

SOCIALIST VOICE

75c



Reconstruct
the Fourth International!

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General Strike to Stop Reagan's Attacks

When a mouse squeaks that is not news. But when it has been buried and presumed dead for years, and then it squeaks — that is news. Thus Lane Kirkland and the AFL-CIO leadership are holding a mass demonstration in Washington on September 19 labelled "Solidarity Day." Parallel marches and Labor Day demonstrations have been called in New York, Los Angeles and Detroit. When this labor bureaucracy, which has built no movement, spread no strikes and not even called a national demonstration after years of attacks on the working class, rears its head and squeaks, somebody has been stepping on its tail.

Working people must not be fooled. Reagan's reactionary policies have indeed awakened the dead, but Kirkland and his fellow mice are not roaring. They are acting only for their own self-preservation; they prefer to sleep undisturbed. Their demonstrations, called to protest the budget cuts, demand "jobs and justice" and "stop the dismantling of forty years of social progress," are a diversion. The bureaucracy has never waged a real struggle and is not starting to do so now. It is mobilizing the working class for other reasons. Despite the bureaucracy's intent, however, the fact that it has been forced to initiate even a partial mobilization of the working class is a class victory. If the workers can capitalize on it their roar will be loud enough to shake the world.

Originally the bureaucrats called for 25,000 people to come to Washington. By late August they officially estimated that

100,000 would come, and they really expected a quarter of a million. This seems like a tremendous effort, but it is not — not when Reagan has raised the stakes so high that he is actually destroying a union, the air traffic controllers' (PATCO), a member of the AFL-CIO. The 250,000 are needed in Washington to draw attention away from the fact that the bureaucrats are taking no action to prevent the smashing of PATCO: no solidarity strikes, no serious picket lines, no halting of airport deliveries, nothing. Even these would only be first steps to save PATCO, but the bureaucracy is too frightened to try.

Yes, frightened. The labor bureaucracy is caught between two classically contradictory forces. On the one side there is Reagan, doing his utmost to stem the tide of capitalist crisis by wiping out all the gains workers have won in half a century of struggle. On the other side there is the working class which is being pushed too far and may in time explode if safe outlets are not created to channel its anger and violence.

The bureaucrats act as brokers for the sale of the workers' labor power to the capitalists. They must try to defend the existence of the unions, since these are the source of the bureaucrats' livelihood; unions are independent working class institutions devoted to upholding the price of the workers' only saleable commodity. On the other hand, the position of the bureaucrats as brokers depends also on the existence of

continued on page 8

**Britain's Hot Summer
Counterrevolution in Iran
CISPES Bars Communists
Self-Determination for Ireland!
Mitterrand's Pre-emptive Popular Front
Spartacist Popular Frontism on El Salvador
ANTI-REAGANISM VS. ANTI-CAPITALISM**

The Counterrevolution in Iran

Amid a wave of arrests, tortures and executions of the left, Iran's ruling Islamic Republican Party deposed the bourgeois liberal president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr in June. This completed the takeover of government offices by the IRP, a party of Moslem mullahs and laymen closely tied to the priesthood. In July, former prime minister Mohammed Ali Rajai (recently assassinated) took over the presidency in a rigged election restricted to IRP candidates.

The IRP's move to consolidate state power represents a major defeat for the Iranian revolution that overthrew the hated Shah in February 1979. The general strike and insurrection that brought down the Shah had raised the hopes of Iranian workers and peasants for prosperity and freedom. Many put their confidence in the mullahs, notably the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had demagogically denounced U.S. imperialism and its local compradors in the Shah's entourage, and a bourgeois Islamic republic was set up. But the masses' continuing struggle made it impossible for the capitalists to pull together a strong regime for two years; one leader after another was denounced as a tool of imperialism and deposed, arrested or exiled.

In our analysis in *Socialist Voice* No. 11, we anticipated that Bani-Sadr's alliance with the army officer corps and his ties to U.S. and French imperialism would make him the chief candidate for the strongman the bourgeoisie needed. And indeed, the Bonapartist leader Khomeini, in balancing between the liberal bourgeois representative Bani-Sadr and the petty-bourgeois IRP, had leaned toward the president for some time. But Bani-Sadr's weakness and his inability to win the war with Iraq strengthened the hand of his IRP rivals and led to his downfall.

Bani-Sadr's weakness mirrored that of the bourgeoisie itself as the crisis in Iran deepened. It became clear to Khomeini

and evidently even to the army that a firmer, more repressive hand was needed to quell internal discord and chaos. Moreover, the army-bourgeoisie combination could not produce a believable anti-imperialist facade to hold the support of the masses. So the neo-fascist IRP made its move to try to save Iranian capitalism. The IRP had progressively altered its stance to align itself more clearly in defense of capitalism while still projecting its anti-imperialist demagogy. During the course of the war the IRP had to give up the pretense that Iranian capitalism could survive without a deal with imperialism. Hence it colluded with the U.S. in a solution to the hostage seizure that completely sold out the anti-imperialist aspirations of the Iranian masses.

MULLAHS USE FASCIST THUGS

The clergy may have all the government posts now, but its hold on power is not secure. Terrorists have assassinated scores of leading IRP members since Bani-Sadr's ouster. There have been several street battles between left-wing organizations and the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards), the government militia linked to the IRP. The Kurdish people continue to fight the central government for self-determination, and there is new unrest among the Azerbaijanis in northwest Iran. Further, the IRP's claim of a massive turnout for their candidate in the presidential elections seems to be a lie — Iranian leftists and French journalists in Teheran believe that not more than a third of the claimed 12,000,000 actually voted.

The mullahs' strength is based, however, not solely on votes or religious faith but on its veritable army of thugs, the Hezbollahi, or Supporters of the Party of God. These gangs have warred against the leftist parties and militant workers from the start, and had succeeded last year in carrying out an

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- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party (on the origins of the LRP).
- No. 2: Capitalism in the Soviet Union (including a polemic against Ernest Mandel's workers' state theory).
- No. 3: The Class Nature of the Communist Parties.
- No. 4: The "Marxism" of the Petty Bourgeoisie — the Spartacist League and State Capitalism.
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- No. 6: The Labor Party in the United States; Is Nationalized Property Proletarian?
- No. 7: The Black Struggle: Which Road Today?
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- No. 9: Marxism and the Draft; Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism.
- No. 10: Polish Workers Shake the World.
- No. 11: Iran — Revolution, War and Counterrevolution.
- No. 12: No Shortcuts to Stop Klan; For Socialist Revolution in El Salvador; Church and State vs. Polish Workers.
- No. 13: "Left" Betrays Salvador Revolution; Marxist Response to Reaganism; Poland: Solidarity Forever?

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Mojahedin leader Rajavi, right, at a rally, supports Bani-Sadr and "democracy." Democracy is possible only through proletarian socialist revolution against Khomeini.



It follows from the nature of the IRP that if it does consolidate its power, the priests will turn against their own mass base. They will dissolve or purge those organizations which have any potential for mobilization independent of the clergy. They will undertake a head-on assault against the working class as a whole, not just as now against the left. As a result of the revolution, they have been forced to permit some slack, allowing for example some worker review of management decisions. Once firmly in the saddle, the IRP will move to crush all working class initiative and independence under a ruthless police dictatorship.

The imperialists recognize this too. Even though the IRP has encouraged the taking of U.S. (and more recently French) citizens in Iran hostage, these powers have continued to make profitable deals with the IRP government. They recognize the clergy's need to take some token "anti-imperialist" actions to appease the real anti-imperialism of the Iranian workers and peasants. Leading imperialist newspapers like the *New York Times* openly state the need for the IRP to take all power as the only force capable of restoring "order" (i.e., imperialism) to Iran. Today, behind their anti-American rhetoric, Khomeini and the IRP are tripping all over themselves to accommodate American oil interests — as they must if they wish to regain any strength within the world market from which no "nationalist" regime can break.

The guerrilla struggle against the IRP regime has had some spectacular successes, including the killing of many leaders by bombs planted at party and state offices. Led by the Mojahedin organization closely tied to Bani-Sadr, the struggle is reportedly widely popular in Iran. But a terror campaign is no substitute for mass struggle. If the Khomeini government is so weak that it cannot consolidate the counterrevolution, and if the working class does not act in its *own* interest, the bourgeoisie will then look to a military dictatorship to keep the masses suppressed. This would necessitate a direct link with imperialism, with or without Bani-Sadr. The other alternative of a Bani-Sadr—Mojahedin government, in effect a popular front (with the army biding its time as in Allende's Chile), would be only a temporary possibility but a very dangerous one for the workers.

NO SUPPORT IN IRAN-IRAQ WAR

In our previous analysis of Iran, we advocated a policy of military support to Iran in the war against Iraq. That meant that proletarian and communist forces would turn their guns against the immediate enemy, the Iraqi counterrevolutionaries, who were aiming through their invasion to destroy all the gains won by the Iranian masses. This policy openly specified that communists must stand for revolutionary opposition to the Khomeini regime and work for its overthrow; and in particular, we called for continued military support to the Kurdish fighters. We warned that the Khomeinist state was plotting to destroy all the revolutionary gains and would inevitably turn its guns on the Iranian workers. We insisted upon the absolute necessity for the political independence of proletarian fighting forces and that they be armed independently of the state.

These warnings and predictions have proved correct. The IRP coup has transformed the nature of the war. The immediate enemy of the Iranian proletariat and peasantry is no longer the Iraqi rulers but their own. No temporary military bloc with the Teheran government is possible when that government is shooting first at the workers. (Of course, workers must still fight the Iraqi counterrevolutionaries as well.)

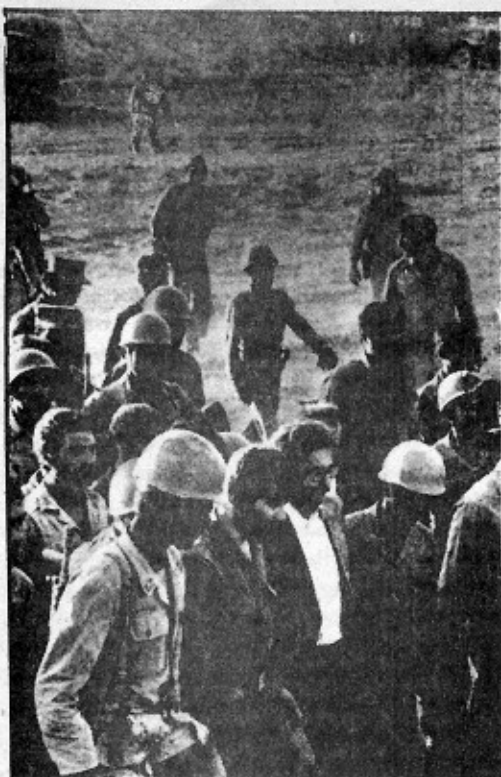
IRP campaign to "Islamicize" the universities, a left stronghold; Bani-Sadr demonstrated his impotence by doing nothing to stop the arrests, killings and university shutdowns. Now that the IRP has governmental power this harassment has become a full-scale massacre.

If the clergy succeeds in consolidating its power, it will install a fascist-like regime in Iran. Unlike the Shah, who never had any mass support (he seized power through a CIA-backed military coup), the IRP has built mass organizations to mobilize small merchants, artisans, and some workers behind it. The mullahs already had a mass base on which to build — the Moslem congregation. Using the traditional prayer services, and setting up neighborhood committees and factory Islamic societies, as well as the Hezbollahi and Pasdaran thugs, the priests have set up the framework for the control of many aspects of daily life by the government and ruling party.

Other aspects of fascism strictly defined are easy to find — the supreme leader who seems to stand above classes is, of course, Khomeini. The Islamic judges who occasionally jail or even execute capitalists for price-gouging or ties to the U.S. stand in the fascist tradition of regimenting a capitalist class too decayed to discipline itself. The "corporatism" of the neighborhood committees, Friday prayer services, and factory Islamic Societies go together with Persian and Moslem chauvinism to enforce the "unity of all classes" against "alien influences" allegedly responsible for dividing Iranians against each other. In line with this, the massacre of the Kurds continues, along with a campaign against members of the Jewish and especially Baha'i religions which threatens to become literally genocide.

WORKER'S GAINS THREATENED

The IRP's triumph means that *all* the gains of the 1979 revolution are in danger of being erased. For the working class these include wage increases, elements of workers' control of the factories and in certain cases factory councils (called *shoras*) still independent of the capitalists and the clergy. Some reports from Iran indicate that the June governmental crisis came at the time of a strike wave by workers that forced the bourgeoisie finally to move to strongman rule.



Bani-Sadr with Iranian soldiers. IRP neo-fascist coup is aimed more at overturning workers' gains than at hapless bourgeois liberal Bani-Sadr.

In the face of the IRP's onslaught the Iranian left has politically collapsed. No left organization that has come to our attention has ever fought clearly for a program of socialist revolution; most followed the long-discredited Stalinist line that a bourgeois-democratic stage had to be completed before socialism reached the agenda. Accordingly, the Tudeh party and the Fedayin majority backed Khomeini's government and now support the IRP dictatorship. On the other side, the Mojahedin gave full support to Bani-Sadr when he came under attack and now call for his return to power. Several other groups that oppose both the IRP and Bani-Sadr still refuse to advocate any program beyond "democracy," which is just another (and, under present circumstances, utopian) way to preserve the property and power of the bourgeoisie. Bani-Sadrism without Bani-Sadr is no more a solution than it is with him.

There is still time to prevent the fascist victory. What is necessary is a party in Iran that fights for the working class to form shoras independent of the clergy, to arm themselves, seize the factories, call on the peasants to seize the land and overthrow the IRP. Such a party would fight for independence for Kurdistan. It would fight against all religion and superstition and would train the working class in scientific socialism, so the workers would fit themselves to run society. If the Iranian working class does not form its genuine Trotskyist party and make the socialist revolution, it will face a regime of deepest barbarism and darkness. ■

Self-Determination for Ireland

As the death toll of H-Block hunger strikers mounts and electoral victories demonstrate the prisoners' mass support, British imperialism has again been served notice that the "Irish problem" will not go away. After 800 years of British domination, the Irish resistance is both a heroic statement of the resiliency of an oppressed people and a grim reminder of the failure of capitalism to achieve its democratic promises in the very realm which spawned parliamentary democracy.

British propaganda and moral tirades on terrorism by Margaret Thatcher cannot hide the obvious reality that Northern Ireland is little more than a police state. Since 1969 British troops have constituted an army of occupation. Troops have made a practice of shooting down unarmed demonstrators, the most infamous incident being the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry in 1972 when 13 marchers were slain. Under the system of internment hundreds of nationalists and other leftists have been rounded up and herded into camps to be interrogated, tortured and eventually brought to trial without juries in special military courts.

The hunger strike campaign represents the latest phase of a five-year struggle to regain political prisoner status for IRA inmates. In 1972 political status was won as a concession to the mass struggle that arose with the rebellions in the Catholic ghettos in the late 1960's; in effect, political status recognizes that a civil war is being waged against British rule. However, by 1976 the mass movement had subsided and Britain's Labour government (!) reversed the policy.

This setback was a result of the bankruptcy of the nationalist leadership. The ghetto rebellions showed the readiness of the masses to go beyond the liberal civil rights movement. Many turned to the Provisional wing of the petty-bourgeois nationalist Irish Republican Army (IRA). However, the terrorist methods of the nationalists more and more ceased to reflect the armed struggle of the masses and

was conceived of as a substitute for it.

Having contributed to the collapse of the mass movement, both by its failure to give real leadership and by its inability to defend the movement through its terrorist methods, the IRA now found itself unable to even defend itself. As a result, beginning with the formation of the Relatives Action Committees in 1977, the nationalists have been trying to rebuild the mass movement. The terrorists who claimed that they alone could defend the oppressed masses were now forced to call upon the masses to defend the defenders!

Marxist truths often strike home with a vengeance. The flip side of the terrorist is the political opportunist. Disdaining the struggle of the masses, the nationalists not only turned to the masses for support but embraced the very same opportunist methods of the civil rights leaders they once used to denounce. The National Smash H-Block Committees, formed in 1979 have dropped any explicit demand for political status. Instead the five demands of the campaign are presented as prison reform (so moderate a program that even Ted Kennedy can support it) in order to build a humanitarian campaign open to liberals, priests and Southern Ireland politicians (whose government also tortures and jails the IRA) — all of whom are looking to rebuild their tarnished images.

I.R.A. STRATEGY FAILS

Even this proved insufficient to build a movement capable of winning concessions. The hunger strike represents a desperate effort at shock tactics aimed at embarrassing Britain to substitute for the failure to build a powerful mass movement. Despite the heroic sacrifices made by the hunger strike martyrs, the tactic is a condemnation of the petty-bourgeois substitutionist methods of the IRA; it allows militant fighters against British imperialism to die for the sake of influencing liberal bourgeois public opinion. The bitter

irony is that those in prison and who have sacrificed their lives had turned to the nationalists because they rejected the liberal civil rights approach of the past. Now their blood is being used to give the liberals a platform to shed crocodile tears for the good old Irish green.

Should the H-Block campaign and the hunger strikes fail, as now appears likely, the IRA leadership will no doubt conclude that they will have "proven" the inability of the masses to fight back. On the contrary, what this tragedy will have proved is that the mass action of the working class, including strikes and general strikes leading up to armed insurrection, is necessary to defeat British imperialism and win even basic democratic rights. Petty-bourgeois nationalists are incapable of leading this struggle. The IRA's appeals to bourgeois "leaders" and "world opinion" and its opposition to mass actions both North and South that might frighten potential bourgeois support flow from its class character.

The bankruptcy of the nationalists demonstrates the necessity for the working class to create a revolutionary party capable of organizing the independent activity of the proletariat. While defending the right of the oppressed Irish nation to self-determination, revolutionaries oppose bourgeois nationalism and fight for proletarian internationalism. Revolutionaries do not support the taking of political power by the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalists but fight for a Irish workers state within a socialist federation of the British Isles and Europe.

the North. Hence the nationalists' need for a socialist cover.

The crisis sweeping Britain, brought to light by the recent wave of riots, is the same crisis that is so acute in Ireland. The Irish working class represents a tinderbox that threatens to explode the political balance in Britain and throughout Europe. In the South, the growing imperialist grip on the economy, accompanied by harsh measures against the working class, has until now been overshadowed by the nationalist struggle. In the North, the economy is characterized by stagnating industries and high unemployment. Under these conditions, manifestations of the epoch of imperialist decay, any notion of creating a united bourgeois Ireland becomes a reactionary cover for the defense of imperialism, which is the only bourgeois "alternative." Already the nationalists have demonstrated by their capitulation to the semi-colonial Southern state (whose interest lies not with a united Ireland but in maintaining British imperial control over the volatile Northern Irish working class) that they will betray the anti-imperialist struggle. Defense of the right to self-determination means politically fighting the nationalists.

SPARTACISTS DENY SELF-DETERMINATION

Revolutionary opposition to the bourgeois nationalism of the IRA has nothing in common with those who refuse to defend the right of the oppressed to self-determination. Thus the phony Trotskyists of the Spartacist League take the in-

The British army acts as a colonial occupation force in Northern Ireland. Mass struggle, not small-group heroism, is the necessary response. Revolutionaries support oppressed Catholics' right to self-determination but explain that real needs demand unity of Irish and British class struggles.



We stand for military defense but no political support to the IRA. In defending the democratic right to self-determination of Ireland, we do not subordinate the class aims of the workers. Rather, socialists fight alongside the oppressed in order to turn the struggle into a class war for socialism. The proletariat must be armed and organized independently from the nationalists.

On the contrary, the petty-bourgeois nationalists' role is to chain the workers' class interests to the wheel of nationalism. Despite its occasional socialist rhetoric, the IRA makes clear that first comes the struggle for nationalism and only in the future will the fight for socialism take place. In practice this has meant capitulation to the Green Tory bourgeoisie of Eire which, in tandem with the reactionary Catholic Church, attacks the working class and represses the IRA itself. Indeed, the present Irish republic cannot be said to represent an appealing advertisement for the nationalist cause to workers in

credibly reactionary position of opposing the Irish people's right to self-determination because a united Ireland independent of Britain would only "reverse the terms of oppression" against the North Ireland Protestants. This is the same argument used by imperialism in South Africa and Israel to justify its oppression of "backward" peoples.

The Spartacists argue that the Protestants have an equal right to self-determination. Claiming that to give the right to one is to deny it to the other, the petty-bourgeois democrats say they cannot give it to either side. The reality is that they are defending the status quo, that is, the right of the oppressor. This is nothing but a defense of imperialism, since what does the right of self-determination for the Protestants represent but the maintenance of the British imperialist relationship? Some pseudo-socialists tail the nationalist wing of the Catholic petty bourgeoisie. The pseudo-Trotskyist Spartacists tail the civil rights assimilationists who even more

glaringly capitulate to imperialism.

A more serious danger is represented by the politics of the Irish Workers Group. The IWG, which also claims to be Trotskyist, is affiliated with the Workers Power group of Great Britain. Despite some correct criticisms of the nationalists and the H-Block movement, the IWG fails to carry out the Leninist policy of working class independence and instead serves as the very critical left wing of the nationalist movement.

LLENINISM ON ITS HEAD

The IWG attacks the campaign for being "tied to the apron strings of the clergy and the 'humanitarians' and, through them, to Fianna Fail" (the Irish equivalent of the U.S. Democratic Party) "and the Catholic Church." However, in exposing this collaboration with the enemies of the Irish working class, the IWG fails to draw the correct revolutionary conclusion of the necessity for the proletariat to organize its forces independently in order to wage the struggle against imperialism in a revolutionary manner. Instead the IWG attempts to pressure the H-Block campaign to orient towards the working class. It argues that "the fight for workers' action" should be the "major focus" of the campaign. The British imperialists can be defeated "if the National H-Block Armagh Campaign as a matter of urgency sets about the task of giving a clear and bold leadership to the struggle to bring out in action the overwhelming mass of Irish workers in support of Political Status."

Incredibly, this turns the Leninist approach on its head. Instead of addressing the workers on the correct proletarian attitude towards the nationalist-led movement — military defense against imperialism but no political support — the IWG lends itself as advisors to the nationalists on the need to incorporate the working class.

TROTSKY ON "ANTI-IMPERIALISM"

The IWG's alternative to the liberal humanitarian campaign is to call for an "anti-imperialist united front" of republicans, workers and socialists." As we have demonstrated in regard to the Spartacists' attempt to build an "anti-imperialist" wing of the emerging popular frontist movement against U.S. intervention in El Salvador, such slogans are a cover for support to the political victory of bourgeois nationalist forces. Though the slogan has been associated with the Maoists, they invented nothing new. Writing to the South African section of the Fourth International in "On the South African Theses" (*Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934-35*), Trotsky said the following:

"The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the *class struggle*. The Comintern, beginning in 1924, transformed the program of national liberation of colonial people into an empty democratic abstraction that is elevated above the reality of class relations. In the struggle against national oppression, different classes liberate themselves (temporarily) from material interests and become simple 'anti-imperialist' forces."

Explaining that in Russia "anti-imperialism" meant alliance under the banner of "anticzarism," the idea of the Social Revolutionaries and the Left Cadets, Trotsky added:

"The policy of Lenin in regard to the oppressed nations did not, however, have anything in common with the policy of the epigones. The Bolshevik Party defended the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination *with the methods of proletarian class struggle*, entirely rejecting the charlatan 'anti-

imperialist' blocs with the numerous petty-bourgeois 'national' parties of czarist Russia (the Polish Socialist Party (PPS — the party of Pilsudski in czarist Poland), Dashnaki in Armenia, the Ukrainian nationalists, the Jewish Zionists, etc., etc.)."

In adopting the "anti-imperialist" front strategy, the Spartacists and the IWG have not yet adopted the full logic of Stalin and the latter-day Maoists calling for the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." This was the slogan discarded in 1917 by Lenin who recognized that it had come to mean class collaboration, the chaining of the working class to the defense of the capitalist order — something which went against Bolshevism's irreconcilable class struggle approach. On the contrary, centrists like the SL and the IWG formally adhere to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution while in practice they capitulate to popular frontism.

The destruction of imperialism can come about only with the destruction of capitalism, in Ireland as everywhere else. This requires a firm proletarian revolutionary party which is willing to engage in military blocs with nationalists. But it can never unite behind a joint "anti-imperialist" banner because that would be a lie. Nationalism is inevitably the servant, not the enemy, of imperialism, just as centrism is the handmaiden of capitalism. The IWG contains many fine cadres but they must break totally from the equivocal position of the radical petty bourgeoisie and counterpose the independent intransigence of the proletariat. ■

Britain

continued from page 24

than anything else they show the willingness of the working class to boldly struggle despite the efforts of the reformist leaders of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to maintain labor peace. The fact that class consciousness did not catch up to class actions in the riots was mainly due to this factor, not in anything inherent in the uprisings themselves. The inability of the rioters to accomplish more tangible goals stems from the isolation imposed by the bureaucrats.

The Labour Party, a mass working-class institution born out of workers' struggles in the early years of the century, has now become an instrument of the labor bureaucracy which uses it to cajole workers into accepting the capitalist attacks without a real fight. During the height of the riots, Labour politicians were vocal in their denunciations of Thatcher. TUC leaders accused her of trying to "stop a floodtide with a sandbag." But for all their name calling, they displayed their usual subservience to capital. Labour and the TUC called for a "new national understanding": a traditional tripartite class collaborationist scheme for government, bosses and workers to "work together" to end the crisis through higher productivity and wage controls. It was nothing but a repeat of the "Social Contract" of the previous Labour government whose attacks on the working class cost it the 1979 election.

Labour's program was little better than the reforms that Thatcher grudgingly accepted. Her government offered subsidies to companies who hire workers under 18 (at sub-minimum wages!) and set up job training centers; they will accomplish little or nothing. Training for non-existent jobs is futile, and cheaper wages for youth act to force down wages for all without any job increases.

Labour's left wing, which is gaining strength through Tony Benn's campaign for the deputy party leadership, has a program replete with socialist phraseology but still offering no escape from capitalism. It proposes more government

spending, nationalizing a few more industries, import controls, plus the same tripartite "planning" as in the TUC program. But nationalizing further under capitalism means little: tens of thousands of workers in the mines, car plants and other state-owned industries are already laid off. Banning goods from abroad is unworkable, given the international character of modern production; even if done partially it will not make obsolete factories any more modern. And significantly higher spending means a collapsing currency and stratospheric inflation as long as capitalist profits and property are not seized. The entire scheme is built upon the absurd utopian assumption that British capitalism will flourish if British capitalists can be forced to ally with British workers and not international capital.

As long as capitalism is allowed to survive the working class will be forced to pay for Britain's imperialist decline. Industry can be revived and men and women given useful, necessary work only through a socialist revolution that expropriates the capitalists and plans the economy without regard for profits.

GENERAL STRIKE NEEDED

The unions did not in any way attempt to throw the weight of the organized working class behind the fighters who had taken to the streets. A general strike was what the situation called for; revolutionaries and other militants should have united to fight for this demand in the unions. A general strike could have united the working class against the government and its austerity program and would have demonstrated to the workers their own strength to defeat their attackers, both the governmental and the fascist agents of the capitalists. It would act as a powerful catalyst towards the creation of a proletarian revolutionary party. Armed self-defense guards built during a general strike would form the nucleus of a revolutionary workers' militia. If the summer riots teach hundreds of thousands that force is needed to defend the working class in the coming days of inevitable class war and repression, then a great forward step will have been taken.

Britain is full of "socialist" and "revolutionary" tendencies mostly buried inside the Labour Party, and the capitalist press lost little time in exaggerating the leftists' role in the riots to blame the disorders on "outside agitators" and "reds." But the general run of leftist agitation was centrist: it was subversive only of a genuine revolutionary spirit and program.

One of the largest centrist tendencies is organized around the *Militant* newspaper and is powerful in the Labour Party Young Socialists, the official youth group. Bourgeois agitators periodically attack its "Trotskyist" influence on Labour, and the riot period was a perfect opportunity. But *Militant's* program differs little from that of the Labour left. During the riots it acted as a mouthpiece for pacifism and parliamentarism by calling for the implementation of Labour Party demands for "democratic control of the police by representatives of the community." They might just as well demand democratic control of the Nazis.

PACIFISTS CONDEMN LOOTING

What's more, these wretched pacifists sermonized against the violence and looting. *Militant* switched its position from unconditional defense of all those arrested in the riots to defense only of those "unjustly" arrested. In the name of Marxism, the champion of all the oppressed against the rulers, they thereby defend a police crackdown on those labelled "criminal elements" who are "moving in to exploit the

situation and loot." Undoubtedly professional thieves always move in, but most of the looters were poor working class people taking what they needed. Such looting has mainly negative social consequences, but any decent communist sympathizes with the looters and defends them against the state. If it is left to the cops to pick out "criminal elements," they will happily attack every black they see. The real criminals, the fascist scum, are under police protection.

The deathtrap that left-Labour politics holds for British workers is strikingly illustrated by the paper *Socialist Organiser*, now run by a merged tendency combining the former Workers Socialist League and International Communist League. An article in the July 30 issue, headlined "An appeal to the labour movement: Defend Youth Against Tories," justifiably criticized Labour left-wingers for not standing by the arrested youth. It pointed out that "Tony Benn said he wouldn't tolerate police being injured in the course of their duties," a backhanded way of defending the cops against their victims. But on page one the same paper boasts "Benn greets our weekly" and quotes him gratefully, photo attached, as saying that "the decision of *Socialist Organiser* to publish on a weekly basis will strengthen the Left press in Britain ... " Any paper that seeks Benn's endorsement and can't label him the miserable traitor he is, *knowing him to be such*, is sunk in the parliamentary swamp too deep to escape.

SWP FLEES TO PROPAGANDA

Centrist politics is not confined within the Labour Party. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is a large left group whose point of distinction is that it concentrates on shop-floor "rank and file" organizing and tries to ignore Labour. It also forms the backbone of "mass movements" with single-issue programs like the Anti-Nazi League and the Right to Work marches. With one strategy it limits workers' struggles at the factory to minimal "next-step" demands; with the other it blocks with Labour reformists and bourgeois liberals, again to keep the program "broad." In neither case does it challenge the Labourites' political domination over the working class; when it raises its own "revolutionary" politics it does so only outside of the struggles it is active in.

Likewise, when the Brixton riot implicitly posed the question of state power the SWP asked itself, "But how do we move from riot to revolution?" (*Socialist Review*, May 1981). The SWP couldn't handle the politics of the riot easily because it was so obviously a "rank and file" act, but one that posed the question of state power rather than broad minimal demands. Therefore it urged a "detour that leads through the factories" and the raising of revolutionary propaganda and party building. Concretely it called for the sale of the SWP's press at factories.

The SWP, which so often disparages propaganda work among the advanced workers in favor of immediate action, had to reverse field. The only possible action in support of the riots would have been to fight for the general strike in the SWP's self-defined bailiwick, the factories — and that would have been the end of its narrow next-step approach. The flight to revolutionary propaganda was a way to escape a struggle which would have posed the revolution in action.

Every day the choice in Britain becomes clearer. Labourism and Thatcherism have proved themselves no answer. If the volatile youth are not won to the program of revolutionary communism they (or at least the whites) will be easy prey for fascist recruitment. The flow of the "far left" even further into the trap of capitalist reformism via the Benn campaign is a

disaster; the fascist groups can easily make a radical, demagogic attack on capitalism to win over working class youth. The need is immediate for a genuine communist party to reflect the combativity shown in the riots. The unionized industrial working class has shown its willingness over the years to fight. It is time to join the struggles through a massive general strike to set the stage for revolution. ■

General Strike

continued from page 1

capitalism. And their usefulness to the bourgeoisie is exclusively their ability to keep the workers in line and deliver labor power so that profits continue to be produced. The result of these conflicting forces is that the bureaucrats serve as capitalism's lieutenants within the working class, reflecting some of the workers' needs in order to hold them within the system and keep it profitable.

Under ideal conditions (what the bureaucrats consider "normal" but are really only the result of imperialism's super-profits in the years of American domination of the world), the capitalists give them sops and reforms to pass down to the workers. In truth these are only won through mass struggles. In times of crisis, when the bosses must be forced to part with any share of their profits, the bureaucrats have to dampen the workers' struggle to keep profits high. But then the capitalists don't offer sops and the bureaucrats have nothing to offer the workers. That has been the story of the past decade, and that is why the bureaucrats are in a tightening bind today.

That is what the bureaucracy is trying to tell Reagan and like-minded politicians: you are going too far. It knows that Reagan doesn't want to wipe out all the unions; it knows the big capitalists still find unions useful in disciplining the working class. Who else besides the labor bureaucrats could have broken up the wave of wildcat strikes in the early 1970's? Who else could have turned a militant working class into a frustrated and cautious mass breaking out only into intermittent strikes?

Reagan's recent relaxation of the so-called affirmative action rules was a signal to industry and the aristocratic white craft unions that the brunt of his attack (PATCO notwithstanding) is aimed at the more oppressed and industrial workers. It is predictable that some of the present attacks on the crafts will be modified in the future so that Reagan can try to mobilize them against other workers and the minorities.

All the political gossip columnists report that Reagan's staff is well aware that his economic program, once its impact is felt, will cause a tremendous reaction. They are prepared to ride it out on a wave of middle-class support generated by his anti-worker, racist and imperialist policies. But it will put the labor bureaucrats on the spot. They are afraid that the impending storm will be strong enough to fling them aside.

In addition to the vast numbers, the bureaucrats invited the leading black, women's and liberal organizations to Solidarity Day. This is the same bureaucracy that opposed the 1963 civil rights March on Washington (but now deliberately cites it as a precedent!) as well as the demonstrations against the Vietnam war. It has turned in desperation. The crisis is that deep.

PRESSURE FROM LOWER BUREAUCRATS

Isn't the bureaucracy concerned that such a mass mobilization will get out of hand, like the March for Jobs in 1975 that chased Hubert Humphrey and other Democratic hacks off the platform? It is concerned but apparently not

overly so. It estimates that the workers will show up to demonstrate but that most are not yet ready to explode. AFL-CIO spokesman Charles Hughes claimed that the unions were pushed by local and regional officials who were under membership pressure to call the big marches. That is partly true. Lower echelon officials are worried about holding their offices as employment and union strength declines. But Hughes' statement is also designed to show Washington how necessary the bureaucracy is when the lid blows off.

Much of the far left attributes the call for demonstrations to mass pressure from the ranks. This assessment has to be discounted. The left in general is contemptuous of the working class and itself doesn't believe its own hoopla about constantly boiling masses. The truth is that we are in a period of deep flux. Sections of the working class are militant and there have been a few important strikes, but by and large employed workers are angry, very frustrated, cynical and — without any visible alternative — very cautious. There is obviously a sector which hopes (rather than believes) that Reagan will provide a way out.

BOURGEOISIE KNOWS WORKERS' POWER

The pressure from the ranks was probably not decisive. Rather the bureaucracy felt that it could call demonstrations without fear of a mass break-out as in 1975. The recent Washington demonstration of railroad workers was militant but contained. Of course, the AFL-CIO will have many staffers present to hold the more explosive marchers in bounds. The large number of middle-class organizations present will also act as a damper. Last but not to be ignored, the pseudo-socialist left would work harder than anyone else to maximize the turnout, and at least its larger groups (DSOC, CP, SWP, WWP) would act as unofficial policemen.

The pressure of the ranks was decisive in the final analysis, in the sense of future expectations of rebellion. The rally thus represents a pre-emptive attempt to capture the leadership of the impending upheaval in order to contain it. For the bureaucrats and the capitalists know one thing that the mass of workers do not: that the working class has tremendous power to disrupt capitalism. One bourgeois mouthpiece, the *Washington Post* (in an editorial on the PATCO strike of August 4) stated:

"If one union, whose members work directly for Mr. Reagan, were now to achieve a spectacular wage increase through an illegal strike, that would be the end of the Reagan economic program. Investors, bankers and borrowers would all immediately conclude that, whatever its rhetoric, the Reagan administration was not serious about reducing inflation. That's why Mr. Reagan now has to stand absolutely fast."

Let us tentatively agree that one union could stop what all the Democrats, liberals, multitudes of middle-class people, and pseudo-socialists cannot, the whole Reagan program. The action of one group of workers can determine the political course of the state. In fact, it poses the question of which class has the power, and it blows away all the mythology of legality and the like. PATCO head Robert Poli put it correctly and bluntly when he pointed out that the only illegal strike is one that loses. Both Reagan and the PATCO strikers are wielding naked class power and only one of them can win.

In reality, a single union can hinder the bourgeoisie but, no matter how strategically placed, it cannot alter state power. In isolation it can be worked around or crushed. The Polish union *Solidarnosc* whose name was borrowed by the bureaucrats for Solidarity Day is a different matter, but it is

hardly an isolated single union! A general strike is also a different matter; inevitably it poses the question of which class shall rule. That lesson from Polish Solidarity the bureaucrats have not borrowed — indeed they are scurrying from it in every way they can. When the workers in Gdansk went on strike and occupied their worksites, the government made threats. Then a tidal wave of workers flowed out of the factories across the length and breadth of Poland. The Warsaw regime, a giant one day, was begging the next.

No wonder the U.S. labor bureaucrats were terrified when Poli and PATCO made the strategic blunder of nearly forcing them into concerted strike action. The UAW's Doug Fraser complained that PATCO's strike "could do massive damage to the labor movement." A united action against Reagan's threats to fire all striking government workers would escalate quickly towards a general strike; that would quickly show the working class its hidden power and even pose the question of state power. Lane Kirkland immediately rushed to the media: "It's all very well to be a midnight-gin militant and call for a general strike. I am not going to make that appraisal." Clearly the 5 p.m. cocktail bureaucrats were more afraid of winning a strike to defend PATCO than of losing. Both the bourgeoisie and the bureaucrats fear a mass strike. During the New York City transit strike in 1980, Mayor Koch called the threatened general strike a "nuclear weapon" too devastating for the unions to ever use.

What the bureaucrats have "done" on PATCO's behalf is pitiful. They have walked a picket line or two (and crossed through many more); they have pleaded with Reagan to grant amnesty (that is, leave the strike broken but the union formally intact and the bureaucrats off the hook). William Winpisinger of the Machinists (and a leader of "socialist" DSOC), who could organize his members to close the airports down, passed the buck to IAM locals who passed it right back. Both claim they can do nothing without other unions, but no one makes the effort to get joint action. The Frasers, the Winpisingers, the "socialist" union leaders are no better than Kirkland.

If the IAM put up picket lines at the airports and the government tried to crack down, the AFL-CIO couldn't sidestep the way it does with PATCO. If the "leftist" government unions immediately affected, like the postal unions and the AFGE, were to stop deliveries to the airports or strike the government in solidarity, that too could not be ignored. Instead, the bureaucrats push the amnesty issue and the limited PATCO strike as a "cause" for Solidarity Day because they can't appear to be doing absolutely nothing and yet they can't do what is necessary to win.

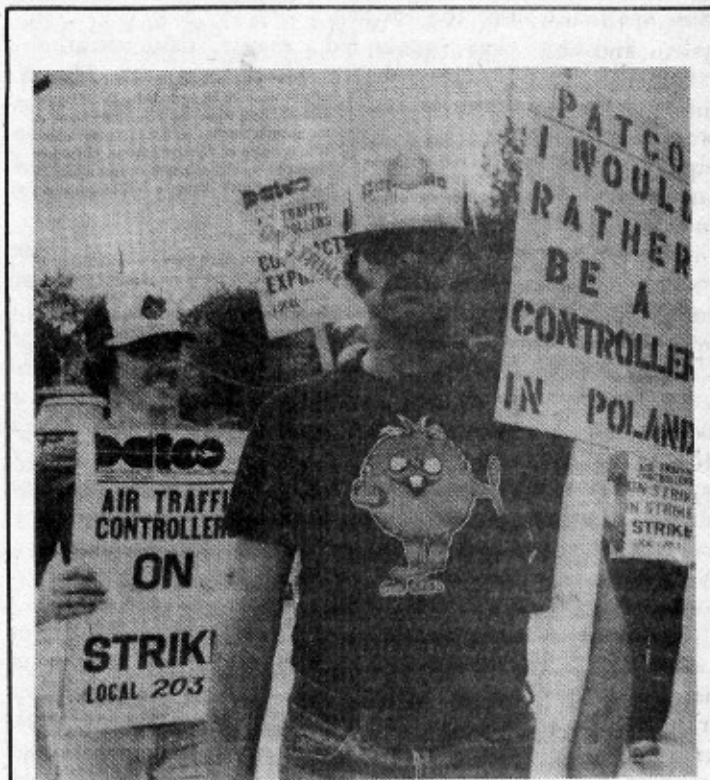
A general strike must be fought for not just over PATCO but to stop the whole attack on the working class and the oppressed. That is the way to win wide support and also to begin to tackle the real problems facing masses of people.

DEMOCRATS DISCREDITED

A general strike would not only stop industry and government. It wouldn't be confined to the unions. In the riots last summer in Miami, Chattanooga, Flint, etc. unemployed and working blacks, Hispanics and others showed their willingness to confront state power. These volatile forces would swell the massive demonstrations which inevitably accompany the general strike. A mass strike would win substantial support from middle class people and students, themselves caught up in the deepening crisis. That is why the bureaucrats have made such a strong pitch to get black, Hispanic, church, community, social work and all sorts of special interest groups

to the demonstration — not to build support for strike action but to announce a new coalition to reforge *all* these groups' links to the Democrats. It is an attempt to reconstitute the Negro-Liberal-Labor coalition of the fifties, which broke apart when the middle-class black organizations were impelled by the struggles of the masses to estrange themselves from the labor bureaucrats (who opposed such struggles) in order to maintain their credibility. Today, weakened by the capitalist crisis, the erosion of past gains and their own success in damming up the mass movements, these forces all come together again for another appeal to the bourgeoisie for sops.

The bureaucrats' hoped for outlet for the workers' anger is electoral politics, which keeps workers away from mass action. The bureaucrats' electoral favorite is the Democratic Party, a capitalist party as much as the Republican, that symbolizes their devotion to the continuation of capitalism.



Picket sign reads, "I would rather be a controller in Poland." PATCO, AFL-CIO, White House all love general strike against Polish rulers — but not here.

But the leading Democrats today are terrified and discredited, so the bureaucracy has to risk partial mobilizations of workers in order to give them a spine and restore their credit rating. It is heavily backing insurgent candidates like Frank Barbaro (the "real Democrat") for New York mayor. If the bureaucrats' attempt to revive used-up liberalism is successful — that is, if the workers do try it again for a historical moment in the absence of an alternative — the cost will be disastrous. When capitalist reformism fails again, masses will look much further right than Reagan for a way out of capitalism's mortal crisis. And then the unions *will* be smashed, not just humiliated.

The bureaucrats have been forced to let the workers make a show of strength to reinforce their own position with their capitalist masters. Revolutionaries must show their fellow workers that this power can halt the inevitable capitalist attacks, scatter the bureaucrats and remake the whole world.

Anti-Reaganism vs.

Anti-Capitalism

For much of the 1970's the pink flags of American "socialism" hung limply. Now they are beginning to ripple with the first whispers of a new breeze. Once again campuses are stirring; once again thousands march on Washington. Old tired militants come alive at the thought of a return to the halcyon days of the movements of the 1960's.

There have been ripples before, of course. The nuclear accident at Three Mile Island and Jimmy Carter's military draft registration provoked a certain response. But the advent of Ronald Reagan has inspired a far greater wave of protest. First his escalation of American intervention in El Salvador revived memories of the imperialist crime of Vietnam; now budget cuts promise to wipe out every gain the U.S. working class has made since the 1930's.

El Salvador has generated many demonstrations, culminating in the mass march on the Pentagon on May 3. And now the "labor movement" (the labor bureaucracy's term for itself) is holding a mass demonstration in Washington on September 19 to protest the cutbacks, the first sign of "movement" by this body within human memory (see the lead article in this issue).

There is a great danger, however, in the politics of these movements: they are all designed to keep mass protest under control and not threaten capitalism. In the case of the AFL-CIO marches this is obvious and predictable. But in the case of those led by the (not so) far left, the underlying politics are unfortunately the same. The far leftists, like the labor bureaucrats, use the across-the-board meanness of Reagan's attacks to obscure the fact that the problem is capitalism, not just "Reaganism." They will lead their troops inevitably into the camp of the capitalist Democratic Party.

LIBERALISM'S COLLAPSE

The reasons for the far left's growing prominence are not hard to find. The decade of the seventies proved a sobering answer to the hopes generated in the sixties. The inherent crisis of capitalism had re-emerged with a vengeance. With the end of the post-World War II prosperity bubble that had enabled the "welfare state" to buy off mass struggles, the old liberalism lost its attraction to workers and the oppressed minorities. Nobody, not even the liberal Democratic politicians themselves, believed the old rhetoric any more. Jimmy Carter came to praise the tradition and ended up burying it, along with himself.

During the 1970's many workers gave up hope in the system without finding an alternative. Others began the process of polarization, searching for more radical answers. Out of the West strode Ronald Reagan, reflecting a section of the bourgeoisie revitalized by liberalism's collapse. Profoundly reactionary though it is, it appeared very radical in comparison to liberalism. It is the only major force in America today that confidently, if blindly, puts forward an alternative to the present crisis.

Large numbers of workers and petty bourgeois bought Reagan's nostrums, despite his obvious intent to heighten profits for the richer capitalists while axing programs for the poor. These sectors believe they are strong enough to defend programs they depend upon, like social security, but they are also willing to make limited sacrifices in the reluctant faith that this will restore prosperity. Moreover, it is the only show in town. The Democrats, including what is left of the liberal

wing, offered no answer at all except more cuts for the poor and more bribes to the rich, the same austerity as the Republicans.

Still closely aligned to the Democrats remain the myriad of middle-class organizations representing various liberal and civil rights causes, along with the more powerful chieftains of the AFL-CIO. Their strategy of lobbying and voting the Democrats back in, seeking to restore prosperity through the forces who presided over its demise, is patently futile. Amid this shambles of indecision and vacillation on the official "left," the "far left" appears as the one element with at least something of an alternative political line to Reagan's.

Lately, the organization that seemed to be most prominent in anti-Reagan activity has been PAM, the People's Anti-War Mobilization, which organized the May 3 demonstration in Washington. PAM had announced a two-part fall program against Reagan. "All constituencies opposed to Reagan's program" are invited to an "All Peoples Congress" in Detroit in October as well as a "National Day of Resistance" to include demonstrations in major cities, highlighted by another big one in Washington.

This does not mean that the warring groups on the socialistic left have pulled themselves together for a sustained campaign. Far from it. The larger, more right-wing organizations which in the past have dominated the PAM-like broad fronts and "movements" took a back seat on May 3. These are the Stalinist Communist Party (CP) and the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), along with the semi-socialist cluster of pacifist organizations. Coming up strong and recruiting rapidly is the left-reformist Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) which counts as a power by virtue of its ties to leftist labor bureaucrats, despite its loose non-cadre membership. All of these groups are forced to collaborate at times but are generally hostile and rightfully suspicious of each others' machinations.

PAM, however, is dominated by none of the above but by the previously second-rank Workers World Party (WWP). The WWP began as a pseudo-Trotskyist group shamelessly backing the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956; since then it has flirted with Maoism and has now systematized its pro-Russian, Stalinist class-collaborationist course and dropped any pretension to Trotskyism. The bigger outfits were aghast at the WWP's temerity in grabbing the leadership of the May demonstration and its rapid-fire projection of fall activities through PAM. We will investigate below just what enabled the WWP to pull off its initial coup. Whether its fall program succeeds is another question.

PAM'S HAZY CONGRESS

The May 3 demonstration was acclaimed by PAM and the rest of the movement-builders as the resurrected anti-war movement of the 1960's. Indeed, the two episodes have much in common. The largely student anti-war coalitions then attempted to win segments of the working class to a bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie based on the liberals' program, for a large bourgeois sector understood that the U.S. had to get out of its losing war in Vietnam in order to save imperialism as a whole. Accordingly, the anti-war movement, in blocking with

the liberal bourgeoisie, acted as a barrier to building the only genuine response to imperialism — a revolutionary working-class communist movement.

The same is true today. The socialistic left and its fronts readily call for the elimination of a wide variety of social ills including war, poverty and oppression — without pointing out that they are all consequences of capitalism and cannot be destroyed without the overthrow of capitalism itself. Thus PAM appeals to all people who “see the importance of linking the war drive abroad with issues of jobs, poverty, racism and sexual oppression at home.” That the link is capitalism is not for PAM to reveal.

In the 1960's the radicalized youth were largely held back to the level of capitalist politics and were shepherded in droves to the electoral machines of Gene McCarthy and George McGovern in the Democratic Party. The movements of the period, NPAC dominated by the SWP and its rival PCPJ led by the CP and the pacifists, rejected support for any kind of political party alternative. This allowed them to build the movement's inner core out of a minority of socialist-minded youth (who favored radical third parties, a labor party or a revolutionary party — or were anti-party), while keeping the movement as a whole limited to broad political agreement — that is, reformist politics that could only end up building the liberal wing of the Democrats.

Likewise today the backbone of PAM (as well as its leftist rivals) is to be found among those militants who are self-conceived socialists and even revolutionaries. The politics of the fronts again are purposefully “broad”: no mention of socialism or revolution is permitted. Accordingly, PAM's propaganda has a necessarily hazy look. It boldly states that Reagan's program can and must be “overturned” but it provides no vehicle beyond demonstrations and meetings to accomplish this end. “At the present moment, there is virtually no political forum for the trade unions and other mass organizations to constitute themselves an organ for expressing the opposition and resistance to the reaction ushered in by the Reagan administration.” So writes WWP head Sam Marcy (*Workers World*, August 14), who says nothing about what this “organ” might be but devotedly pushes PAM's All Peoples Congress as the forum for building it.

Marcy has his problems. An unspecified “organ” won't suffice as a political vehicle to oppose the government — that has to be a party. But he is afraid to be so concrete since the next question is, what party? Any proposal for the “movement” to adopt a particular political party now would alienate one side or the other, either the labor bureaucrats and liberal Democrats or the socialistic militants. So Marcy waffles, but the real world demands an answer.

It might be imagined that PAM's forum would at least afford *Workers World* (and other pseudo-socialists) an opportunity to advocate their own “revolutionary” party. Nowhere does the WWP suggest such a forthright intention. Revolution in the U.S. (as opposed to far away places) is not foremost in the WWP's eyes. Thus its post-May 3 newspaper commented, “This action had broad support without subordinating the revolutionary struggle and support for liberation movements.” While the numerous articles on the march did cover liberation movements (which, under their present leaderships, are not communist but revolutionary only in the bourgeois nationalist sense), *Workers World* did not see fit to mention the problem of capitalism and the need for a socialist revolutionary movement in the United States or anywhere else.

This is no accident. To call for a revolutionary party would make it impossible to cohabit with the Democratic Party in the

same “movement” — it would mean a fight against the Democratic Party and all such bulwarks of capitalist politics. That would drive away the liberals who will be needed in the future. It would mean fighting at the Congress and elsewhere for a revolutionary anti-capitalist program in counterposition to the minimal reformist program proclaimed by PAM. In fact, it would mean stating that the enemy was not simply “Reaganism” but capitalism as a whole. Sam Marcy would then have to stop speaking of “reaction ushered in” by Reagan (as if Carter's austerity program was progressive!). He would have to warn against the enemy which he is instead trying to woo into his own embrace.

The cynical WWP-PAM leadership is not yet ready to openly marshal its forces behind a Democratic or other overtly capitalist champion; that would lose them a considerable portion of the dedicated militants who do the building of marches and conferences. Nevertheless, in their effort to look “real” — that is, to adapt the whole “movement” to what seems *to them* to be real, the capacity of capitalism for reform — they inevitably tend toward liberal Democrats. Marcy's effort to construct a coherent reformist set of demands designed to attract left liberals and bureaucrats has already led him to endorse open class collaboration retrospectively. He states: “Nor is it possible, as it was earlier, to rely on friendly capitalist politicians to assist in the struggle against recalcitrant employers and for improved social legislation.”

Having thrown out any *principle* of working class independence by denying its necessity at all times, he reduces the question to a tactic. In fact, PAM's inability to specify the mechanism or party to bring down Reagan (let alone capitalism!) is a guarantee to channel the newly attracted forces into the trap of bourgeois electoralism and whatever tarnished hero the Democrats manage to come up with in 1984.

THE FAR LEFT'S SQUABBLES

Whether or not they join in the particular bloc that PAM is offering, *Workers World's* larger rivals have no intention of putting forward any fundamentally different program. The Communist Party will continue its policy of trying to build “broad” formations based on left-liberal politics; its decades-long history of blocs with leftish Democrats is proof. In the 1930's the CP could do inside the CIO upheaval what liberals could not: chain the rebellious masses of workers within the confines of political class collaboration. It no longer has the strength for such a massive betrayal but its will is undiminished.

DSOC for its part also welcomes “broadness.” It is officially committed to resurrecting liberal capitalism (as a first stage toward an eventual socialism, of course) as well as to the strategy of doing so within the Democratic Party. That in fact is where much of its growth is happening; it is capturing many of the New Leftover radicals who joined the Democrats during the McCarthy-McGovern campaigns. Liberalism needs them not only for legwork but for program as well: DSOC fronts like the Democratic Agenda are the party's only signs of life.

The SWP is a horse of a similar color. As a formerly Trotskyist organization which still retains the name for holiday occasions, it is formally committed to opposing the Democrats. It has turned Trotsky's tactical call for an independent labor party into an eternal reformist strategy (see “The Labor Party in the U.S.” in *Socialist Voice* No. 6). This, however, in no way hindered it from building an objectively pro-Democratic bloc in the 1960's, NPAC. And it has repositioned itself to accomplish that same task again. An

SWP Political Committee report printed in the June 12 *Militant* states: "We're not right on the verge of a class-struggle left wing or labor party being born. We're still at the stage where we don't know how, when, and in what form a class-struggle left wing will emerge in the American labor movement."

Thus for the SWP the need to push for a class-based party was indefinitely postponed. This clearing of the decks came as a result of the defeat the SWP suffered in the intrigues surrounding the May 3 preparations (see "May 3 Maneuvers" in *Socialist Voice* No. 13). The SWP was forced to recant openly and retrospectively praise the PAM demonstration. The *Militant* commented that "actions like the May 3 protest have a powerful effect on the working class. They reinforce and extend the anti-draft, anti-war sentiment that already runs strong among millions of union members. ... Buoyed by actions like May 3, the opposition in the unions to U.S. intervention puts those who support the government's role ... increasingly on the defensive." And it concluded, "Mass actions — even bigger and broader — will be needed as part of the struggle to stay the hands of the nuclear-armed madmen in the White House and the Pentagon."

Like Workers World, the SWP believes that cross-class mass actions, not proletarian struggle and socialist revolution, are what's needed to prevent nuclear war. But unlike the WWP, the *Militant's* emphasis on the trade unions is constant and non-critical. Consequently, it was not simply organizational finesse that enabled the WWP to steal a march on the other groups before May 3. The *Militant* report openly admitted that the SWP had waited for the labor leaders to come through and had based its perspective on them — in vain. The WWP, on the contrary, made clear from the start that, while it wants to bring the bureaucracy in, it took a more radical line in order to appeal to militants who are indifferent to the union leaders.

Significantly, PAM attracted the participation of black nationalist groups like the Black United Front (BUF) rather than the more moderate black leaders who are aligned with the labor officialdom. In fact, Workers World's brand of "third worldism" allowed it to disguise its own leadership role in order to boost artificially the role of black leaders. Thus it boasted that the black contingent headed by the BUF led the march and that the trade union contingent which followed was largely black and Latin in composition, a fact which for *Workers World* "exposed as untrue the commonly held misconception that the American labor movement is mainly white and male." Even the gay contingent was led by black women. "Being multi-national, men and women, gay and straight, they felt comfortable with the demands to end racism, repression and bigotry."

However, the entire black contingent with its various organizations numbered only one thousand. The union contingent was also small, and it represented not "the American labor movement" (which is undoubtedly dominated by white males) but a few left-leaning New York unions with large minority and female memberships (notably hospital workers and city workers). The positioning of contingents could not disguise the fact that the May 3 action was overwhelmingly white and middle class. Yet it was the WWP's decision *not* to wait for the "American labor movement" that gave it its organizational advantage.

Sam Marcy's analysis brings out the WWP's particular angle. He argues correctly that the trade unions now represent only a minority of workers and therefore cannot wage a successful "decisive struggle" against capitalism. Marcy deduces from this that the unions cannot fulfill the function of

the unspecified "organ" that is needed, which "can and will encompass all strata of the working class." The proof of the Congress' potential, for Marcy, is the promised participation of "hundreds of varied people's organizations of a progressive character and, most importantly, the community groups." Of these, one that Workers World is most proud to have in its orbit is the Black United Front, a formation whose anti-capitalist rhetoric serves as a cover for its support to black capitalists and politicians in the Democratic Party (see *Socialist Action*, February 1979). Marcy's formula for subordinating the working class to petty-bourgeois elements is a left-sounding prescription for a popular front betrayal of the workers.

THE MIDDLE CLASS LEFT

PAM, it turns out, has not been one big happy family. (And given the essentially reformist politics of all the "far left" groupings, it is a blessing that they cannot achieve a unified organization of their own.) Factional disputes inevitably break out in such formations, over how and at what pace to extract the radical teeth and smile more sweetly for the bourgeois liberals. In the CP- and SWP- dominated fronts in the past, the organizers had sufficient numbers and labor allies to withstand any opposition from forces further to their left. Today it does not seem that the WWP has the same kind of power.

Thus the Communist Workers Party (CWP), which had played the role of PAM's house left wing and provided the only "socialist" speakers at its rostrums, announced that the WWP expelled it from PAM. The CWP intends to boycott the All People's Congress, justifying this decision by PAM's lack of internal democracy and various political disagreements. The September 2 *Guardian* reports that other organizations have resigned from leadership posts in PAM. These disputes may supply the excuse that the larger left groups are looking for to stay out of PAM's activities and kick the WWP back down to the minor leagues.

The basic political issue in dispute, according to the CWP, is PAM's turn away from its anti-war orientation towards a total emphasis on Reagan's budget cuts. The purpose, according to the WWP, is to "broaden our scope" and thereby attract more people — even members of the Moral Majority concerned about their Social Security, suggested Larry Holmes of the WWP at a PAM planning meeting in New York. Holmes was trying to be cute only to avoid the obvious: the people whom the WWP wants to attract and who object to the radical anti-imperialist slogans are the labor officials, not right-wing elements. The problem for the WWP is not to broaden PAM's scope (since the May 3 anti-war demonstration also featured domestic slogans for jobs and against racism and poverty) but to *narrow* it to appease the labor bureaucracy.

The WWP has had to move closer to the bureaucracy, a position its larger rivals already occupy. The SWP, which slapped itself on the wrist for waiting too long for the unions, has now flipped back to its labor party line and, like most of the far left, is now cheerleading for the AFL-CIO's "Solidarity Day." Now that the bureaucrats are making a show of strength, the left has dropped its rampant anti-imperialist rhetoric of May 3 to fall into line.

That the whole far left plays such a capitulatory role is not due to any conspiracy. It is a matter of political logic, stemming from its material position in capitalist society: they straddle the class line, being both middle class and working

class at the same time. It is no wonder that class collaboration and popular frontism seem desirable and progressive to elements with one foot on each side of the class struggle.

The modern middle strata wax and wane with the fortunes of the imperialist superprofits which spawn them. After World War II there was a vast expansion of white collar and privileged blue collar labor aristocrats. Other middle elements socially more alienated from the working class also flourished:

social mobility withered.

No wonder the middle-class goal is the restoration of past prosperity and the reinvigoration of the welfare state — even though these are utopias under decaying capitalism. The bulk of these demoralized class elements find themselves still wedded to liberalism, and they pray for the resurrection of a Kennedy dynasty. Their far left wing is the socialistic milieu which understands that deeper social change will be necessary



Flint, Michigan school workers fighting off police attack in 1976 strike. As capitalist crisis deepens, such strikebreaking is as inevitable as police brutality in ghettos. Workers need general strike and armed self-defense, not middle-class pacifism and electoralism.

the population in the liberal professions as well as among intellectuals and students exploded. State power also expanded enormously, becoming crucial in the regulation of industry and in financial decision-making. Thus there were created myriads of bureaucratic middle strata in government employment, and more whose schooling and income were dependent on state programs. For them, progress came to be seen as tied to government expansion. In the 1960's these elements spearheaded a variety of radical assaults on capitalist society in the name of liberalism and even socialism and revolution. Nevertheless, their fundamental effort was for reform and an equitable distribution of wealth and status under capitalism.

The 1970's proved that if capitalism survived, all such gains would be eroded. The deepening crisis not only attacked the poorer and racially oppressed sections of the working class but also threatened the new middle layers who had to face being thrown back into the proletariat or unemployment. As poverty programs and social services were cut back, government employment contracted along with funding for schools and research. As the whole job market shrunk, the promise of

to achieve the common goal. It dreams of a better organized and less chaotic world, what is in fact a statified capitalism but in its mind is called socialism.

WHERE IS THE LIBERAL BOURGEOISIE?

It is instructive that the only existing "movement" (aside from the labor bureaucrats) for the restoration of welfare capitalism is headed by these socialistic elements. The liberal bourgeoisie has practically evaporated and does not fight for its own program. The liberal intelligentsia and politicians are a mere shadow of this bourgeois force and have only the symbols and surface manifestations of power without the reality.

The most self-confident sections of the bourgeoisie are those who have made their wealth in comparatively recent times. These so-called Sun Belt capitalists in industries like petrochemicals, energy, computers, land speculation and agribusiness stood behind Reagan's drive to power. The mass base for Reaganism is provided by the traditional small-property owning petty bourgeoisie as well as sections of the

labor aristocracy attracted by the radical-sounding free enterprise program. An appeal to this base accounts for the occasional forays into right-wing populist attacks on Wall Street. However, the difference between Sun Belt swash-bucklers and finance capitalists is small; capital in the U.S. is highly interpenetrated. That is why Bush is vice-president. "Wall Street" overcame its initial hostility to Reagan's plans, although it is still nervous that they will not sufficiently invigorate profits and curb the crisis.

The liberal bourgeoisie, the extreme edge of this Eastern establishment, found itself either persuaded into acquiescence or without an effective alternative to Reagan. Its motivation was not simply the impending loss of profits that makes any "solution" look better than Carter's fumbling, but the sure knowledge that increased profits have to come from deepened attacks on the working class. Large scale unemployment, the coal miners' strikes and the black ghetto upheavals in the summer of 1980 (reminiscent of the 1960's) sent intimations of anarchy rumbling through the bourgeoisie, including its liberal wing.

Under such circumstances the liberal intelligentsia is reluctant to participate in mass demonstrations until it is sure that they are safe from mass "anarchy" or even excessive revolutionary propaganda. This was already a prime concern in the 1960's; it is far more true today. What is interesting about the speakers list at the May 3 rally is not the number of liberal politicians invited but how few actually showed up. The shopworn out-of-office Bella Abzug was a poor prize.

The chase for shadows of the bourgeoisie has inevitably led the "radical" Workers World Party to make even greater concessions to the labor bureaucracy, the real power point in the melange of middle-class groupings. Marcy is correct that the unions encompass only a minority of workers and that they cannot overturn this government (much less the bourgeois state) by themselves. But this fact is deceptive. The unions dominate the basic industries at the heart of capitalist production. If they strike, profit-making grinds to a halt. Thus their potential power is enormous. In contrast, urban "communities" do not create real community — they atomize; they do not permit the growth of sustained mass organizations except as byblows of industrial organization. Groups based on the community are inevitably led by the middle-class layers.

The industrial proletariat is still the key to social transformation. The labor bureaucracy derives its strength in society from this inherent power. The WWP may attract this or that union local to its "Congress" but the real balance of forces means that Marcy must adapt to the unionists, not vice versa. In turn, only the union leaders will attract more shadow bourgeois politicians to the anti-Reagan ranks. These politicians have infinitely more confidence in the labor fakers than in socialists, even such experienced policemen of the left as the CP and the SWP. And the labor bureaucrats, whose existence fundamentally depends upon brokering between the classes, must demand further programmatic concessions from the left and further attempts to win over more shadows.

While the bureaucrats may be forced to mobilize and may be forced to utilize leftists to organize a response to Reagan, the last thing they want is to ignite a real movement. The price they will therefore exact for allowing the left a role is that its work must be channelled into electoral lines. The Democratic Party must be resurrected.

Such a development would force the non-Democratic Party far-left to choose between its abstract positions and the reality of its class-collaborationist politics. It can support the Democrats directly a la DSOC, it can build a third party line for Democratic candidates, or it can run a pro-forma socialistic

candidate while urging the masses to vote Democratic as the CP did in 1936.

There is a counterweight to these pressures, fundamentally a counterweight to the entire far left strategy of "movement" building. The Miami rebellion of 1980, joined by a series of other urban ghetto upheavals, was only the opening shot by which the most dispossessed black workers showed their willingness to fight. They have now paused, seeking a solution; they have not given up the struggle. But they lack an overall class consciousness and the ability to halt the bourgeoisie's sources of profits.

The corollary to the central importance of the industrial working class is also true: when the core of the class is inactive the rest of the class is inhibited. Despite their heroism and eagerness to fight, unless the ghetto workers and unemployed can join with or spark the industrial workers as such, their struggles will be severely limited. Their lack of class consciousness is primarily due to the inertness of the unionized heavy industrial workers who have been hamstrung by the labor bureaucracy. But unionized labor is increasingly coming under attack; with PATCO, Reagan has already shown his willingness to destroy a trade union composed of one of the most aristocratic sections of workers. Whereas in the 1960's, the privileges of the labor aristocracy allowed the bureaucracy to keep the massive strikes of that decade from achieving political and societal breadth; this will be far more difficult in the coming period.

Thus there is another alternative to the pre-emptive popular-front-within-the-Democratic-Party scenario: the anti-capitalist mass struggle. It is only a matter of time before the confused, frustrated and seemingly weak working class breaks through in a massive strike wave or even a general strike that surprises even itself by its strength and radicalism and potentially poses the question of state power. United working-class movements do not occur because of minimal programs and popular front intrigues. But when the working class rises up in mass action, it can force middle-strata elements to follow: some to join with it and some to try to mislead. Such an eruption would provoke the pseudo-socialists and the labor bureaucrats into fostering a far more radical version of the Popular Front in an effort to prevent a revolutionary development.

FIGHT ALL POPULAR FRONTISM!

It is necessary for genuine revolutionaries to fight all such schemes and all class collaboration. The enemy is not Reaganism alone but capitalism in its entirety. As we pointed out in *Socialist Voice* No.13, the inevitable collapse of Reaganism as a supposedly radical alternative to liberalism will accelerate the masses' yearning for a really strong solution. Reagan's failure will regenerate fascism on his right (as Thatcher's is doing in Britain) as well as the mass response of working-class militancy. If the radicalized workers do not see a revolutionary answer to the question of state power, they will be easy prey for the demagogic Nazis ("national socialists") who do claim to provide a real alternative to capitalism while actually preserving it.

The only guarantee that the approaching working-class movement will not be stifled is to build a genuine communist party that can show the way to the revolutionary solution. To this end the League for the Revolutionary Party marches side by side with our fellow workers in anti-Reagan actions, even those organized by the popular frontists or the bureaucrats, but we make our revolutionary opposition to them clear. We

continued on page 16

Mitterrand's Pre-emptive Popular Front

Francois Mitterrand's triumph in the French presidential elections in May and the Socialist Party's sweep of the legislature in June have inspired forecasts throughout the press, both pro- and anti-socialist, of profound economic and political changes. In fact, however, little has changed or will change as a result of the electoral shift. Although the SP and Mitterrand rode to power on a wave of working-class votes, the elections were not a working class victory. France remains a capitalist country governed by bourgeois politicians.

The elections did represent a shift in the way the bourgeoisie will have to defend its rule. The politicians now in office in France hope to maintain stable class rule by incorporating working-class institutions into the state machinery and by convincing workers to postpone their struggles in favor of parliamentary action. Former Premier Pierre Mendes-France, a mentor of Mitterrand, summed up this strategy before the elections: "For the working class to accept the discipline or the patience which will be asked of it, it must have confidence in the government."

The new government is therefore made up of politicians of "the left," a broad term that blurs class distinctions. The cabinet is dominated by the Socialists and includes a token number of Communist members, so it is based on the two traditional working class parties. But it also includes "left Gaullists" and Left Radicals, the latter two groups being openly capitalist parties. It promised a number of "socialist" measures: raising the minimum wage and other benefits, creating new jobs, nationalizing key industries, etc. Some steps have already been implemented by Mitterrand — before the legislative elections, in order to ensure a Socialist victory.

The real purpose of Mitterrand's program is nevertheless to dig French capitalism out of a deep crisis that ex-President Giscard d'Estaing had been unable to overcome. The nationalizations, for example, are aimed not at expropriating the capitalists (who will be generously compensated by the government) but at centralizing and planning new investment in order to outcompete France's international rivals. The increased minimum wage, it is hoped, will stimulate consumption and therefore revive some stagnant industries; the capitalists will hardly suffer since the government will pay much of the cost, and the rise will only compensate workers for recent losses to inflation. Additional payments and loans to rouse the economy were made to capitalist firms directly.

Will such measures work? It is very unlikely. Mitterrand's job-creating programs barely dent the growing army of unemployed, and his stimulation measures will inevitably stimulate inflation, already running at 13 percent in France. Inflation can be held down only if the trade unions, presently in a very weak condition, can be prevented from demanding higher wages across the board and if "productivity gains" (that is, speed-up) can be extracted from the workers in return for wages. That is a primary purpose of the Socialists' government planning and workers' "co-participation" schemes — allowing workers' representatives to plan their comrades' obsolescence.

To contain the workers' demands is Mitterrand's goal — but his victory sets contradictory pressures in motion. On the one hand, it has undoubtedly raised workers' expectations and hopes: on the other, it hopes to persuade them to rely on the government instead of the class struggle. That is why Mitterrand appointed Communist ministers — after the Communist Party, which normally wins the votes of the industrial working class, saw its electoral base reduced from 20 to 15

percent of the vote and its parliamentary contingent cut in half!

The Communist Party's task in the government is to keep the workers and their unions passive. Its Stalinist history of strikebreaking and scabbing shows that it is quite capable of trying. But its eroded revolutionary reputation and its political vacillations (towards both Mitterrand and its devotion to the USSR) have weakened its strength considerably. Just before the elections, CP head Georges Marchais embarked on a racist campaign of attacking housing projects for immigrant workers (largely African and Arab) in CP-run municipalities; to the credit of the party's working-class electoral base, this policy sharply backfired.

Mitterrand needs the CP because it is the only mass party the industrial workers think of as their creation. The SP, descended from the original French workers' party, is now composed chiefly of white-collar and supervisory workers and professionals (the largest component of its parliamentary delegation is made up of teachers). Mitterrand himself is only a Socialist of recent vintage. For over a decade he was an ordinary bourgeois minister, serving in particular to prosecute France's imperialist war against Algerian independence in the 1950's. Having adopted socialist plumage, he still made a point of keeping a few unmistakably bourgeois ministers in his cabinet (as well as running in an electoral bloc with the Left Radicals) — they serve as a promise to the bourgeoisie that nothing will exceed permissible capitalist limits, and, more importantly, as a warning to the working class that too vigorous a struggle will topple the left coalition and bring the right back to power.

In form, therefore, the Mitterrand government is a popular front, a bloc between workers' and bourgeois parties designed to defend capitalism against the workers' struggles. But it differs from the classic French popular front of 1936 in that today there is no mass working class upsurge to contain. In 1936 the workers took the electoral victory of the popular front as a signal for a massive general strike that forced the bosses to cede unprecedented gains. Mitterrand's victory, in contrast, sparked triumphant rallies on the night of May 10, but since then the workers have taken a wait-and-see attitude. When the world capitalist crisis eventually forces Mitterrand to move openly against the workers' interests (like the British Labour governments of the 1970's), then the working class's ability to mobilize its own strength and develop its political consciousness will be tested.

For this reason it is important to examine the policies of the most advanced sections of the French working class, those workers grouped into the self-styled revolutionary (or "far left") organizations. In France, these groups have greater strength than in the U.S. (or for that matter than in most of the industrial countries of the West). Arlette Laguiller, the presidential candidate of the Lutte Ouvriere (LO-Workers Struggle) group, won 2.3 percent of the vote against Mitterrand and Giscard, a slight decline from the far left's electoral total in 1979. The Internationalist Communist Organization (OCI) which did not run its own candidates but worked closely with the Socialist Party, now claims a membership of six thousand. Both of these groups regard themselves as Trotskyist; a third such organization, the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League), ran several dozen legislative candidates and undoubtedly also contains several thousand members.

To understand the far leftists' electoral tactics, a brief

introduction is necessary. French elections are fought in two rounds, a week apart. To win on the first round an absolute majority is needed, but about 15 percent of the first-round vote entitles a candidate to run in the second round, in which only a plurality of votes is required for election. This enables the parties in an electoral bloc to withdraw all but one of their candidates from the second round, thus uniting the bloc for the decisive vote.

The revolutionary policy, codified by the Communist International in the 1920's, has been to run communist candidates in the first round to fight for the communist program and test its support; then, on the second, to bloc with the other working class parties if they abandon all alliances with the openly bourgeois parties. That way a "class against class" vote can be assured. Of course, the communist campaign itself would stress the impossibility of achieving socialism through bourgeois elections and warn the workers of the dangers of relying on parliamentarism. Revolutionaries give "critical support" to the reformist working class leaders only when they have placed themselves at the head of a workers' movement that has not lost its illusions in the reformists' socialist or pro-working class intentions. The "support" is to the workers' struggle, the criticism is for the leaders' politics of surrender and betrayal.

PSEUDO-TROTSKYISTS FOR PSEUDO-SOCIALIST

The OCI chose to call for a vote to Mitterrand on the first as well as the second round, arguing that any other course would endanger the left's chances for victory. Not that a large vote for Marchais (or Laguiller) would have knocked Mitterrand out of the race, for he would have remained in as long as Giscard was held to under 50 percent on the first round — and votes for Marchais would do this as well as votes for Mitterrand. The real logic behind the OCI's line is that a large vote for the "Communist" on the first round would have scared bourgeois and petty-bourgeois voters from voting for Mitterrand on the *second*; that is, Mitterrand's candidacy would have owed the CP too much and seemed too working-class. The OCI, very closely linked to the social-democratic union apparatus of the SP, saw its policy work: Marchais lost badly and therefore Mitterrand kept his image as a consensus candidate, not a class representative.

The LCR also jumped aboard Mitterrand's bandwagon. It distinguished itself by campaigning for "unity of the working-class candidates," that is, for an agreement between Mitterrand and Marchais that whichever of them came in behind the other would withdraw in the second round. This, together with its call for an "SP-CP majority" in the legislative voting, gave the impression that an SP-CP government would represent a genuine workers' regime. Unfortunately for this conception, not only were both parties running on pure bourgeois reformist programs but there has been no mass working-class activity that could force such parties to risk taking far-reaching reforms. Moreover, the SP made clear from the start that it would only govern along with bourgeois ministers; the CP made no objections to this. Under these circumstances, to call for an SP-CP government was not just to create an illusion but to advocate a lie. This was proved by the final outcome: a strong majority for the SP alone, which Mitterrand predictably used to keep his bourgeois alliances (and to add CP ministers for anti-working class purposes).

Lutte Ouvriere was able to overcome the legal obstacles and run its own candidate, but Laguiller's highly personalistic campaign had nothing revolutionary about it. It appealed for

votes to "Arlette" as a woman of the people, a genuine worker, a candidate of the left — but not as a revolutionary or a member of a Trotskyist party. Lutte Ouvriere defined itself as "the left of the left" and proved this true — that it had no fundamental differences with reformism. Laguiller, for example, called for bringing the police "closer to the people" — that's the racist, anti-working class cops whose function is not to aid innocents in distress but to smash workers' struggles. In answer to a typical baiting question from a bourgeois reporter as to whether she would defend the frontiers of France, she answered not that France is an imperialist country which the working class has no interest in defending, but that the French generals in 1940 had done a very poor job of defending the French people. Such policies are indistinguishable from the reformist national chauvinism of the social-democratic SP and the Stalinist CP.

After the first presidential round, LO backed Mitterrand on the second and a "left majority" for the Assembly. Thus LO belatedly joined the other pseudo-Trotskyists in urging votes for an "SP-CP government" which in no way disguised its dependence on bourgeois politicians. Shameful spectacle!

POPULAR FRONT A TRAP

The French far left, like its counterparts in the U.S. and elsewhere, has moved far to the right since the heady near-revolutionary days of 1968. It accepts electoralism without criticism and regards a popular front government as a step forward for the proletariat, not as a dangerous trap that sets the workers up for capitalism's most vicious attacks. The contrast with 1936 is even more striking. Then the Trotskyists took an uncompromising attitude towards the reformists' bloc with the bourgeoisie, and then they were under far greater pressure from the mass working class movement behind the popular front. If the far left capitulates so enthusiastically to Mitterrand's pre-emptive popular front today, that only shows it will be an obstacle when a revolutionary crisis comes. ■

ANTI-REAGANISM

continued from page 14

may attend PAM's meetings and other similar conferences, not as members but as opponents. We act in unity with our class but against the leaders who betray it. While the pseudo-socialists' practical program is capitalist reform, no one can ever mistake the fact that the LRP is the unyielding voice of revolutionary communism. We know that our efforts in this milieu will play only a small role in separating the revolutionary wheat from the reformist chaff. The big blows will be struck by the movement of the proletariat and the oppressed. It is to this, our own class, that we devote the bulk of our resources.

By itself, the far left with its middle-class politics and middle-class base can only be impotent in this crisis period. It must follow some section of the working class. As presently constituted, it has made the choice of following the labor bureaucracy and therefore, inevitably, its policy of class collaboration. However, in the ranks of the anti-Reagan actions are many militants who are genuinely seeking a way to break with all that is capitalism. They are now being misled, but the deepening crisis will turn many members of the pseudo-socialist groups and independent leftists away from middle-class delusions and toward the revolutionary vanguard as the class moves into action. The ranks of the "movement" have a fundamental choice to make, between the parties of the popular front and the proletariat. ■

Spartacist 'Anti-Imperialism'

While most of the U.S. left went along with the class collaborationist plans of PAM at the time of the May 3 demonstration and has continued to accept its cross-class strategy of organizing for the fall events, the Spartacist League (SL) has taken a different course. It denounced PAM and the Workers World Party for their popular front policy at home and made a great show of dissociating itself from the May 3 leadership by organizing its own "Anti-Imperialist Contingent." But in doing so it moved its own centrist politics one more giant step to the right by failing to distinguish itself from PAM's popular frontism abroad in the case of El Salvador. This we showed in an Open Letter to the Spartacist League, distributed to a publicly announced Spartacist educational conference on the weekend of June 6 and 7 in New York. As a result of this leaflet and our intervention, the SL forcibly expelled us from the conference and published a specious and slanderous attack on us in their newspaper. We reprint below first our leaflet and then the SL's extremely revealing response. We then further analyze the politics behind the Spartacists' actions.

TROTSKYISM VS. "ANTI-IMPERIALISM": WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

In response to the civil war in El Salvador the Spartacist League has repeatedly demanded that everyone else answer the pointed question: "Which side are you on?" The SL and the Anti-Imperialist Contingent that it created gave their own answer to this crucial question of class allegiance at the May 3 demonstration in Washington: "We straddle the class line."

Proof? The May 8 *Workers Vanguard* crowed that "On May 3, the only flags of the Salvadoran Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) were carried by the Anti-Imperialist Contingent, whose color guard also bore Vietnamese and Cuban banners, along with red flags of proletarian internationalism with the symbol of Trotsky's Fourth International."

It is a criminal slander of Trotsky to claim any identity between him those who wave the banners of petty-bourgeois nationalism and communism together. Trotsky carried one flag only. "Many people forget a very simple but absolutely irrevocable principle," he stated: "that a Marxist, a proletarian revolutionist, cannot present himself before the working class with two banners."

A banner for Trotsky was not a piece of cloth but a statement of party, program and class. The communist flag symbolizes the independence of the revolutionary proletarian party and its program from any other. This is the principle that the Spartacists are betraying over El Salvador. When you march under two flags you are marching in favor of two programs. In El Salvador as everywhere else there is irreconcilable war between the banners of pro-bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism — class war.

The chief slogan of the Anti-Imperialist Contingent was "Military Victory to the Leftist Insurgents." This slogan's deliberate vagueness (it avoids saying who these leftist insurgents are) was apparent before May 3; each SLer gave his or her own interpretation in response to our probing. But the demonstration itself left no room for doubt when the Spartacists rallied round the FMLN flag. Indeed, the FMLN banner became the line drawn by the SL between itself and



FDR-FMLN leaders all want popular front regime. Spartacists, like 1970's Mandel-Pabloites, back guerrilla pop frontists as opposed to electoral ones favored by U.S. SWP.

the People's Anti-War Mobilization (PAM) crowd. Its significance was spelled out by the SL's Jan Norden at its "anti-imperialist" counter-rally: "We have here the flag of the FMLN. You won't see that flag at the other rally. You know why? The FMLN is the enemy of the American government. And they don't want to side with the 'enemy.' They just want the American government to have more intelligent policies. That's why they refuse to call for military victory."

It is quite true that PAM and the rest of the reformist, Stalinist and centrist initiators of the March want the United States government to join in a political deal between the popular frontist rebel leadership, the FDR, and elements of the ruling junta. PAM & Co. were trying to foist a rotten class collaborationist line on the entire demonstration. *But Norden and the SL were simply lying* in claiming that the FMLN banner was not at the PAM rally — in fact PAM had the FMLN itself! The FDR-FMLN sent a well-publicized message of endorsement hailing the PAM event in no uncertain terms and explicitly supporting *all* of its demands. An FDR representative spoke on the PAM dais. *Workers Vanguard's* attempt to compete by printing an interview with two FDR-FMLN representatives was feeble in comparison. There is no question which side the FDR-FMLN was on.

And why should there be? After all, PAM's class collaborationist line is also the line of the FDR-FMLN. The clue to the Spartacists' distortion is that the FMLN is not simply the enemy of the U.S. Its leaders are nationalist; that is, they accept the bourgeois nation-state and world imperialism dominated by the U.S. as the only reality. They are intent on preserving capitalism in El Salvador by reforming it, and their military strategy fits in perfectly. They want to win over "patriotic" officers and capitalists now on the junta's side in order to prevent real power from getting into the hands of the workers. Those in the FMLN-FDR who favor military victory and those who want military successes in order to bring about a diplomatic ("political") solution differ on tactics — but are absolutely united in insisting that the resulting state be bourgeois, with a workable tie to imperialism. An FDR-FMLN government in El Salvador, like the FSLN's in Nicaragua, could survive in no other way — given its rejection of socialist revolution and proletarian internationalism.

To this end they have Mexico and West German imperialism on their side, trying to convince the U.S. to with-

draw aid from the junta. These governments share the FDR-FMLN view that "stability" in Central America can only come through accommodation and class collaboration. Reagan refuses to go along mainly because he doesn't think that the mobilized workers and peasants of El Salvador will be so easily contained if the repressive forces are weakened in any way. This is the classic dispute between popular frontism and reaction over how best to maintain imperialism's sway.

FMLN-FDR: ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

The Spartacists avoid an open endorsement of the popular front line by alleging a vast distinction between the proletarian-military FMLN and the FDR, which they acknowledge is popular frontist. In fact, the two formations are one. Their public statements bear the joint FDR and FMLN symbols, they speak in the name of the "FDR-FMLN," and even *Workers Vanguard* used this title before inventing the distinction. The only truth to the SL's claim is that the military contingents making up the FMLN were built by the proletarian political-military organizations within the FDR, not by the bourgeois and social-democratic politicians whom they are linked with. But the FDR itself is merely the creation of these organizations and their Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses (CRM). The FDR adopted the CRM's pro-capitalist program when it was formed, and the CRM-FMLN recognized the FDR as the core of the future Salvadorean government. Despite their different histories, the FMLN and FDR leaderships today form one united bloc around their class collaborationist line.

The FDR-FMLN does not have the Salvadorean bourgeoisie on its side; it has only the bourgeoisie's shadow, a handful of politicians. Trotsky was a million times right when he pointed out, during the Spanish civil war of the 1930's, that a bloc with even this miserable shadow of the bourgeoisie was disastrous for the working class. The FMLN-FDR needs the shadow to make its vain attempt to cajole the bourgeoisie and the U.S. into a deal. It is in the interest of maintaining their treacherous coalition that the nationalists work to contain the anti-capitalist struggles of the masses.

If the Spartacist League was serious about the distinction between the FMLN and the FDR it would have to condemn openly the FMLN for its connection with the FDR and the popular front. This it does not do. On May 3, even its criticism of the FDR had become secondary and practically invisible. The placard "No Popular Front Illusions" occasionally sprouted among the various flags and military support banners, but what does it mean? Whose illusions? In whom? The slogan is amazingly vague for such proudly "angular" sloganeers as the Spartacists; it was obviously designed to cover their avoidance of a condemnation of the FDR-FMLN's popular frontism, rather than to inform. At the demonstration, only the slogans of the League for the Revolutionary Party openly condemned the FDR's betrayals of the Salvadorean revolution.

Given the Spartacists' suppressed "criticism" of the FDR and its open endorsement of its twin, the FMLN, no wonder that demonstrators were confused by the Spartacist counter-rally. We do not know whether *Workers Vanguard's* claim of a "500-strong Anti-Imperialist Contingent" that "swung onto the Arlington Memorial Bridge" is correct, because the group was fragmented after being outmaneuvered by PAM's attempt to force it to the end of the march. But we do know that attendance at the counter-rally, at the time when it was in direct competition with PAM's, was at most 200 by actual count; this included passers-by at the Spartacists' anti-imperialist toilets

and refreshment stands. The SL puffed itself up to look big but was politically deflated. We spoke with several militant demonstrators who marched with the contingent but hesitated to join the counter-rally, seeing no essential difference from PAM's. In this they were right. At the main rally many marchers carried anti-imperialist placards and even anti-capitalist ones. They believed they were taking sides, Comrade Norden to the contrary notwithstanding, with the FDR and the FMLN. The tragedy is that their heartfelt support for the Salvadorean revolution was mistakenly identified with the traitorous banner of the FDR-FMLN — and that the fake *Anti-Imperialist Contingent* offered no alternative to this.

The SL's policy of straddling the class line was carried over into the very name of its contingent. In the Stalinist-Maoist tradition, "anti-imperialist contingents" were organized to oppose imperialist policies of this or that capitalist regime, not capitalist imperialism as a system. The SL leaflet for May 3 condemned PAM for avoiding any mention of imperialism — but did not chide it for not mentioning capitalism, since the SL contingent was based on exactly the same fudge. In fact, several speakers on the PAM podium did rail against "imperialism." "Anti-imperialism" in reality has come to mean a strategy for winning a supposedly anti-imperialist stage under capitalism prior to any thought of socialist revolution. It is the next-to-last refuge of scoundrels.

Any Trotskyist should know that the only genuine anti-imperialism is anti-capitalism. But again, the slogans calling for socialist revolution in El Salvador were ours, not the Spartacists'. The "workers revolution" slogan buried in the Spartacist leaflets in small type, we were told, "means" socialist revolution. In some contexts it does, but not when the SL blurs the difference between "leftist insurgents" and the workers, thereby suggesting that military victory by the former amounts to state power for the latter. "Military victory to the leftist insurgents" obviously means victory to the FMLN when you fly its flag. If it is a disguise for the socialist revolution why then favor only a "military" and not a political victory? On top of this, the SL also informed the world through a "Fact Sheet" that such a military victory is "the only 'solution' to the civil war" — explicitly leaving socialist revolution out of the picture.

It would be perfectly principled to make temporary agreements for joint action with petty-bourgeois, or even bourgeois, formations — as long as the Marxists do not conceal their own politics and their class-based conflicts with their temporary allies. The Spartacists, aligning themselves with the reformists and Stalinists of the FMLN, did the opposite: they hid their purported socialist goal and marched under the nationalist flag. Trotsky in his day was explicit about what revolutionaries had to do:

"The sole 'condition' for every agreement with the bourgeoisie, for each separate, practical and expedient agreement adapted to each given case, consists in not allowing either the organizations or the banners to become mixed either directly or indirectly for a single day or a single hour; it consists in distinguishing between the Red and the Blue, and in not believing for an instant in the capacity or readiness of the bourgeoisie either to lead a genuine struggle against imperialism or not to obstruct the workers and peasants." (*The Third International After Lenin*, pages 168-9.)

What is the cost of confusing the proletarian banner with that of bourgeois nationalism? We have pointed out in *Socialist Voice* that the FMLN's guerrilla strategy has criminally kept the working class disarmed, thereby aborting

the January 1981 general strike and allowing the regime's death squads to mow down workers daily in San Salvador. There are two struggles being waged by the "leftist insurgents" today. One is the underlying revolution of the proletarian masses, and the other is the FMLN's attempt to ride the masses' discontent into power. The latter means a class collaborationist regime aimed at preventing the workers' revolution. Communists must make the distinction absolutely clear. The crucial slogans are arms for the workers and victory *to the workers*, not their betrayers.

After May 3, the SL asserted that an FDR-FMLN government in power would be "flimsy," leading to "a situation of dual power" and thereby "opening the possibility for workers' revolution" (*Workers Vanguard*, May 22). It adds, "At the very least, rebel military victory would allow the masses a taste of vengeance against the brutal killers who have ruled the country..." No! Not unless the workers are armed! In Nicaragua, the FSLN disarmed the masses after the revolution and, far from respecting the masses' hopes for justice, treats Somoza's butchers with kid gloves. There will be no dual power or socialist revolution if those who cheer on the FMLN today have their way.

While the Spartacists call for military victory to the FMLN, the LRP stands for the military *support* of the guerrilla organizations against the murderous junta but not for *their* victory. Significantly, a Spartacist-like slogan was rejected by Trotsky for the Spanish civil war: "We are not interested in military victory in and of itself, but in the victory of the revolution, that is, the victory of one class over another. ... Without the proletarian revolution the victory of 'democracy' would only mean a roundabout path to the very same fascism." (*The Spanish Revolution*, pages 257-8.)

Trotsky advocated that Bolshevik-Leninists fire their guns for the moment against the fascists and not the popular frontists. This was to ensure that proletarian revolution became the "only solution;" unlike the SL, he also carried on an unceasing political attack against the workers' misleaders. Can anyone imagine Trotsky waving the flag of the Spanish Republicans, the Mensheviks, Stalinists or the POUM? Even the suggestion is laughable.

Comrades Spartacists, you have come a long way. In raising the FMLN's flag and calling for its victory, you side with those who refuse to arm the workers of El Salvador and who plan to ensure capitalism's reign. Your words of "workers revolution" are lies in the absence of an attack on the FMLN as the workers' enemy. The workers' blood is on the FMLN flag and on the hands of those who hold it aloft.

WHERE ARE SPARTACISTS GOING?

The Spartacists are by no means the first to stand under the banner of "anti-imperialism" in the name of Trotskyism. During the Nicaraguan revolution, the Morenoite tendency carried the FSLN flag in its Simon Bolivar Brigade. There isn't an iota of difference between the FSLN program and that of the FMLN-FDR, except that the Nicaraguan popular frontists were unable to avoid armed workers uprisings. The Spartacists' Simon Bolivar contingent on May 3 was merely a hollow echo of that of their Morenoite rivals for the leadership of left Pabloism.

We have long predicted that the SL, despite its Trotskyist rhetoric, would inevitably add its name to the rolls of the popular front. The Spartacists' fundamental loyalties are not to the proletariat but to sections of its aristocracy, and particularly to the "rational" economic planners of state capitalist Russia which they claim is still a workers' state. The SL has

convinced itself that "Defense of the USSR Begins in El Salvador," so if the Salvadorean workers are not seen to be ready for the socialist revolution, the FDR-FMLN will have to be relied on to do the job of stopping the imperialist advance. It is the old Pabloite garbage that the workers are not necessary for socialist revolution - the "revolutionary" petty bourgeoisie or the Stalinists will do.

When Trotsky in his day defended the Soviet workers' state, he did so by supporting the internationalist proletarian revolution. He bitterly fought the popular-frontist Stalinists who gave up on the working class and, in order to defend the USSR in their own way, betrayed the workers in country after country into the hands of bourgeois nationalism and imperialism. Today, when the banners of Stalinism and social democracy have become threadbare, it takes epigones of Trotsky using his flag to ensnare revolutionary workers and leftists.

There are differences between the PAM supporters and the Spartacists. Just as the Maoist "anti-imperialists" of the 1960's hotly attacked the capitulations of the anti-war leaders, so the SLers fill that niche today. Like the Maoists, the SL is unable to draw a class line between itself and the anti-war leaders; it draws only an artificial demarcation over what strategy the popular front should follow to achieve victory. The SL is doomed to wobble in and out of the burgeoning popular frontist networks and coalitions, satisfying its leftism by organizational counterpositions but missing, inevitably, the class line.

In its shift to the right, the Spartacist League has made the general centrist penchant for ambiguity in slogans and formulas into an art form. Such vagueness is necessary, given centrism's inherent vacillation between the classes. The SL issued the tragicomic slogan of "equivocal support" to the Polish workers. It recently added present-day Nicaragua to the anti-Marxist category of "indeterminate" class states neither bourgeois nor proletarian. Now it has two class banners in El Salvador. Rarely before has any tendency so precisely identified itself as centrist.

Since the collapse of the Fourth International after Trotsky's death, the Pabloites and Shachtmanites who inherited its banner have all ended up following two flags: the USSR, Cuba, Vietnam, the Labour Party, FSLN, FMLN, Khomeini, or Babrak Karmal, etc., along with the proletarian red flag. Necessarily, this means furling the communist one and enlisting under the banner of the class enemy. In Washington, only the LRP marched under the Fourth Internationalist banner *and none other*. Which side *are* you on, Spartacist League?

**Socialist Revolution in El Salvador!
U.S. Out! No FDR-Junta-U.S. Deals!
Arms to the Salvadorean Workers!
Military Support to the FMLN Fighters!**

The Spartacist Attack

(from *Workers Vanguard*, June 19, 1981)

The NYC weekend was punctuated by a militant demonstration denouncing the counterrevolutionary role of Sam Marcy's Workers World Party-Youth Against War and Fascism (WWP-YAWF), front men for imperialist "doves" on El Salvador. Beginning with the May 3 Pentagon demonstration organized by the WWP-controlled People's Antiwar Mobilization (PAM), the Marcyites have gone to any lengths to prevent communists from raising the demand for

military victory to left-wing insurgents in El Salvador. But on June 6, a 125-man SL demonstration effectively swept aside the YAWF thugs. This also focused the next day's discussion, where SL speakers stressed that a leftist victory in the civil war was vital to the struggle for workers revolution in Central America.

The discussion was sharpened by the presence at the conference of a tiny social-democratic Shachtmanite group, the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), which opposes military victory for the Salvadoran rebels, and which walked past the Spartacist demonstration against the WWP-YAWF thuggery for liberal Democrats to go into the Marcyste meeting. On May 3, as well, they had attended the PAM rally for Bella Abzug and the Democrats at the Pentagon. An LRP leaflet to the conference claimed to stand for "socialist revolution" in El Salvador and "military support to the guerrilla organizations against the murderous junta but not for their victory." As a Spartacist speaker noted, "How do you give military support without being for victory? Presumably, when they're on the verge of victory, you take the machine guns back!"

The Shachtmanite LRP accused the SL of selling out by carrying banners of the El Salvador guerrilla coalition FMLN, and they retrospectively condemned the Spartacist slogan "All Indochina Must Go Communist" as an apology for the Stalinists. SLers pointed out that among the red flags with hammers, sickles and fours we carried the banner of the Salvadoran leftist rebels because we fight for their victory in the civil war against the U.S.-backed killer-junta, as we also fought for an NLF-DRV military victory in Vietnam. One speaker noted:

"The slogan 'All Indochina Must Go Communist,' was primarily one of solidarity with the social revolution against American imperialism. Secondarily, it is also directed against the Stalinists, and against the popular front, because the Stalinists did not want military victory — they wanted a 'political solution,' a coalition government. They didn't want a military victory, don't you understand that?! "In a similar way, the slogan 'Military Victory to Leftist Insurgents in El Salvador' is a knife in the popular front! Because the popular-front leaders do not want a military victory, they want a 'political solution.' So the germ of that slogan is, "Split the Popular Front!"

A second Spartacist speaker pointed out that:

"The difference between us and the LRP is we expect to affect the course of history. We are in there calling for military victory of these people and they will see in the course of struggle that it is that program, and not the program of their vacillating leaders which will lead to victory of the socialist revolution there.

"We might listen to you if you were on the same side of the barricades with us, but you've been on the other side twice in the last few weeks; once at the PAM march and once last night. And there is a reason why; you guys are right there with your nose up the ass of the popular front. That's why you have been politically defeated, because you are on the other side of the class line on this struggle in El Salvador!"

These social-democratic scabs on the struggle in El Salvador had received two speakers in all three conference sessions. Yet they would not abide by the democratic rules of the conference and tried to heckle the next speaker, who had been injured in the fighting the night before. A marshal removed the disrupters from the hall. In his summary, comrade Foster remarked of the LRP that "if Stalinism is the syphilis of the working class, lerpies is a minor but incurable political disease."

LRP REPLY

The Spartacist League has tried to bury the fundamental class questions in its overwrought diatribe against us. We charged the SL with supporting a stagist, class-collaborationist solution for El Salvador, and *Workers Vanguard's* attack only confirms this.

The burden of the attack is that the LRP "opposes military victory for the Salvadoran rebels," i.e., the FMLN guerrilla organizations. Yes, our position of military support to these groups in the fight against the junta means that we do not want them to be defeated by the reactionaries, but nor do we want them to win state power. In this epoch of capitalism we oppose the conquest of state power by any non-proletarian force. That is elementary Marxism, elementary Leninism, elementary Trotskyism.

Our slogans, in contrast to the SL's and others', are designed to split the workers from their pro-bourgeois and bourgeois misleaders. That is the purpose of the Leninist-Trotskyist military support tactic worked out in the Russian, Chinese and Spanish revolutions. We urge the working class to aim its guns at those who are firing at it now, the junta and its army. But we warn that the temporary bourgeois allies of today will be the violent class enemies of tomorrow — FDR head Guillermo Ungo stands in the footsteps of Chiang Kai-shek. They will inevitably seek to crush the workers in their turn and are currently conducting the war in such a manner as to betray the struggle to imperialism.

The Spartacists present themselves as blindly unaware of the class violence temporarily buried within the popular front bloc. "How do you give military support without being for victory?" they mockingly demand. "Presumably, when they're on the verge of victory, you take the machine guns back!"

Right. What the Spartacists ridicule is a fundamental class truth. The Bolsheviks led the Petrograd workers to fight the reactionary Kornilov one day, giving military support to the liberal Kerensky; they fought Kerensky the next day. Presumably the Spartacists would have preferred "military victory" for Kerensky's bourgeois Provisional Government. After Kornilov was defeated, "taking Kerensky's guns away" by force was the only way to prevent his planned assault on the revolutionary workers. It also meant the socialist revolution by the proletariat.

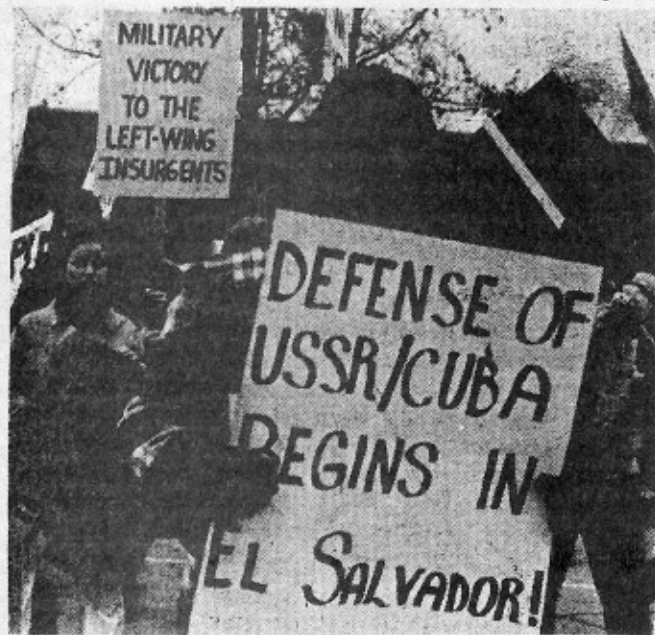
Moreover, military support does not mean giving guns or money to the workers' treacherous temporary allies. It means arming the workers themselves to fight against a momentarily common enemy. That is the key class question. The Spartacist suggestion of giving machine guns to the FMLN-FDR (while studiously avoiding the demand for arms to the workers) is a recipe for wiping out the proletariat tomorrow.

The SL's jeering question shows precisely which side it is on. It regards the guerrillas as the only force capable of fighting the regime; thus only the guerrillas need guns. "Because the left-wing insurgents are starved for arms, 18,000 workers and peasants have been slaughtered ..." says the Summer 1981 *Young Spartacus*. And *Workers Vanguard* adds in another article in the June 19 issue: "There is a close connection between military victory and workers revolution. A workers revolution in El Salvador is impossible without military victory of the leftist insurgents. ... And the only guarantee of military victory is the mobilization of the masses for their own class interests."

Indeed, there is a close connection between an FDR-FMLN victory and the socialist revolution: the first would work to prevent the latter. A military victory is necessary — but by the

working class, not its liberal exploiters. The SL in fact is calling for the mobilization of the masses *not* in "their own class interests" but solely to goad the pro-bourgeois rebels to victory. It believes, therefore, in classical reformist fashion, that the victory of the popular front is a necessary first stage before socialism.

The FMLN's guerrilla strategy, never criticized and in fact applauded by the SL, can *only* lead to a popular front if successful. Guerrilla warfare, unlike reliance on armed, class conscious workers' detachments independent of the bourgeoisie, is designed to prevent class differentiation and workers' control. The guerrillas know they need urban action to win and they call for it, but they never arm the workers. Even the "political general strike" some of them raise does not involve armed workers' self-defense. The criminal policy of not feeding arms to the workers has the consequence of almost daily executions of proletarians by the junta. According to recent articles in *NACLA Report* and the *Latin American Weekly Report*, the guerrillas' urban strategy consists of sabotaging industry, the economy and thereby workers' jobs —



Spartacists and Alexander Haig both claim that USSR is main issue in El Salvador. Both seek to hide class character of struggle.

a far cry from the proletarian task of seizing industry and holding it hostage against the capitalists.

Of course, the Spartacists like to deny that "military victory" means state power for the FDR-FMLN; their slogan does not entail "political victory," they say. This is nonsense, belied by *Workers Vanguard* itself, which asserted (as our leaflet cited) that a regime of "dual power" would result from the rebels' military victory. Dual power means an unstable situation characterized by a weak bourgeois government holding state power and facing a working class that has built its own independent fighting institutions (soviets) that are challenging for power. In El Salvador, however, the workers are unarmed and there are no workers' dual power institutions. All that remains in the SL scenario is the FDR's own bourgeois government, which, unopposed by powerful workers' organizations, will not be as "flimsy" as the Spartacists promise.

The only thing "dual" about this state power is the presumed split within the FDR-FMLN. While *Workers Vanguard* appears to have accepted our point that there is no

real political distinction between the FDR and the FMLN, it now makes a distinction between the leadership and the "guerrillas in the field" — that is, between those who want a popular front government through negotiations at any price and those who prefer achieving the same end by military means. Hence the SL claim that its military victory slogan is "a knife in the popular front." The slogan does split the FDR-FMLN, but not along class lines — both sides are popular frontist, and that means bourgeois. The best "knife in the popular front" would be guns in the hands of the workers.

The Spartacists quite rightly compare their current slogan to their "All Indochina Must Go Communist" of the past, but the parallel is not to any imagined split in the Vietnamese National Liberation Front. That slogan plainly called on the Vietnamese Stalinists to take state power — which for Pabloite theoreticians like the SL means creating a "deformed workers' state" but in reality means leaving the workers and peasants as exploited as ever under the rule of a state capitalist bureaucracy. El Salvador is not the first time the Spartacists have called for a bourgeois nationalist victory not just over imperialism but over the workers as well.

The outcome of the Spartacist program for El Salvador can be already seen in Nicaragua. There the workers were armed in the civil war against Somoza, but the Sandinistas took state power and disarmed them afterwards. Thus the military victory went to the petty-bourgeois guerrillas. The role of the Sandinista armed forces today is to defend capitalist property against the factory takeovers and land seizures by the workers and peasants. Still the SL sees no bourgeois state in Nicaragua — that is because it hopes the Sandinistas will finally kick the private capitalists out of the government and nationalize their property. That unlikely scenario would create another fake workers' state with the workers relegated to being a passive, unarmed audience. The Sandinistas are avoiding this script, however, precisely because the workers are not passive and might well try to take power into their own hands. The FSLN, if not the SL, understands perfectly well which class its "indeterminate" state stands for.

THE SPARTACISTS TURN TO THE RIGHT

Workers Vanguard's response to us gets noticeably more heated when it moves away from the fundamental political questions. And that is where the slanders and physical force enter the picture, for a clean political fight was not what the Spartacists had in mind.

The debate took place at an SL conference held in the midst of a youth recruitment drive aimed at taking advantage of the opportunities created by the new political situation. The advent of Reagan and the El Salvador war have awakened a response among students and others over questions of war and the economy, and the various left groups have been salivating over the prospect of a new 1960's-type movement. The SL in particular is yearning to grab for itself a share of this potential upsurge and has shifted its line to the right in order to do so.

Until a few months ago the SL and its youth group, the Spartacus Youth League, were openly bemoaning their membership losses. Now they are bragging about their rapid gains of new students, who are being recruited on an agitational 3-point basis: "If you want to build picket lines and not cross them; if you want to smash Klan-Nazi terror through labor-black defense; if you defend the workers states of Cuba and the Soviet Union against the very real threat of irradiated barbarism, World War III, and you're not visibly psychotic ... take a stand and join us now." (*Workers*

Vanguard, June 19). But you don't have to be visibly for proletarian socialist revolution, apparently.

When a political tendency turns to opportunistic recruitment, it is par for the course to seal off its new, loosely gathered members and reinforce their embryonic loyalty by distorting the political differences and creating a line of physical violence between itself and its rivals. The SL has done this toward both us on its left and the Workers World Party and PAM on its right.

Current recruitment is not the whole story. Inevitably, the unfolding of the class struggle will radicalize many militants who will grow disillusioned with the conservative left establishment's class-collaborationist course. The Spartacists are trying to position themselves as the left opposition to the present leadership so that they can then reap their reward. They openly take as their model the strong Maoist-led breakaway currents which mushroomed out of the New Left in the 1960's. Like the Maoists of yore, the SL is substituting escalated rhetoric and dramatic organizational confrontations to the extent that it cannot present itself as a clear-cut, genuinely communist alternative. And like the Maoists, its "anti-imperialist" line does not pose a fundamental class difference between its solution for El Salvador and PAM's. The popular front strategy was perfectly consistent for the Maoists because it mirrored the Stalinist line of the 1930's. But for the Spartacists, whose reason for an independent existence rests upon their constant (although fraudulent) claim to complete Trotskyist orthodoxy, the new line is impossible to justify. The flag of the popular front has no basis in Trotskyism whatever.

The LRP has steadily contrasted the Spartacist line with genuine Trotskyism, and that explains why the SL felt compelled to respond with slanders, an expulsion and a few additional attempts to provoke physical confrontations — in order to wall off its newest layers from our political ideas and to hold on to its position as a left wing in the new "movement." No, the SL does not expect us to recruit many of its members or contacts now. But we do endanger their plan of providing the future alternative for the anti-war cadres when the present left establishment loses its luster. The Spartacist leadership knows that the "arguments" it contemptuously tosses out about our small size are insufficient. The SL itself, before the movements of the 1960's, was itself not much larger than we are now. In the long run politics are what counts.

SLANDERS REFUTED

Let us take up the Spartacists' slanders. First, they label us social-democratic and Shachtmanite. That would be merely their usual childish name-calling as opposed to scientific polemical precision, were it not for the fact that when they found us hard to answer at their conference, they were forced to classify us as "classical sectarians" and "ultra-lefts." That is, they recognized that we were attacking them from the left — but left criticism is precisely their sore spot, so they chose to use a diametrically opposite label in print. If you have contempt for your audience, what the hell?

Then they say we are "scabs on the struggle in El Salvador." This will appear to anyone as an outright lie, for we have obviously never sided with the junta in any way nor called for a negotiated settlement with imperialism (like the folks whose flag the SL carries). But this particular slander does not mean what it seems to say, for the SL is charging us with scabbing on the "class line," the "barricades" that it has drawn between itself and the Workers World Party.

First, "On May 3, ... they attended the PAM rally for Bella Abzug and the Democrats at the Pentagon." True. We at-

tended two popular-frontist rallies that day, PAM's and the Spartacists'. One had the FMLN flag and the other the FMLN itself. We attended in order to counter their class collaboration with our banners and press.

The second "scabbing" charge is the one that the SL used to expel us from their conference. *Workers Vanguard* asserts that we "walked past the Spartacist demonstration against the WWP-YAWF thuggery for liberal Democrats" to attend a Workers World Party public meeting on the night of June 6. Again, it is true that we attended the meeting, to observe and possibly intervene. Both the SL's announcement of its demonstration earlier at the conference and the slogans of the demonstration itself (reported in *Workers Vanguard*) showed it to be a protest against the WWP's popular frontist politics, from the standpoint of the SL's popular frontist politics. There was therefore little to choose between them.

The claim that the demonstration was a picket line against WWP thuggery was invented the day after. There had been a bloody fight between the SL contingent and the WWP; we arrived at the Workers World meeting after the fight and even then were told that the purpose of the Spartacist demonstration was *not* to stop people from entering the meeting. If attending that meeting is "scabbing," then from what "scab" did *Workers Vanguard* get its quotations from Sam Marcy's speech inside? The charge is patently fraudulent, designed to heat up the atmosphere against the LRP and to amalgamate us with the WWP.

That is exactly what was done. At the June 7 session of the Spartacist conference, a succession of SLers accused the LRP of crossing lines of blood. As the charges escalated to absurdity, one LRPer called out "Liars!" — and at that point the SL goon squad (reduced by *Workers Vanguard* to "a marshal") descended on the LRP delegation, according to plan, and herded us out. The Spartacists had found the only way they could to "answer" us. "These people are ... willing — physically, violently, in any way they can, through slander, etc. — to seal off a whole generation of youth from revolutionary politics." So says the SL about the WWP — but the description fits the SL perfectly.

So far the SL provocations against us have been familiar in form: we have been attacked, harassed and ejected from meetings by other political cowards on the left before. The Spartacist incidents are noteworthy for two reasons. One, they mark an important shift from the SL's previous tradition featuring a continuous, self-congratulatory claim of adhering to the norms of workers' democracy and a rejection of the machismo and thuggery common to the CP, the SWP, the WWP, the RCP, et al. Secondly, the SL's abandonment of workers' democracy will not come without cost. It has given its bigger and more right-wing rivals like the SWP a perfect gift: an excuse to justify their frequent exclusion of the SL (and the LRP) from public meetings. The SWP can now claim that minor, non-disruptive heckling warrants exclusion — after all, that was the ostensible reason the SL used to expel us, and they can quote *Workers Vanguard* to prove it.

What about the SL's accusations of thuggery against Workers World? On May 3, we observed the maneuvering between the two groups. There were insults galore and some pushing, but the WWP, quite adept at goon tactics in its own right, generally did not stop people physically from attending the "anti-imperialist" rally (as the SL charges) — although it certainly did try to discourage them.

As for the June 6 fight, on that evening itself we had no knowledge of who had provoked what. If the SL had asked us not to enter the WWP meeting (which it didn't) on the grounds that the WWP had attacked it, we would have

complied until the facts could be determined. Now, based on the accounts in the SL and WWP press and on reports of other observers, it is our belief that this particular fight was provoked by the SL. We would certainly defend the SL's right to demonstrate outside the meeting in an unobstructive way, but that does not seem to have been the Spartacists' intent. There was a political logic to an SL provocation which does not apply in this case to the WWP.

The SL's charges against us are an attempt to identify us with PAM and other class collaborationists, to bury the fact that our criticism stems from a politically polar opposite position. This, of course, is only a reflection of the SL's need to place some distance between itself and the WWP. But no amount of blood between these two centrist groups will put a class line between them. The SL stands one step to the left on the rightward-moving centrist continuum. "Gone are the days," *Workers Vanguard* tells us, "when *Workers World* was filled up with photographs of the heroic Viet Cong. There are no 'venceremos' chants for El Salvador's FMLN. ... In 1956 the Marcyites were the crudest pro-Stalinists, cheering on Moscow's tanks as they crushed the Hungarian workers' political revolution — all in the name of 'anti-imperialism.'"

Yes, much of that is gone. Now it is the SL which chants "Venceremos" for the FMLN, cheers on the Russian army in Afghanistan, and counsels no resistance should the USSR invade Poland to smash the workers' gains. All in the name of "anti-imperialism," too. How history has changed.

CISPES Bars Communists

Socialist Voice believes it vital to report on the frequent political exclusions by the various liberal-far left groupings as the social struggle deepens. They serve to expose those who always talk about building "broad democratic" movements but oppose authentic Bolsheviks, who supposedly stand for authoritarianism and sectarianism.

Thus the LRP was barred from attending a *public* meeting of CISPES (the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) in New York on July 21. CISPES is an organization whose components range from leftist groups to bourgeois Catholic church-affiliated institutions. This liberal bloc logically takes as its condition for membership not solidarity with the Salvadorean masses but its opposite, allegiance to the FDR popular front and its bourgeois program.

The exclusion vote was taken on the recommendation of the CISPES Administrative Committee, which had met the night before and unanimously decided to bar "certain people who don't agree with the principles of CISPES." At the meeting itself no one presented a written motion, no one had any minutes of the Administrative Committee decision, and none of these great "democrats" presented *any* motion as such. Different supporters of the CISPES officers stated different versions of what was being voted on; the chair cut any political discussion short because of a "long agenda"; and finally the chair attempted to limit the response of the LRPers to two minutes. The LRPers naturally fought this denial of basic democracy and won more speaking time, but few CISPES members had the guts to vote against this political expulsion from a public meeting.

LRP supporters had been attending public meetings of CISPES as observers and have spoken at meetings and other activities for our communist politics. The event that precipitated our exclusion was the large demonstration on July 19 called by CISPES to celebrate the anniversary of Somoza's overthrow in Nicaragua. During the demonstration we carried banners calling for "U.S. Out of El Salvador" and for socialist

The WWP has abandoned its one-time claim to orthodox Trotskyism. Nominally still opponents of class collaboration and the capitalist Democratic Party, it endorses them in practice every day. The WWP was once distinguished for its total dedication to the "Defense of the USSR." Inevitably, this led it to the Kremlin's policy of defending popular frontism across the globe.

Part of the SL's problem in distinguishing itself from the WWP stems from the same source. The SL has decided that the defense of the USSR is the key issue in EL Salvador; so, like the WWP and above all the Kremlin, it is perfectly willing to sacrifice working class independence and socialist revolution to the national interests of the USSR.

Although the Marcyites still hedge their advocacy of popular fronts to a degree, theirs is still more obvious than the SL's. But history will change that too. When popular fronts in Europe and elsewhere begin to reflect those sections of the Western bourgeoisie and middle class who favor detente with Russia and the further statification of capital, and then these forces begin to endorse alliances with the USSR rather than bellicosity, then the SL will face its severest test. Its left-wing popular frontism will come into bold relief in the imperialist countries of the West just as it does today in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The Spartacists have embarked on the well-worn road to right-wing centrism and, eventually, practical class betrayal. ■

revolution. At times when there was no other chanting, we raised chants for socialist revolution in El Salvador and arming the working class. In answer, a group of "marshals" from CISPES and PAM descended on our contingent and tried to hustle us out of the march. While we successfully defended our right to march, the goons kept dogging our steps to isolate us from the rest of the march. When we chanted, they counter-chanted to drown us out. (Their slogan was the hoary homily "The people united will never be defeated," a completely false promise because the "people" includes the "democratic," traitorous bourgeoisie.)

CISPES feels it necessary to keep communist ideas from infecting its supporters, but it never refrains from accepting support from the right. Democratic politicians, labor bureaucrats, priests and even ex-junta supporters are featured on its platforms, always spouting bourgeois politics and in particular support for the FDR's call for a negotiated settlement with U.S. imperialism. A March CISPES conference presented as an honored speaker one Carlos Paredes, a minister under the junta until just two months before! For protesting Paredes' presence and the FDR's call for a deal with the U.S., the LRP was forcibly ejected.

FDR representative Arnaldo Ramos advised U.S. leftists at a forum at the New York Marxist School against attacking the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), a CIA front sponsored by the AFL-CIO. AIFLD is currently helping the junta's phony land reform that serves as a cover for the mass slaughter of militant farm workers. Criticism of AIFLD, Ramos argued, would hinder obtaining "broad support" for the Salvadorean struggle.

CISPES has followed this advice, muting criticism of AFL-CIO policy in El Salvador and of AIFLD. Its firm devotion to a bourgeois solution has taken CISPES down the road of embracing the junta's discards and covering up the role of the CIA. Its policies have little to do with really supporting the people of El Salvador. ■

Britain's Hot Summer

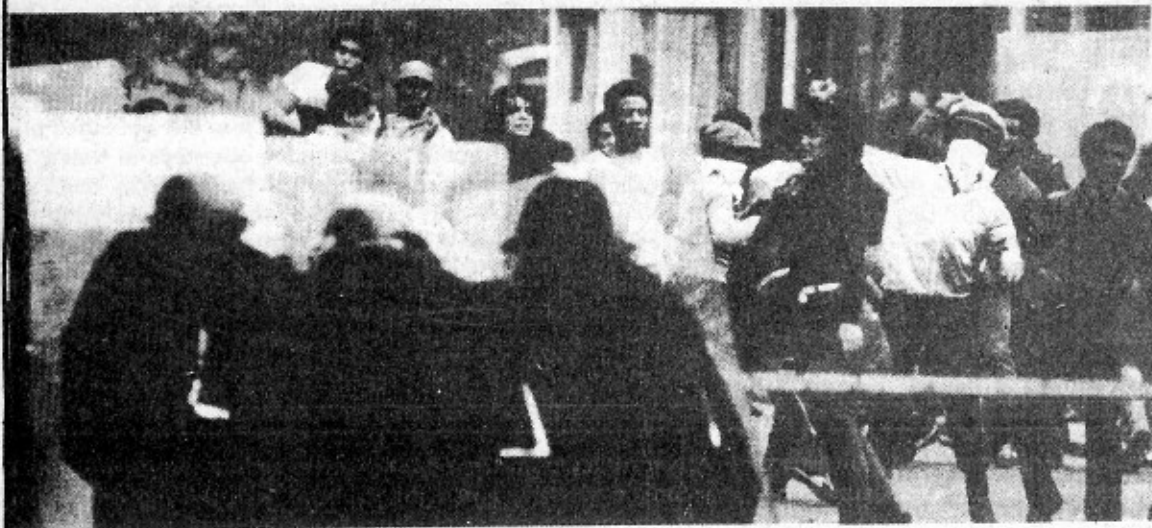
The class struggle in Britain erupted with intense fury in July as street riots by black and white youth swept the country. Enraged by police and fascist terror, racial discrimination and depression levels of unemployment, the protesters took a cue from the Northern Irish rebels and burned buildings, erected barricades using overturned police cars and battled with the riot police. The weeks of rioting shattered the hallowed pacifist tradition of the British working class imposed by the union bureaucracy and social-democratic parliamentarists. Explicitly they were a bitter but frustrated attack on capitalist state power and its organs of repression. Implicitly they demanded decisive action against rotting capitalism by the whole workers' movement.

The uprisings, following outbreaks in Brixton and other black areas of London earlier this year, were a response to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's brutal economic policies and public service slashes directed against workers, especially non-whites. Inflation, unemployment and police brutality are inherent in dying capitalism and were escalating under Labour's rule prior to Thatcher. But now unemployment

killed) has encouraged more fascist action, which is now spreading to previously unaffected areas.

The fascist violence has been met with growing militancy by blacks, including Asians. Following a particularly vicious attack in the London district of Southall in which the home of an Asian family was set afire and a mother and two children were killed, Asian youths in the area responded on the night of July 3 by burning down the pub where the thugs (known as skinheads) assembled. The British ruling class tried to make the uprisings appear as race riots. But as white working class youths joined in, it became increasingly evident that they constituted a much broader social upheaval.

The capitalist state predictably responded with force to these latest working class outbreaks. Special Police Groups (SPG's) which had been created to deal with industrial disputes went into action. Copying the British occupation forces in Northern Ireland, police were authorized to shoot rubber bullets to quell the rioting. Tear gas canisters were fired into the crowds, nearly killing several people. The appropriately named William Whitelaw, Thatcher's Home



Brixton riot. Black and white working and unemployed youth battle British police. Despite Labour, union and left leaders, workers need united general strike to stop capitalist attack. General strike will show workers they can make revolution and end capitalist misery.

among blacks and youth approaches 40 percent (it is 13 percent overall officially); inflation is running over 11 percent even with Thatcher's deflated economy. Under such conditions many have no hope of ever getting a job. A popular reggae song sums up the "career opportunities" as the "ones that never knock."

Fascist groups like the National Front and the British Movement, following the line of the conservatives who repeatedly issue dire warnings of Britain being "swamped by non-whites" taking jobs from whites, have been gaining strength as the economy collapses. Turning away from their electoral focus of past years, they have stepped up their violent marches through Caribbean, Asian and Jewish areas always aided by the cops. Most recently, police and government vindictiveness during the riots (2500 youth were arrested in one July week, many were injured and one disabled youth

Secretary, threatened to bring in troops, while army bases were used to intern those arrested. Trial by jury was suspended as judges handed down stiff sentences for looting.

While the riots did not paralyze the economy and cut off profits as strikes do, they nonetheless posed a serious threat to capitalist stability. The youth of Liverpool, Manchester and other working class cities had lit a fuse. Just how far the fuse would go in unleashing more major working class action was not clear, and the bourgeoisie was in no mood to find out. Thatcher moved in quickly to stamp the riots out.

Riots by themselves cannot end capitalism or its crisis. More powerful economic and political action by the organized industrial working class is decisive. But the riots weren't just symptoms, they were actions taken by volatile workers and unemployed and they must be defended by all workers. More

continued on page 6