Slavonia and Krajina. "Ethnic cleansing" of all the victimized peoples was rampant. Yet Dutch troops in Srebrenica turned civilians over to Serb military killers, while Clinton's diplomats snidely winked at the Croatian slaughter in the Krajina.

NATO's aim is not to defeat or even cripple the Bosnian Serb army, as some on the left claim, but to force its leaders to the bargaining table. The Serbs had been fighting to prevent the formation of a Bosnian state and to establish the Greater Serbia proclaimed by the demagogue Milosevic. But he, Tudjman and Bosnian president Izetbegovic had long ago made clear their readiness to serve as imperialist clients; it remained for Bosnian Serb chief Karadzic to do so too.

A further goal of the bombing campaign was to persuade the Muslims and other supporters of an independent Bosnia to accept a subordinate status. The bombing "proves" that the U.N. will guarantee their statehood by military means.

DEFEAT THE U.S./U.N./NATO ATTACK!

As working-class revolutionaries, we are for the defeat of the imperialist intervention and therefore support the military actions of the Serb forces against it. Any setback for NATO is a blow against imperialism and thus a victory in the class struggle — even if inflicted by bloody criminals like Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic or a Saddam Hussein.

The bombing campaign restores imperialism's clout in the Balkans. This is why the workers and oppressed peoples of the world have to oppose NATO's attacks and make every effort to aid their defeat.

Under the umbrella of the NATO bombing, the Bosnian army, allied with Bosnian Croats and the Croatian army, seized territories in northwest Bosnia. NATO accepted the advance, warning that conquering too much territory would endanger the "peace" (even threatening to bomb the Bosnians). This confirms that the imperialist aim is to broker a balance-of-power deal while keeping its pawns in line.

Previously, NATO had confined itself to pinprick attacks

on Serb forces, even after the most murderous acts of ethnic cleansing. As well, the U.N. maintained an arms embargo to the region, preventing the Bosnian government from defending its nation's right to existence. (Some arms got through, but not the heavy weapons that would have balanced supplies from Serbia proper.) An economic embargo against trade with Serbia, applied because of its violation of U.N. dictates, victimized the Serb population without halting Milosevic's aid to his Bosnian Serb allies.

The break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991 reflected the crisis of imperialism's "new world order." Before the bombing, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote that "Four years into the Balkan war, the only thing more confused than the war itself is Western policy and its astonishing string of failures aimed at containing the conflict." (July 28.) That has now changed.

The imperialists' indecisiveness was caused by their divi-



U.S. plane readied for NATO bombing run against Serb nationalists.

sion. Germany, asserting its predominant influence in East Europe, had championed Croatian and Slovenian independence from the start. Britain and France, the declining European powers, leaned toward Serbia. The U.S., always the advocate of stability through local junior partners, at first called for Yugoslav unity under Serbian leadership. Then, under pressure to oppose ethnic slaughter, the U.S. turned to its dual strongman policy. That became clear in 1994, when it brokered the Croatia-Bosnia partnership that began to turn the military tide. It has now succeeded in reasserting its own imperialist hegemony through military and diplomatic might.

WAR NO LONGER FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

The LRP has denounced all the imperialist embargoes and favored Bosnia's right to self-determination since the start of the war in 1992. As we wrote in *PR 43*:

Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a nation as such but a collection of peoples with a common history — similar to many African states carved out by imperialism not based on a single national territory. Our position of self-determination and defensism means support for the struggle against oppression, not recognition of a formal national status.

It follows that we favor self-determination by the Bos-

nians as a whole: Muslims, Croats, Serbs, Jews and those who reject an ethnic designation. ... But the nationalist oppression and imperialist interference may instead forge a solely Muslim nation. That would be a setback for internationalism, but communists would defend that nation's self-determination.

The multi-ethnic character of Bosnia has been greatly undermined if not destroyed by three years of vicious nationalist warfare. Bosnian self-determination of any kind is further sabotaged by current events: the Bosnia that emerges from the imperialist deal will be heavily dependent on imperialism if not under the thumb of Croatia. The deal forces the government to give up areas (e.g., the already "cleansed" towns of eastern Bosnia, like Srebrenica) that have traditionally been majority Muslim or multi-ethnic in population.

The Milosevic government is acquiescing in the Bosnian conquests in northwest Bosnia, even though the area is largely Serb-populated, like the adjacent Krajina. This indicates its compliance with the imperialist deal; Milosevic has already recognized Bosnia's independence. Given NATO's military role, the Serb nationalists' power to prevent a Bosnian state has been checked. This situation may change, but preventing a "Muslim" statelet is not now within the Serbs' power.

The Bosnian government and army are fighting now to carry out the imperialist deal and take over their allotted 51 percent of the country. The deadly cynicism of all sides is highlighted by the fact that they have in effect agreed on mutual ethnic cleansing as the way to ensure homogeneous regions for the ensuing "substates." Waiting till after the peace settlement to exchange populations would fail, they fear, since civilians could be persuaded to leave their ancestral towns and villages only by force. So the brutal cleansing occurs by tacit agreement of the rival authorities.

Thus the fighting now, as far as we know, is not over Bosnian national existence but essentially over borders. This situation could change, but under present circumstances we therefore withdraw our military support to Bosnia's army against the Serbs. In a parallel situation we withdrew support for Croatia against Serbia when that war was no longer for independence but solely for additional turf.

To continue supporting the Bosnian government against Serbian forces at this time means defending Croatia's battle over turf with Serbia. It would also mean strengthening Croatia for the inevitable future struggles with an independent Bosnia, since the well-armed Croatian army is gaining most of the victories on the ground.

We still give military support to any non-government Bosnian forces fighting imperialism. As well, in future conflicts against U.N., Serbian or Croatian forces, for self-determination and against the imperialist deal, we would support the Bosnian side.

REACTIONARY NATIONALISM

The primary lesson in the Yugoslav wars is that nationalism offers no solution to the masses of people; it is bourgeois and reactionary, in an age when capitalism has no way out of its deepening rot. Bosnia is clear proof: politicians on all sides who proclaimed nationalist goals now display contemptuous disregard for *their own* people (not just "the enemy"), in whose name they profess to be acting.

Nevertheless, communists since Lenin have supported the right of oppressed nations to self-determination (the oppressors already have that right) — because any defeat of imperialism is a gain for the international working class. At

the same time, we fight to break the oppressed masses from their nationalist leaders. In the case of war, as in Bosnia, this means that our policy has been military and technical — not political — support to the nationalist misleaders.

As we summed up at the start of the Yugoslav wars:

Defense of self-determination is also necessary for proletarian unity, which can only be based on recognizing the equality of peoples. Unity of workers of all nationalities is the only answer. Those Serbs who have opposed the invasion of Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, notably the soldiers' mothers who demonstrated against mobilization and the Serbian reservists who deserted en masse, have taken mighty steps to show that the Serbian masses are not the enemy. A genuine revolutionary communist party would build on these actions to show the working-class alternative to the horrors of nationalism.

From reports we have seen, the weight of the embargo has halted the Serb resistance movement. As well, the utter corruption of the imperialists and their subordinates is illustrated by the proposed treaty's proclamation of the right of all refugees to return to their homes. This is abstractly just, but it is obviously unworkable in a situation of ethnic slaughter. The treaty is in reality designed to put an end to such rights by creating homogenous areas. Nationalism and imperialism have jointly eroded the right to self-determination. The only solution to guarantee the rights of nations and ethnic minorities is the internationalist working-class struggle leading to a socialist federation of Balkan states.

LEFT CAPITULATIONS

In *PR 47* we analyzed the "social-imperialism" of much of the Western left over Bosnia: policies that accept all or part of the Western powers' military and political intervention. The new diplomatic round and above all the NATO bombing have only made the left capitulations worse, notably on the centrist far left.

The British Workers Power group often appears the most revolutionary among the centrists. WP had vacillated among several lines in the Yugoslav war (see *PR 43*) but finally settled on defending Bosnia's right to self-determination. Until September it had also raised the slogan, "UN/NATO out of Former Yugoslavia," which implies opposition to any attack as well as support for any force fighting NATO's presence. But when the bombing began, WP wobbled once more:

The RS [Bosnian Serb republic] is under direct attack by imperialist warplanes and the British and French ground troops of the Rapid Deployment Force. Whilst we recognize the right of the RS to defend the traditional majority areas, towns and villages against attack by these forces, it cannot make us in the present conditions defencists of the RS. Thus in the war between NATO and the Republika Srpska, revolutionaries continue to take a revolutionary defeatist position on both sides. Each side's strategic goals are reactionary.

Reactionary both sides are, but there is a qualitative gap between imperialist NATO and a local nationalist power. NATO's triumph means the greater and more lasting danger of bolstering imperialism. When imperialists use armed force to police even one of their local satraps, as with Saddam Hussein in 1991, communists take sides: we want imperialism to be defeated. That should count double for WP, which still claims that the ex-Yugoslav states are workers' states!

In analyzing their anti-Marxist theory in *PR 49*, we noted

that WP refused to defend the East German "workers' state" from absorption by West Germany. Now they repeat the double surrender of communist principles: non-defense of a "workers' state" under imperialist attack. No doubt they are bowing to pressures from the British Labour left, who call for an imperialist peace rather than war against NATO. This latest example of anti-Leninism confirms the connection we drew between their false theory of Stalinism and their inveterate tailing of British reformism.

On this side of the Atlantic, the Communist Party USA, the International Socialist Organization and the Spartacist League support imperialist policy from a different angle. These three groups, often at swords' points, have had the same stance on Bosnia: claiming to support none of the nationalist sides but endorsing the arms embargo that hindered Bosnia from defending itself.

The pseudo-Trotskyist ISO and SL both argued that ending the embargo would mean calling on the West to save Bosnia; they forget that in the Spanish civil war of the 1930's Trotsky demanded an end to the imperialist embargo that prevented the beleaguered Republic from getting arms. The CP simply calls for implementing a "peace settlement," as if an imperialist-imposed deal is a solution.

With the NATO bombing, the ISO and SL diverged. Like the CP, the ISO calls for an end to the bombing but says nothing about defending its victims. This evasion parallels its behavior in the Gulf War: as part of the social-patriotic anti-war movement, it refused to call for defending Iraq.

The Spartacists, arguing that "in recent months ... this has become an imperialist war against the Serbs," correctly

conclude that defense of the Bosnian Serbs against the U.S. and NATO is called for. (*Workers Vanguard*, Sept. 8.). But they throw in defense of the Serbs against imperialism's "puppets of the Muslim-Croat alliance," ignoring that Milosevic is equally subordinate to imperialism and that the West is now orchestrating the territorial carve-up on all sides.

Selective anti-imperialism has been a Spartacist trademark for years. Most recently they reported the Serb conquest of Srebrenica and Zepa without mentioning the slaughter by the victors or the collusion of the U.N., which they had decided was by then on the anti-Serb side.

The most blatant pro-imperialist line we have seen on the pseudo-Trotskyist left was taken by Socialist Action (U.S.), which has been strongly pro-Bosnian nationalist. Their article, "Why the U.S. and NATO were compelled to punish Serb chauvinists" by Gerry Foley (*SA*, Sept. 1995), implied that the Serbs deserved NATO's punishment — it certainly said nothing about opposing the imperialist bombings. In reporting the flight of Serb civilians during the Croatian conquest of Krajina, Foley incredibly described the Croatian army as "the oppressed" and the civilians as "oppressors."

Why this perennial pandering to imperialist programs by the pseudo-Trotskyist left? Some capitulate to petty-bourgeois nationalism, like SA. Others promote illusions in ex-Stalinists of the Milosevic stripe, like the SL. The underlying reason is their contempt for the working class. They do not want to see masses armed to take political decisions into their own hands. Therefore they look for other saviors, and find themselves denouncing one side of imperialism's two-pronged strategy while endorsing the second. ●

'Tax the Rich'? Exchange with L.A. Workers Voice

We print below an exchange of letters with *Los Angeles Workers Voice*, a group that originated in the now-defunct Marxist-Leninist Party. (On the MLP, see PR 46.)

LAWV LETTER

Our LAWV group is studying your PR #49 and we agree with very much of what you say about building up a real mass movement based on the working class, exposing labor fakers, poverty pimp charlatans, bourgeois political influence, etc.

But why do you counterpose the slogans of "Tax the Rich," "Make the Banks Pay," etc. to the call for the general strike? Marxists don't like to see the workers get creamed! A General Strike would have tremendous importance in any major U.S. industrial center now. It would probably not be the revolutionary takeover at this point. But it would sure force the pols to get on their Lear Jets, huddle with their capitalist masters and political stooges and fork over the money to stop social service cuts.

Why counterpose the two different types of slogans? Why not be flexible and use both? Your approach seems

sterile, wooden and undialectical. Soaking the rich with taxes via mass actions, general strikes, etc. will send some marginal firms packing, but 98 percent will pay the bill! If the capitalists don't pay the bill, then the politicians will make the working people pay more! This is one of the side effects of the near paralysis of most working-class struggles over the last 15 years. Increased workers organized militancy can force the rich and their state to retreat. We have to learn to win battles first, then it is easier to talk about ultimate victory in the class war!

Neil C., LAWV

LRP REPLY

We too want to see the working class win battles as a step toward socialist revolution. That is why we oppose raising the slogan Tax the Rich and propose instead the demands Expropriate the Banks and Corporations and Repudiate the Public Debt.

First, Tax the Rich is considered by many on the left to be supremely practical. Arthur Cheliotis, president of CWA Local 1180 in New York, along with left economist Bob Fitch, published a pamphlet, *Reclaiming What is Ours*, that gives the most serious and detailed plan — to tax the rich a little more and the working class a tiny bit less. Tax the Rich is posed as a practical reform, so "achievable" that it doesn't make a dent in the burden the capitalist crisis has dumped on the working class.

Even so, Tax the Rich is in fact impractical under capitalism. If some government feels forced to try it under mass pressure, what would force capital to stick around and watch

Letters Welcome

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their profits go down the toilet? During the very week you wrote your letter, Wall Street's Cocoa, Sugar and a couple of smaller exchanges moved across the Hudson River to Jersey City. The cost savings to these exchanges, they stated, was taxes.

As for capital that can't move, it will still take it out on the working class through higher interest rates, lower wages, higher costs or simply folding up. That's why the only answer is expropriation. To remove the power of the ruling class, we have to take away their property, not just toy with it.

And that's the point. Tax the Rich accepts the continued economic power of the rich (more accurately, the capitalists) and accepts capitalism's profiteering through exploitation and oppression here and abroad. That is because it is a populist, not a socialist, slogan. It contributes to the dangerous populist atmosphere in the U.S. discussed in our article. Left populists talk about rich vs. poor rather than class against class in order to submerge the life-and-death issue of who rules society.

Because it doesn't finger the capitalist class as the problem, Tax the Rich rhetoric is a set-up for selling capitalist politicians like Jesse Jackson. Especially in the hands of bourgeois demagogues, it can easily be used to raise taxes on the already beleaguered middle class, petty bourgeoisie, and higher-paid workers — layers the proletariat needs to win to its side.

In sum, demands like Tax the Rich are unlikely to lead to victorious battles and do little to prepare the working-class masses for ultimate victory in the class war.

At bottom, our difference with you on this issue is a question of method. The material gains of any workers' struggle under capitalism today would be far more temporary than in the past, given the depth of the system's crisis. We fight for such gains, but our main aim, which could have far more lasting consequences, is the gain in confidence and class consciousness that would be realized when after decades workers once again see their own power as a united class. That is the only way to build a revolutionary party to overthrow the system.

For me the most pungent argument in your letter was your point that a mighty general strike could force the capitalist government to suddenly come up with the most left-wing tax scheme imaginable; it would terrify them that much. But whether workers will settle for this populist reform or would go further depends on the level of struggle and the hold of reformist leadership. While the upcoming struggle will be initially defensive, we see it as open-ended. We don't declare in advance that our class must settle for concessions that protect the capitalist foundations.

As Lenin said, "A reformist change is one which leaves the foundations of the power of the ruling class intact and which is merely a concession by the ruling class that leaves its power unimpaired. A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power."

We will fight to convince workers in advance that expropriation is the answer. Expropriation of the banks would indeed shake the foundations of capitalist power in the Leninist sense because it challenges private property rights. If workers have illusions that a capitalist nationalization of the banks is really the solution, we will join in the fight, demanding workers' control over any capitalist expropriation, in order to convince our fellow workers that the only effective answer comes from taking over those foundations of power altogether, through socialist revolution and a workers' state.

If workers take the road of fighting for progressive taxation, we will also join in to help defend whatever temporary gains are winnable. But today it is not a question of defending an existing movement but of sharply opposing various political leaders, from Democrats to union bureaucrats and their left tails, who advocate reformist taxation as the solution.

For us, regarding the struggle ahead as separated into defined stages with impassable barriers between them is precisely the "wooden and undialectical" approach you accuse us of. The achievement of communist consciousness is a process. The fight for revolutionary understanding goes hand in hand with the fight for revolutionary changes: the fight for the act of insurrection itself, the "ultimate" victory, must be intertwined with the immediate struggles under capitalism or it will never be reached. This is the invaluable lesson we have gained from Trotsky who, following in Marx and Lenin's tradition, championed the "Transitional Program" as a method whereby revolutionaries can join in united working class struggles, always pointing in the direction of challenging capitalist rule, constantly struggling to find tactics to raise consciousness that way.

Indeed, our class can begin its best fight today through independent class actions, institutions and control; that would be a great beginning — if it is not separated from the truth that the overthrow of capitalism is the answer. *Evelyn Kaye*

POSTSCRIPT

In mid-October it was announced that the Coffee, Sugar and Cocoa Exchange has reversed its plans to move to New Jersey, having been offered \$91 million in cash and tax subsidies by New York. Especially today we should stress that tax incentives inevitably go to the rich, not vice versa. ●

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New York: MTA Attacks All Workers

As a sample of our political work, we print below a large section of a leaflet distributed this summer among transit workers in New York. Copies of the full text and other LRP leaflets are available to readers on request.

The leaflet responds to the Metropolitan Transit Authority bosses' stepped-up attacks on the public transit system and therefore on the entire working class. In it we explain how such an attack can occur: it is set up not only by the acts of the leaders of the Transport Workers Union, the most powerful New York union, but also by the sellout of the fight against city and state budget cuts last Spring (PR 49).

The leaflet also discusses the oppositional caucus in TWU Local 100, the union which organizes bus and subway workers under the New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA). New Directions (ND) tails the bureaucrats' pro-capitalist policies and helps perpetuate the climate of demoralization among unionists. It is led by closet "revolutionary socialists," particularly members of Solidarity, who pulled the caucus together and keep it united on a program of agreeing to disagree on all important questions.

So capitulatory is ND's outlook that it actually supported the new pension plan when it came out in the summer of '94; this "reform" was another nail in the coffin burying past workers' gains. The "theoretical" leader of ND, Steve Downs speaks as a Solidarity member at Solidarity public meetings, which are advertised in the middle-class left milieu where transit workers are unlikely to find out about them. The joint management/union/"public" panel, which Downs will help run, will impose One-Person Train Operation (OPTO) on many routes and eliminate train conductors — a very dangerous procedure in New York's subways. Solidarity bears responsibility for giving left cover to treacherous union misleaders as they knife workers in the back.

The MTA has launched another attack on all New York area workers, a big one. They withheld the August 1 contractual raise from TWU Local 100 members . . . and demanded contract renegotiations for wage cuts, massive layoffs and major work-rule changes. This is in addition to the current layoffs, transfers and privatization drive!

At the same time they announced for November a 25-cent (20%) fare hike for the NYCTA plus unprecedented service cuts: an end to night service on several shuttle lines, the end of several bus routes, and fewer trains on several important lines. They plan a 9% fare hike on Metro-North. They even tried to end free passes for students, but, fearing riots, backed off. When working-class parents and students showed they would take mass action to defy the threat, the bosses chickened out — for now.

WITH SUCH FRIENDS . . .

The New York working class depends on public transport. The NYCTA workforce has great potential power and a history of struggle. So why has the MTA taken such a vicious step against the whole working class at once?

It is happening everywhere. An economic crisis is devastating capitalism, and the bosses are making us pay for it. Given recent acts by labor leaders in New York, the government figured it could now escalate the attack. If it succeeds, the next will be far worse.

Many workers are angry but don't know what to do: the alternatives seem frightening. However, a small but growing number know that the only defense we have is *extreme* — in fact, revolutionary. A union bureaucracy committed to capitalism only betrays our interests. We must start now to create a new revolutionary leadership, before it is too late.

The city and state budget cuts last spring, in education, transit and health care, aroused great working-class anger. City and state college and NYC high school students, mostly working class and largely Black and Latino, launched massive, militant demonstrations. . . . Leaders of Local 1199 hospital workers and TWU Local 100, among others, mass-distributed a sheet, the *Weekly News*, which complained about the cuts. But the only actions it advised were phoning legislators to protest and voting for Democrats. And the union leaders gave big speeches. This unusual flurry of activity was a cover for refusing to mobilize workers for action. Then they hung the students out to dry. . . .

From long experience, the bosses know they needn't fear the labor bureaucrats. But the latter's active role in keeping the lid on the workers and squashing the student protests gave the government and the MTA the green light to hit all workers at once instead of one sector at a time.

THE MTA DEFICIT AND THE CAPITALIST CRISIS

The MTA has a severe budget deficit, some of it self-inflicted, like the \$700 million farecard-turnstile boondoggle. And big federal, state and local government deficits lead them to slash payments to mass transit. . . .

The MTA and other government agencies sold billions of dollars worth of bonds, mostly to banks and other corporations — hence the deficit. By capitalist law the MTA must pay its bonds off before any other expense. To come up with bond payments, they shut down and sell off our transport and lay us off. This means that workers starve so that bankers and businessmen can feast. . . .

When the economy was expanding, the union leadership acted as brokers between the members and the bosses. They negotiated wage and benefit hikes for workers, in return for keeping us in check. Naturally, they raked off a big share to maintain themselves as a privileged layer between workers and bosses. By occupation they are loyal to the capitalist system that feeds them. . . .

But now the system's crisis means that the capitalists have to take back what they gave, and much more. The bureaucrats base themselves on what the bosses can afford, not what workers need, so they give back past gains. . . . (For example, President Stanley Hill of DC 37 gave up \$600 million of his members' pension money.) And they prevent or sabotage strikes and other struggles.

TWU International President Sonny Hall, Local 100 President Damaso Seda, & Co. have acceded to management in every contract. Now they actively attack the membership in anticipation of management needs. When management threatened layoffs this spring, Seda and Co. insisted that the TA lay off provisionals — TWU members — in place of permanent civil service workers. Then they told us that they had prevented all layoffs! Watch who goes next.

The Hall/Seda gang played an equally rotten role in withholding our wage increase: they signed a secret agreement with the TA after contract ratification *reducing the wage*

increases, by an amount to be decided later. This followed from the '94 pension "reform" which they sold to trusting Tier 3/4 members (and forced on those hired after its effective date). The union leadership knew all along that the 2.3% increased contribution didn't fund retiree medical benefits enough for the health insurance business: they lied and deceived us to help the TA retire us earlier.

They now trumpet their arbitration "victory" in getting the raise: but the NYCTA made the point that they can blatantly break the contract at will and make our union leaders beg them to stop. And the union-sanctioned reduction in the raise for Tier 5 pension members means *the first permanent two-tier wage system in NYCTA history*.

New Directions, the biggest opposition group in the local leadership, doesn't try to organize even a demonstration against the raise withholding. It's a *dissident* wing of the union bureaucracy, one which only claims to represent the rank and file. As a vacillating opposition to Hall/Seda, it now has significant representatives on leadership bodies; they express unhappiness at the constant givebacks but in practice never fight for another course. ND has no alternative because at base it too accepts the limits of capitalism. It is even considering another lawsuit against the union in the anti-worker capitalist courts. . . .

ND actually supports the coming "blue ribbon panel" that the TA and the Seda gang cooked up to legitimize OPTO. ND leader and United Motormen Executive Board member Steve Downs will be the union's second-in-command on it. You don't need to be a revolutionary to know that we should have nothing to do with this fraud but to expose and denounce it as cover for the imposition of OPTO!

For once, the MTA has enraged the whole working class simultaneously: they may have less maneuvering room to divide us. It's the exact moment when transit workers have the chance and duty to lead the whole working class: the transit workers' key position in keeping the city functioning automatically gives us a central role in the fightback.

Powell

continued from page 1

Millions of whites, working-class and petty-bourgeois, are angry at the erosion of their living standards. Many are now attracted to the populist Republican right, whose leaders denounce big government, corruption and moral decay — their racism only slightly hidden. The bourgeoisie certainly wants the benefits of a racial backlash, but it fears the right will rashly provoke a race war by going too far too fast.

Alternatively, if the working class industrial centers explode and the proletariat unites in action, the bourgeoisie knows that radicalized labor aristocrats and even petty-bourgeois could recognize that they share basic interests with minority and poorer workers. The right-wing demagogues are whipping up a radicalism which could get out of their hands.

Enter Colin Powell. His military career proves his loyalty to world domination by corporate America, and his conservative economic views delight the establishment. On the other hand, his moderate social positions fall with the spectrum of acceptable politics and could help "bring us together." Best of all, tales of his rags-to-riches rise from the Bronx to the Pentagon fit right in with illusory hopes in social mobility, a

Right now, workers who are committed to building an alternative leadership, a revolutionary workers' party leadership, demand that Hall/Seda and ND call a demonstration against these attacks, and challenge the other union leaders to mobilize their members and join such a giant protest. It's not at all a revolutionary demand — let's see if they do even that much!

REVOLUTIONARY RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS

We fight for Local 100 taking the lead in fighting for a general strike of all workers against all of today's layoffs, fare hikes and service cuts. TWU bureaucrats and the dithering dissidents either ignore the fare payers or appeal to them as simply transit consumers, instead of as fellow workers who have the power to shut down workplaces. This approach restricts working-class passengers to pressure-group tactics — lobbying Democratic politicians. . . .

[Former New York mayor] Ed Koch once fearfully called the general strike a "nuclear weapon." Right! A general strike could halt fare hikes and wage and service cuts. . . . It would end the working-class retreat and put us in position to start advancing. Such a united show of force would be totally different from the past strikes which the bureaucrats kept isolated and therefore open to Taylor Law and other attacks. At minimum it would bring back the days when the capitalist government in New York was too frightened to use their rotten laws against us. . . .

We believe that the only way to really end the anti-working class attacks, mass unemployment and the racist and anti-immigrant divide-and-conquer strategy is socialist revolution. The central task for working-class people who see this is to join with us now and build the revolutionary party. It doesn't happen in a day. Only by fighting together in the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) for the revolutionary program can we finally stop capitalist misery, exploitation, racism and war, and build a society of prosperity, equality and peace for the whole human race. ●

populist myth that the capitalists encourage without fear.

Powell's independence of the two party machines, even if he ends up running as a Republican, helps make him relatively independent of mass demands. He seems to come from outside the politicians' orbit and to stand above the greedy games the masses are fed up with. Seeing no current political force that represents "the people," much of the middle strata and many workers are being led to believe that Powell would establish fair government and stop the attack on them.

Powell's candidacy would serve a deeper bourgeois need. Despite the current blather about reducing the growth of the state, in this era of decadent capitalism the state's role must inevitably expand. During an acute period of unresolved class confrontation between proletariat and bourgeoisie, capitalism traditionally turns to a Bonaparte, a Man on a White Horse, who seems to stand above the class struggle and represent the people at large. Such a "hero" attempts to reach power by popular acclaim, even voicing hostility to the "malefactors of great wealth." Then, wielding a greatly centralized state power, he uses his popularity to defend the ruling class, its property and its system.

We have not reached a point of conscious class confrontation. The capitalist attack is a largely one-sided war. A full-fledged Bonaparte isn't needed — yet. So it is no accident that a semi-Bonapartist figure like Powell comes riding onto

the scene. As Leon Trotsky observed about Germany in the early 1930's, several figures reflecting aspects of Bonapartism occupied state power within the confines of bourgeois democracy as a prelude to Hitler, the "national socialist" who finally put a bloody end to the immediate class conflict.

The capitalist class at this early stage in the looming confrontation is hesitant, a good way off from its future turn to fascism as its last resort in the fight against proletarian communism. And, not by accident, Powell is also a cautious man. Should he run now? Wait and see. He only wants to grab for the brass ring if he can win it. His personal caution makes him even more delectable to the cautious capitalists.

A Powell candidacy would aim to create a new bourgeois center, reducing the influence of the populist Republican right and of Democratic liberals and bringing both parties "back to their senses." Powell is already positioning himself as a centrist: he favors both abortion rights and the death penalty, affirmative action and the free market — all in moderation. There is little chance he would be interested in a whole new party, except as a device to get on the ballot: even a bourgeois third party would risk cracking the two-party shell game that has served U.S. capitalism for so long.

The big bourgeoisie ruled the U.S. since the end of the 19th century generally through a congressional bloc between Republicans and bourgeois agrarian Southern Democrats. The conservative Democratic "Solid South" collapsed under the Black revolt and the industrialization and urbanization of the post-war prosperity. With the economic crisis and the renewed bourgeois offensive to restore profits, a renewed and solidified bourgeois bloc became vital. Reagan put it together, but it rested on a distraught petty-bourgeois base; the closeness of the NAFTA vote showed that it was not housebroken enough. Wall Street figures that a Powell administration would regain popularity for a more stable right-center bloc led by mainstream conservative Republicans, backed in Congress by moderate Democrats.

POWELL'S RACE

The fact that Powell is Black helps this center bloc strategy. His race will be used in celebratory fashion to validate America's democratic pretenses at home and abroad. A Black president would exemplify the myth that the U.S. has achieved racial equality. To many whites (and Black elitists), Powell already confirms their patronizing belief that Blacks could make it if they only worked hard.

Writing of the mass anxiety over jobs and the economy, Roger Wilkins in the *Nation* claims that "Powell's presence in the White House would sweep away the ugliest impediment to facing those problems honestly: racial scapegoating." On the contrary: his victory — even his serious candidacy — will fuel the racist lie that Blacks just have to drop their "attitude" and get off their asses. Powell's military aura and race make him an ideal figure, as far as the bourgeoisie is concerned, to discipline rebellious workers, Blacks above all.

It is also important that Powell is not *too* Black. At this stage only the most racist whites would refuse to vote for him on that ground. As he says of himself, "I was never a very threatening kind of black man. At different times, I was a good Negro to have around." (*Parade*, Sept. 17.) Unlike Jesse Jackson, he would not depend on an angry Black vote; Jackson tried hard to win support from moderate capitalists, but because of his militant base they mistrusted him.

Despite Powell's allegiance to Reagan and Bush, he would gain a substantial Black vote, especially since the Black

middle class votes out of proportion to its numbers in comparison to workers and unemployed. Powell could attract even reluctant Blacks as a concession to race unity and pride. Tragically, a false "unity" behind servants of the bourgeoisie leads only to disaster. Many Blacks supported Clarence "Uncle" Thomas to their present regret, out of a sense of racial allegiance. Genuine Black solidarity can only be forged in a working class-led struggle *against* the capitalists.

Powell's race, however, is not an unmitigated blessing for his bourgeois backers. As a Black man, he is compelled to confront the razor-sharp issues that slice through U.S. society. He tried to finesse Louis Farrakhan's invitation to speak at the "Million Man March," claiming other engagements without saying whether he was for or against. But to maintain any support among Blacks, he will not be able to dodge race questions forever.

WHO IS COLIN POWELL?

Powell's real record is that of a Washington insider and bureaucrat; his "hero" image is media hype. He served imperialism loyally as Reagan's national security adviser and



Soldier or draft-dodger, Black or white, capitalist politicians serve bourgeoisie, impose austerity on workers.

Bush's chairman of the chiefs of staff. In the former post, he joined in the Iran-Contra cover-up, funneling funds to counterrevolutionary rapists and killers in Nicaragua. As an officer, he had previously helped shield the army's My Lai massacre in Vietnam.

Under Bush he was the principal architect of the imperialist and racist invasion of Panama in 1989. Then he oversaw the brutal Gulf War against Iraq in 1991, when the U.S. bombed the population back to pre-industrial conditions — and ensured that the bloody dictator Saddam Hussein was left with enough arms to crush Iraqi and Kurdish rebels.

He is known for the "Powell doctrine": the U.S. should send troops to fight abroad only when its decisive interests are at stake; and then should use overwhelming military force to win wars quickly and decisively, without risking casualties that could awaken domestic discontent. When as president he sends U.S. soldiers into battle, as he inevitably will, his reputation for caution will help vindicate imperialist militarism and undercut opposition at home.

Most capitalists believe that he will be equally cautious on domestic policy. But he is also backed by a group of sophisticated bourgeois thinkers like Peter Peterson, a cabinet member under Richard Nixon, and financier Felix Rohatyn, who were crucial in getting Clinton elected in 1992. In 1988 this group issued a manifesto for bipartisan austerity. Rohatyn's remarks at the time about "the next president" are

the plans of such activist Powellites today as well:

He won't be able in the campaign to discuss rationally the things he will have to do. . . . The real options he is going to have to deal with should be presented by, as much as possible, a depoliticized, bipartisan group that is prestigious enough that its recommendations right after the election will prepare the president to take action the moment he is sworn in. (PR 31.)

The Rohatyn types certainly have nothing in common with the right-wing radicals; they are careful to avoid boiling the masses while stirring the pot. They hope that the military toughness exhibited by Powell, combined with their expectations of rough times for capitalism ahead, will lessen any personal cautiousness about moving decisively.

Whatever the variations in their outlook, Powell is being groomed as the capitalists' stealth candidate, hyped up and humanized to evade the masses' political radar. With few commitments to the base of the Democratic and Republican parties and utterly loyal to the bourgeoisie, he is an ideal imperialist chieftain at a time when crunching moves against the working class are needed.

WHITHER CANDIDATE POWELL?

Powell's appearance as a "non-candidate" has already sent politicians and pundits scrambling, with both liberals and conservatives seeking to position him their way. Democrats want him to run independently, hoping he would aid Clinton by siphoning off Republican votes in a three-way race — like Ross Perot in 1992. The *New York Times'* liberal Black columnist Bob Herbert also urged Powell to run as an independent — to "serve as a trusted bridge between the lower and middle classes" who would have a hard time backing a Republican. Such liberals only help deceive the masses. Powell's "independent" candidacy would really be that of an external caucus of the Republicans, aimed at restoring control over their party to the bourgeois mainstream.

On the other side, many Republicans want Powell on their ticket; Dole hinted he could have the vice presidential nomination. If he accepts, that might guarantee victory, but Powell's taking second place is unlikely: his purpose is not to strengthen the Republican Party but to remake it.

Other loyalist Republicans, even on the right, want Powell as their top candidate in order to guarantee victory. Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition, who demanded a while ago that any Republican candidate pledge himself against abortion, now refuses to say he couldn't vote for the pro-choice Powell! Neo-conservative William Kristol goes further: he thinks Powell could win a "huge" majority that would "expand and solidify the emerging Republican majority." Thus Powell would serve as a "useful way station on the road to a lasting conservative realignment."

One trouble is that major party candidates face a long list of primaries which Powell would prefer to avoid, lest he be forced to descend from his above-the-battle pedestal. So some party leaders are looking for ways to get Powell the nomination in effect by acclamation. That would also better suit Powell's aim of re-creating a strong centrist party, while avoiding as much as possible over-antagonizing the right.

Both parties are in critical condition, making extraordinary measures necessary. That is why wide sections of the ruling class are treating Powell as a Black Man on a White Horse come to rescue bourgeois politics from the barbarians.

The Democratic Party's predicament is not that it is ditching the bourgeoisie. The *Times'* report notes:

Ever since Bill Clinton came to office, he has done more for the Fortune 500 than virtually any other President in this century — making trade the No. 1 priority by, for example, pressing the North American Free Trade Agreement into enactment over the objections of labor, . . . beating down the doors in China and Japan, . . . and opening a "war room" that uses the power of the United States government to win contracts for American business around the world

That is why the Democrats are a capitalist party, even though the major part of the ruling class is Republican. But the bourgeoisie is a tiny minority of the population, so its parties have to enlist more numerous forces as party cadre. Their job is to convince the mass of working- and middle-class voters that the bourgeoisie deserves to rule.

CAPITALIST PARTIES IN CRISIS

Outside of the South, the Democrats have rested on an urban working-class voting base, largely white ethnic Catholics but including Black voters, since the late 1920's. The post-World War II prosperity bubble, plus the Black struggle of the 1960's, brought Blacks more of the sops the party doles out. But while "Great Society" programs temporarily gave some help to Black workers and the poor, they did far more to create a layer of professional povertycrats with a material stake in defending the system.

When the bubble burst and sops dwindled, the more aristocratic labor and petty-bourgeois elements turned away, falling for racist arguments that the Democrats would hand over their gains to Blacks and Latinos. The party is now much more dependent on Black votes; along with the slowly rising mood of union militancy in the past few years, that gives the bourgeoisie cause to fear that Democratic politicians could be pressed to concede too much.

The Republican voting base has traditionally come from the socially conservative petty bourgeoisie, even though power always rested with big capital. The bloc reformed under Reagan was between Wall Street (symbolized by George Bush) and the newer layer of "Sun Belt" capitalists. This group rests on capital-intensive and high technology industries (armaments, petrochemicals, energy, computers) but is intertwined with large labor-intensive service, construction and agribusiness interests. As we wrote in 1981:

This newly arrived, self-confident and relatively dynamic sector of the bourgeoisie says that it achieved its new wealth by sheer enterprise and will. If an American works hard, and the government, Russian Communists, terrorists and beggars leave him alone, it asserts, he can make it. Its petty-bourgeois following listens.

It is no accident that these convenient fictions coincide with the absence of unions in the Sun Belt regions and the decline of class struggle during the period when the Sun Belt industries grew up: Reagan's rugged individualists have generally not been compelled to rule through accommodation with an aroused working class. (PR 15.)

The petty-bourgeois base that this wing of capital appeals to dreams of prosperity without welfare and taxes. Small business owners elected the new Republican majority in Congress, and their needs diverge from those of big capital. Far less interested in foreign trade, panicked over the costs of workplace-based health care, squirming under environmental regulations, they are eager to end welfare (not just "as we know it" à la Clinton), threaten to close the government down to enact their tax schemes and risk palpitations on the

bond market. For good reason, big business is more than "frustrated" with them.

Today these petty-bourgeois notions are also swallowed by many white workers who find their jobs threatened by corporate mergers and downsizing. They blame affirmative action and illegal immigration rather than capitalism; they think they can get even by ousting "pro-Black" politicians. But they are facing what Black workers went through years ago when automation wiped out millions of blue-collar jobs.

Newt Gingrich is the chief middleman between Wall Street and the petty-bourgeois layer he nourished and trained. If Powell runs, Gingrich will have to convince his base to accept him as the Republican candidate. As Powell's politics become clearer, the radical petty bourgeoisie may kick up its heels and refuse support. That may require more concessions (abolishing many federal agencies, say) than



Powell's war: U.S. brings 'democracy' to Panama.

Powell and his backers can stomach. The various wings of capital could more easily agree on further eroding the remaining gains of labor, Blacks and Latinos; that would please much of the petty bourgeoisie too. However, here the establishment's fear of going too fast would be tested severely. So it is by no means sure that Powell could get the Republican nomination and restore it to bourgeois normalcy.

PSEUDO-INDEPENDENCE ON THE LEFT

While the profit-hungry capitalists refashion their war strategy, their liberal-left opponents play games. The working class's official leadership has not been ignoring the small upturn in class struggle triggered by the bourgeois attack. They know that sooner or later the anger will boil over.

Clinton's unpopularity has led layers of union officials to restructure their support for the Democrats by making noises about an independent party. Labor Party Advocates, the bureaucracy-controlled outfit that has been around for years but never run a single campaign, is planning a founding convention for a labor party — next June. The timing is superbly cynical: too late to get candidates on the national ballot, early enough to build support for Clinton as the "lesser evil."

In 1996, the bureaucrats will use labor party sentiment only as pressure on the Democrats. In the future, when the Democrats have discredited themselves even more and the class struggle has intensified, a labor party or a bourgeois third party might actually be created — in order to corral the workers and keep them tied to capitalist electoralism.

A grassroots working-class movement for a labor party might even break away from the bureaucrats and move in a revolutionary direction under conditions of class upheaval. Such a turn would be in direct opposition to the work of the various covert socialist "revolutionaries" who are laboring for

a labor party now; theirs would be a thoroughly bureaucratic, pro-imperialist reformist party.

Black leaders face the same dilemma as the labor bureaucrats: can they get their base to support Clinton a second time, given his racist record in office? Opposing him could throw the election to the Republicans — who, Powell or no Powell, are even more racist. That is why Jesse Jackson murmured a few months back about running an independent campaign against Clinton — and lately has repeated that he is keeping his options open. But he never meant it: his role is to keep Blacks tied to the Democrats. Like the leftish labor bureaucrats, he talks of independence to get small sops in order to lure people back to the Democratic graveyard.

For some Black leaders, Colin Powell is an alternative to Jackson, both as a lever for wresting concessions from Clinton and as a realistic bourgeois candidate who appeals to Black voters. Thus Kweisi Mfume, former head of the Congressional Black Caucus, said on television that he would of course support Clinton's re-election — but that "things have a way of changing." On the other hand, populists like Jackson, who claims to champion working people of all colors, at this point cannot openly endorse a conservative like Powell. Jackson is presenting a plan to "reindustrialize America" and create urban jobs, hoping against hope that Clinton will jog toward the left side of bourgeois politics rather than stick to his present right-center course.

On the far left, as we have shown in recent issues of *PR*, the current fad is left-wing populism. "People before profits" is the slogan of middle-class elements threatened by the capitalist rampage for hiking profits. Of course, a Marxist working-class victory would dispense with profits and privilege altogether. Instead, the pseudo-socialists' populist dodge is an attempt to appear realistic in the face of the upcoming class polarization. It will go nowhere — except possibly to derail numbers of proletarian activists.

The working class desperately needs its own party independent of all wings of the bourgeoisie. That means a revolutionary party dedicated to overthrowing capitalism. Populism in its right or left manifestations is a political disease of the middle classes. It subverts the necessity for an independent revolutionary working-class alternative. Further, given that the middle strata are not really a class and have little social power of their own, such layers are prone to Bonapartism.

Today, the still moderate sectors of the middle class will be drawn to Powell. Tomorrow the inflamed petty bourgeoisie will likely be drawn to an even more Bonapartist demigod. Keeping radical politics at the level of populism ensures that coming movements will be under the dominance of the petty bourgeoisie, a set up for an authoritarian Bonapartism far transcending Colin Powell.

The new wave of advancing revolutionary-minded youth are mostly Black and Latino. This layer is critical to the revival of authentic communist politics in the U.S. Given the miserable role of the white-dominated liberal-labor bureaucracy, it is no wonder that many of these fighters do not yet accept Marxism, the understanding that revolution and liberation can only come through an independent class-conscious proletariat. If they are detoured into the populist dead-end road, they will inevitably serve as missionaries for a future Bonaparte. And that Man on a White Horse will spell only grief for the working class and the oppressed peoples of this country and the world. Colin Powell is dangerous enough, a Bonaparte with a human face; the future Bonaparte's face will be hidden behind a white sheet. ●

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Detroit Strike Exposes Labor Leaders

by Bob Wolfe

The future of U.S. trade unions has recently been fought out in two significant but vastly different battles. While major union heads skirmished for control of the crisis-ridden AFL-CIO, a potentially more decisive struggle has been waged on the picket lines in the Detroit newspaper strike.

The Detroit strike is the kind of struggle declared out-dated time and again by both sides in the AFL-CIO election. Its mass pickets showed the potential of workers to resist the capitalist attacks. A fight the bureaucrats hoped to avoid, it became a central battleground in the class war.

UNION-BUSTING BOSSES

On July 13, over 2500 workers representing six unions organized into the Council of Newspaper Unions struck Detroit's two main daily newspapers. Backed by thousands of working-class supporters, the strike saw violent clashes with cops and hired goon squads. Many Saturday nights there were pitched battles, as strikers sought to stop the critical Sunday papers from being distributed.

The issue was clear for all to see — union-busting. The Knight-Rider and Gannet owners made no secret of this. Mobilizing scabs, private security forces and their friends in government, the bosses prepared a long time for the decisive showdown. What the union-busters didn't count on was that the workers would wage a real fight.

However, the union bureaucrats repeatedly tried to disarm the workers in the face of police violence by preaching passivity and the holiness of bourgeois legality — which the bosses ignore whenever they can get away with it. On the weekend of September 16, they did what the bosses and the cops couldn't — undermine the militant struggle.

Insisting that workers honor court injunctions limiting the number of picketers, the bureaucrats allowed the bosses to get out the Sunday papers. Since then militant workers have battled to regain the strike's momentum, unsuccessfully. There have still been militant confrontations at distribution centers by a few hundred. But mass militant picket lines at the plant are necessary — to stop production, not just hamper distribution. This requires mass action to smash the injunctions, which in turn requires a fight against the pro-capitalist union leaders.

A defeat in this strike would mean not only the collapse of the newspaper unions, as has occurred in New York and other cities. Such a defeat in the industrial heartland and the home of the United Auto Workers would also be a serious blow to all unions. At a time when some bureaucrats feel compelled to act to reverse the decline of the unions and the threat to their own positions, a wavering line was drawn. While the bureaucrats favored big contract concessions, they did not want Detroit to be another PATCO.

In Detroit, some bureaucrats actually mobilized workers to go to picket lines. Yet despite wanting a victory badly, the bureaucrats could not help but try to sabotage the strike. Like the sorcerer's apprentice, they panicked when they saw the forces they helped conjure up. They trembled at the sight of thousands of workers fighting it out with the cops and hired goons. They found that they couldn't control the workers who came out to really stop scabs. At this point it is clear that their fear of mass struggle far outweighs their concern over the strike's defeat. That's why they turned to the



disastrous strategy of depending on boycotts and filing unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board.

Detroit also illustrates the unions' crisis, which forced a section of the bureaucracy to reluctantly turn against Lane Kirkland. Reluctantly, many bureaucrats realize that they have done such a splendid job of selling out the workers that the bourgeoisie has less need of their services. In order to serve as labor lieutenants of capital, they need some sort of army to command.

This recognition that they must rebuild their base in order to sell it out has led to cracks in the seemingly monolithic AFL-CIO structure. Ironically, after 78 years under only four leaders, the federation's signs of life turned out to be a fight between two old-time bureaucrats who at best hold half an original idea between them. Only the AFL-CIO's history of conservatism and inertia made the events leading to Kirkland's ouster seem dramatic.

You didn't need a score sheet to figure out that Kirkland was a loser. He came to power in 1979 with the economy in decline. For 13 years he ran an outfit that couldn't win a strike or a good contract anywhere. Then things took a dramatic turn for the worse. Clinton, a Democrat, the long awaited "friend of labor," got into power, and everything really hit the fan: labor got humiliated over the jobs bill, the minimum wage, the "health care for every American citizen" malarkey and the big blow of NAFTA.

Under Kirkland the AFL-CIO never seemed to get it. In 1993 Clinton appointed the Dunlop Commission to recommend changes in labor law. Composed of government reps, capitalist executives and retired UAW chief Doug Fraser, it concluded — to the bureaucrats' surprise — that the NLRB should *reduce* restrictions on company unions (Fraser dissented), and that worker-management "cooperation" should be official national policy. As well, when it came to the final version of the watered-down bill, which workers had been promised would outlaw the use of scabs, it turned out to be — surprise again — virtually unenforceable.

Kirkland's decline paralleled the end of the prosperity bubble and the Democrats' ability to provide sectoral reforms for the unions. His tenure rested on complicity with U.S. imperialism's Cold War drive, including efforts to keep workers abroad under safe pro-capitalist leaderships. The government financed 95 percent of the AFL-CIO's international budget,

an amount equal to union funds for organizing at home. Yet the collapse of Stalinism signified the end of a period of quiescence; the ruling class realizes now that the class struggle at home requires different management.

The road to Kirkland's withdrawal also showed the conservatism and vacillations of the AFL-CIO tops. In February, John Sweeney of the SEIU, Gerald McEntee of AFSCME, Rich Trumka of the Mine Workers, Ron Carey of the Teamsters and the heads of the merging auto, rubber and steelworkers' unions were hoping to convince Kirkland to go. Their goal was to smoothly install Tom Donahue, long time federation vice-president and let Kirkland depart peacefully.

The ever-loyal Donahue, however, announced his own retirement and support for Kirkland in May. The reluctant opposition then put forward Sweeney and geared up for the election — the first outright challenge to an incumbent since 1894. In June, Kirkland saw that he would lose and announced he would resign in favor of Donahue. But it was too late; Donahue was too tied to the old guard. Thus Sweeney, who has been around for decades without posing any opposition to Kirkland, became the "New Voice" candidate against Donahue. And in October, the same pressures that forced Kirkland out also disposed of his loyal ally.

WHAT SWEENEY REPRESENTS

The Sweeney wing, as many have already commented, is more of a facelift to boost the sagging popularity of the decrepit AFL-CIO rather than a reflection of mass working-class struggle. This truth has been borne out in Detroit, Decatur, Seattle and other local struggles where the Sweeney slate distinguished itself in rhetoric but not in action.

As well, Sweeney's "action" plan, civil disobedience, has already lost strikes with real potential — Hormel and Staley. It is more than possible that bureaucrats like Sweeney will be forced to lead mass militant actions in the future — in order to derail the inevitable class upheaval the capitalist attacks are leading to. In such an event, large numbers of militant workers may develop illusions that such bureaucrats really represent a fighting leadership in their interests.

But this is hardly the case today. The incoming slate, while it feels direct pressure from some pockets of workers, still represents an attempt to pre-empt a widespread struggle from even occurring. Thus there was no basis for using the political tactic of critical support at this time.

The reason it took decades for any contest to occur is the AFL-CIO's fear that a mere election contest would spur too much of a reaction among workers. In this spirit the bureaucrats formed a committee to set rules of conduct for the campaign — to prevent the opening up of too much discussion. The alarm bell rang when Donahue supporter Morton Bahr, President of the CWA, started exposing the record of Sweeney's running mate Linda Chavez-Thompson of AFSCME. Among other things, Chavez-Thompson had opposed an illegal strike of an independent union of sanitation workers in Texas in 1978, sending a telegram to the City Council urging them to fire the striking garbage collectors who had seceded from AFSCME! As *Labor Notes* reported (Sept. 1995), Chavez-Thompson said:

You cannot ask citizens in an area where wages are low to support substantial raises for garbage collectors.

Both sides accept the capitalist profit system and its need for low wages. Sweeney's big distinction was supposed to be that he would spend a large chunk of AFL-CIO funds on aggressive organizing, modeled on SEIU efforts like the

Justice for Janitors campaign in California. Many of these newly organized jobs, however, while they represent important victories, are on the low end of the wage scale. Justice for Janitors gained wages of about \$6.80 per hour, below the poverty line for a family of four or more, while SEIU nurses aides in Detroit, who engaged in a one-day strike this summer, pull down \$6.00 an hour.

As well, the SEIU's well deserved reputation for a high number of trusteeships is often used to show how the union opposes internal democracy. This is true, but it is far worse because the appointed leaderships have often been used to squash critical struggles. For example, a well-documented article in the October *Chicago Workers' Voice* noted that the trusteeship imposed on SEIU Local 99, a union of bus drivers, janitors, clericals and teaching assistants, resulted in the Sweeney-backed leadership forcing school-bus drivers in their own union to scab during the 1989 Los Angeles teacher's strike! More recently, Sweeney squashed an opposition in SEIU local 399, a union of janitors and nurses organized through the Justice for Janitors Campaign — just in time to push a contract that includes a pay cut for janitors now living high off the hog at \$6.80 an hour.

REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE

During the electoral battle, the candidates scurried around the country looking for strikes and rallies where they could blow hot air. Neither side wanted to talk about how to defend the unions and workers — including those laid off and replaced by scabs. The closest approach was the "threat" to form a labor party. But this only showed the minimal difference between nominal labor party advocates and Democratic stalwarts. In June, pro-Democrat Sweeney said, "if the Democrats don't work out we'll have to try something else." His pro-labor party running-mate Trumka pleaded for Democrats "to return to defending the American worker" — not for workers to stop defending Democrats!

Their "clashing" views belie indistinguishable politics: both use labor party sentiment to pressure Democratic politicians. That labor party types and Democratic supporters coexist in the same slate reflects the equally easy coexistence between Democratic politics and reformist labor party rhetoric in the bureaucrat-led outfit, Labor Party Advocates.

The fact that the leadership contest generated little interest among workers does not at all mean that what happens in the top bureaucracy is unimportant. This bureaucracy has been capable of squandering what was once among the most powerful labor movements in the world. It is the fundamental barrier to the exercise of power by the U.S. working class. It is not an enemy to be taken lightly.

Today the tide is clearly turning toward open discussions of central strategies, not just in bureaucratic and middle-class left circles. The LRP has fought for a revolutionary strategy in the unions since our inception, opposing the notions of rank-and-file leaders that real answers for workers can be found in militancy, union democracy or better contracts.

In Detroit, a fight can still be waged against bureaucrats' sabotage. The strike can only be won by fighting the bureaucrats' policy and demanding they mobilize mass pickets to shut the plant down. As well, given the vicious police assaults on unarmed strikers, the call for mass self-defense of all working-class struggles takes on particular importance.

The tremendous enthusiasm for the strike shows that workers are ready to fight back and are looking for new strategies and leadership. In such situations, revolutionaries use

every opportunity to argue for the general strike, the most powerful action our class can take to defend itself. A general strike would hit capitalism in its heart and change the entire balance of forces in the class war.

To forge real class unity, the workers have to move beyond traditional union questions. Class-wide demands — Stop all layoffs and cutbacks! Stop police brutality, racist and anti-immigrant attacks! Jobs for all at a living wage! — can overcome the divisions between the largely white strikers and the worse off Black and Chicano workers in Detroit.

In and Out of the ISO

by Tony Goodes

Why did I become a socialist? First, through my work experience and general awareness of the ominous, barbaric state of the world, I began to question the institutions responsible for social policy, management and behavior. First, what roles did these institutions play in shaping the subjective: people's thoughts, perceptions, and opinions; and the objective: people's economic status, class and day-to-day living situation? Secondly, who effectively controlled these institutions and to whose benefit?

This inevitably led me to a personal study of Marxism. This study was liberating because it gave me an invaluable tool with which to interpret the world and make sense of individual, group and societal actions. It also led me, regretfully, to join the International Socialist Organization. Nevertheless, my stint in the ISO was instructive, because in that time I became aware of the necessity for sound revolutionary politics — despite, not because of, the ISO.

While the ISO claimed to be a Marxist and Leninist revolutionary group, it failed to carry out revolutionary politics — in its paper, in coalition with bourgeois reformists and union bureaucrats, as well as at political rallies and demonstrations. Additionally, when I counterposed my opinions on a wide variety of issues — the labor party question, NAFTA, their utter lack of criticism of the union bureaucrats they worked with and their reformist politics, the lack of concrete political debate within the group itself as well as with other groups, and most importantly the failure of the group to acknowledge the working class as the primary focus for the vanguard party — I was quickly labeled “ultra-left,” treated as a threat and effectively marginalized. I realized the ISO was not a healthy group with a serious dedication to Marxism but a sickly outfit bent on stifling democracy and contemptuous of political debate.

Two examples: first, while attending a pro-Zapatista rally in Chicago's East Village, a member of the Spartacist League (who did not know I was in the ISO) asked me what I thought of NAFTA. Before I could say that it was aimed at allowing capitalists greater freedom to immiserate the working classes, especially of Mexico, another ISO member jumped in and told me not to talk to the “insane” Spartacists. This is a regular tactic: any opponent of the ISO is either insane or ultra-left. As a result, I got to hear the ISO's position on NAFTA: neither support nor oppose this imperialist weapon.

It bothered me that the ISO refused to oppose NAFTA. I began submitting documents to the powers-that-be in the ISO illustrating NAFTA's effects. This received no response. When I asked for justification of the ISO position, I was promised internal documents: none ever were provided. The

Capitalism now leaves us only two choices: accept poverty, racism and war; or fight for socialist revolution. The crisis demands revolutionary party leadership in the unions. The more the bureaucrats have led workers in retreat, the greater the attacks. Now the unions find themselves with their backs against the wall. Class collaboration and sellouts are no longer sufficient — the bosses want total surrender. Revolutionary workers must be in the fight to transform the militancy displayed in Detroit and elsewhere into a tide of revolutionary struggle in the interests of all workers. ●

only answer I received was from the assistant editor of *Socialist Worker*, who suggested that “the majority of the people and groups who oppose NAFTA are doing it on nationalist and racist grounds.” To avoid being associated with this position, the ISO had to remain neutral.

This justification seemed awfully weak to me. I asked if the ISO still believed in the right to bear arms; he responded, “Yes, of course.” So I suggested, by analogy with his NAFTA logic of guilt by association, aren't we then included with the right-wing and fascist groups who also believe in the right to bear arms? Shouldn't we be neutral on this too? No response. This was the last I heard on the issue from anyone within the ISO.

Second, I attended a “Jobs for Justice” rally after I left the ISO. It was fairly large, about a thousand people, with a strong union presence. I decided to walk near the Progressive Labor contingent because they were the only ones raising revolutionary slogans: “Socialist revolution is the only solution,” “Jobs for all,” “Smash the capitalist system,” etc. The ISO, as usual, was chanting their popular front slogan, “The people united will never be defeated.”

The rally proceeded to Union Park, where the crowd was treated to speeches by politician after politician, bureaucrat after bureaucrat, all pleading for voting for the right (bourgeois) people. The final speaker was the Rev. Jesse Jackson. PL erupted: they denounced Jackson with bullhorns as a betrayer of his race and the working class, a pawn of the system, etc. To PL's credit, they were loud enough to warrant three or four Teamster security guards sent to shut them up.

As PL stood their ground, one of their members, a young Black man leading their chants, was struck by a security guard. As a result the cops began to move in. Not one ISO member moved to assist the PL comrade or to resist the guards or the cops. The situation was clear: a working-class militant was hit for confronting politicians and bureaucrats loyal to capitalism. The issue was not whether you agreed with PL's politics; in this situation you act in united front fashion to protect your class and hold back the cops, the protectors of capital.

When I confronted people in the ISO about their non-revolutionary behavior, they responded, “Hey, we're just here to sell a few papers and make a few contacts.” One would have to try very hard to match such cynicism.

I am excited to be a prospective member of the LRP, a group with solid revolutionary politics that takes political debate with the utmost seriousness, whether internally or with other tendencies. Furthermore, the LRP recognizes the need to confront centrism, of which the ISO is a major perpetrator. I greatly look forward to working within the LRP to make the revolutionary party a reality. ●

South Africa: The Coming Showdown Program for the Struggle Ahead

by Matthew Richardson

Part One of this article in PR 49 discussed the austerity program and other attacks launched by the ANC-led Government of National Unity (GNU) and the capitalists in South Africa, and the strikes and other mass struggles which erupted in the GNU's first year. It also described how, in the absence of a revolutionary workers' party capable of leading these struggles,



Pretoria: Over 2000 Metalworkers Union members in recent protest.

forward, betrayal by the workers' pro-ANC leaders and repression by the government were able to bring them to a temporary halt. Part Two begins with the events following the end of these struggles in late 1994.

MANDELA THREATENS REPRESSION

Particularly during the truckers' strike, the capitalist media and politicians had spread fears of "anarchy." As they regained control of the masses, the ANC leaders felt strong enough to take advantage of this atmosphere and went on an offensive against the masses' militancy. President Nelson Mandela used his speech to the new session of parliament to tell the masses to expect even less from the government than previously, threatening repression in response to any future mass struggles. According to the *International Herald Tribune* (London), Mandela

lashed out ... at anarchy, corruption, crime, rent boycotts, illegal squatting and illegal strikes ... [while he] made just one fleeting reference to building homes for the 25 percent of the black population that lacks formal housing ... [and] gave equally short shrift to education, health care and clean water. ... He spent much more time ... lecturing blacks who have not given up behavior that often won them glory during the anti-apartheid struggle. (Sept 18, 1994.)

Summing up, this imperialist newspaper pointed out how the government is doing the bidding of the capitalists:

The speech brought into sharp relief the extent to which

Mr. Mandela's government — led by men and women who were orthodox Communists and socialists during the decades of the anti-apartheid struggle — has accepted the prescriptions of bond markets and international lending agencies.

Indicative of the response of South African capitalists, Cape Town's *Weekend Star* (March 11-12, 1995) ran a front-page headline, "New, No Nonsense Mandela a Boost For Business," and wrote:

After 10 months in power, President Mandela is showing a steely side that analysts believe will reinforce the country's post-apartheid economy ... His tough new line is long overdue and very correct. ... Trade unionists, policemen, soldiers, protesting schoolchildren and striking civil servants have felt the lash of his tongue in stern warnings against anarchy and vandalism. ... On Thursday, Mandela told businessmen in Johannesburg that his patience was being seen as a weakness by workers and students trying to press unreasonable demands. "I have closed that chapter. I have begged them. Now they must beg me," he said.

On Wednesday, Mandela warned during a whipcracking tour of unruly black schools around Cape Town that he would no longer tolerate classroom strikes and demonstrations. "I just want to warn you that my patience is getting exhausted. I am prepared to come down on anybody who takes advantage to drag this country into anarchy."

Despite Mandela's strongman posturing, neither the ANC nor the ruling class in general is yet ready to switch to using the police and military as their basic method of rule. As before the mass strikes, the government will use armed repression only as a last resort. The key to its rule will continue to be the policing of the working class by the leaders of the workers' organizations who are tied to the African National Congress and South African Communist Party.

LABOR RELATIONS ACT ATTACKS WORKERS

The ruling class is well aware of the role played by the ANC-SACP leaders in holding back the masses. However, the experience of last year's strikes strongly reinforced the bourgeoisie's awareness of these misleaders' weakness. For this reason, the ruling class has looked for new ways to use the state to limit workers' ability to use mass action and independent organization to defend their interests.

The bourgeoisie is meeting this need through the Labor Relations Act (LRA), a bill developed by the ANC and agreed to by big business and the union leaders in July 1995. The final details of the bill will not be clear until it enters parliament next year, but its chief elements are well known.

The outstanding feature of the bill is the extensive restrictions placed on the right to strike. The bill requires a period of non-binding arbitration at the hands of govern-

ment-appointed arbitrators before workers can legally launch a strike. Thus unions lose their current right to remove arbitrators they consider biased. After arbitration, workers must give the bosses 48 hours notice before striking. Strikes over layoffs, firings or any issues effected by a collective bargaining agreement or wage determination are outlawed.

Strikes are prohibited in "essential services," as well as in workplaces requiring continuous maintenance — which will presumably mean mines, food processing and steel mills, at minimum. Workers can be fired for taking part in or merely "contemplating" an unprocedural strike, and bosses can sue unions for lost profits in such strikes. Picketing on bosses' property is effectively banned, as are sit-down strikes.

On the other hand, the use of scabs is permitted, and the bosses' "human right" to lock out workers (enshrined in the constitution) is reinforced in the new bill. Bosses also maintain their unchallengeable right to lay off workers for "economic, structural, or technological" reasons.

The bill features a proposal for the creation of "workplace forums" to be created in all workplaces of over 100 workers. But the purpose of these forums is not to undermine (let alone remove) the dictatorship of management. Rather, they are designed to tie the workers to the capitalists in areas of "common interest," while adding further restrictions on the workers' ability to organize independently against management. Thus they will undermine workplace union structures. The proposed forums will give workers empty consultation rights on decisive issues, and joint decision-making power over less important ones. If a joint decision is not made, the matter will be resolved in arbitration, and workers are forbidden to strike over such issues. Bosses are under no compulsion to negotiate over layoffs — they just have to "consult" the union.

SELLOUT OF THE LRA STRUGGLE

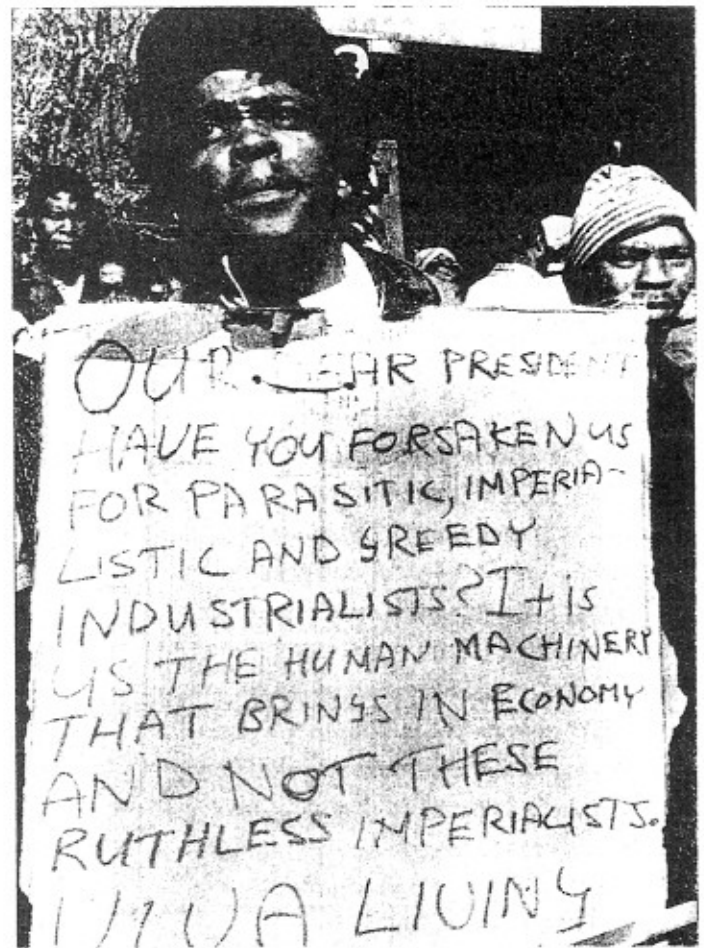
Many workers recognize the LRA as an attack on their rights and have pressured their leaders to launch a fightback. Union workers have demanded that all clauses limiting the right to strike, picket and use protest action be scrapped, along with those that protect lockouts and scabs.

The leaders of COSATU, the major union congress, were forced by their ranks to launch a campaign of mass struggle against the LRA to lead toward a partial general strike on June 19. This was the first time COSATU had been forced to act independently of its ANC and SACP alliance partners, who both favored the bill, thus further undermining its class-collaborationist alliance with the ANC-SACP.

On June 5, mass demonstrations against the LRA by tens of thousands of workers took place in every major city. But the union leaders only used these actions to bolster their failing images as militants and as a safety valve to release workers' pent-up frustration. The June 19 "strike" became a finale to what the leaders had always planned as a militant surrender campaign. The SACP leaders of COSATU immediately began secret talks with labor minister Tito Mboweni and the bosses' representative, Bobby Godsell. Breaking the mandates from their members, they agreed to all the clauses of the LRA the workers had opposed.

SOCIALISM AND TRADE UNIONIST ILLUSIONS

The role of the ANC-SACP leaders in the unions and other mass organizations in sabotaging the 1994 strike wave and the struggle against the LRA confirms what we have said since the first negotiations between the ANC and apartheid's



Nationalist Party: the key to their deal is the use of the ANC-SACP leaders to contain the masses' struggles.

The crisis of leadership the working class faces in South Africa and everywhere else is a product of the crisis of capitalism. The reformist leaders are committed to maintaining capitalism, but the workers' interests and struggles threaten the system: that is why the reformist leaders betray. That is why the working class needs a leadership committed to overthrowing capitalism. The crisis can only be solved by the most class-conscious workers' building a genuinely revolutionary international party to lead their fellow workers in struggle to the socialist revolution.

While many thousands of workers in South Africa regard themselves as socialists, most do not yet understand the need for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state, the building of a workers' state and the fight for world socialist revolution. Behind this are the illusions spread by the SACP union leaders in the ability of trade unionism to satisfy workers' needs.

These leaders are not pure syndicalists who argue that workers can solve all their problems through unionism alone. They recognize the need for political struggle but delegate all real responsibility for it to the ANC and SACP. The SACP told workers that before the socialist revolution they would have to fight for a bourgeois revolution that placed the ANC in power. Now the union tops say that socialism can be won by using the trade unions to pressure the government and capitalists. The unions' success in raising living standards through struggles for partial, economic demands have buoyed workers' hopes in trade unionism. And the election of the ANC-led government raised the illusion that the possibilities

in unionism were now practically limitless. Many workers expect that over time, and through the pressure of the unions, the ANC will oversee the building of socialism.

The pervasiveness of such syndicalist illusions became clear in the strikes that followed the 1994 elections, described in Part One of this article. In the lead-up to the forming of the GNU, the vanguard layer of tens of thousands of workers distrusted the ANC. Some had already concluded that the ANC had betrayed the struggle in the interests of capitalism. But most were tricked by the SACP's stagist line, holding on to the illusion that the ANC was committed to democracy, and that it could be pushed by mass struggle led by the unions to implement pro-working class policies.

After the elections, these militants seized the opportunity presented by the masses' high expectations to launch the strike wave and other struggles. But as these struggles show, workers will increasingly be thwarted by the limits of trade union struggles that do not go beyond economic demands and do not challenge the ANC politically.

South African capitalism, like the world economy overall, can afford no lasting concessions. Strikes and protests can still win wage increases and other partial gains, but these opportunities are quickly diminishing. The government is bankrupt, mid-sized capitalists are barely surviving and the large companies know that their profitability can be swept away in a day by volatile international financial markets. This means that the capitalists have to oppose further concessions ever more strongly and look to intensify exploitation.

For the workers, this means that concessions already won will be taken back tomorrow if there is not a mass struggle to defend them. The deepening economic crisis will make partial demands ever more difficult to win and increasingly

ineffective in combatting the system's ravages. Under these conditions, the working class will at some point find their economic struggles at a dead-end. By explaining that this shows how capitalism cannot satisfy the workers' needs, revolutionaries will be able to convince many advanced workers that the socialist revolution is the only solution. But many more workers will be convinced only through further struggle.

USING TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

This situation compels revolutionaries to show the way forward, lest workers become demoralized by the blind alley of trade unionist struggles. By supporting and participating in every struggle, revolutionaries can both *agitate* for the most effective methods of struggle, as well as *propagandize* among the advanced workers to explain how the struggle for partial demands shows the need for particular *political* demands.

Some key examples: the many promises of social development in the GNU's Reconstruction and Development Program (see PR 49) cannot be paid for by the bankrupt government, which is cutting expenditure on housing, health and education in order to pay interest to the banks. Under a slogan like "*Make the Bosses Pay for Reconstruction and Development*," revolutionaries can fight to unite the many RDP struggles around the need for the "*Nationalization without Compensation of the Banks and Big Industries*" as the only way to pay for these desperately needed programs.

Similarly, struggles for wage raises will increasingly confront unprofitable companies; there, the only road forward is to demand the nationalization of the companies to allow production to continue and the workers to keep their jobs and raise their wages at the state's expense. Given the crisis of capitalism, the fight for a living wage for all can only

COSATU: Break From the ANC-SACP!

Part One of this article in PR 49 should have included a correction to our slogan on class independence.

We have argued that the first responsibility of revolutionaries in South Africa is to draw the class line between the working class and the bourgeois ANC by fighting for the independence of the workers' main mass organizations, the COSATU unions, from the ANC.

Following its unbanning, tens of thousands of workers flooded into the Communist Party, and many more looked to it with great expectations. That is why we considered the SACP to be a workers' party with a counterrevolutionary petty-bourgeois leadership.

During the negotiations, while some SACP tops like Joe Slovo were acting as right-wing leaders of the ANC, others like Chris Hanu were gaining popular support by making fake threats that they would lead a struggle independent of the ANC if it betrayed the masses. We believed that because of this, workers would be unclear whether the SACP was completely tied to the ANC's deal with de Klerk, or whether its radical leaders were capable of having the party lead independent mass actions.

While we had no doubt that all the SACP leaders would betray the struggle, we saw the opportunity to prove this to the workers who hoped otherwise by raising the demand on the SACP leaders that they break from the ANC along with COSATU. This demand had particular

value after the assassination of Chris Hanu, when popular sentiment to break from the negotiations was at an explosive high: once again, thousands of workers flooded into the SACP hoping that the party would lead a mass struggle against the deal with de Klerk. (See PR 44).

But since then conditions have changed profoundly. Despite the assassination, numerous provocative acts by the de Klerk government and gross capitulations by the ANC, the SACP has continued to support the de Klerk deal. Now it is a loyal partner in the GNU, providing several key ministers. Today, no significant group of workers has any illusions that the SACP will lead a break from the ANC and fight the GNU. The tens of thousands of worker members the SACP claims are now no more than paper members, having abandoned the party.

Under these conditions, to continue to call on the SACP to break from the ANC and lead an independent working class struggle would be to create illusions in these counterrevolutionaries. Lacking timely information about the changed conditions, we mistakenly continued to raise this demand after the elections. The class line must now be clearly drawn between the ANC and SACP on the one hand, and COSATU on the other. This does not mean abandoning SACP workers or not working with the SACP in united struggles. But it does make the revolutionary slogan clear: *COSATU: Break from the ANC-SACP!*

be taken forward under the banner of nationalization.

The capitalists are using increases in the cost of goods to cut wages. This necessitates an *escalating scale of wages* that keeps pace with the increases in the cost of living.

Workers have long raised the call for *jobs for all*, crucial in a country where half the working class is unemployed. The new government's failure to reduce unemployment at all clearly shows the need for policies to restructure the economy. In particular, a *sliding scale of hours* to divide the available work among all workers is necessary, combined with a massive *public works* program to create more jobs by sponsoring essential projects like new homes and schools.

Only workers "on the ground" in South Africa can know precisely what demands to put forward, and when. We suggest these as an approximation of how revolutionaries formulate key demands today; the point is to link the current economic struggles to the political struggle that must develop.

The purpose of such transitional demands is not to provide a more militant reformist program than the SACP's. Nor are they drawn from a subjective assessment of what workers are "ready to accept." Rather, they are based on the masses' objective needs; they codify the solutions to these problems suggested by the working class's own struggles. They are the only policies which can answer these needs, on the basis of an independent working-class struggle against capitalism.

AIM OF TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

They will also be used as a weapon against reformist leaders of the working class. Revolutionaries will be able to encourage their fellow workers to join them in saying to the leaders: "Put up or shut up! If you really are for jobs for all, a living wage, for housing and social services; if you are really for socialism, fight for these transitional demands. If not, we will have to replace you with leaders that will." Always warning that the reformist leaders will betray the struggle because they are opposed to the overthrow of capitalism, revolutionaries will use the experience of the struggle and this sort of dialogue with the masses to prove the need for revolutionary party leadership of the struggle.

Marxists call these class-wide demands transitional because they advance the masses' consciousness from the immediate needs of the struggle towards the policies of the future workers' state in the transition to socialism. However, transitional demands have no ability in themselves to raise revolutionary consciousness — only revolutionaries' constant arguments for socialism combined with the masses' experience can achieve that.

These demands cannot be used as slogans for immediate mass struggle in South Africa today. The masses of workers will only come to see the need to fight for them once they have pursued their partial economic demands further and found them wanting. Their use today is in preparing this future struggle by explaining their importance to the most advanced workers — and to popularize them among the masses through the medium of these advanced workers.

Many vanguard workers are already debating the idea of socialism and looking for a way to link today's struggles to their socialist aim. Revolutionaries should explain to these workers that the limitations of trade union struggles they are already beginning to see will inevitably produce a violent clash between the current strategy of economist struggles and the convulsions of capitalism. The experience of the joint struggle with these workers for the transitional demands will prove the need for the socialist revolution.

A small but significant number of workers already understand that the ANC-SACP has sold out the working class and that there must be an independent struggle against them. Meanwhile the masses of unionists increasingly see that COSATU's alliance with the ANC-SACP is an impediment to winning their demands. Therefore the fight for COSATU to break from the ANC-SACP and lead an independent struggle against capital is paramount (see box, p. 18).

Even if the perspective of such a struggle is limited for a short period to pressuring the ANC-led government and the bosses, the need for the unions to adopt an independent program of working class policies is evident. After all, if COSATU simply pressures the ANC to deliver what it promised, that would mean jettisoning many essential demands because the ANC has already rejected them, like nationalization and jobs for all.

WORKERS' CHARTER STRUGGLE

Consider the fate of the Workers Charter campaign in COSATU. The campaign began in the mid-1980's, with workers fighting for a socialist working-class program for COSATU against the imposition of the ANC's Freedom Charter. (See PR 31-34.) Led by Moses Mayekiso, the campaign's syndicalist leaders sold out to the ANC; they accepted the Freedom Charter for today's struggle, relegating the struggle for socialism to empty talk for the future.

But the workers' socialist ideals and traditions of class independence were too strong for the COSATU bureaucrats to completely remove a workers charter from discussion. So the 1989 COSATU Congress resolved to draw up a workers charter that would *not* be a political program independent of the ANC's Freedom Charter; instead it would "articulate the basic rights of workers and all toiling masses" to be "guaranteed by the constitution of a people's government." The resolution reflected mass pressure for an independent program of workers' demands, as well as the successful effort by the ANC-SACP union bureaucracy to prevent this struggle from going beyond support for a future ANC government.

In 1990, a mass campaign of meetings and workshops, involving tens of thousands of union workers, debated what demands the workers charter should include. From this, a *Draft Workers Charter Report* was produced in 1991, which, like the resolution that first commissioned it, reflected the struggle between the pro-capitalist union leaders and their socialist-minded rank-and-file. Amid the bureaucrats' reformist crap like the setting up of all sorts of joint bodies between the workers and the capitalists, the pressure of the workers is clear in clauses like those stating that "Capitalism [is] responsible for poverty [and] unemployment," and others that assert COSATU's "Need to strive for socialism . . . for worker ownership and control . . . in a socialist economy or state." Among its concrete demands, the draft charter called for jobs and a living wage to be rights for all.

This was a threat to the deal between the ANC and the Nationalist Party. So the COSATU leaders stifled any further discussion by directing the report to be reworked by their executive committee, and it has not been heard of since. But the ranks have not forgotten the Workers Charter. Calls for its adoption have been raised on a number of occasions — including in the metalworkers' union's resolutions to the 1994 COSATU Congress, which also called for COSATU to break from the ANC-SACP alliance.

Given the betrayal of every major demand of the masses by the ANC-SACP, there is clearly a need for the workers of

COSATU and the other unions and mass organizations to again put forward a Workers Charter. Revolutionaries could use such a campaign to popularize a program of transitional demands that can really provide answers for the goals set out in previous Workers Charter drafts.

Because of its history of militancy, the masses continue to look to COSATU when mass struggle is needed. If COSATU broke from the ANC-SACP and adopted a Workers Charter calling for socialism and setting out transitional demands to solve unemployment, guarantee a living wage and realize the promises of the RDP — that would monumentally advance the struggle of the entire working class. It would help the industrial workers take the lead of the township masses, giving their struggles much needed organization and political focus.

AN INDEPENDENT WORKERS' PARTY

This sort of class-wide political struggle goes beyond the limits of trade unionism. The explosive organization of the whole working class (industrial and rural workers, the full-time, part-time and unemployed workers etc.) around a political program poses the need for the formation of an independent political organization: a workers' party.

The question of an independent workers' party has already been raised by workers in South Africa. The metalworkers' union NUMSA voted at its congress before last year's elections to call on COSATU to break its alliance with the ANC and organize a "conference of the left" to discuss the creation of a workers' party (see *PR* 46). NUMSA's call quickly gained support from a number of unions, and earned the wrath of the SACP union bureaucracy.

But it was almost inevitable that this movement for a workers' party would quickly dissipate. Most of the workers attracted to the idea of a workers' party maintained illusions in the coming ANC government and thought of an indepen-

dent party as necessary to watch over the workers' interests under an ANC government — and to mobilize the workers to push the ANC to deliver on its promises if necessary.

These illusions made it easy for the SACP and COSATU bureaucrats to oppose the idea, saying that the unions could defend the workers' interests — and that a separate workers' party was unnecessary if not detrimental to the struggle. Moreover, the workers had still not launched their economic struggles under the ANC government, which they hoped could bring them significant gains. For these reasons, the movement within COSATU for a workers' party had lost its momentum by the 1994 elections.

But as we described earlier, betrayals by the ANC-SACP both in government and in the unions are doing much to undermine the workers' hopes in trade union struggles as the way forward; the deteriorating economy is adding to this. The politicization of the workers' movement and its advance towards an independent workers' party that we project as the most likely course of development in the coming period will unfold neither immediately nor uniformly. Workers will still have to pass through the experience of more trade union struggles around economic issues, in order for the necessity for a new political method of struggle to be confirmed in their minds. Moreover, isolated victories of economic trade union struggles or even a brief economic upturn in South Africa could bolster hopes for success through the old-style trade union struggles. The defeat of strikes could also temporarily blunt workers' militancy.

Nevertheless, the overall direction of struggle is toward political demands. The shock of continued betrayals by ANC-SACP leaders and a sharp deterioration of the economy may initially cause a lull, but in time it will stimulate a radical response. Then an independent party based on the workers' mass organizations will most likely be placed on the agenda.

The only solution to the crisis of working class leadership is an authentically revolutionary party. The inevitable shift of the working class's struggles to the political road will profoundly change the arena and tactical methods for achieving this task. Until now, an appeal for the revolutionary party could only win an audience among a relatively small layer of politically advanced workers. However, the coming movement of workers toward political solutions in South Africa will become so widespread and explosive that no nucleus of the revolutionary party could keep up by direct appeals for recruitment. Masses of workers in struggle will see the need for their own political party before they are convinced that they have to overthrow the government and state through revolution. They will continue to hold reformist illusions even while favoring a militant struggle for socialism, and they will best overcome those illusions through the experience of a mass struggle for an independent workers party.

By explaining this to the advanced workers, revolutionaries will be able to win many more workers to the revolutionary party. By crystallizing the key task of the workers' struggle for class independence in the call for the creation of an independent workers' party based on the trade unions, revolutionaries will make accessible to great masses of workers in the most concise form, their key immediate task in the class struggle. By participating in a united struggle for a workers' party, revolutionaries will have the opportunity to prove to their fellow workers that the independent class party they are fighting for must adopt the program of socialist revolution if it is to lead them to victory.

The militant workers understand socialism in somewhat

South African Workers' Library

In our last issue, we noted the urgent need for Marxist literature in South Africa. There are many revolutionary workers in that country with a real thirst for learning about the theory, history and practice of the world communist movement.

Tragically, there are few copies of the great Marxist works to be found there, and they are financially out of the question for proletarian youth barely scraping out a living in the townships. So we decided to establish a Workers' Library and to create a fund to achieve that end.

In memory of a comrade who had devoted much of his life to the education of youth, the fight for Black liberation and revolutionary communism, we created the Steve Russell Fund. We asked for financial donations or books and pamphlets by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg. We have received some response so far, but much more is needed.

Please send books or contributions to: Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, N.Y. 10008. Checks should be made out to *Socialist Voice* and earmarked for the Steve Russell Fund.

vague terms, as meaning democratic control and planning of a nationalized economy producing for their needs, not for profit. Most importantly, what these workers do not understand is that to achieve socialism there must be a socialist revolution that violently overthrows the state and creates a dictatorship of the proletariat. The need for revolution is something that the workers must learn through the course of struggle, and the workers' party movement we anticipate will give revolutionaries an excellent opportunity to prove this.

PROGRAM FOR THE WORKERS PARTY STRUGGLE

We do not mean that revolutionaries would ever advocate a reformist workers party. On the contrary, when a workers' party movement does develop, revolutionaries will argue that the workers must make it a revolutionary party. At the same time, they will explain that they know the masses of workers are not yet convinced of the need for socialist revolution, so they will join them to build the workers' party and seek to prove that the party has to fight for revolution in the course of the struggle. Thus revolutionaries will treat the character of the new party as open-ended, to be determined through the course of the struggle.

To do this, revolutionaries would raise a program of transitional demands like those described above in the discussion of the Workers Charter. They will explain that these policies are necessary to relieve the burden of capitalism's crisis from the workers, and that they are also the first steps toward building socialism. But the workers' party cannot afford to confine itself to the role of a pressure group on the ANC. To implement these transitional policies, the workers party must fight for power itself. The workers' party must aim to create a *workers' government* committed to putting these transitional policies into effect.

Revolutionaries must explain that for a workers' government to have a chance to implement its policies, the capitalist armed forces and state apparatus must be smashed through armed revolution. They must warn workers that it is unlikely that the workers would even have the chance to form their own government before they make the revolution. If a workers' government can be formed without smashing the capitalist state, it could only last a moment before being confronted with an armed showdown with capital. Therefore, the workers' government must be *revolutionary* — it must take charge of preparing and executing the revolution and establishing the armed *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

While the independent workers party should be prepared to run in elections in order to popularize its program and to prove to the masses that socialism cannot come through parliament, it must primarily be a party of mass struggle. Revolutionaries should fight for all the tactics of mass struggle as outlined in Part One of this article. The party should be prepared to use the *general strike* weapon when suitable. The creation of *armed self-defense guards* in every struggle should be extended to a workers' militia to defend the workers' organizations and communities against attack.

The workers' strike committees should be extended into *committees of action*, to ensure the greatest possible control and organization of the mass struggle by the workers themselves. These bodies would be able to vote on class-wide policies to effect the whole country. Dominated by the industrial workers, committees of action could mobilize the township masses. Such committees should become dual-power worker' councils like the soviets of the 1917 Russian revolution, organs of working-class rule vying with the

capitalist state for control over society.

We stress that the developments we call for — the fight for transitional demands arising from economic struggles, the struggle for a Workers Charter coming out of the COSATU independence movement, and the expected movement for a workers' party — should not be interpreted as a mechanical scheme of stages through which the working class must travel consecutively on the road to socialist revolution. Rather, our point is that all the objective conditions of the class struggle



Apartheid's LRA was defeated by workers (above). The same struggle is needed against Mandela's LRA.

are pushing the working class from all directions at once toward a leap from trade union-style conflicts around partial, economic demands to a mass struggle for class-wide, political demands. But workers' consciousness lags behind objective conditions; it will only make that leap in response to a decisive event which forcefully impresses on them the need for an independent political struggle.

REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE COMING STRUGGLES

We have outlined ways in which revolutionaries can adapt their program to the immediate struggles of workers, connecting them to the need for the socialist revolution. How these struggles precisely develop is impossible to predict. What we have discussed is a likely direction of development and the tactics that can be used. Exactly how these policies can be put into effect can only be answered by workers engaged in the struggles in South Africa.

The purpose of explaining this to the most advanced workers today is to help prepare them. Such propaganda will show how the revolutionary party will mobilize the masses in a united struggle for socialism, and so help convince the most advanced workers to join the revolutionary party today. Moreover, it will show socialist-minded workers who are not ready to join the ranks of the revolutionaries how to lead today's struggles forward, thus establishing a dialogue between them and the revolutionaries which can lead to their joining the revolutionary party in the future.

Importantly, while preparing the way for the mass political struggle, revolutionaries must be aware of the danger of appearing to lessen in any way the absolute immediate need

to build the vanguard revolutionary party. The central propaganda slogan of revolutionaries must remain 'Build the Revolutionary Party — Re-Create the Fourth International'; propaganda for the future workers' party tactic is subordinate.

FAR LEFT IN CRISIS

With the South African working class rapidly becoming disillusioned with the ANC-led government, and with many thousands already seeing socialism as the solution to their needs, one might expect that the would-be revolutionary groups to the left of the SACP would be thriving right now. Nothing could be further from the truth. Almost all these centrist groups are in crisis, disoriented by a class struggle that is rapidly overtaking them. A closer look reveals why: all have in one way or another, acted not as revolutionary opponents of the ANC but as its critical supporters.

The Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) is the largest far left group and was the main force behind the Workers List Party (WLP), which ran in the 1994 elections (PR 47). In its campaign, however, the WLP did not explain that the coming ANC government would represent the same capitalist rulers as under apartheid, that it would betray all its promises and in fact attack the workers. Nor did the WLP suggest methods of struggle to combat this threat and connect these to socialist revolution. Rather, the WLP put forward a reformist program of putting pressure from the left on the future ANC government.

It was not surprising then the WLP received a pathetic 4,100 votes. Genuinely revolutionary-minded workers could not see it as an alternative to the ANC; more backward workers who believed the WLP's argument that the best that could be hoped for was to push the ANC to the left, would surely have voted for the ANC in order to give them the two-thirds majority in parliament that would have allowed them to govern independently of the Nationalists.

Before the 1994 elections the International Socialists of South Africa (ISSA) split over the question of voting for the ANC. The minority formed the International Socialist Movement (ISM), entered the WLP and opposed a vote for the ANC. ISSA itself tried to attack ISM from the left, arguing that workers need a vanguard revolutionary party rather than the mass reformist one that ISM supported. But the ISSA majority, with the support of their British overlings in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), turned this argument to a justification for the right-wing policy of voting for the ANC! ISSA defended this by arguing that the workers' primary task in the elections was to defeat the Nationalists, even though the ANC had already guaranteed the Nats a share of power, showing that a vote for the ANC was a vote for de Klerk.

South Africa and Proletarian Revolution

The South African black working class is the leading mass force in the struggle to overthrow world imperialism and free the human race. This pamphlet, a collection of articles by Matthew Richardson, details the revolutionary lessons of its rich experience.

A COFI Pamphlet

\$2.00

Socialist Voice, P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008

The Comrades for a Workers Government (CWG) are the most radical-sounding of all these groups, and are affiliated to the British Workers International League. Still, the CWG echoed ISSA's lie that voting for the ANC could defeat the Nationalists. Moving rapidly rightward over the last few years, the CWG even took a huge step toward the thoroughly discredited idea of turning the ANC into a workers' party, encouraging workers to fight within the ANC to expel the "openly bourgeois elements." (Qina Msebenzi No. 8) If the CWG were honest about this, it would explain that this would mean ousting the entire leadership of the ANC and everything it really stands for — that is, to destroy the ANC. But the CWG do not say this because it would be a powerful argument for *not* trying to reform the ANC in the first place. With their hackneyed talk of reforming the ANC, the CWG simply sows confusion among the advanced workers.

After the elections ISSA split again, over issues which neither section seems to have thought important enough to explain to their readers. But this also is not so surprising, considering that those who left ISSA this time included some of the most vociferous advocates of voting for the ANC; they then immediately joined ISM, which had refused to vote for the ANC and had instead joined the WLP! ISM had left the WLP by the time of the merger, so where the group now stands on such "unimportant" questions as whether the working class should give political support to the bourgeois ANC, is unclear. What worker could trust a leadership that shows such contempt for its own political ideas?

ISM's abandoning of the WLP left WOSA essentially alone. Not wanting to admit the WLP's failure, WOSA maintains it as a reformist front group. The coming local elections will force WOSA to make a decisive choice: either run the WLP in the elections and likely be humiliated by another pathetic result, or not run in the elections and admit the complete failure and collapse of the WLP.

All these groups were trying to ingratiate themselves with popular consciousness, at a time when the masses held great illusions in the ANC. But now that they are rapidly coming to understand the capitalist, anti-working class character of the ANC, the most advanced workers are looking at the left groups and asking: Who had the courage to warn us of all this when few of us would listen? Who told us how to prepare? Who pointed the way forward?

THE WORKERS INTERNATIONAL GROUP

The only group to the left of the SACP that appears to have passed this test is the South African section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (WI[SA]). As we reported in PR 47, the WI got 5,500 votes in 1994. This was a significant achievement, considering that the WI had come out from underground only a short while before the elections and was virtually unknown and without resources. At the time, we questioned the significance of the vote because we did not know the WIS program or to what degree the vote reflected a real movement of workers toward class independence. We can now answer these questions.

While the vote totals cannot be trusted because of the widespread vote-rigging that took place, the WI clearly received a significant working class vote. They openly ran as revolutionary socialists, posing all the key revolutionary tasks of the workers instead of hiding them beneath deliberately vague phrases like the centrists. They made their central argument the need for the socialist revolution and the need to build the revolutionary party to achieve it. They also drew

the class line against the ANC, opposing a vote for it and calling for an independent workers' struggle. They warned that the ANC government would be a capitalist government and would attack the workers; it would have to be overthrown by the workers in the future. The comrades argued for proletarian internationalism, not as a moral ideal or



Militant South African workers look to socialism as solution to capitalist exploitation.

middle-class "solidarity," but in terms of building the Fourth International in the fight for world socialist revolution; they opposed all illusory national solutions for the working class.

In doing so, the Workers International differentiated itself from all the middle-class left, showing that it was alone in swimming *against* the stream of opportunist adaptation to the ANC-SACP. Summing up their election campaign, the WI(SA) explained that the workers who followed them:

... were warned that the new Government of National Unity of the ANC and the racist National Party will oppress the workers and will do its best to satisfy big capital and international imperialism. ... This needs to be challenged by a revolutionary workers party of the masses. ... During the election, the Workers International explained to the working class that the Manifesto of the Workers List Party had crucial political weaknesses. It does not explain the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in the world as well as in South Africa; it does not explain how the working class is to take power, avoiding the question of the socialist revolution; its position on internationalism is vague, avoiding the issue of the Fourth International completely, and putting forward an unacceptable conception of a mass workers party which is not revolutionary and which is all things to all people. The disastrous result of the Workers List Party and the magnificent result of the Workers International, shows that the project of a non-revolutionary workers party is a non-starter, and that more workers are interested in a revolutionary party that is opposed to Stalinism and that stands for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

In addition a number of other so called socialists decided to support an ANC electoral victory. They voted against

the need for an independent working class party, and pursued a policy of "critical" support for the sell-out ANC. Hereby they showed to the working class that they are incapable of giving a lead, and that whenever the struggle of the working class reaches a crossroad, they will stand against the political independence of the working class, and will strive to tie them to one or other agent of the capitalist class, of course "critically." (*Workers International News*, Vol. 1, No. 1.)

Since the elections, unlike the rest of the left, the WI has grown in size and influence, particularly in the Western Cape. It has done so because it continues to fight for socialist revolution and has exposed the betrayals of the ANC-SACP union leaders. However, its fight for the vanguard party has been marred by a lack of clarity on the mass workers' party tactic and on the transitional method.

Unfortunately, the WI(SA)'s achievements are in direct contradiction to its ties to, and defense of, the Workers International (WIRFI), the international tendency built by Cliff Slaughter's Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) in Britain. We have analyzed the record of this tendency in *PR* 29, 36 and 37.

The WIRFI made its political debut in Southern Africa when its Namibian group, the WRP(N) ran in the 1990 elections as part of a rotten popular frontist electoral bloc called the United Democratic Front (UDF). The UDF was dominated by bourgeois elements who even received funds from the South African government (*PR* 36).

Moreover, the WIRFI is moving rapidly to the right: the WRP(GB) recently raised a call for a "new socialist party" in Britain which is indistinguishable from the reformist Workers List Party in South Africa. This new party's socialism is vague and certainly not revolutionary. Its internationalism is not to be that of building the Fourth International to lead the world's workers in struggle, but the ultimately nationalist notion of international "solidarity." With this policy the WRP is looking to join with the lefts of the British Labour Party who are disgruntled by the party's dominant right wing and want a new reformist party without the bourgeois leaders.

More recently, the WRP has launched a campaign around the war in the former Yugoslavia which has crossed the line from solidarity with the Bosnian victims of imperialism to tacit support for imperialist intervention in the region. The WRP did not even call for an end to the bombings, much less defend the Serb forces from NATO and call for military support to those fighting the imperialists.

No matter how close to a revolutionary policy the WI(SA) has been following to this point, they cannot be trusted. As long as they defend popular frontism in Namibia and a new reformist party in Britain, they cannot be relied on to continue to oppose the ANC and WOSA-type centrism. The WI(SA)'s development toward revolutionary politics cannot continue with its allegiance to the WIRFI: either they degenerate into the right-centrist swamp of the WIRFI, or they see through the WIRFI's opportunism and break from this international tendency. Only then will we be able to determine the real character of the WI(SA).

*No Support to the Government of National Unity!
COSATU: Break from the ANC-SACP!*

*Build the Revolutionary Party — Re-create the Fourth
International!
Forward to Socialism!*

LRP in South Africa

During a recent political tour, LRP comrades had the opportunity to discuss revolutionary strategy and tactics with South African workers in a number of cities. Visiting industrial plants and addressing meetings of striking workers, the LRPers were greatly impressed by the internationalism and high level of political class consciousness of South African workers.

Given the virulent anti-communism that infests political debate in American unions, it was refreshing to encounter working-class meetings where socialism and revolutionary ideas were openly discussed. The cynical leftist view of apolitical workers only interested in trade unionist, "bread and butter" issues collapses before the reality of South African working-class politics.

Whenever workers heard there were foreign visitors, they insisted that we speak and give "input" to their meetings. Thus, when we attended a strike meeting by NUMSA workers, we were asked to address the situation of unions in Australia and the U.S. Workers were particularly interested in the question of the social contract. Comrade Matthew Richardson explained how the social contract in Australia undermined the militant working-class movement, while Comrade Bob Wolfe focused on the divide-and-conquer strategy of the U.S. ruling class and the need to fight against class collaboration.

While South African workers were eager to learn about the class struggle in the U.S. and Australia, we had a great deal to learn from their more advanced struggles. Their internationalism took a concrete form on July 14 when Cape Town workers, including many strikers, joined a rally to defend Mumia Abu-Jamal, who faced execution in Pennsylvania. Workers turned the demonstration into a militant march through downtown to the U.S. embassy, and then through posh bourgeois streets to a struck worksite.

While our experiences reaffirmed the growing revolutionary consciousness of South African workers, we also got a taste of the bureaucratization that threatens to strangle the revolutionary workers struggle when we attended a conference of some hundreds of COSATU shop stewards. Given the heated debate over the Labor Relations Act

(LRA) and the numerous workers' struggles, we anticipated an exciting Congress. Instead, political discussion was limited to lecturing by ANC-SACP leaders — who blamed workers for not giving enough support to the GNU government that was attacking them. In a series of maneuvers that would have made their AFL-CIO counterparts proud, the COSATU bureaucrats avoided all serious political debate by first putting discussion of resolutions towards the end of the agenda — and then tabling the resolutions on the grounds that their wasn't enough time left for discussion.

Clearly the leaders feared opening up the question of the ANC-SACP/COSATU alliance and the GNU's anti-working class attacks. Discussing the LRA, with its provisions defending lockouts and scabbing, would have opened the door to questioning the alliance itself.

We participated in two forums by South African leftist organizations. The first was a WOSA public meeting on the LRA. Speaking from the floor, we argued that the key questions before the meeting should be explaining why the union leaders betrayed the workers, and what workers must do to stop this from happening again. The ANC-SACP union leaders' sabotage of the struggle against the bill starkly reinforces the need for an alternative revolutionary leadership. in conscious and open struggle against the current leaders. But anyone expecting such an analysis from the speakers was sorely disappointed. In a lengthy talk, WOSA's speaker accurately described the bill's problems. Nevertheless, he offered not a word of criticism of the leaders who approved the bill! Nor did a speaker from the Chemical Workers' union who is also a member of the Comrades for a Workers Government group.

We spoke to several workers' meetings about the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, describing how the defense of Mumia is an important part of the working-class fight against racism and police attacks in the U.S.

Our trip confirmed our understanding that a rapidly growing number of workers see through the ANC-SACP and are looking for the revolutionary road forward. Contrary to all the bourgeois propaganda, the South African revolution has only just begun.●

COFI/LRP

continued from page 2

United Secretariat, the largest network of false claimants to the legacy of Leon Trotsky, is careening toward disintegration. One national section after another is abandoning even the ghost of the idea of an independent revolutionary party. Democratic centralist discipline has become a joke.

The International Socialism tendency, which claims to be growing in the U.S. and abroad, has suffered several fractures and losses. A South African split and a series of apolitical expulsions in Australia are only the latest. For the flavor of what is happening in the U.S. ISO, see page 15.

We have paid particular attention to the British group

Workers Power and its allies, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), because of its left pretensions. WP's surrender to imperialism over Bosnia (see p. 4) has organizationally split the LRCI, already torn by its incessant tailing of reformist politics, its wild floundering over Stalinism and its open capitulations to petty-bourgeois nationalism. Its New Zealand group has split; its Latin American sections have broken away entirely. All sides seem united in that they have no coherent understanding of Stalinism, nationalism or the world.

Under the surface of world events, a massive proletarian explosion is building up which will dwarf the eruptions of the late 1960's and early '70's. As the working-class struggle moves in that direction, we can expect schisms far more productive for the re-creation of the world revolutionary party.●

Defending Mumia Abu-Jamal

by Susan Darwin

A growing movement in support of the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal finally won a stay of execution on August 7. However, the first appeal for a new trial was rejected on September 15, by the same racist Philadelphia judge, Albert Sabo, who convicted him 13 years ago.

Appeals are planned to the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court and Federal Courts. Yet as the Reverend Al Sharpton put it, "If the case ends up going before the Supreme Court, it will end up on the desk of Clarence Thomas." Clearly a strategy that relies on the courts cannot free Mumia.

Increased use of the death penalty sharpens the weapons of repression which will be used by the capitalist state against the working class as a whole when class war breaks out. The death penalty machinery is aimed against Abu-Jamal and several thousand others, disproportionately Black and Latino. Over 50 percent of death row inmates are people of color; white victim and black accused is the most likely combination for a capital conviction. In Philadelphia Blacks make up 80 percent of those sentenced to death..

MUMIA'S FRAME-UP

Mumia came of age politically in 1968, when Black ghettos were exploding. By age 15, he was a leading spokesman for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, a chief target of the FBI's murderous "counterintelligence" program. Hundreds of pages of FBI files show attempts to frame Mumia for a political assassination in 1973. One file stated that he has "not shown a propensity for violence" — but he was on the "armed and dangerous" list, telling cops to shoot first and ask questions later.

Mumia was lucky enough to survive this scene. He became an articulate radical journalist who publicly exposed the racist Philadelphia police violence in the 1970's. He wrote a exposure of the Philly cops' attack on a house of a member of the Black counterculture MOVE group in 1978. The notorious racist mayor and former chief of police Frank Rizzo denounced the "new breed" of journalists, warning him: "one day, and I hope it's in my career, that you're going to be held responsible and accountable for what you do."

The Philadelphia authorities took vengeance on MOVE in 1985 when they firebombed its headquarters, killing eleven people, including four children. But the cops had already silenced Mumia. On December 9, 1981, a car owned by his brother, William Cook, was stopped by officer Daniel Faulkner, who started beating Cook. Mumia, working as a cab driver, drove by and stopped. Shots rang out; Jamal was found with shots to the chest, Faulkner dying.

Mumia was charged with murder and convicted under conditions pointing to a rigged, racist trial:

- Ballistics evidence that did not point to Mumia's gun was either not collected or kept out of the trial.

- Mumia's alleged confession, supposedly extracted when Mumia was in the hospital (where police kicked and beat him as he waited to be operated on) does not appear in the original police log or statements.

- The police version identifying Mumia as Faulkner's shooter came from witnesses who were all in trouble with the law but not subsequently prosecuted.

- The jury itself was rigged. It included friends and relatives of cops, and the prosecution used eleven of fifteen peremptory challenges to remove Black jurors.

- Typically of Philadelphia, a biased jury was ensured by the fact that the jurors had to be "death qualified" — willing



LRP contingent at Philadelphia rally for Mumia in August.

to give the death sentence. As Mumia's book *Live From Death Row* shows convincingly, this means that Blacks and women are systematically excluded.

- Judge Sabo, a member of the Fraternal Order of Police (which has been aggressively campaigning for Mumia's execution), has sentenced more people to death than any other judge in the country; he behaved in an overtly biased manner at every step of the case.

- Mumia was denied the right to represent himself and was actually removed from the courtroom for most of the trial. This insured that his incompetent court-appointed lawyer would be driving blind.

- To make it perfectly clear that this was a politically motivated vendetta, the prosecution was allowed to argue that Mumia's membership "in an unpopular political organization" (the Panthers) showed his "longstanding disdain for the system" and that he had "planned to kill a cop all the way back then."

EXECUTION HALTED

Now Mumia has been able to mount a defense that has brought these facts in detail to the public. The Abu-Jamal case confirms that capitalist "justice" is a lie: capitalism in its death agony will junk the rules of bourgeois democracy to suit the needs of the state. A committed, articulate Black spokesman for the oppressed is an enemy of the ruling class.

Mumia is a political prisoner, held on death row because

of his beliefs. Since Blacks are often the most militant (and revolutionary-minded) among workers, the state seeks to silence those who fight the system — whenever it can get away with it.

The stay of execution was in large part a victory won by the left-inspired movement. When Pennsylvania Governor Ridge set a date for execution, this forced various “progressive” celebrities into gear.

A major factor for the stay was the fear that executing Mumia might spark a reaction by Blacks who are fully aware of cop terrorism. The scandal around racist cop Mark Fuhrman in the O.J. Simpson trial also helped, as did ongoing revelations of police corruption and brutality in Philadelphia itself. In the face even of small riots that broke out against blatant police brutality in Florida, Indiana and New Jersey this year, the ruling class held off. The L.A. riots three years ago are still fresh in the bourgeois mind.

Thus the Mumia defense movement overlaps with the interests of bourgeois liberals who support the death penalty but see that the questionable execution of an increasingly well known journalist could discredit capitalist “justice.” A *New York Times* editorial called for a new trial and opposed the death penalty — but implied that Mumia belongs in jail: his defenders “should recognize the possibility that Mr. Abu-Jamal is not the innocent man they depict.”

DEFENDING MUMIA

Mumia’s freedom should be fought for not just because his death would be a racist crime but because a victory would show the possibility of defeating the state.

The campaign to defend Mumia gives revolutionaries the opportunity to prove the need for the socialist revolution to people who want to end the system of oppression and inequality. To this end the LRP has joined in many rallies to defend Mumia in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and even South Africa and Germany where comrades were visiting.

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY Vol. 5, No. 4, Spring 1995

Through Fascism, War and Revolution: Trotskyism and Left Communism in Italy

The predominance of the Italian Communist Party and its promotion of the ideas of Gramsci have resulted in much of the history of the revolutionary left in Italy being obscured or totally hidden. This issue corrects the imbalance by presenting for the first time in English a series of essays describing the rise and development of the Italian Trotskyist and Left Communist movements from the late 1920’s to the aftermath of the Second World War.

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The Spartacist League, through its front group, the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC), is the most significant left force in the campaign. But at the August 12 rally in Philadelphia — sponsored by the Workers World Party along with its front groups and liberal allies — the PDC, together with MOVE and Refuse & Resist, were denied permission to speak from the podium. This was a sectarian disgrace.

The Spartacists are professed revolutionaries and have the greatest opportunity to fight for a revolutionary party in their defense work. But they have kept public discussion of the necessary politics out of sight. They typically call for “mobilizing the full power of labor to fight the execution” — without exposing the labor bureaucracy as the main force blocking such a mobilization.

Sometimes they do worse and promote the bureaucrats’ hollow posturing. At a PDC-sponsored “Labor/black mobilization for Jamal” on August 3rd in New York, the SL went out of their way to call for a round of applause for Stanley Hill, head of AFSCME’s DC 37, after he spoke. Hill had just sold out his workers in the New York budget battle and had joined mayor Giuliani in asking the state legislature for less aid for welfare and hospitals (in return for lower cuts to his union) — and then invited the anti-labor mayor to speak at a DC 37 retreat! (*New York Observer*, Oct. 2.)

The Spartacists call, correctly, for a united-front movement. But for revolutionaries that does not mean covering up the treacherous actions of temporary allies. When labor bureaucrats are forced to defend their members’ class interests, we join with them. But their politics must be opposed, not applauded, even within the united front.

Thanks to the Spartacists, Hill got to polish his image on the cheap by attending the Mumia rally, and the Spartacists got to brag that they had a labor-centered demonstration — when in fact Hill didn’t mobilize any of his 100,000-plus members. In their coverage of this event, the Spartacists didn’t dare mention Hill’s presence, even though he was the top figure there and showed up prominently near the podium in *Workers Vanguard’s* own photo (Aug. 25.)

Would the bourgeoisie dare to execute Mumia in the face of a working-class explosion, such as a general strike against the capitalist attacks? The labor bureaucrats who work overtime to contain workers’ struggles are part of the problem, not the solution, even when a handful of them endorse the Mumia protests. As an LRP spokesman said at a PDC-sponsored rally for Abu-Jamal in Chicago in August:

We have heard from a number of union leaders tonight. And we commend them for showing up. We understand that they will face a price — red-baiting and the like. But let’s look at who’s not here. The hundreds of thousands of union workers and oppressed youth who really have the power to stop the murder of Jamal. . . .

In the course of building a class-wide fight, authentic communists counterpose their revolutionary program to liberal and nationalist programs, to the electoral and reformist strategies of militant union officials. So while we commend the Spartacist League for its dedication and hard work, we criticize the SL for moderating its political program in the presence of more conservative forces. That is a centrist policy: it denigrates the revolutionary capacity of the working class and its centrality for socialism.

*Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!
Down With Capitalism’s Racist Death Penalty!
Socialist Revolution Is the Only Solution!*

Farrakhan

continued from page 32

and oppressed. History proves that what was won on the streets in ghetto rebellions is being lost in the voting booths. A march whose goals were backed by enemies of the Black struggle like Clinton, Dole, Colin Powell, Chicago's Mayor Daley, Philadelphia's Mayor Rendell and the Anti-Defamation League was itself part of the problem.

Farrakhan succeeded in getting virtually all the key Black political figures to acknowledge his growing power among Blacks. The march signed on Rev. Benjamin Chavis, recently ousted head of the NAACP, social-democratic professor Cornel West, Washington mayor Marion Barry, civil rights heroine Rosa Parks and other notables. The Revs. Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and Joseph Lowery (head of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference), fought off endorsing the affair for as long as they could but finally enlisted.

WHY FARRAKHAN FLOURISHES

Much of Farrakhan's current success derives from the gaping vacuum left in the Black leadership after the abject failures of integrationism and its advocates. Integrationist leaders for whom the NOI was previously anathema had to endorse a march whose men-only format had Farrakhan's ideological stamp all over it — in order not to appear to stand against Black unity.

There are several reasons why Farrakhan in particular has been able to capitalize on the current situation.

1. Farrakhan's denunciation of racist American society, "this modern-day Babylon," rings true, especially in comparison to the mealy-mouthed utterances of other Black leaders and politicians. He appears as a militant and angry outsider, a proud Black man who doesn't play the game.

2. The rising chorus of attacks on him by powerful white forces seems to confirm that he is an authentic champion of the victimized Black people. The attacks on him and the NOI mount along with the attacks against the whole race. Many Blacks, even those who fundamentally disagree with the NOI, solidarize with him as a target of white racists.

3. U.S. capitalism sharply defines itself by race, in order to hide its fundamental class division. Farrakhan's "nationalist" separatism not only seems to throw down the gauntlet in the face of white-dominated society, it also calls for unity of all Blacks against the surrounding enemy. Even among those who know that Blacks are not a nation, Farrakhan's group-identity message strikes responsive and fervent chords in seeming to answer the serious need for Black self-defense.

4. Black shopkeepers, always far more marginal than their white counterparts, feel even more devastated and isolated in an economy that is especially crisis-ridden for Blacks. Their angry separatist yearnings cover a desperate hope for an accommodation with their white counterparts that will allow them their own space within the system. And like petty-bourgeois whites, they too have veered in increasing numbers toward the radical-sounding right — a right of a different color. They too have been prone to see the barriers to their aspirations not in bourgeois society but in other groups — Jews, Koreans, Latinos or immigrants in general. This builds Farrakhan's petty-bourgeois base.

5. Farrakhan's stress on self-help emphasizes business

achievement and a puritan ethic; it can benefit only a small petty-bourgeois layer and has little practical meaning for the working-class masses. However, the message that Blacks will have to rise by their own efforts in a hostile world rings true. Blacks increasingly see that all the mainstream white-dominated institutions are hostile to Black advancement. Farrakhan appeals to those who have given up hope in society's approved channels but not their aspirations to rise.

6. The capitalist attack on the government and foundation-backed "safety net" programs that were created in response to the ghetto revolts has already had an enormously destructive impact on the lives of impoverished Blacks. It has also undermined a whole strata of "povertocrats," and the living standards and jobs of many other middle-class professionals are also threatened. Since the threat to affirmative action programs appears to come from other groups, many Blacks have come to understand the world as one of rival ethnicities. Thus integrationism has eroded among the educated middle strata, and the separatist outlook has grown. Farrakhan's traditional petty-bourgeois base has expanded to include such middle-class elements.

7. While the vast majority of U.S. Blacks are working-class, class identification between Black and white workers is low. The chief reason is that the unions rarely fight for the needs of their members, Black, Latino or white — certainly not for the numerous Black workers and unemployed outside their organizations. The blocking of class identity facilitates the rise of petty-bourgeois leaders among the oppressed.

8. So far only a tiny minority of Black workers and students have been exposed to authentic revolutionary Marxism, the real alternative to both integrationism and separatism. The middle-class left has tailed either pro-capitalist integrationism or pro-capitalist nationalism and avoided fighting for an openly *revolutionary* solution.

WHAT IS BLACK NATIONALISM?

We sometimes put "Black nationalism" in quotes precisely because nationalism without a territorial base isn't really nationalism. As well, Blacks are subjugated in the U.S. but not as a separate nation.

Elijah Muhammad, founder of the NOI, generally cast his expectations for the future of the "Lost-Found Black Nation" in vague theological terms. The NOI continues to call for a separate national state, as it must if it is to maintain its uncompromising stance of rejecting white society. However, Louis Farrakhan also speaks in "practical" terms. In his book *Back Where We Belong*, published in 1989, he states:

If you say we must return to Africa, what nation in Africa is willing to receive 40 million of us? . . . Let us be reasonable . . . America is not willing to give us eight or ten states, or even one state. Let's be reasonable.

In the years before and after the American Revolutionary War, there existed movements among the African slaves for a return to Africa. In later years the call for an American Black homeland in Africa, Haiti, Central America, the Southern Black Belt or elsewhere struck responsive feelings among many Blacks — but not because they actually expected or wanted a territorial haven. Such ideologies flourished after serious setbacks in the struggles for equality in the U.S. At those times, as now, for the masses of plebeian Blacks "Black Nationalism" meant militant rejection of white alliances and lying promises, plus a call for Black unity to repel the siege.

In effect, the Black nationalist leaders' underlying aim is

not to forge a separate Black nation but an internal colony, a subordinated nation (which does not now exist). Consciously or not, the separatist wing of the petty bourgeoisie aims to become a junior partner comprador class exploiting Black labor for the dominant American imperialist ruling class.

Blacks in the U.S. are caught in a contradiction which, barring genocide, will last as long as capitalism exists. They are constantly driven to try to realize the system's promise of full participation, while they are always rejected in the end. This torturous contradiction created Farrakhan; he cannot resolve it and is doomed to reflect it.

Because Farrakhan wants to function as a broker between the ruling class and the masses of angry Blacks, he must champion mass sentiment to a degree. At present he has been able to get away with an openly conservative program because of the vacuum of leadership and struggle; masses are momentarily responsive to his strong call for unity and self-assertion and do not yet demand a radical content.

Even under these circumstances, Farrakhan and his followers could come under violent attack or repression by the capitalist state. It would then be necessary for revolutionary workers to defend him — for the real intended target would be the Black masses. In the future, Farrakhan may be forced to raise militant demands and call meaningful actions, in order to hold leadership when mass struggles break out. In that case revolutionaries would join in common action, always warning against Farrakhan's treacherous pro-capitalist leadership. This is the method of the united front.

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

The alternative strategy among Black leaders has been integrationism, previously called assimilationism. This must not be confused with Marxist internationalism and interracialism. Marxists seek working-class unity across race and national lines. Our strategy always champions the rights of oppressed nations, peoples and races — to prove that capitalism is the enemy and that the revolutionary struggle of the whole working class is the solution. In sharp contrast, integrationist leaders delude the Black masses that America can become a colorblind society without the overthrow of capitalism.

Worthwhile achievements like the removal of legal segregation were accomplished through determined struggles, but U.S. capitalism requires that society still depends on racial oppression. The real gains made by the Black struggle in the 1960's and the early 1970's came from the ghetto rebellions that swept urban America and caused the capitalists to act out of genuine fear. The revolts were sparked largely by unorganized poor workers who paid no attention to the efforts of the integrationist Martin Luther King or the NAACP to restrain them. The only nationally prominent leaders with real authority were Malcolm X and a few Black Power figures whose politics had a revolutionary cast.

The ghetto rioters wanted jobs, an end to police brutality and other concrete changes. They did not share the illusions about whites and Blacks walking hand in hand into the future. Integrationism was a vague but useful false consciousness under which the ruling class and the new Black middle-class layer, created in response to the mass struggle, could cement their hold. The inherently racist ruling class accepted dappling their governmental facade with some Black faces.

A big campaign effort for Black voting registration took place under the aegis of Jesse Jackson, starting in the late 1980's. Throughout the 1970's Black progress had been undermined by the deepening capitalist crisis. The Reagan

years saw a turn to a more frontal assault. Despite the election of more Black politicians, things got worse for Black people. And Black voting declined.

Jackson's presidential crusades in 1984 and 1988 were designed to reinvigorate the Black vote, prop up the declining Democratic Party — and promote Jackson as the hegemonic leader of Blacks. Even though he was a protege of



Fruit of Islam guards defend stage at Million Man March. March was a barrier to Black pride and to Black struggle against racist capitalism.

King, Jackson's campaigns were notable for their barely hidden subordination of integrationism in favor of interest-group "Rainbow" politics in which Blacks would have substantial influence and peacefully coexist with all others.

Jackson succeeded in gaining Black leadership for a time. Hoping against hope, more Blacks voted again. But the reality of U.S. capitalism intruded. Jackson had to humble himself before the powerful in the Democratic Party. His Rainbow Coalition served as a cover for the Black and white liberal politicians who themselves served as front men for the capitalist attack on the oppressed and exploited in America. Farrakhan, who in the past had collaborated with Jackson and PUSH and had endorsed his campaign in 1984, began to inherit sizable chunks of Jackson's base.

ANGER ... AND INACTION

Booker T. Washington, the acknowledged forerunner of Marcus Garvey and the NOI separatists, could plead with the ruling class by falsely claiming that Black slaves had dutifully assisted their masters in the Civil War and therefore should be treated well. But Farrakhan, to carry out his program for a separate Black economy, must express the rage and rejection of white domination felt by the masses in order to win their support and use it to compel concessions.

Farrakhan both expresses his followers' rage and demands their social obedience. Hence his militant rhetoric and demonstrations of power, on the one hand — and his avoid-

ance of any anti-government or even anti-white acts, on the other. Farrakhan's anti-Semitism is also in part a shopworn maneuver to make him seem hostile to the white ruling class; in reality scapegoating Jews lets the ruling class as a whole off the hook. (For background on the Black/Jewish confrontation, see articles in PR 22 and 40.)

Unlike Washington, Farrakhan cannot now cajole the white bourgeoisie. Not only is today's monopoly economy far more interpenetrated with Black business, but Blacks are now predominantly working-class and live in the heart of the urban centers; while driven back, their threat of social "disobedience" has by no means been smashed. There is no defeat of historic proportions as with the betrayal of Blacks by the populists in the 1890's. Farrakhan's major card for winning capitalist support is this threat of rebellion and revolution. Without it the ruling class would ignore him.

In *Back Where We Belong*, arguing that the capitalists should back his aims, Farrakhan stated:

I say to you, it is in America's best interest to permit us to do this. For right now blacks are becoming increasingly disenchanting, and we are a social tinderbox. And if black people rise up in an evil manner, we could foment revolution inside this country

The danger for Farrakhan too is that the Black masses might carry out the threat; then his program would be smashed. True to his outlook, Farrakhan joined with Black politicians in calling for law and order in Los Angeles in the wake of the 1992 riots. The threat of rebellion is a two-edged sword for him, and Farrakhan knows it.

For all its blistering anti-white rhetoric and the menace implied by its Fruit of Islam guards, the NOI remains inert in response to brutal physical attacks on Black communities. The NOI is no different in this respect today than in the days of the martyred Malcolm X, who said:

It could be heard increasingly in the Negro communities: "Those Muslims talk tough but they never do anything unless somebody bothers Muslims."

Black "nationalism" never fundamentally challenged capitalist society. It sought to achieve a parallel (if far smaller) Black economy internally. Leaders like Garvey and Elijah Muhammad never sunk roots in Africa, but they did create and nurture Black-owned businesses in the U.S.

THE NATION'S BUSINESS

The NOI today follows in their footsteps. While most of its capital comes from members and friends, some comes from investment by Black businessmen. The NOI also has contracts with several big-city governments to police housing projects. *Business Week* touted Farrakhan's entrepreneurship, adding that, "If necessary, the Nation says, it will turn to banks for funding." (March 13, 1995.) Even if the banks in question are Black-owned, they are financially interpenetrated with the top financial and industrial corporations and the U.S. government, all dominated by white capitalists.

The firms started by Garvey and Elijah Muhammad inevitably meshed with the economic fabric of monopoly capitalism, if they lasted at all. That will be the fate of most of NOI's projected businesses: a surface separateness for a marginal and actually dependent economy. Under continuing economic discrimination, Black business takes in approximately 1 percent of the national income. It exploits a tiny fraction of the Black working class; white capitalists directly carry out super-exploitation without a significant Black intermediary. To the extent that Black-owned businesses and

franchises become big, they tend not only to merge into the larger economy but also to broaden their hiring policies.

The claim that the nationalist petty-bourgeoisie will hire more Black labor attracts support among Black workers, especially the unemployed. But given the economic decay, only a minuscule number can expect to be hired. And the capitalist drive for cheaper labor means that other subjugated minorities are forced to sell their labor power at super-exploited levels, thereby pressuring down wages in the relatively marginal Black businesses even further.

WOMEN STAY BACK

Black nationalism is a pro-capitalist ideology that mimics in many ways the values of the dominant capitalist culture. The Nation of Islam shares the paternalism that is a vital part of bourgeois culture and its other religions. In some ways it outdoes the reactionary white campaign for the restoration of "traditional family values"; it even advocates that women be veiled, treating them as male property.

Capitalism promotes the sanctity of the traditional bourgeois patriarchal family as a counter to class consciousness. The "protected" woman is supposedly shielded from the rigors of the workplace, the big questions of the world and the struggles in it; as the isolated and parochialized homemaker, she serves to restrain class struggle by her spouse, and to transmit conservative ideology to the children. The man is supposed to feel big because he can control "his" woman, even though he and she are both controlled by the system.

A march that goes to Washington with the same message as the white right wing is no threat to the racists. It says to the forces it claims to oppose that it is really with them. It asks in effect, "Why attack us? We are really your allies." Of course, rather than mollifying the reactionaries, this only tells them they have nothing to fear in continuing their attacks.

In emerging as the premier "race leader" at the march, Farrakhan tempered his separatism, his anti-Semitism and his doctrines on women. But his anti-woman message remained clear. Women were virtually excluded, and "atonement" to the noble, dependent females remained the theme. Women were still told to step aside and let the men take their "rightful place": up front and in control. To cover for having to ally with Farrakhan in the face of his progressive friends, Jesse Jackson did his best to provide a liberal rationale for the obviously sexist format. Jessica Moore reports in the *Daily Challenge* (Oct. 2) that in a Harlem speech he "spoke of marching with a moral code centered around 'no racism, no anti-Semitism, no anti-Arabism, no Asian bashing, no homophobia, no sexism . . .'" And no women.

Gay-bashing is a natural companion to sexism. At a preparatory rally in Washington in August, Rev. George Stalling gave the authentic message behind the march in an address broadcast by National Public Radio. He said:

You know, some folks say if Minister Farrakhan hadn't called [the march] . . . we'd gladly join in. What do you want? Some Milquetoast, some sissy faggot, to lead you to the promised land?

He got thunderous applause. Farrakhan's stalwarts give one message to the cadres of NOI and their periphery — and another line that carefully avoids inflammatory statements to the broader public. The rhetoric on women, gays, Jews and whites varies, depending on audience and circumstance. Since speaking truth to the Black masses is not a high priority for these elitists, consistency is no virtue for them either.

In reality, it is the contradictions of crisis-ridden capital-

ism itself — not gays, not Black women, not Black men, not godlessness — that are tearing apart the bourgeois family structure. Black men get less pay for more work, if they can get jobs at all. Black women have always been forced into the workplace to survive — at lower wages for comparable work than men. Black men and women are both underpaid compared to the white male standard, which itself is falling. Black unemployment, poverty and the high death rate of young Black men due to crime, drugs and disease is what has made it so hard to maintain Black marriages.

Thus, for all its obvious male chauvinism, Farrakhan's message also disparages Black men. In saying that it is not primarily the capitalist system but Black men who are responsible for the crisis between Black men and women, Farrakhan's ideology exacerbates the crisis.

That Farrakhan puts down Black women and men should be no surprise. Beneath all the rhetoric about self-help is his belief that the Black masses' condition is basically their own fault. If the voter registration campaign does not gain the numbers the NOI has proclaimed, it will blame the supposed indolence of the Black masses rather than their awareness that the vote means little in their lives.

Disdaining uncontrolled mass action, Farrakhan is obliged to register his demand for a piece of the pie through elections, the same road to nowhere pursued by the integrationists and the Rainbow chasers before him. All these mis-

leaders accept the idea that Blacks must seek minimal reforms and reforms within the limits of capitalism. And whatever the initial radical rhetoric, given their fundamental loyalty to the capitalist system, relying on politicians inevitably means detouring the masses into electoral passivity.

THE ELECTORAL DEATHTRAP

It is no accident that Farrakhan made yet another voter registration drive a centerpiece of the march. Donald Muhammad of *The Final Call*, the NOI's newspaper, quotes him as saying:

We believe that one million Black men sober, disciplined and organized, each one registered to vote with many more millions back in the various cities of America in support of us, we believe we can become a powerful voting bloc for the upcoming presidential elections, and, therefore, it is our desire to formulate a Black agenda which every presidential hopeful will have to speak to before he can get our vote. (*Your Black Books Guide*, Aug. 1995.)

But the capitalist candidates all have their own Black agenda: racism, joblessness, austerity. Playing the system soberly, by its rules, will not work, especially not now.

At the outset of his mobilization for the march, Farrakhan stressed the need for Blacks to pull out of the Democratic Party because it takes them for granted, and register as

Pride and Self-Prejudice

Many people sincerely believe that the message of the NOI is Black pride. The opposite is true.

It should be obvious why self-pride is vital to a struggling people. When one group dominates another for long, it is never simply by armed power alone. A justifying social myth, accepted to one degree or another by the subjugated people, is necessary to maintain orderly submission. American society has not only murdered and exploited Black people; it has sought to convince not only whites but Blacks too that they are inferior.

However, it is testimony to the power of the human spirit that, from the beginning, the people wrenched out of Africa and dragged to these shores revolted time and again. In the face of their threat to its power, the system reacted, not by conspiracy but by reflex, by telling Blacks that their truculence, undiscipline and rebelliousness were further proofs of their inherently inferior nature.

The May 1993 issue of *Third World Viewpoint* quotes a speech by Minister Louis Farrakhan in October 1992, "Obedience is the highest form of sacrifice." He said:

All in that area called the Garden of Eden, that's where the original man first started when this planet was found in its new orbit after the explosion of Moon from Earth 66,000,000 years ago as the Hon. Elijah Muhammad taught us. So Shabazz was not permitted to stay in that area so he took his family into the jungles of East Asia which we now call Africa, to make a people close to nature. And the Hon. Elijah Muhammad said, this is the origin of "kinky" hair because we didn't have "kinky" hair prior to that. The hair on our head was like the hair on our eyebrow.

The hair on your eyebrow is straight, the hair on your head is not the same as the hair on your eyebrow. But

the hair of every other people is the same as their eyebrow; your eyebrow straight, your hair, something different. Wouldn't you like the hair on your head to be as straight as the hair on your eyebrow? That's why you are so busy frying it. . . . Because most of your family of other black people on earth, jet black, they didn't have no broad nose and thick lips and "kinky" hair. They were dark skinned people, jet black, but they had straight hair, thinner lips, a thinner nose. We are marked as a different kind of black person and we were rejected and despised not only from the circle of the Gods, but we were despised and rejected by all the other dark people of the earth. This is why today black people with "kinky" hair and broad noses and thick lips are rejected in every society. (I want you to hear me well tonight.)

Why are we rejected? Because the essence of beauty is in obedience and submission to God and the essence of ugliness is when you rebel against God. And when you rebel against God, in your rebellion you are marked with a certain mark of your rebellion; which is the disfigurement of your internal self which manifest itself in the disfigurement of your external self. And this is why when you look at our people, wherever we are found on the earth, you find us either disfiguring ourselves physically because we are disfigured on the inside because of rebellion.

Thus Farrakhan stigmatizes Black features as inferior and attributes the "disfigurement" to Blacks' rebelliousness — not only against God, but obviously against U.S. capitalism as well. Is it any wonder that the march stressed the need for Blacks to change rather than to fight racist society?

independents to maximize their bargaining power. Having brought major political leaders like Jackson into line, he has toned down the idea of withdrawing from the Democrats.

Farrakhan always emphasizes his loyalty to the doctrines of Elijah Muhammad. He keeps the faith in that he too denounces confrontational actions by Blacks. That applies above all to his own march (an action Muhammad could never have taken): he has emphasized how controlled and respectable it would be. When he called on Black non-marchers not to work on October 16, he urged them to stay home and pray.

His electoral line and political coalition-building amount to a clear departure from his mentor's abstentionist views. Given the material conditions in which his organization and the Black community now find themselves, he has no choice but to orient to the state and therefore to electoralism. The state has funded the "safety net." The state enforces affirmative action. Only the state could mobilize the capital which Farrakhan needs to carry out his Black capitalist program. The state today gives him a few contract morsels to whet his appetite for more.

Marx pointed out that the working class can only fit itself for power through class struggle. Many of the concerns of the march — "Black on Black" crime, drugs, etc. — can be overcome only through mass action against the racist capitalist state, not by passively voting for it.

RACE AND REVOLUTION

Under the surface the American masses are boiling angry and desperately frustrated. Isolated riots and strike actions flare up — but they do not become widespread because the participants and their counterparts elsewhere do not see in them a viable strategy against the one-sided class and race war waged against them. Yet a titanic explosion is inevitable.

In this context, the right wing is radicalizing, in an attempt to reach the masses with their fraudulent message. Attuned to the deep rumblings under the surface, they are arming themselves politically and militarily for the coming struggles. In contrast, the remains of the middle-class left and the present leadership of the oppressed can only put forward, once again, the powderpuff strategy of electoralism: independent political action, Rainbow blocs, reformist labor parties.

Instead, what is vitally needed is a communist revolutionary party whose program reflects the actual needs and interests of the proletariat — especially of Black workers, the potentially most volatile and a very powerful section of the proletariat. Such a party, composed primarily of advanced workers, would mobilize for mass action instead of the electoral crapshoot. A revolutionary party would run in elections only to better expose the capitalist system, not to support it.

The world capitalist crisis has already caused the collapse of Stalinism and the pulverization of the middle classes. With these barriers shattered, the objective possibilities for the recreation of authentic proletarian communist parties are vastly improved. In the U.S., given their history and strategic emplacement in today's urban industrial economy, Blacks will play a leading role in the return of class struggle and therefore in the building of a revolutionary party, way out of proportion to their numbers in the general population. The absence of such an alternative at this moment allows Farrakhan to emerge as the champion of Black unity and self-assertion, although his political program is a deadly trap.

Past and present conditions have led Blacks to a profound distrust of whites. Much of the Black experience with

so-called Marxists, Black as well as white, has also led to suspicion of manipulation and hidden agendas. Such distrust can only be overcome by proven and sustained practice, not simply promises.

Revolutionary policy must include support for organized mass self-defense at all times. Winning white workers to the fight against racism is both possible and necessary if capitalism in this country is to be overthrown. But when Blacks face police violence and other thug attacks, they have every reason to organize their own self-defense. As well, authentic Trotskyists in the U.S. have always advanced the right of Black self-organization. At a time when the Black struggle is advancing, revolutionaries advocate a mass Black organization within which they can campaign openly for revolutionary proletarian leadership. These are important tactics, both for defending the genuine need for Black unity and for demonstrating the necessity of a revolutionary class strategy.

The revolutionary party always fights for effective struggle against racism and capitalism, to demonstrate that white workers share Black workers' basic interests. That is why the LRP from our inception has advocated a general strike in this country. That is the way the working class can achieve a genuine class identity and the racist-inspired barriers of the past can begin to be broken down.

For example, when we fight for the general strike, a classwide action, we aim to politically arm such actions with demands like jobs for all, an escalating scale of wages and a sliding scale of hours — to divide up the necessary work among all. We demand the building of public works to provide vital services and employment. We demand an end to racist attacks and attacks on immigrants.

Such a program meets the immediate interests of Black workers. Capitalism has already proved that only full employment, not affirmative action programs and quotas which accept the present (and declining) level of employment, can guarantee Blacks jobs. Such demands are in fact in the interest of all workers, because all are now under the threat of peon wages and massive unemployment. The socialist program both promotes class unity and fights against racism at the same time.

Today the fighters for such a program are few but are beginning once again to increase. In the U.S., small but significant new layers of young workers are coming to revolutionary consciousness. Mostly, but not entirely, Black and Latino, they are no fans of Farrakhan. However, many are confused by his appeal. Believing in an interracial world, they are confused by the evident need for Blacks to organize their own defense in a racist society; how can these tenets both be true? Only authentic Marxism can answer such questions and point the way forward to what we most need, a revolutionary, internationalist and interracialist vanguard party. ●

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PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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Farrakhan No Answer to Racism

by Sy Landy

The "Million Man March" led by Minister Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam (NOI), was one of the most massive events ever held in Washington. The mainstream bourgeois media as well as the Black press described the October 16 rally as "historic" and "inspiring." And there is no doubt that the sense of Black pride, solidarity and raised hopes among the participants was a profoundly moving experience. Revolutionaries, however, are careful to distinguish the aspirations of the masses from the aims of the leaders.

It was no accident that the racist white capitalist politicians "liked the message" of the march and endorsed its goals, even though they decried the messenger. The ruling class liked the march because it was a diversion of the struggle for Black liberation and a safety valve for the justified and explosive anger of the ghetto masses.

Revolutionaries, on the other hand, opposed the message and goals of the march. Despite the feelings of solidarity, this march was built as a barrier to Black pride and Black struggle against the system.

The NOI proclaimed October 16 as a "Holy Day," a "Day of Atonement." Black men were to come together to apologize for purported past sins, including sloth, crime and drugs, "abuse of our women" and the failure to assume responsibility "as heads of our households." Removing these ills from the Black community, it was claimed, would be a major blow against white supremacy. The march also stressed voter registration and Black "self-help" to build up independent businesses. Although the Gingriches were condemned and white racism attacked, the march and speakers stressed that it was "an internal thing," an attempt by Black America to straighten up and fly right.

There were many good reasons for masses of Black people to march on Washington. Blacks are desperately looking for a way to fight deepening racist attacks, increasing economic devastation and the social horrors wreaked on their communities across the country. Before the march, the reaction to the O.J. Simpson verdict showed that only a minority of whites understand what Blacks overwhelmingly know: that the cops and courts are dedicated to *injustice* against them.

Undoubtedly many came to Washington hoping to find a way to get united action against the orchestrated scapegoating of Blacks by the capitalist state and media. The most militant among them were disappointed, and rightly so. Far more, however, were genuinely inspired by the message of Farrakhan and the other speakers; united, they wanted to go back home committed to uplifting Black America.

If any Black leader but Farrakhan had put down "white bashing," called for reconciliation with the "great" American government and stressed self-help the way he did in Washington, he would have been dismissed as a Clarence Thomas. But Farrakhan could get away with it because of his history of anti-white separatist rhetoric. But even he could only deliver his message of accommodation by associating it with



Black pride, which accompanies Black anger over racism.

Surveys at the march show that participants came mostly from the middle strata and the upper reaches of the working class. Farrakhan's mixed message had a particular appeal to this audience, but calls for self-organization and self-pride resonate among many poorer Black workers as well.

The tragedy is that once again hopes for self-*uplifting* are doomed. Not because the struggle for liberation is hopeless, and not because Blacks are powerless. In reality, Blacks have tremendous power, but the only way to obtain liberation is to use that power *against* the racist system. Black men are victimized by capitalist society and then vilified as an underclass of criminals and drug addicts. "Atonement" is no answer to the stark facts of raging unemployment, low-wage jobs and racist discrimination which keep Black men down.

The message of the march is even worse: it pumped up the reactionary ideology that today is fueling the right-wing attacks. The endorsement of traditional male/female roles is an acceptance of the sexist "family values" rhetoric of the racist religious right as well as the mainstream bourgeoisie. As the capitalist economic crisis destroys the family and society, the ruling class blames single Black mothers and Black "attitude," criminality and culture. While workers and oppressed people yearn for stability, safety and a decent living standard, these sentiments are manipulated by the rulers to take the heat off the system and cast the blame on the victims. The march agenda fell right into line.

Despite rhetoric about fighting racist politics, the march avoided any concrete demands. It stressed voting registration, the prime diversion pushed by the bourgeoisie on all workers

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