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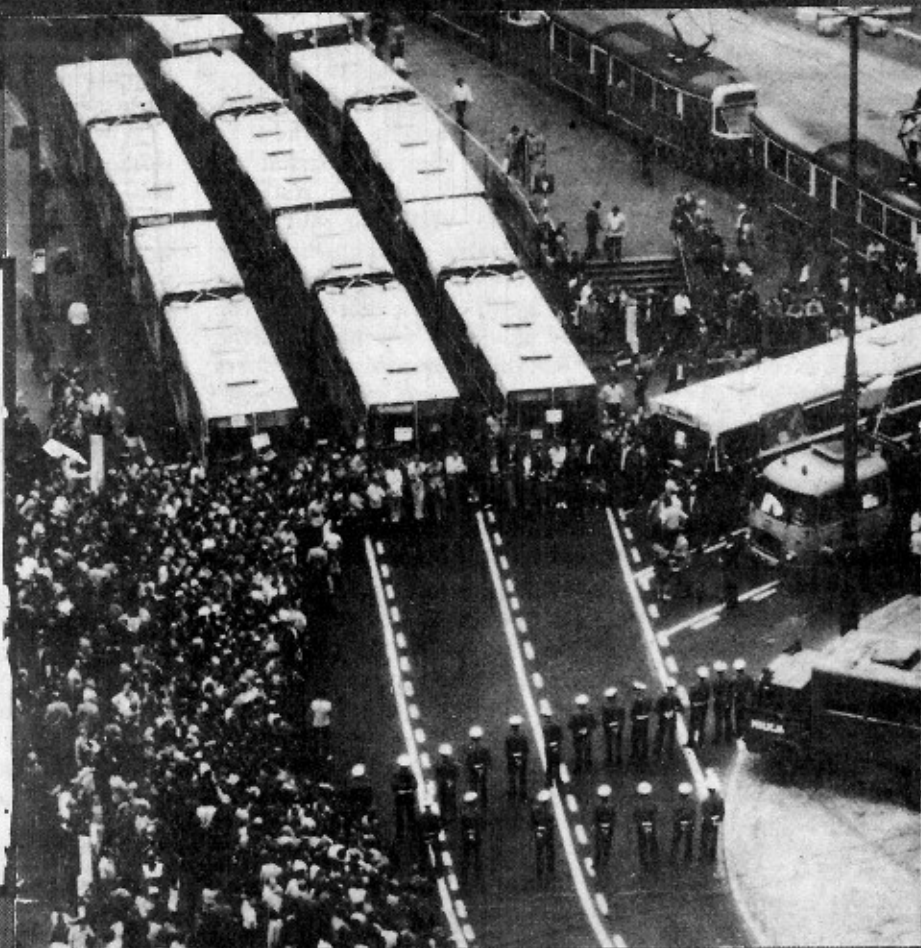
Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY



Reconstruct  
the Fourth International

## Polish Workers under Siege

*Showdown  
in  
Eastern  
Europe*



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*inside:*  
Labor after Solidarity Day  
Reagan's Russian Dilemma

# **Editorial: Nicaraguan Arrests Aid Capitalism**

Whenever the capitalist media and the petty-bourgeois left press agree on a political interpretation of events, that is the time to hold on to your wallet. For somebody, probably everybody, is lying.

Such is the case with the present course of the two-year-old Nicaraguan revolution. The Reagan administration, desperately trying to halt the rebellion against imperialist control over Central America, has been denouncing the Sandinista government for "going Communist" and escalating its economic and military pressure. The U.S. left has been cheerleading for the Sandinistas' supposed turn. But the truth, based on a careful reading of the facts in both the left and bourgeois press, is that the petty-bourgeois Sandinistas are equally desperately signalling their resolve to keep Nicaragua capitalist — hoping the imperialists will listen and that the Nicaraguan workers won't notice. The latest reports confirm to the letter the analysis *Socialist Voice* has made of the Sandinistas from the beginning.

Take for example the arrest of four Nicaraguan capitalists in October, highly publicized both in Nicaragua and the U.S. They were charged with describing the government as "Marxist-Leninist" in violation of a September state of emergency decree. At the same time, and with much less publicity in the U.S., about a hundred Communists were arrested under the same law for complaining that the regime was giving in to capitalism. Significantly, three of the businessmen were sentenced to jail for a few months (the fourth was released) while the leading Communists, members of a leftist split-away party, face three years imprisonment.

The disparity in numbers and in jail terms between the arrested capitalists and Communists reflects the Sandinistas' priorities. Underlying the government's accusation of verbal crimes on both sides lies a genuine economic crisis. Sixty

percent of the economy remains privately owned, even though the vast properties of ex-dictator Somoza were nationalized, and eighty percent of credit and foreign exchange goes to the private sector. But the private capitalists still refuse to invest in Nicaragua and continue to smuggle funds out of the country. The reason was made clear in an observant article by Alan Riding in the November 17 *New York Times*:

**"The Sandinists insist that their goal is still to carry out a profound social revolution without eliminating political pluralism and a mixed economy, but their critics on the left and right doubt this will be possible.**

**"In practice, the guerrillas-turned-rulers have resisted the extreme left's demands for stronger measures against the private sector, but their radical pronouncements have nevertheless kept alive the fears of conservatives."**

What those fears are was made explicit by Alfonso Robelo, the businessmen's chief spokesman, quoted by Riding: "If we don't sort out this mess, both us and the Sandinistas will be swept away and some third force will decide things." That third force is the proletariat. For, as Riding noted, leftist "agitation among trade unions was considered by the regime to be even more dangerous than the business group's protests."

Why then arrest the businessmen? Chiefly to fool the workers into thinking that the government represents them. But also because there is a real dispute between the Sandinistas and the private capitalists over how best to "sort out this mess." The government thinks that business as well as the working class has to be closely supervised, while the capitalists want a government that they dominate directly which would give them a freer hand to operate. The dispute is fundamentally over how to control the workers and peasants who made the revolution in 1979.

The Sandinistas try to maintain their revolutionary credentials among the masses by keeping close relations with Cuba and by verbally aiding the guerrilla struggles in El

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- 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.
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- No. 5: U.S. Labor and the Left; A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism.
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# **SOCIALIST VOICE**



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# Reagan's Russian Dilemma

There has been a growing flap in the bourgeois press over the Reagan administration's lack of a coherent foreign policy. Early in the year, the president declined to give a major foreign policy address to the nation with the excuse that he didn't want to tie his own hands. Translated into language foreign to capitalist diplomacy, the truth, this simply meant that the administration did not have an overall concept that it was sure would last, and that its policy contradictions would become too apparent if openly expressed.

As events proceeded the press pundits upped the ante. The October 26 *Washington Post* quoted a succinct administration diplomat: "It's a mess." On the same day, the *New York Times's* resident international expert Anthony Lewis wrote that "The ineptitude of the Reagan Administration in foreign policy — the fumbles, the discords, the embarrassing corrections — has become an open scandal." By November journalists were openly referring to the conduct of foreign affairs as a "national joke." And when President Reagan at a November 10 press conference saluted the success of his international policy and the "happy family" that conducted it, the Washington reporters howled with laughter.

Of course, the press, salivating over the inside Washington gossip, sees the problem as bureaucratic breakdown due to the infighting among Ed Meese, Alexander Haig, Caspar Weinberger et al to become Reagan's top foreign policy dog. Indeed, the squabbles do reflect deeper shifts and countershifts along the historic road toward centralization of political power in ever fewer hands in the White House. But the dogfight is more fundamentally a refraction of the tearing apart of an international social system as it plunges into a deeper crisis. As world capitalism shakes to pieces, the superpower striving to hold it together is inevitably pulled in all directions.

At first glance it might appear that the government's high-pitched hostility to the USSR provides the framework for a unified foreign policy. On the contrary, the underlying contradictions in the reality of the Russian superpower make this impossible; we will say more on this later. But it is already obvious on the surface that the Soviet rivalry does not hold Reagan's policy together.

## USSR a Technological Threat?

*Item:* Washington has been steadily proclaiming, at the top of its diplomatic lungs, that Russia's military build-up is outdistancing the U.S.'s. White House speeches are regularly spiced with references to "gaps" and "windows of vulnerability." The recent much-ballyhooed 99-page government report on the subject solemnly warned that "the Soviets have dramatically reduced the U.S. lead in virtually every important basic technology." And the image of a USSR with such enormous vitality in arms production and technology has been linked repeatedly to Russian expansionism. Afghanistan was only the first step; the Persian Gulf, southern Africa and Central America are labeled as Moscow's imminent targets.

Yet Ronald Reagan commented not long ago that "Communism was a sad bizarre chapter" of which "we are beginning to see the end." Secretary of State Haig chimed in with the thought that the Russian system was "showing signs of

spiritual exhaustion" and was suffering from "formidable problems," including economic failures and "ideological sterility." Surely, one would think, the Russian economy is a peculiar failure if it can achieve military-technical superiority over the most advanced nations of the world.

*Item:* The U.S. bitterly criticized West European nations for planning to build a ten billion dollar pipeline to give them access to Siberian natural gas. Of course, the White House went on to bless a 40 million dollar deal arranged by the Caterpillar Tractor Co., a U.S. corporation, to sell the USSR one hundred pipe-laying machines. And, in the same vein, the U.S. government approved the sale of 23 million tons of American wheat to the self-same Russian menace.

## Do Russians Instigate Terrorism?

*Item:* Reagan, Haig, Weinberger, Richard Allen & Co have proclaimed that they will hold Russia responsible for much of the world's instability and its own overall pattern of actions; therefore the U.S. response would be uniform. That is the so-called "principle of linkage." Yet earlier this year, when the Lebanese Christian allies of Israel were in an escalating conflict with Syrian forces that threatened to explode into another Middle East war, Haig pleaded with Moscow to pressure its Syrian clients to back off. Rather than blame Russia as the instigator, Haig tried to gain its support for stabilization, asserting that in this case there was "no linkage." Thus Russia is not the instigator when it openly furnishes Syria with arms, but it is responsible when the U.S. has been unable to prove that it is funneling arms to the Salvadorean rebels.

*Item:* Alexander Haig has regularly claimed that the Russians are behind the "training, funding and equipping" of all the "international terrorists." But in February, the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department leaked the opposite conclusion to the press. "There's just no evidence for it," said an official quoted in the *New York Times* of February 9.

Of course, a lack of coherence in foreign policy accompanied by an overdose of lying to conceal it is nothing new. Remember Jimmy Carter? One important bourgeois mouthpiece considers incoherence the essence of wisdom in such matters. A *Washington Post* editorial of August 3 on the U.S.'s "Two Trade Policies" of both limiting and expanding trade with the USSR stated:

"Sound like the familiar old contradiction of administrations past? You bet it does. It's just as well, too. Only ideologues and the naive dream of building policies on just one of those strands. Accepting that they both must be juggled is the beginning of wisdom."

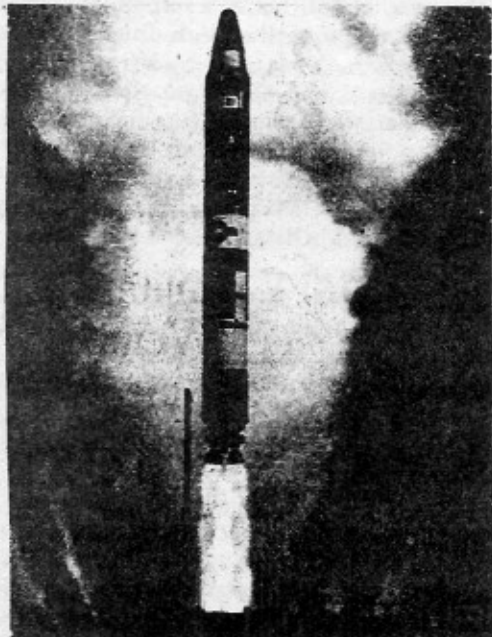
Very true. There are inherent contradictions which force America's foreign policy into inevitable attempts to straddle, namely the profound and irreconcilable material differences of interest among social classes. All governments have faced them, but they are not static and different administrations have dealt with them differently. The escalation of incoherence that characterizes both Carter and Reagan stems from the fact that these world-wide conflicts — both between the working class and the capitalists and within the ruling capitalist class itself — are coming increasingly to the surface,

for the world is moving towards a new revolutionary conjuncture wherein the fate of human society will be determined. Socialist revolution matures in a crisis where not only is the proletariat conscious and dynamic but the bourgeoisie is split asunder. The latter condition may, however, with the defeat of the communist vanguard, lead to depression, fascism and world war as tools for capitalist revival. The days of decision are drawing far closer than either bourgeois or working-class opinion recognizes.

### Kissinger's Grand Alliance

*Socialist Voice* has been able to describe American imperialist policy and predict its course over the years with deadly accuracy. Most of the left calls it names and bemoans its acts; this is hardly enough. To construct a serious vanguard party, Marxist theory and the ability to make scientific predictions are vital.

To understand the contradictions which doom Reagan's foreign policies, it is instructive to retrace the outlines of Henry Kissinger's imperial policy during the Nixon-Ford years. In *Socialist Voice* No. 1 we already pointed out that Kissinger's strategy was based on building a Holy Alliance, after the example of his hero Metternich, to repress the wave of revolution threatening to engulf the world. The hub of his policy was to maintain American superiority by binding the imperialist states of West Europe, Canada and Japan together militarily, politically and economically. This meant trying to overcome their rivalries (in which the U.S. was losing ground) in order to maintain their collective grip over the semi-colonial lands which were being most heavily crushed in the crisis of capitalist economy. In turn, this core alliance rested upon building up regional sub-imperialisms and junior partners (Israel, Iran, Brazil, South Africa, etc.) to police their areas of the "third world."



*Titan II fired from its silo. "Super-hardened" MX's do not a super-hardened foreign policy make.*

The termination of the Vietnam war enabled Washington to cut its losses and hold the rest of the imperialist structure intact. It also enabled Kissinger to establish friendly relations with the People's Republic of China and to fashion his "detente" arrangement with Moscow. For the Stalinist state

capitalisms were also staggering under the crisis and hoped to progress through trade and investment from the West; they too wanted global stability. As we stated in *Socialist Voice* No. 4, "the Russians, naturally, did not favor so absolute a maintenance of the status quo, but in the face of revolutionary challenges to the whole festive board of imperialism, they held to their part of the bargain and defended the table." Moscow did intervene at times in anti-imperialist struggles; it "aided the rebels in order both to gain immediate influence for the USSR and to prevent national bourgeois-democratic revolutions from becoming proletarian socialist ones."

Kissinger appreciated Moscow's restraining hand over its allies in the Middle East and elsewhere. He tried to incorporate Russia into a Middle East-wide agreement and thereby make good use of its ties with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the "radical" Arab states. Kissinger was of course aware that Russia, the second most powerful military nation, had interests conflicting with those of the U.S. He was wary of Moscow extending its influence, but he also understood that Russia was simply not capable economically of retaining important allies, especially nations desperate for economic aid. Stalinist Russia's loss of Egypt in the early 1970's, added to its previous rejection by the equally Stalinist states of China and Yugoslavia, was a major blow.

A big uproar by elements in the U.S. to the right of Kissinger arose when it became clear that he was using America's growing aid to East Europe not only to win friendship for Washington but to bolster Russia's faltering grip over its satellites. For Kissinger knew that turning any of these countries into U.S. satellites would force the wounded Russian bear into adventurism. After all, John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's Secretary of State in the 1950's, had called for the "massive rollback of Communism in the captive nations" — until the Hungarian Revolution frightened the West as well as the USSR. Then "rollback" Dulles quickly sent rolls of dollars to the Gomulka regime to stabilize Poland by buying off the workers' revolt there.

America's Marshall Plan and cold war line toward Russia had begun only after the Stalinists had helped to choke off proletarian revolution in the West and the colonies in the post-war years. In the 1950's the Russian empire itself became the locus for workers' revolution, a danger to all of imperialism. Kissinger, every bit as reactionary as Dulles, was forced to extend in the 1970's the old 1950's policy of subsidies to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and of course Yugoslavia as the East's economic crisis deepened.

### Masses Force Concessions

Kissinger even publicly snubbed the equally reactionary Alexander Solzhenitsyn and studiously avoided aiding dissident intellectuals inside the USSR. He could not afford to undermine his semi-friendly semi-enemy, the USSR, a collaborator in the maintenance of world order and stability. For all the hatred Kissinger inspired among ultra-reactionaries in the U.S., the last thing this latter-day Metternich could ever be friendly to was revolution or the slightest hint of working class power. He steadfastly opposed the liberation struggle in Angola and helped engineer the bloody coup against the popular front in Chile. For all his traffic with ruling Stalinists, he opposed even the hint of popular front governments containing even the most docile Communist Parties in the Western countries with strong working classes.

The rising tide of mass upheaval forced a very reluctant Kissinger to seek some concessions from even his apartheidist friends in South Africa in order to cement a covert alliance for mutual stabilization with black African nations. The crisis



forced him not only to try bridging the gaps between rival imperialisms but also to make modest attempts at accommodation with powerful pressure from the masses, particularly the South African proletariat. Nevertheless, the growing struggle spelled defeat for his overall policy based on reactionary alliances. More was necessary.

### **Carter's Hapless Reformism**

Despite his Southern-fried image, Jimmy Carter, like Kissinger, had long associations with the dominant American financial and industrial corporations and was as much a "trilateralist." Yet having matured politically in the midst of the civil rights movement and the economic development of the so-called "New South," Carter had a different strategy for achieving world stability. The temporary restabilization of the South by the 1970's seemed to indicate the success of token integration of the black masses into a Southern economy thoroughly intertwined with monopoly capitalism. Accommodation through sops financed by economic development and government aid became Carter's program for the world.

Symbolically, he appointed Martin Luther King's lieutenant, Andrew Young, as his ambassador to the United Nations and, in effect, to Africa and the rest of the ex-colonial world. Carter also proclaimed a new policy based on "human rights"; that is, he sought to prod the murderous dictatorships and sub-imperialisms to adopt a benevolent facade. Carter recognized far more urgently than Kissinger that it would be impossible to achieve regional alliances between the likes of South Africa and the black African states without getting tangible concessions from the U.S.'s openly racist junior partner. Otherwise, sooner or later the black workers of South Africa would blow the lid off. Carter had no intention of overthrowing reactionary allies like South Africa's Vorster, Chile's Pinochet, Iran's Shah or even little Nicaragua's Somoza. He only wanted to shore up their regimes with fig leaves and integrate middle class dissident leaders (and hopefully their followers among the masses) into a more "pluralist" system.

Carter also had reason to be hopeful about winning over various "third world" nationalist regimes to closer ties with American imperialism and his new strategy for stability. Revolutions generally led by middle-class elements had established fragile new nations of both the Stalinist and the more traditional "all-class socialist" varieties of capitalism. The rampaging crisis was undermining all the development schemes based on aid from one or another imperialist camp. The threat of popular revolution spurred sections of the recently arrived middle classes to orient towards both the international social democracy of the West European left and Carter's human rights line. A left face was needed to deter the masses' discontent.

The Stalinist-led revolutions and counterrevolutions came to the same impasse as the others. China, in its desperate attempt to modernize after its failed "great leaps," plied its way deeper into the Western fold to obtain loans, technology and trade. It sought to divert its growing internal class struggle by escalating its hostility to the USSR, a welcome sight for the Western imperialists. Beleaguered Vietnam and Cuba also tried to reach accommodation with the U.S., but they were at first stalled and then rejected.

Carter pursued Kissinger's line of detente but accompanied it with sharper jabs at the USSR. Like Kissinger, he knew that Russia was weak and declining, but whereas Kissinger had tried to prop up the old order, Carter tried to force reforms out of the stubborn Stalinists through his "human rights"

campaign. He pressured the Russians through the Helsinki accords in which the U.S. had officially recognized East Europe as Moscow's fief in exchange for promises of loosening up its economic and social traditions. Carter's speedy aid to the Gierk "reform Communist" regime in Poland in the face of workers' revolts demonstrated his reformist anti-revolutionary outlook. Carter did not welcome working class or other leftist gains in Western lands; unlike Kissinger, however, he would grudgingly accept popular front governments if need be as a means of shoring up capitalism.

In our article "Jimmy Carter's New 'New South': the World" in *Socialist Voice* No. 4 (1977) we already pointed out that Carter's policy was as doomed as Kissinger's, for even the temporary success of the New South equilibrium could not be duplicated, especially under the conditions of escalating economic crisis. The last straw that broke the back of his "human rights" solution was the overthrow of the seemingly impregnable Shah of Iran — the strong man of pro-Americanism whom America had armed to the teeth, encouraged to slacken a bit on his torturings and helped to puff up his domestic economy with showpiece development. His fall accelerated the internal crises of nearly every regime in the Middle East. When Carter proved unable to reach a new accommodation with the Shah's successor Khomeini, the game was over. His final effort, the attempt to integrate the Nicaraguan rebels into a reformed Somozaist regime, collapsed. Whetting mass appetites and being unable to deliver was disastrous. A new turn was obviously needed lest the foundering "human rights" fraud lead to an imperialist debacle.

The failure of bourgeois reforms has always led rulers to beat the war drums, both to solidify their allies and to lock in the potentially rebellious masses. Thus Franklin D. Roosevelt had turned to war industries and the War Deal in the late 1930's when the New Deal's weakness began to show. Presidents Ford and Carter had both sought to lock Western capital and labor together with "trilateralism." At home they tried to cement class divisions through campaigns over inflation and energy labelled the "moral equivalent of war." The moral equivalent failed, and Carter then replaced "human rights" with the MX missile. A year later Afghanistan furnished his excuse: Carter was able to bang the cold war drums at a fever pitch with his grain embargo, the Olympics boycott and more military escalation.

But the bourgeoisie needed a real change to a more warlike policy. This brought Ronald Reagan to power with a program specifically designed for the occasion: all guns and no butter. And just as we correctly predicted the failure of the Kissinger and Carter foreign policies, we can also foretell and account for the wild gyrations as well as the future collapse of Reagan's.

### **Reagan's Militant Rhetoric**

When Reagan entered the White House, even those Western European politicians who were leery of what seemed to be a genuine American primitive were happy at least to be rid of the bumbling Carter. Reagan promised a consistently tough cold war posture toward Russia and its alleged threat to capitalist world order. Bemoaning the purportedly vast arms gap, he made a big show of upping the military budget. Denouncing welfare and waste at home as a source of softness abroad, he stripped social spending to the bone. He scuttled the SALT II arms control agreement that Carter had already put into suspended animation. He labelled the civil war in El Salvador a product of Moscow's conspiracy to take over Central America, a U.S. preserve, and cancelled all projected

deals with the guerrilla opposition forces.

All this was done to the cheers of Reagan's fundamental political base, the Sun Belt capitalists. The core of this group rests upon capital-intensive and technologically modern industries (armaments, petrochemicals, energy, computers), but it is intertwined with large labor-intensive service, construction and agribusiness interests. The one sits atop a large white technical and clerical workforce, while the other maintains a vast unskilled army of workers with a high percentage of blacks (in the South) and Hispanics (in the Southwest). This newly arrived, self-confident and relatively dynamic section of the bourgeoisie says that it achieved its new wealth by sheer enterprise and will. If an American works hard and the government, Russian Communists, terrorists, and beggars leave him alone, it asserts, he can make it. Its petty bourgeois following listens.

### Sun Belt Nurtured Reaganism

It is no accident that these convenient fictions coincide with the absence of unions in the Sun Belt regions and the decline of class struggle during the period when the Sun Belt industries grew up; Reagan's rugged individualists have generally not been compelled to rule through accommodation with an aroused working class. The high-technology industries with white, skilled, non-union workers could ignore the social struggles that threatened the older financial and mercantile sectors of capital whose Sun Belt center is Carter's Atlanta. Less familiar with civil rights and token unionism as a method, the Reaganites also understand world politics in a way that reflects the particular capitalist environment that nurtured them.

But the Sun Belt bourgeoisie has not ousted Wall Street and the giant industrial corporations from power. Although it has a somewhat different outlook from the older sectors, it is by now thoroughly integrated into American finance capital as a whole. Its man came to power when the leading capitalists found him both useful and sufficiently acclimated to the realities of world power to be trusted. However, the big bourgeoisie has few votes: it must depend upon lesser strata for support. Consequently, Reagan's campaign rhetoric really appealed most to the petty-bourgeois base that dreams of a future government-free prosperity without welfare (domestic or foreign) and taxes.

Predictably, to keep his voting base Reagan held to his rhetoric, but its reality shifted. Traditional Wall Street politicians signed on, starting with vice president George Bush. And policies changed: Reagan had once inveighed against "trilateralism" and the Panama Canal "giveaway" sponsored by international bankers, but shortly after the election David Rockefeller toured Latin America extolling Reagan to local businessmen. And no one has heard of any attempt by the administration to reopen the Canal question.

The Reaganites' old nemesis was Kissinger, because of his alleged softness toward the Russians. Now Alexander Haig, an associate of Kissinger on Nixon's foreign policy staff, has taken his mentor's role, while Richard Allen, Reagan's national security adviser, announced that he too saw the world the way Kissinger did. This does not mean that Reagan's foreign policy can be a carbon copy of Kissinger's. That Holy Alliance is no longer possible, and Kissinger himself no longer adheres to it. The gulf that Kissinger attempted to bridge between disparate forces is now far wider, and the availability of reforms is narrower. Now that Kissinger's hesitant accommodationism and Carter's more effusive tokenism have both failed, what Kissinger and Reagan both favor is an *evolved* version of the Alliance, tougher and less accommodating.

Like past administrations, Reagan's must try to hold intact America's core relationship to West Europe and Japan while strengthening the weakened U.S. grip. But the crisis intensifies the rivalries within the trilateral partnership. Both Britain (under the reactionary Margaret Thatcher) and France (under the popular frontist Francois Mitterrand) see value in the American hostility toward Russia and are using the threat of war abroad to undercut class struggle at home. But West Germany is caught in a bind. The German economy has become more and more intertwined with East Europe (East Germany especially) and the USSR. Even the traditionally anti-Russian Christian Democratic Party has publicly retreated from its anti-communist bellicosity, acknowledging that the intimate ties with the East are vitally important.

Reagan's policy requires persuading Europe and Japan to increase their arms production. This, of course, would be an added drain on their budgets, worsening their competitive position towards the U.S. Reagan is also trying to emplace new missiles in West Europe, a move that has caused additional tension since the European bourgeoisies, however much they welcome warmongering, do not want to provide the battlegrounds of the next war. There has also been a rapid rise of a significant and troublesome middle-class pacifist movement in Western Europe. Reagan was finally forced to temporarily relieve the pressure on his bourgeois allies by making a U-turn in the form of a "peace program."

Reagan's inconsistency, like Carter's, has added to the problems. At the same time that he demands new missile systems placed in Europe and casually refers to West Europe as a future nuclear battleground, he placates his political allies at home by retreating on the shuttling of MX missiles across Utah and Nevada. Then he leaps to a demagogic call for eliminating U.S. and Russian land-based missiles in Europe — while keeping West European and U.S. sea-based missiles aimed at Moscow. This transparent tactic will give way to some new gimmick shortly, no doubt. A sign of further gyrations was the first set of cuts in the "uncuttable" military budget. For Reagan's retreat to modified Kissingerism shows up most clearly in the arms sector of foreign policy.

### Military Stance Modified

The United States has regularly proclaimed a "missile gap" whenever politicians wanted to heat up the cold war or, like John Kennedy in 1960, simply wanted to get elected. Equally regularly, each time it was afterwards "discovered" that the U.S. is actually way ahead in the arms race. Now is no exception.

The USSR has indeed spent more for weapons than the U.S. in recent years. But it also has a far less efficient economy with a far lower rate of productivity per dollar or ruble spent and it therefore gets far less for its money. As well, the USSR has fewer and economically weaker allies, whose arms production does not match that of the U.S.'s allies. Finally, the USSR's technological level is far behind the West's. When a Soviet deserter flew Russia's latest warplane to Japan a few years back, it had to be revealed publicly how backward it was. The recent U.S. success with the space shuttle shows the same gap, since space technology both reflects and develops military technology. The Russians, who use the same booster rocket to put men in space today that they had twenty years ago, have nothing to match. "Nowhere is the Soviet lag more obvious than in the military applications of space": so summed up the *Washington Post* (April 15) after interviewing leading space and military authorities. The U.S. can now put important far more advanced weapons and warning systems into space than



the USSR.

One vital ingredient in the U.S. program of escalating military budgets, therefore, is the sure knowledge in Washington that intensified arms competition can drive the Russian economy into the ground. Sections of the American bourgeoisie and many West European politicians raise objections, out of fear that the war policy they favor might, if too unyielding, lead to world war itself. There is some basis for their fear, since rhetorical escalation is definitely a feature of Reagan's world view, reflecting the brash outlook of his base. However, Reagan's goal is to force the Russians only far enough to get further guarantees that they will act as a world stabilizing force.

Some months ago, a "senior state department official" gave an obviously authoritative statement to the *Times* (July 9), asserting that it would be in Russia's "best interests to act in a more civilized fashion and then move to resolve specific issues." He added that "it is too much for the Europeans to ask us to forswear what was, in fact, President Reagan's campaign promise" — linking Russia's good behavior with American trade and arms decontrol deals. And since then, Haig met with Soviet foreign minister Gromyko in New York to discuss exactly that. Haig asked that the Russians say less hostile things about the U.S. and back off on activity in the trouble spots of the world.

Reagan's policy is aimed at pushing the Russians to the wall but not to war. Hence, when the more extreme types in his coterie escalate the imminence of war he has to move more decisively than he generally does in foreign policy. In late October he fired his chief military adviser, General Robert Schweitzer, for claiming that Russia's arms build-up was initiating a "drift toward war" and specified that his military posture was aimed at preventing precisely that.

Reagan has already been forced to modify his tough military stance. The U.S. bourgeoisie is quite willing to wreak havoc with the Russian economy through overspending on arms, but its own economy isn't in great shape either. Non-war economy sectors of industry and widespread objections to further social cuts are forcing him to trim. Nevertheless, the wide gap between the productive capacity and technological level of the U.S. and the USSR is placing a ruinous burden on the Russian ruling class.

In sum, Reagan believes that he can use Russian weakness to make the USSR more docile. His policy differs from Kissinger's in the past only in degree. In Poland, for example, he has propped up the Kania-Jaruzelski regime and urged the workers' Solidarity movement to be moderate. But he projects a more truculent image and endeavors to publicly shame the Russians. Kissinger had been willing to accord the Soviets a semi-equal footing in his Holy Alliance, whereas Reagan and Haig see the opportunity to make them crawl to play the same role.

### **Masses' Threat to Reaganism**

The Reaganites have also been forced to modify their original foreign policy "principles" in relation to the ex-colonial countries as well. In El Salvador, most significantly, they have finally admitted that the struggle there is not of Russian origin, and junta president Duarte was given only a lukewarm reception when he visited Washington in early fall. Government officials began leaking to the press the idea that behind their adamant objection to any deal between the junta and the leftist guerrillas they were constantly "on the lookout" for new propositions from the rebels (*Washington Post*, October 14).

Shortly thereafter the administration toughened its stance

again, accusing Cuba and Nicaragua of actively aiding the guerrillas. The frightened Senate and a House of Representatives subcommittee both voted unanimously, Reaganite conservatives included, to urge negotiations with all the competing Salvadorean factions. But Haig and Reagan have not abandoned searching for a deal between the junta and the guerrillas. It is rather that the junta's military position has deteriorated so rapidly that the U.S. might be left without a faction to bargain with. So it turned to military blackmail.

In the Middle East as well, Reagan has had to accept a change in plans. The Saudi rulers denied the U.S. assertion that the Russian danger was primary and insisted that, for them, Israel was the chief enemy; still, Reagan fought to get the AWACS deal through Congress. The Saudis could not afford to accept an open alliance with Israel like that of the late Anwar Sadat. Rejecting the Camp David sellout of the Palestinians, they came up with their own plan for a Palestinian mini-state under the control of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Reagan will eventually have to deal with the Russian-backed PLO "terrorists," either on the Saudi or the Egyptian plan. This course has already been declared kosher by Nixon, Ford and Carter; and Reagan's hope for stability in the region will compel him to agree as well, even if Israel and the Zionists make him drag his feet.

The underlying reason for the failure of Reagan's hard-line policies has been the class struggle. The Saudis, medieval though their morals, laws and customs may be, are compelled to acknowledge the aspirations of a very modern class, the proletariat, in their own country and throughout the Middle East. Oil workers were prominent in the downfall of their friend the Shah; the Arab masses in general are violently opposed to concessions to the sub-imperialist transplant of Israel. So the Saudis cannot appear to be pulled by American strings, even when their peace plan is designed to safeguard oil, under Western auspices, from revolution.

### **Central American Capitalism Endangered**

Likewise, in El Salvador Reagan's position was most directly undermined by the support given to the FDR-FMLN rebels by Mexico and France, two allies whom the U.S. cannot ignore. Their opposition derives from mass pressure as well. The French Socialists are in power to preempt any working class challenge in that country, and the hope of French capitalism stabilizing its economy rests heavily on expanding its trade with the neo-colonial world. This requires a political effort to build a sympathetic base among the secular nationalist reform regimes, which remain the best hope of keeping nationalist revolutions within the bounds of capitalism. Mexico in particular fears the wave of revolution sweeping through Central America and also hopes to use the nationalist pseudo-socialist forces in the region as a deterrent to either proletarian revolution or anarchy. The proletarian struggle of the Salvadorean masses, despite their capitulatory leadership (see "Left Betrays Salvador Revolution" in *Socialist Voice* No. 13), is what has forced the issue for France, Mexico and now the U.S.

Reagan's claim that Russia, together with Cuba, Libya and "international terrorism," is the chief cause of world unrest will not be totally dropped — for several reasons. For one, the American ruling class has a generally conspiratorial view of the world. The fear of "outside agitators" particularly inheres in the Sun Belt mentality, which ideologically prefers to think that the "grinning and shuffling" masses would remain docile otherwise. Secondly, it would be difficult, given the raw wound of Vietnam, to mobilize the American people for adventures and saber-rattling against rising peoples unless

named enemies can be blamed. Thus the Namibian struggle against South African overlordship must be portrayed as a Russian plot; support for Sudanese dictator Nimeiry against his own people must be cast as defense against Libyan "madmen"; and the drive to maintain Central America as an economic and military dependency in the face of mounting class struggles must be covered with denunciations of a supposed Russian "hit list." Thirdly, given Russian-Cuban ties to guerrilla leaders, pressure on them does put pressure on the "terrorists."

Both Carter and Reagan have made clear that they would like, in the abstract, to deal with the neo-fascist religious movements springing up around the world. In practice, however, the demagogic right-wing radicals like Khomeini must reflect the masses' hostility to imperialism and cannot openly collaborate with the U.S. So in the short run the U.S. must lean toward more traditional, less populist, military dictatorships. Even these it has to deck out as center-right coalitions, if at all possible, in order to make them appeal to the middle-class democrats who, it is hoped, will be able to contain the masses.

The Turkish military junta is an example, as is the Mubarak regime in Egypt installed (with sickeningly grateful U.S. approval for his 99 percent "electoral" victory) after the assassination of Sadat by Islamic rightists. So is Reagan's insistence that the Salvadorean junta and the oligarchy behind it must put up with the Duarte facade even though these ultra-reactionaries regard him as communistic. Otherwise, the only alternative for U.S. imperialism is to deal with popular-frontist center-left forces who are coming more into prominence, as in Zimbabwe, France and Greece. Reagan has already taken a softer line toward such developments, at least in Europe, than the geyser of previous rhetoric would have indicated. But a deliberate orientation in this direction is a different matter.

Reagan consequently is left with a policy of vacillating, modified reaction. His line can lead only in one of three directions, all bad for U.S. capitalism. He might overstep himself and actually provoke a world war which, property-preserving neutron bomb or no, the capitalists wish to avoid despite the inexorable drives of their system. A more likely outlook is that the basic imperialist rivalries between Germany, Japan and the U.S. will be exacerbated by the cold war clamor; internal class battles, plus the additional economic burdens imposed by the U.S., could weld Germany and Japan into a hostile bloc.

The third possibility is that Reagan's saber-rattling may go too far and give impetus to the looming proletarian revolution. Just as the U.S. fears that Russian aid to petty-bourgeois leftists in the Middle East and Central America might give the workers enough leeway for a class upheaval despite Moscow's best intentions, so too U.S. intervention in Eastern Europe could have a parallel result. The capitalists imagine that what they fear is "anarchy" and not proletarian socialism, but whatever the name, it is clear that such revolutions could spread rapidly and spell the end not only for Stalinism but for all of European capitalism.

### **Stalinism Parallels Fascism**

Since the administration's foreign policy still hinges on manipulating the threat of an expansionist USSR, a major reason for the ineptitude of that policy is that Russia cannot perform the role assigned to it. Understanding Reaganism requires understanding this.

The end of the second world war demonstrated that Russia was no longer the totally contradictory degenerating workers'

state that it had been in the 1930's. Its former capitulation to imperialism was succeeded by its own imperialist participation in carving up the world. It proved strong enough to crush workers' revolutions in East Europe and contain them through its Moscow-loyal parties in the West. But the state capitalist system was rent with contradictions. Trotsky had described Stalin's rule in the 1930's as symmetrical to fascism: that is, the fascist-like forces ruled over a workers' state rather than a capitalist base. The restoration of capitalism in the USSR resolved the symmetry into close similarity. However, fascism in power (as Trotsky pointed out) cannot maintain the rule of the iron fist that it had used to achieve power, the counterrevolutionary mobilization that had smashed the proletariat and forged a monolithic unity out of the ruling class. Before long, the class struggle re-emerges and different sections of capital reassert their competing claims.

### **Russian Economy Suffering**

Even under Stalin's totalitarian political rule, the economy was showing strains of anarchy. The ruthless attack on the workers was accompanied by selective concessions. Stalin was never able to erase completely the consequences of the Bolshevik revolution, such as nationalized property and central control over foreign trade. Their existence symbolized a capitalist system forced to maintain proletarian property forms which are always, as Trotsky pointed out, a temptation for working-class takeover even when used against the workers. Concomitantly, the system was driven to meet popular needs if the masses were to be divorced from the state power they had created. Thus full employment, even when it became a barrier to production as is inevitable under the laws of motion of capitalism, had to be maintained. Soon economic growth rates began their steady decline; and revolt stalked Russia's East European empire and forced a halt to Stalin's policy of plunder.

With Stalin's death the fascist-like period came to an end. During the period of imperialist stability the new rulers crushed revolts where they had to but they generally remained wedded to a policy of concessions. Given the history of Bolshevism, the Russian leaders instinctively knew what Ronald Reagan does not understand: it is dangerous to push too hard against the working class. Thus Hungary after the Russian counterrevolution in 1956 had a reform regime, not a fascist garrison state. Likewise Khrushchev's famous "revelations" about Stalin were in fact an assurance to the Russian ruling class that it could safely relax and enjoy the spoils of its conquests — no more knocks at the door from the GPU at four in the morning.

The respite was welcome. Under Stalin Russia had gone through the counterrevolutionary cauldron which had not only wiped out the revolutionary opposition but had heavily purged and repurged the new ruling strata as well. Then it faced a brutal world war which decimated the population and industry. And after that the cold war broke out; Russia had to face an ungrateful West which still saw the absence of private property and the Russians' influence with the emerging revolutions as threats. Like the overburdened economy it governs, the Russian ruling group is aging and worn out. Under Brezhnev Russia is no longer a totalitarian state but a senile Bonapartism. It wants neither war, revolution nor turmoil, but the world will not leave it alone.

Consider the ease with which Reagan can taunt and insult the Russian "menace." He shoots down Libyan planes on Qaddafi's doorstep while Libya's allies in Moscow can only grimace but bear it. He openly intervenes in Poland with aid and threats on Russia's border, but let Brezhnev return the



*In 1956 the Russian army stormed into Hungary to crush revolutionary workers. Proletarian revolts in East Europe helped undermine Washington's Cold War myth of a Russian monolith. The myth's revival today is even more transparent, given the dismemberment of Russia's bloc and its economic febleness.*



favor in El Salvador and the earth would tremble. He unilaterally pulls out of SALT II, and the Russians plead for the restoration of detente. Moreover, Russia's allies are a burden that provides little support. East Europe is mired in debt and retarded productivity. Yugoslavia and China are lost, Rumania tweaks Russia's nose with its independent foreign policy, Poland nears collapse.

Recently reporters Howard Simons and Dusko Doder of the *Washington Post* (October 26) published significant interviews with four members of the Russian CP's Central Committee, who made no secret of the party leadership's sense of dread. They spoke openly of the need to "restructure the entire economic mechanism." They complained "that the system lacked motivation and stimuli to encourage greater productivity." And one official summed up: "Our people have always lived in the extreme circumstances — the revolution, civil war, Stalin's forced industrialization, then world war again. This is the first period of normalcy in our history. This is why we want detente — whose main promise is to allow each nation to concentrate on its development."

Whereas Reagan's relatively dynamic sector of U.S. capital believes that it can lock together the Western bourgeoisies and

working classes by beating the war drums, the Russian ruling gerontocracy knows it cannot do likewise. Russia simply does not pose the constant threat that Reagan imagines and requires for his policy to work. World Wars I and II were inter-imperialist conflicts caused essentially by the needs of first Germany and then Germany and Japan, the most recent powers on the imperial scene, to escape containment by the dominant powers. Russia poses no such challenge. Indeed, if the rivalries today between West German, Japan and the U.S. create hostile blocs in the future, Russia's economic weakness would reduce it to a junior partner and an area for exploitation of one of the war blocs. Even though the USSR is Washington's chief rival today and would be the enemy if war breaks out in the short run, over time Japan or Germany is still the more serious rival.

It is conceivable, of course, that Russia could radically overhaul its economy for a time and even rein in its recalcitrant allies. But not under the present regime. It would need a fascist-type takeover, which in Russia would undoubtedly appear in the form of a "back to Stalin" movement. Because of the increasing restiveness of the proletariat and the

*continued on page 31*

# Pseudo-Trotskyists Embrace Counterrevolution

Since our first issue *Socialist Voice* has reported in detail the vacillations and betrayals of the various tendencies claiming to represent Trotskyism. It is bad enough to make theoretical errors that violate the principles of Marxism, or to advocate bourgeois programs for the working class that will lead to inevitable defeat. But what we have to deal with now makes all past capitulations seem like child's play: the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Spartacist League (SL), the two largest American representatives of pseudo-Trotskyism, have enlisted openly in the armies of counterrevolution.

The SWP has chosen sides in the struggle in Iran between the ruling Islamic Republican Party and its bourgeois-liberal and working-class opponents. It argues that revolutionaries should swallow whole the anti-imperialist pretensions of Ayatollah Khomeini and the mullahs and insists that all Western efforts to restore imperialist influence in Teheran are being carried out through the agencies of ex-president Bani-Sadr and his left-Islamic Mojahedin supporters. The SWP

power is the IRP, its "Revolutionary Guards" and its fascist thugs, the hezbollahi. There is a parallel to 1917, but the Khomeini-IRP alliance represents Kornilovism, and Bani-Sadr is the Kerensky who momentarily had to rely on the workers to fight a rightist counterrevolution that he himself had colluded with.

There are pitched battles — nearly a civil war — going on in Iran today between the IRP's legions and the Mojahedin, together with centrist socialistic forces like the left-Fedayin and Peykar. The Marxist position is not determined by the politics or claims of the various misleaderships but by the need to save the workers' movement from destruction and help it overcome its pro-capitalist illusions — that is, to give it communist leadership. So in the current fight we give military support to the leftists against the thugs and murderers of the government.

Let there be no mistake. We are enemies of Bani-Sadr just as we are of the mullahs, because both sets of capitalist



Once Iranian leftists wore masks for protection against the Shah's Savak murderers. Today Savak agents kill for Khomeini, while pseudo-Trotskyists provide them with the mask of leftism.

tries to echo Marxist tactics by defining its position as that of "defense of the IRP government against attacks from the right" as opposed to *political* support of that government. It cites as a precedent the Bolsheviks' military defense of the Kerensky regime in Russia in 1917 against the Kornilov counterrevolution ("Why defenders of 'democracy' go wrong" by David Frankel, *Intercontinental Press*, October 5).

But who are the counterrevolutionaries in Iran? The IRP and Khomeini have gunned down over a thousand leftist militants and even children in the streets, seizing back many of the material gains and rights won by the workers in the revolution against the Shah. Bani-Sadr when he was president also tried to erase the workers' gains, but then the conflict between the liberal pro-Western capitalists he championed and the IRP (with whom he shared power) kept the regime weak. Now that he is out of favor, the workers' enemy in state

politicians are enemies of the movement and interests of the proletariat. We would fight together with the Bani-Sadr forces at the moment against the IRP only because the immediate victory of the mullahs means the immediate destruction of the workers' movement and its gains. But just as the Bolsheviks never called for Kerensky's victory, we never call for Bani-Sadr to regain power. We insist on the absolute independence of the workers' fighting organizations as a guard against their treacherous temporary allies. We continue to raise our communist politics: we urge our fellow workers to fight for political power for their own class in a workers' state. Should Bani-Sadr and the Mojahedin win out, the workers must continue their military and political struggle against their capitalist regime as well.

The SWP prefers to back Khomeini, on the grounds that "democracy" is the U.S. imperialists' slogan in Iran. Yet the



saber-rattling Reagan regime is acting with notable moderation and caution in the Khomeini — Bani-Sadr conflict, despite the mullahs' anti-imperialist rhetoric. Washington's need for stability in the Middle East means *not* supporting the overthrow of Khomeini by the liberal, vacillating center of Bani-Sadr.

Ironically, the SWP's own evidence bears out this obvious deduction. Frankel mentions Washington's overt hostility to Khomeini but is forced to add that "if U.S. officials are to be believed, it is not doing anything about it." He then knowingly comments, "One does not have to be a Marxist to find this unconvincing." In reality it is unconvincing only if one is not a Marxist or just a moderately well-informed observer. Frankel's article shows that the U.S. is worried about Iran, but it offers absolutely nothing to show that it seeks Khomeini's overthrow — except for one argument that actually proves the opposite. In response to a report that 80 percent of the Shah's secret police (Savak) agents are now working for Khomeini, the SWP suggests that "these ex-Savaki are also working for their old buddies in the CIA." No doubt many of them are, and Khomeini of course knows about their CIA links. He understands their anti-working class accomplishments, and they are serving him well with their restored torture chambers for oppositionists. To conclude that this proves the CIA's *opposition* to Khomeini, as the SWP does, is to carry political degeneration to the point of absurdity.

The SWP falls back on the contention that, whatever Khomeini's crimes, the Iranian masses still back him against his enemies. Its case is refuted by many reports, including one in the same issue of *Intercontinental Press* that masses of workers, not just isolated petty-bourgeois leftists, have been ranged against the regime. A number of strikes against government policies are cited, beginning in December 1980 during the war with Iraq, when patriotic "national unity" propaganda was very high. The mass popularity of the Mojahedin is proved by the circulation of their press and the size of their rallies, both in the hundreds of thousands.

### 'Stalinist Betrayal' Fits SWP

This report came in an article by Michel Rovere, translated from the French-language *Inprecor*. *Inprecor* and *Intercontinental Press* purport to be different editions of the same publication, but in reality they are organs of rival factions in the self-styled "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec). This disunited bloc holds together by agreeing to disagree over many vital questions; thus there are three competing sections in Iran with counterposed strategies, although all of them began with an uncritical stance towards Khomeini. The Frankel and Rovere articles are implicit polemics against one another; in choosing not to make this explicit, the SWP is simply following the USec's ancient tradition of dishonest diplomacy.

Rovere, nevertheless, makes his position clear when he denounces the Iranian pro-Moscow Tudeh party for its position on the civil war. He quotes Kianuri, the Tudeh leader:

"Even if our formation were to be outlawed and our members persecuted, we would continue to defend the line of Imam Khomeini, which is to battle imperialism and its local agents, the 'liberals' and 'Maoists.' Our position in this regard is not based either on partisan considerations or on tactical maneuvers. Our support to the revolution is of a strategic order."

Rovere comments, with full justice: "This declaration

merits inclusion in an anthology of Stalinist betrayal." What he diplomatically neglects to add is that an equivalent position of Stalinist betrayal of the working class is held by his "fellow Trotskyists" in the SWP.



*SWPers take pride in their dedication to women's liberation. Early in the revolution these hypocrites defended Khomeini's imposition of the veil. Now they defend the mullahs' regime that specializes in rape and humiliation of suspected revolutionary women.*

Equally criminal is the position of the Spartacist League towards Poland. We have noted previously (*Socialist Voice* No. 10) how the vacillating centrists of the SL initially claimed not to be able to make up their minds about the Polish workers' revolt: it could be either revolutionary or counterrevolutionary, they said. This was hardly an incisive Marxist guide to action; indeed, it only masked the Spartacists' reluctance (and perhaps shame) to reveal their real position of hostility to the working class. Nevertheless, their contempt was plain to see in every bourgeois insult they muttered about shiftless workers: the Poles were "demanding the biggest free lunch the world has ever seen," "in order to eat one must work," and the like. Subsequently, the SL made this explicit by urging the Polish proletariat not to oppose the Russian army if it invaded Poland to crush Solidarity. Now it has gone all the way and invited the Russians in: "The threat of a counterrevolutionary thrust for power is now posed in Poland. That threat must be crushed at all costs and by any means necessary" (*Workers Vanguard*, September 25).

The SL used to denounce open capitulators like the Marcyite Workers World Party for supporting the Russian armed forces against workers' upheavals, as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. But its political degeneration has been clear enough; *Socialist Voice* predicted the SL's switch to the side of the Russian rulers four years ago (issue No. 4, page 25). Even so, it is no pleasure to see our prediction come true. There are sincere would-be Trotskyists in the SL who have now openly joined the camp of Scheideman, Noske, Stalin and the other butchers of the working class.

The "counterrevolution" the SL is speaking of is led by Solidarity, the 10-million member workers' organization. In league with the CIA and all of Western imperialism, Solidarity is supposedly now aiming to destroy the Stalinist "workers' state" and introduce capitalist domination over Poland's

economy. Proof? Solidarity's national convention in early September called for "free trade unions" throughout the Soviet bloc and "free elections" to the Polish parliament, and both of these are obviously typical CIA slogans. Later the SL added to its indictment the proposal that Poland join the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Yes, there are counterrevolutionary forces in Poland and they are tied to the West. But who are they? Not even the Kremlin pretends that Western capitalism's armlock over the Polish economy was provided by Solidarity; it was the Warsaw regime (with Moscow's approval) that begged and borrowed millions of dollars in loans and is now up to its ears in debt. Russia's collapsing economy can no longer buoy up its crisis-ridden satellites. Western politicians and bankers are now demanding that Solidarity must accept austerity. All the counterrevolutionary forces, East and West, want Poland stabilized within the broad imperialist orbit.

The Kremlin and its Polish pawns do claim that the strikes and unduly large eating habits of the Polish workers have exacerbated the economic crisis, and here the SL's "free lunch" snottiness simply refines the line. When a society cannot meet the elemental needs of its people, that is the very time that the communist understanding that the system is a failure becomes clearest to the proletariat; that is when revolution is on the agenda. But that is precisely when the SL labels the workers' "excessive" demands counterrevolutionary and comes to the aid of the state, the main engine of counterrevolution in reality.

### Spartacists Back Russian Invasion

The SL's argument that the use of democratic slogans proves Solidarity's reactionary character is absurd, just as is the SWP's identical claim in Iran. As we show in a separate article in this issue, Lech Walesa & Co., like their trade unionist counterparts in the West, are seeking to reform the Polish state so that it can withstand and incorporate the workers' upsurge and prevent it from reaching revolutionary consciousness. One example: Warsaw would love to join the Western-dominated IMF, following the path of other Stalinist states. But such a move to enforce austerity would be highly unpopular — unless it is approved by Solidarity. Hence the reformists' proposal.

The SL further "proves" that the workers in Solidarity are counterrevolutionary by pointing to their leaders' affection for American AFL-CIO bureaucrats like Lane Kirkland and Albert Shanker, who are tied to the State Department and the CIA. Walesa's relationship to these bureaucrats is real; so are the latter's direct links to imperialism. But their policy (despite the SL's citation of a Woody Allen movie to corroborate Shanker's evil) is not to overthrow the Polish government and destabilize Europe. They share the constant attitude of American government since the 1956 Hungarian revolution. Contrary to the SL's oft-repeated "analysis," neither Brzezinski nor Reagan are "crazed madmen" but merely bourgeois reactionaries who want to see a weak Poland that will not break its Russian tie but will remain a constant drain upon it. Kirkland agrees and therefore encourages Walesa's reformism.

Accordingly, in the text of his speech prepared for the Solidarity convention, Kirkland called for "unlinking human rights and freedom from the question of who owns the means of production. Respect for workers' rights does not automatically flow from any economic system" (*New York Times*, September 27). In other words, there is no point in overthrowing either capitalism or "communism" to replace it by the other because workers have to struggle for their rights

under either system. Kirkland's reputedly fierce anti-Stalinism turned out to be quite tame. When it came down to the prospect of advocating a working-class revolution, even in distant Poland, he backed off.

The SL is quite explicit in denouncing as counterrevolutionary Solidarity as a whole, not just the reformist and clerical nationalist leaders who are trying to direct the anti-exploiter and egalitarian aspirations of the mass of militants. In turn, the SL makes its appeal to the Polish workers who did *not* join Solidarity — those who never responded to the general strikes, who stood aside when masses were demanding more food, who hoped to survive by collaborating with the Stalinist state rather than fighting. Every revolutionary knows of such Tory workers, the most backward elements of the proletariat, frequently found among the labor aristocracy. It is a telling indictment of the Spartacists' entire upside-down analysis that these are the elements they look to for building their "Trotskyist" cadre in Poland!

The SL, of course, justifies all its inanities by claiming that the reforms Solidarity wants amount to the restoration of capitalism. That in turn depends on the belief that the Stalinist seizure of power in Poland after World War II meant the abolition of capitalism. We have dealt with this disastrous idea before (see "Polish Workers Shake the World," *Socialist Voice* No. 10); for the present it is enough to state that in Poland the workers are exploited by an alien, privileged class of bureaucrats that owns the means of production, operated until last August a harsh police state, promotes anti-Semitism, and maintains capitalist inequality and mismanagement.



*Karl Radek, a Left Oppositionist in the 1920's, who became a leading capitulator and a shrill apologist for Stalinism. In contrast to Trotsky, the renegades from*

*Trotskyism claimed that Stalinism was carrying out the revolution despite "atrocities." The Spartacist League continues this shameful tradition.*

This is not the first time an American leftist group has mimicked Moscow's line, the genuine counterrevolutionary one — and slandered the working class. But it is still rare for a professed Trotskyist organization to do so. After all, Trotskyism was born in the struggle *against* counterrevolutionary Stalinism. But the SL insists that Stalinism defends "the revolution" against the workers:

**'Solidarity's counterrevolutionary course must be stopped! If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this. And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counterrevolution.'**

The Spartacist League has the gall to denounce *Reagan* for hoping for a Russian military invasion! Its support for actual counterrevolution is "of a strategic order," like the Tudeh's





*Starvation stalks Poland as its capitalist economy collapses. Masses daily line up to buy meat; the SL lines up with Stalinist butchers. Well-fed Spartacists echo bourgeois sneer that workers don't work hard enough to eat.*

support for counterrevolution in Iran. Whereas the SL "does not flinch" from the slaughter of masses of workers; the SWP, less forthright, prefers not to admit responsibility for the crimes it defends.

Political logic has led both the SWP and the SL to the support of counterrevolution in their respective countries of choice. Nevertheless, the politics that led them there are not precisely the same. The SWP "supports" every mass movement; that is, it tails the bourgeois (Khomeini) or reformist (Walesa) leaderships with gentle, non-revolutionary criticisms of their actual and potential betrayals. It even hopes, idiotically, to build a new International with the nationalist regimes of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada. The SL likewise identifies every movement with its leadership but, in contrast, frequently chooses to oppose the movements for that reason. In Iran, it opposed the anti-Shah movement led by Khomeini and defended progress (i.e., pro-imperialist capitalism) against Khomeini's "feudalism." In Poland, it opposed the anti-Stalinist movement by defending progress (this time it was Stalinist state capitalism) against "counterrevolution."

The gaps between the SWP and the SL loom large on the surface, for the two groups differ to a greater or lesser extent on almost every practical question. We have often pointed out, however, that the SL's superficial leftism is no alternative to the SWP's blatant reformism, and the symmetry in their underlying distrust of proletarian action independent of petty-bourgeois control is striking. Now they have simultaneously taken their stands for outright counterrevolution, finding virtue in bloody reaction and stupidly citing irrelevant and contradictory evidence to hide the truth. The spectacle can only be described as an obscene farce.

Yet it reflects an historical tragedy. The SWP and the SL are the major dregs in the U.S. of the once-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party inspired and guided by Trotsky. The massive defeats of the world working class through fascism, World War II and the post-war counterrevolutions disoriented and later destroyed the Fourth International. Various currents of would-be Trotskyists seized on one aspect or another of the momentary reality of defeat (bourgeois national liberation struggles, reformist trade unionism, Stalinist "revolutions") as a substitute for working-class struggle, but all ignored the most fundamental principle of Marxism, the seizure of state

power by the proletariat and by no other class in its name. In the 1940's the International was dominated by the current of Pabloism, which held the theory that the working class is not necessary for the socialist revolution. Petty-bourgeois Stalinists or nationalists can make the revolution for the workers, without them, and if need be against them. The SWP, SL and many others share this theory today.

The SWP and SL "overlook" the counterrevolutionary danger facing real, living workers only because they "know" that the "real" revolutionary proletarian interests lie elsewhere: with the bourgeois nationalist "anti-imperialist" leadership for the SWP, with the "necessarily brutal, stupid" but supposedly anti-capitalist Stalinists for the SL. (The SL is obviously very proud of being an unflinching accomplice to potential mass murder. But it should be aware of a shameful precedent: the host of capitulators from Trotskyism in the 1930's in the USSR — Radek, Preobrazhensky, et al — who concluded that the Stalinists were maintaining the revolution in their own "brutal, stupid" way. These traitors were the political precursors of the post-war Pabloites and their successors.)

It is easy to hold on to bad theories and treasonous politics when no events are decisive enough to test them. Today, however, the SWP and SL have come face-to-face with the conflict between actual proletarians and the alleged guardians of proletarian interests. And they have sided against the workers; for them, the fictional "revolution" or "workers' state" has replaced the revolutionary working class. Certainly the reawakening class struggle in America will shake some of them back into sanity, but the prospect for the majority is not rosy. Such corrupted cynics are as likely to stand on the oppressors' side here as they do elsewhere.

The testing of would-be revolutionaries goes on in periods of lull as well as of action, and in a lull the tasks to be met are if anything harsher. The SWP and SL have miserably failed. Every great event of world history occurs twice, said Marx; the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. So it is with the collapse of Trotskyism in the face of proletarian defeats; the reciprocal collapse of today's pseudo-Trotskyism is a vile joke. The gain for the working class is that two of the more rotten pretenders to working class leadership have openly proven themselves to be the traitors they are. ■

# PL-INCAR NO ALTERNATIVE TO 1199 BUREAUCRACY

*The leaflet below was distributed by LRP supporters in District 1199, the hospital workers union in New York City.*

The recent elections in 1199 have once again illustrated the bankruptcy of a union leadership which has allowed workers to suffer setback after setback. It is unfortunate that the Progressive Labor Party (PL), which ran an opposition slate, put forward no real political alternative to the Leon Davis bureaucracy.

At the Labor Day march on September 7, six associates of the International Committee Against Racism (INCAR), which is closely linked to PL, were viciously assaulted by paid organizers of 1199 (according to *Challenge*, PL's newspaper). These workers were part of a PL-INCAR slate running for positions as convention delegates.

The attack on the PL-INCAR grouping was preceded by a short argument between Jesse Olson, Guild Division Executive Vice President, and the oppositionists over whether the latter had a right to march with their own banner within the 1199 contingent. Olson told the workers he would get the union by-laws to settle the question and left the scene — leaving the PL-INCAR supporters to be immediately attacked by staff goons. Joyce Tasketta, a worker at Flushing Hospital and member of the PL-INCAR slate, got a fractured jaw. There were other less severe injuries.

While thuggery is not new in 1199, the attack was distinctive for a "progressive" bureaucracy which has generally used only individual delegates to shut up opposition among the rank and file. (Because 1199 delegates are not on paid staff, their thuggery can be more easily disavowed by the bureaucrats.) The gangsterism on the part of 1199 staff is obviously sanctioned by all wings of the 1199 bureaucracy. The willingness of the bureaucracy to engage in such a naked attack on September 7 is due to its growing fear of how the 1199 members will react to the deepening economic crisis facing all workers.

With their do-nothing policies and contract sellouts, the bureaucrats have spread rampant demoralization among the workforce. Disinterest in union activities is the predominant attitude of 1199 hospital workers. Nevertheless, the union leaders know that explosive anger lies under the memberships' surface apathy; therefore even a handful of dissidents pose a threat since they could trigger off a more massive rebellion in the not-so-distant future. Not just 1199 officials but every union bureaucrat lives in dread that they will not be able to control the workers' upheavals that will inevitably occur when "Reaganomics" fails to halt the economic crisis.

On September 7, the pitiful 1199 contingent consisted of staff and a few loyal delegates, notably supporters of the Communist Party (CP). These delegates passively witnessed the organizers beating up 1199 workers. Any worker who has the *slightest* interest in democracy would denounce this attack, regardless of political differences with the victims. It is therefore significant that the delegate-supporters of the Stalinist Communist Party, who are always talking about "rank and file democracy", both saw and remained silent about the attack. In reality they always support the rotten bureaucracy against any left opposition in the "rank and file". The bureaucracy itself contains past and present supporters of the so-called Communist Party.

During the depression the CP talked just as radically as the equally Stalinist PL does today and attracted many fine militants who were taken for a ride. PL will also betray sincere

militants and would-be revolutionaries looking for an alternative, if it is not politically defeated.

PL has been the largest opposition group in 1199 for many years. In 1199, PL supporters are known almost exclusively because of their campaign to end the divisions within the union. They have also opposed contract sellouts and at times been hostile to the bureaucrats to the point of falsely calling them "pro-fascist". But PL, in all its years of opportunities, has failed to fight for the communist program and leadership within the unions. In contrast to the present union leaders it calls for a more militant trade-unionism and a hodgepodge of radical promises which are impossible under capitalism.

Revolutionaries support reform struggles but constantly point out that no reform will solve workers' problems. Crisis-ridden capitalism can not even grant workers the concessions it once did. This is particularly true for black and Hispanic workers who are hit the hardest by the crisis. Racism is a necessary tool of capitalism to keep workers divided. Real communists show that the consequences of reformism are disastrous for all workers — it means the continuation of capitalist exploitation and racism.

PL, which calls itself "communist", created INCAR specifically as an anti-racist but *not* anti-capitalist (therefore reformist) front organization. PL has lost support within the past few years and has had to rely more on INCAR to supply numbers for its activities. INCAR's newspaper *Arrow* reports that the slate in 1199 this year is 40 percent black, 30 percent Latin and 30 percent white. But "while a majority of the candidates are not yet members of INCAR, none object to 1199 CAR building itself through the election. ... Without compromising its principles, 1199 CAR is building the biggest opposition movement in 1199's history."

## PL Runs Pro-Capitalist Slate

These folks have no principles left to "compromise". PL, which professes to oppose capitalism, has for years run on a slate with INCAR which supports capitalism. So now they are running a majority slate that is not committed to *any* organization or program whatsoever. It seems absurd but it is just an extension of the fact that PL has never fought for leadership of the unions on a communist basis anyway. The reason for PL's behavior is incredible political *opportunism*. PL's desire to build a large base for itself outweighs any need to speak the truth about capitalism.

Further, *Arrow* brags that "the 1199 CAR program is being developed in consultation with hundreds of union members. The program will attack racism in health care, hospital jobs and the union; present measures to make 1199 a fighting and democratic union; and develop a campaign against fascism and racist war. The keynote will be INCAR's amendment to the 1199 bylaws eliminating the union's system of Divisions, which separate service from professional and technical workers."

The program is not even "developed" yet and they are running for political leadership. They promise to attack the big evils like fascism and racism without putting forward a strategy. They say that the "keynote" is ending the divisions within 1199. This is a valuable reform of the union's structure which the League for the Revolutionary Party has supported. But it is hardly the center of a revolutionary strategy to oppose racism and fascism. Making this reform the "keynote" of their electoral campaign signifies that PL's actual program for 1199



is not only reformist but extremely narrow.

What is more unifying than any structural reform of a union are the struggles that workers engage in together. The "keynote" of a revolutionary campaign must be the general strike. A general strike would not only *unify* workers, union and non-union, black and white, but would be a powerful enough action to actually defend workers against racist and other capitalist attacks. While the LRP has only small forces within 1199, we have constantly championed the need for a general strike. We are open in saying that the general strike would have very positive revolutionary consequences.

We know that it is mass actions of the class that will shake up the structure of 1199 and other unions. PL-INCAR is happy to "talk big" in the abstract but their real notion for 1199 workers is step by step reform of the union. This is more absurd as it becomes clearer that no union, on its own, can solve the problems of its membership.

Why should anyone want to vote for PL-INCAR as opposed to the present leaders who also claim to want to fight fascism and racism? To Stalinists, reformists and other bureaucrats, workers are just pawns to be used for leg work, votes, dues or cannon fodder. To them it doesn't matter that workers be informed or able to know what their elected representatives really stand for. PL's opportunism is a replay of the Communist Party's and today has much in common with other opportunist groups, forces in 1199 such as the Communist Workers Party, the Revolutionary Socialist League and the Socialist Workers Party.

As well, PL is no different from other phony leftists and the bureaucrats in that it too sees nothing wrong in physically attacking fellow workers, especially other leftists. In fact, PL has a sordid history of doing so which makes *their* protest against 1199 thuggery not wrong, but hypocritical. The various phony left groups compete with each other to gain members for their organizations; like the bureaucrats, many seek to destroy opposition through physical intimidation and violence. That is because there is no fundamental *political* difference between these groups and the current leadership.

What is different about PL is the wild organizational sectarianism which covers its political opportunism. In the 1199 elections it adds candidates to its slate, no matter their views, in an effort to look big. A central aspect of PL's sectarian outlook is to try to create the illusion among workers that it is a real mass force. But there is method to the madness.

The economic problems faced by 1199 workers are not created by the hospitals alone but by the capitalist system as a whole which is breaking down rapidly. The capitalist attack on the working class won't be stopped by 1199 members alone but by a mass force, the whole class. And that's where PL's actions are particularly damaging. For example, PL's sectarianism led to an atrocity at the recent Solidarity Day march in Washington D.C. on September 19.

Reagan's open class war forced the AFL-CIO bureaucracy to call the mass demonstration. Its own neck was at stake so it was forced to abandon telling the members that they are too weak to fight back. They had to put up a show of unity and power. At this event, PL members stood off to the side as over a quarter of a million workers marched by and urged individuals to "break away" from the mass of their working class brothers and sisters and join the tiny PL-INCAR counter demonstration. The unsuccessful PL action was allegedly in favor of a "general strike" and "socialism."

The willingness of workers to launch a general strike depends upon their understanding that they have the potential unity to bring it off. PL's tying the general strike to an action by less than a hundred people in direct counterposition to the

hundreds of thousands could only make the idea of a general strike look like the weak and divisive weapon of a small sect: PL's "general strike" not the workers!

In Washington we argued with PL members to stay with the workers and use the demand for a general strike to expose the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. No go.

The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) has always pointed out that through a general strike masses of workers would gain the confidence and consciousness to throw aside the bureaucrats and move forward to create the revolutionary socialist alternative. The revolutionary party will be constructed by workers who fully understand the interests of their class. Those leftists who use manipulative acts by their elitist groups as a substitute for the consciousness of the masses of workers are a roadblock.

PL's ludicrous sectarianism is only a cover for the fact that its basic politics are just as opportunist as those of its rival bureaucrats. In the deepening social crisis the bureaucracy, now naked politically, will have to put on radical clothes to cover itself before angry workers. After all, it once used the CP to this end. Either PL will abandon organizational separatism and ally itself with the present bureaucracy, as the CP did, or it will try to replace them. Either way the politics would be fundamentally the same: a no-win leadership telling the workers they can achieve future gains from a capitalist system which can only survive through unemployment, racism, and the roll-back of all past gains.

The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) has supported neither side in the 1199 elections. 1199 needs a new leadership, not new clothes.

### Postscript

The Progressive Labor Party's campaign in the union didn't get much reaction from the workers. But it did manage to rile the bureaucracy, as our leaflet indicates. INCAR supporters reported further incidents of harassment during the course of the campaign, and an LRP supporter was physically threatened by two union delegates while giving out our leaflet at Brooklyn Jewish Hospital.

Further, any naive doubt as to the bureaucracy's role in these attacks was dispelled at the October 17 Guild Delegate Assembly. After an LRP supporter denounced the bureaucrats for always condoning violence against union critics, and an INCAR supporter who had been injured in the Labor Day attack demanded a real answer from vice president Jesse Olson (who was chairing the meeting), Olson yelled, "I do not condone any opposition in the union!" He adamantly repeated this declaration three times before realizing his slip of the tongue.

Meanwhile, PL's response to the attack has been none too solid. The LRP proposed a joint demonstration which PL would not agree to. Independently, it has done little to make its own defense a union-wide issue. It did distribute a leaflet at the Delegate Assembly reporting the attack but called on workers to respond only if they happened to agree with INCAR's politics. This leaflet, issued two weeks *after* the election, finally presented a "program" of eleven radical demands ranging from PL's timeless "30 for 40" to "Hospital bosses out of South Africa."

As conditions worsen, the bureaucrats and their goons will get even more vicious in their attacks on militants and leftists. It is unfortunate that PL's sectarianism generally prevents them from engaging in defensive united fronts with other workers — leaving them (and others) more isolated than necessary and, despite the false bravado in their press, easier prey to similar attacks. ■

## How Kirkland Refuses to

Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, has blown the cover off one of the best-kept secrets in American politics. In the interview reprinted below, he reveals that the general strike is a working-class weapon of titanic power and, moreover, that a growing number of people are demanding it.

The interview originally appeared in the October 5 *Federal Times*, a paper covering government employment. Despite its startling content, it has been ignored by the bourgeois media. As well, to our knowledge none of the left press has seen fit to comment on it, although excerpts have appeared in trade unionist papers.

The American workers, whom Kirkland is supposed to represent, mostly regard themselves as individuals powerless to stop the erosion of what they have worked for. Here Kirkland makes plain that the opposite is true. If, as he correctly points out, a general strike could effectively stop "a coup, an invasion or the rescinding of the Bill of Rights," then it could undoubtedly stop Reagan's destruction of PATCO and, while we're at it, the whole escalating attack on the working class.

That Kirkland prefers to allow Reagan to smash a trade union rather than use a powerful strike weapon is nothing new. What is eye-opening is that so great a clamor is made for a general strike. According to Kirkland's figures, about half of his correspondents on the PATCO strike "denounce me for not calling a general strike." And the flow of denunciations is no trickle: "I would say I have never gotten as much mail on an issue in my life." If Kirkland is to be believed, this is a development in working-class opinion that demands serious attention.

Although the working class has been largely unconscious of its potential power, two other sets of people besides its own official misleaders are well aware of it. One group is the more astute capitalist politicians. For example, last year during the New York City transit strike, mayor Edward Koch referred to a possible general strike as a "nuclear weapon" too devastating ever to use. Of course, Koch was merely taunting the treacherous labor leaders who he knew would never act to devastate the capitalist system that their existence depends on.

### Unions Left Open to Assault

The second group is the Marxists. We in the League for the Revolutionary Party have propagandized for the general strike for years, in our press, in workplaces, on the streets. We have constantly sought to educate our fellow workers about the strength of a united working class. In addition, in situations where decisive defensive action was on the order of the day (as in the transit and PATCO strikes), we have agitated for calling general strikes, face to face against the union bureaucrats.

These hacks have just as tirelessly worked both to convince workers that they are weak and to keep all strikes localized and divided. Why then does hack-in-chief Kirkland bring the general strike up now? For one thing, the misleaders have accomplished their task of demoralization so well that the capitalists can arrogantly ignore their services; Kirkland is warning Reagan that the bureaucracy is still needed to quell unrest from below.

Secondly, the unions have been left so open to attack that many lower-rank officials are terrified that their institutions and their own jobs are at risk. Some state federations,



*PATCO on Labor Day. On Solidarity Day Kirkland backed up PATCO — to the end of the march.*

municipal councils and locals have called for symbolic general strikes; it is undoubtedly mainly these elements whose mail Kirkland is receiving. In any case, Kirkland knows that the idea of a general strike is in the air, so he is doing what he can to dispose of it. Implicitly, he is using the bureaucracy's miserable record in defending workers' rights to discourage mass action when he stresses the discomforts and disadvantages of a general strike in the interview.

But the bureaucrats' treachery is not an argument against a

## Kirkland Explains Lack Of Support for PATCO

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland says he has been flooded with wires, letters and postcards calling for a "general strike" to support the striking air traffic controllers union.

"I would say I have never gotten as much mail on an issue in my life . . . about ten percent denounce me for supporting the controllers, about 90 percent are procontrollers and about 50 percent of those denounce me for not calling a general strike," the labor chief told reporters.

Kirkland said that despite the "tremendous" amount of mail he has received and its "overwhelmingly pro-controller" tone, he has no intention of urging AFL-CIO unions to walk off their jobs in sympathy with the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization. "I find it hard to see what constructive end would be served by an action that would punish the people of this country for the actions of an administration," he said.



**LANE KIRKLAND**  
... flooded with



# Stop Reagan's Attacks

general strike. It is an argument for revolutionary leadership of the unions to replace the reformist officials. Under the volatile conditions American workers now face, a general strike could break out any time; as time passes and the capitalist attacks broaden, its likelihood increases. Even if a general strike begins with the bureaucrats still at the helm, the power of the strike itself and the unity of the proletariat in action are the best educational devices to prove the lessons we communists stand for. Revolutionary leadership, which once looked irrelevant and impossible, will then appear very real indeed. As in Poland, the idea will arise of not just calling a halt to the immediate grievances but of transforming the very fabric of society.

This potential, naturally, is why Kirkland and other bureaucrats have no intention of ever carrying out such a strike. For example, the Philadelphia AFL-CIO called a one-day general strike for October 28 to defend a two-month-long strike by the local teachers union. But all signs pointed to the assumption that the bureaucrats meant not to go through with it. Sure enough, on the eve of the 28th, they accepted half a concession (no layoffs for now) and sent the teachers back to work with no pay increase. The threat of the general strike did force the city to budge, but the strike's real threat was to the bureaucrats' equilibrium. They were afraid above all of showing that decisive action could have squelched the attack

on the teachers and shown the way to stop Reagan as well.

Significantly, all the pseudo-socialist groups hailed the Philadelphia call for a general strike, and only a few warned of the bureaucrats' treachery. But none of them thought to take the lead in demanding a general strike — until the bureaucrats beat them to it demagogically. As we point out in our article on Solidarity Day, the left restricts its arsenal to limited actions (elections, pickets, local strikes) out of fear both of the workers and of appearing "unrealistic." Although bureaucrats from the local level on up to Kirkland have been forced to dally with the general strike as the capitalist crisis intensifies, the fake leftists still miss the point.

## 'Left' Avoids General Strike

Kirkland's linking the general strike to national crises was not accidental. His failure to take even minimal steps to defend PATCO stems from his understanding that even that much would have forced the working class into a knock-down, drag-out fight with Reagan and his "law" which neither side could afford to lose. The "left," in restricting its pressure to half-way steps, also sought to avoid a major clash — but unlike Kirkland, it pretends that a middle ground limited to militant unionism is still possible. Kirkland unveiled the general strike weapon and let the cat out of the bag. The pseudo-leftists are still holding it. ■

Kirkland added that only a "matter of the gravest national concern" — such as a coup, an invasion or the rescinding of the Bill of Rights — would "bring me to the point of undertaking to organize a general strike."

And he emphasized that AFL-CIO has already "carried out all of the methods of support" sought by the air traffic controllers. During the seven weeks of the controllers' strike, no union has ordered its members to honor PATCO picket lines, boycott flights, or strike in sympathy with the controllers. Asked why "other unions are not respecting the PATCO picket line," Kirkland replied that the AFL-CIO affiliates at airports are bound by "no-strike clauses" and "do not want to open their treasuries to all the corporation lawyers of the airlines."

"I am certain that many of the unions on these properties would like to be able to bring this thing to a head by withdrawing their services, but . . . the net result of it would be immediate mandatory

injunctions, prosecutions, civil suits and stripping of the local treasuries.

"In light of that, they don't choose to do it, and I would be the last to second-guess them," he said.

The International Association of Machinists and the Air Line Pilots Association are among the AFL-CIO affiliates representing workers in the air travel industry.

Kirkland was asked whether the no-strike pledge required of federally employed air traffic controllers is as binding as a no-strike clause in a contract with a private employer. He called the federal employee agreement "a yellow dog contract" that "all government employees are required to sign . . . to get the job."

Kirkland described the PATCO picketers as "the most law-abiding group I ever saw." He pointed out that the controllers have been scrupulous in "not picketing the work entrances for ground crews, pilots or others."

(See KIRKLAND, Page 22)

## Kirkland

(From Page 3)

"Their picketing the work entrances for other trades would obviously be pursued by the law, would violate injunctions, subject them to contempt of the court, arrest, etc . . . The picket lines are at the work entrances for air traffic controllers, which are removed from other entrances," he said.

Kirkland was asked about the "likelihood" that PATCO would be doomed by a Federal Labor Relations Authority decision barring the union from representing federal workers. "The union is the people," he replied.

"If these people go back to work as a body, the union survives as long as they want it to."

—HERSHOW.

# Exchange on the All-Peoples Congress

## Debacle in Detroit

Dear Socialist Voice,

I read your article on the People's Anti-War Mobilization (SV No. 14, Sept.-Oct. 1981), and found it gurgling with perhaps unintentional inaccuracies and faulty analysis. I hope there is space available in your next issue for us to throw in our two cents.

Red Balloon is a member of the National Co-ordinating Board of both PAM and the All-Peoples Congress, and we are also part of the Interim Steering Committee of the APC. As one of Balloon's representatives on these committees, and also as someone who is organizing PAM full-time on Long Island, I think I have a pretty good idea what is and what is not going on in terms of PAM's politics, its perspective, and also, in terms of the feelings and ways of relating of the people involved.

### Democrats Rejected

We don't blind ourselves to our weaknesses. There need to be more people from organized labor involved for, relative to people from other areas, there are not enough rank-and-file union activists at the moment, a situation we are hoping to change. But we feel that this can be rectified, that it takes some time, primarily because there are no trade union bureaucrats ordering their members to get involved — nor do we desire the involvement in any decision-making way of the Democratic Party politicians or the trade union mis-leaders. Let me make this clearer: We are not interested in recruiting them, nor *can* we do so even if we wanted to and still remain true to our program and principles. In fact, we've discussed the idea of involving liberal politicians on our decision-making boards, and unlike NPAC and PCPJ of a decade ago, have rejected such a prospect *unanimously* (which is how most of our decisions get made — by consensus). But it takes time for rank-and-file workers to get involved politically when their trade-union leadership avoids responsibility or outright opposes what we are doing.

But this is not to say that outreach is not being done to the rank-and-file; an *enormous* effort is being made to bring rank-and-file workers *by the thousands* to the All-Peoples Congress on Oct. 16-18. And when I look around at the people doing this work — at APC meetings; at the focusses; on the streets — and I see the large number of Black and Hispanic people, women, gay people, and poor white workers (many of whom are *un-organized*, to the eternal shame and stupidity of the trade union bureaucracies) who are *leading* this effort, making the policy decisions, making real the democracy, the socialist, working class democracy that all of us on the Left dream of being part of — I can see and be part of history in the making. It makes a heart proud. And it makes it easier to put the polemics into perspective.

As I outline in the attached essay ("Turning Motion Into Movement"), there is a fundamental difference (and it is a necessary difference) between the role of mass-based organizations and the role of the revolutionary party, something that most communist groups never learned, and for which we all pay the price. *Socialist Voice* does the same thing in its article. It wants the mass-based organization to be the Vanguard Party, without conceptualizing — let alone helping to construct — the complementary, but independent organizations of the oppressed, exploited, and alienated. I

offer "Turning Motion Into Movement" to you to read, re-print, learn from, and criticize. One doesn't build a movement through calling for it to happen; the working class will not arise by advocates demanding that it does so. There is process to be gone through; there are experiences to be internalized and understood with the full depth of one's being, and not simply by one's mind. Advocating that this process occur, that people feel a certain way, cannot substitute for building the embryo of a new society within the womb of the old — an embryo that has to fight for every free breath every moment of its existence and which, counterposed to the already-existing institutions of capitalist society, at some point in its development declares itself to be the new order, the new society, and fights to smash the already-existing state apparatus and launch the hopes, dreams, and already-existing organization of the workers and oppressed to a new, socialist, red society.

That said, there are things to be done now, today, to make this a reality in practice, and not just in mind. We view PAM and the All-Peoples Congress as a major contribution to that struggle. That is the context in which we in Red Balloon understand PAM and the APC. That is why we work so hard in building it. And most of our differences with groups like CWP (who *withdrew* from PAM — they were NOT purged) stem from the conceptualization of how this process takes place, both organizationally, and in terms of the psychologies, emotions, love, and ways of seeing of the people who will make the revolution.

So please re-evaluate your conceptualization of PAM. You are making a major error in both your analysis and your approach that leads you to make the errors in your analysis.

Sincerely,

Mitchel Cohen, for the Red Balloon Collective  
September 21 1981

### Socialist Voice Replies

The above letter, taking issue with our article "Anti-Reaganism vs. Anti-Capitalism" in the previous issue of *Socialist Voice*, was written before the All-Peoples Congress took place in Detroit in mid-October. The congress, an obscure event, proved the accuracy of our information and analysis. It answered the criticisms raised in Mitchel Cohen's letter far better than we could have in words alone, since practice is a far better teacher. It is still necessary, however, to draw out certain lessons, for practice unexamined is not understood.

Cohen's criticism boils down to two charges. First, he alleges that we implied unfairly that the congress was a set-up for pro-capitalist forces, liberal Democratic Party politicians and reformist trade union bureaucrats. Second, he claims that we, in common with "most communist groups," do not understand the relationship between the "Vanguard Party" and "mass-based organization."

For the first point, we observe that the National Advisory Board of the APC, evidently a public relations device with no formal power, includes Bella Abzug, former Democratic Congresswoman from New York, Paul O'Dwyer, former Democratic president of the New York City Council, and Ramsey Clark, former Democratic Attorney General of the U.S. and candidate for Senator. In addition, John Conyers, Democratic Congressman from Michigan, lent his name for



extensive publicity extolling the APC. He, O'Dwyer and Erma Henderson, Democratic president of the Detroit City Council, all addressed the congress.

Cohen believes that, contrary to NPAC and PCPJ in the anti-Vietnam war days, the APC does not want "liberal politicians on our decision-making boards." But neither NPAC nor PCPJ had them on their boards either. Yet Cohen understands that those outfits were nevertheless bond servants of the capitalist pols. The liberals understand that they do not have to serve on the actual policy committees when the left will loyally do their work for them. From time immemorial the process has been the same. Dedicated leftists organize the flytrap. At first, when there are only a few flies, only the more venturesome leftist politicians will take note. But if it proves safe and more flies are entrapped, then more come round.

In his pre-APC letter, Cohen claimed that "I think I have a pretty good idea what is and what is not going on ... ." But now, after the event, listen to a more humble Cohen: "The way the congress was run does not reflect the decisions made by the interim steering committee of the APC" (*Guardian*, October 28). Friend Cohen was mortified to learn that his "decision-making boards," which worked "by consensus," as he boasted, did not make the real decisions. The Workers World Party (WWP), as we predicted, ran the APC as a front group, deciding what should come up and what should be adopted. As the disappointed *Guardian* reported, "Controversy centered not on any one political issue, but on the lack of opportunity to discuss politics."

The Democrats knew that serving on the boards had nothing to do with what was going to happen. Workers World also knew, since they were the ones operating behind the scenes. We knew, based on our experience and the Marxist class analysis of the forces involved that we had outlined in our article. Many of the leftists, however, including Cohen, did not know. Now they do — but only until the next flytrap floats by, we fear. Most unfortunately, there were newly political people who came to the congress, who did want to fight against Reagan's attacks and who did want political clarification. They were disappointed and burned badly by the outcome, as all but the WWP now admit.

By the final day of the congress it was obvious that Workers World was in total control; the meeting was just a show to present what had been decided in advance. Tellingly, when an LRP observer pointed out to a Red Balloon member that everything had been decided in the back room, he agreed, adding ruefully that "Until yesterday we thought we were at

least part of the back room."

The floor discussion and the resolutions that emerged had to be stage-managed and controlled. It was garish: applause was on cue; "spontaneous" motions were planned and timed; most floor speakers were carefully selected. That is because free debate among the many local reform groups and the handful of socialistic outfits present would have been chaos. Without the binding direction imposed by a mass movement, open discussion among the various petty-bourgeois groups would simply have reflected their anarchic position in society: it would have been a war of each against all.

Imagine, for example, a discussion among the advocates of different electoral strategies. There were partisans of the Democrats present, but also of a labor party, a people's party, a workers' party, etc. If a Democratic Party proposal would have been voted down, you lose Abzug, Conyers, Henderson, et al. If it had won, there go the socialistic cadre who do the legwork — and even the WWP would have had to vote against the Democrats!

Think also of the various distinctions among the various groups over what reforms to call for, how to fight oppression of women and gays, how to fight racism. Vital international questions, like the workers' struggles in Iran and Poland (where the WWP supports Stalinist counterrevolution) were unmentionable. Indeed, the congress did collapse into chaos over the foul anti-woman, anti-gay rantings of elements associated with the National Black Independent Political Party, an external caucus of the Democratic Party.

No wonder the WWP had to run roughshod, even to the extent of disgruntling Red Balloon and others. The WWP did not have the authority given by leadership of a genuine movement to impose order in any other way. For the APC does not represent a movement but is rather a prefabricated political and organizational straitjacket for a future movement.

### Militancy and Minimalism

Workers and oppressed people are seeking a way out of a desperate situation. If they for the moment accept capitalism, it is because they see no alternative. Union bureaucrats, minority leaders and liberal politicians at best present an illusory program for returning to the sops of the 1960's. APC, in the name of unity, proposes a program and actions acceptable to these misleaders. Racism? It can be solved within the system by measures like affirmative action. Sexism, the war build-up, unemployment? The same — none require revolution. Military spending can be abolished under imperialism! All these lies add up to a reformist consensus program acceptable to both the Democrats and the capitalist reformers who think of themselves as socialists.

As for action, the "Days of Resistance" were originally slated for October and now are postponed to the spring. Between now and then various unspecified "guerrilla" actions were suggested. Larry Holmes of the WWP prated about shutting Washington down and not leaving until Reaganism was stopped. Anything to avoid tackling the Democrats head-on.

We predicted that the APC would provide bourgeois representatives with a platform and discipline the far left, which it did. We also pointed out that "PAM's inability to specify the mechanism or party to bring down Reagan ... is a guarantee to channel the newly attracted forces into the trap of bourgeois electoralism." And so it was.

Did the militant ramblings of Holmes or anyone else show how to bring down Reagan or Reaganism? Of course not. What do Holmes' "guerrilla actions" mean? Revolution? Hardly. Lobbying Congress? Much more likely. By posing

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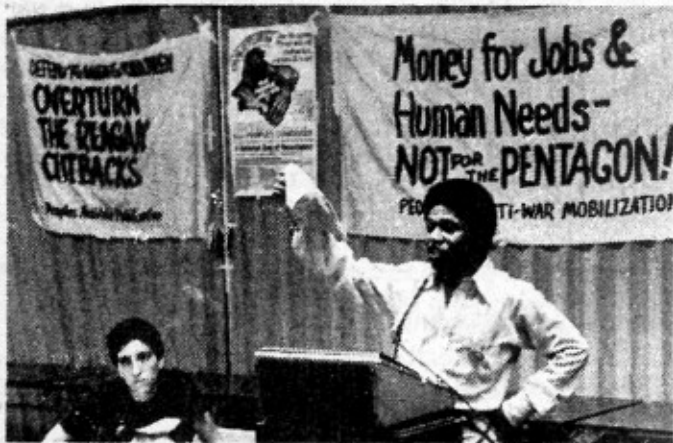
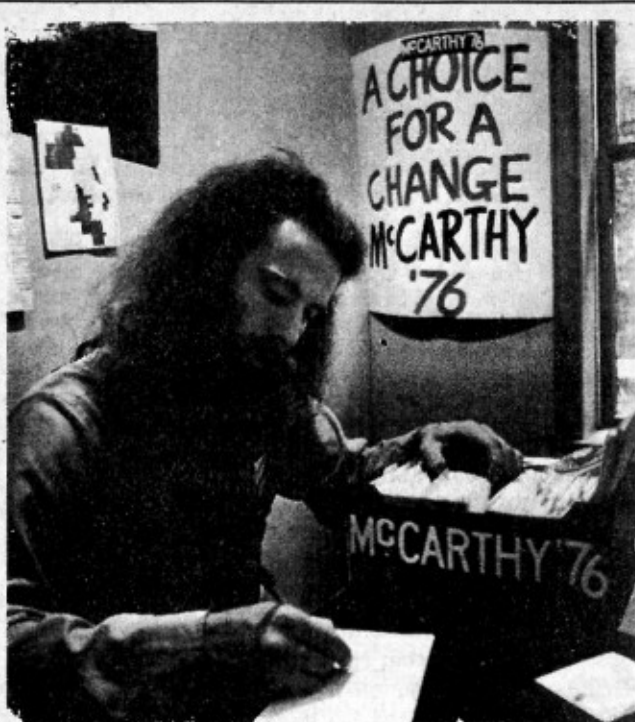
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*NPAC and PCPJ in the 1960's were run by "socialists" who turned radical youth into campaigners for imperialist politicians like McCarthy and McGovern. Today, the All-Peoples Congress tries to entrap the future movement into reformist politics — and inevitably onto the Kennedy bandwagon.*

power through Congress only, the APC's support for pro-Democratic electoralism is barely concealed. The real alternative — the power of the working class to remake society, the absolute necessity for working class independence, the program of socialism and socialist revolution by the working class — has to be sharply *counterposed* to all the reformist strategies. And if you do not attack capitalism and the Democrats along with Reagan, if you convince would-be socialists not to raise the question, you are nothing but a barrier to "socialist, working class democracy" and an obstacle to any fight to "smash the already-existing state apparatus." You are therefore nothing but a front for the Democratic Party and capitalism.

### What Kind of Unity?

Cohen's second charge explains why he and similar-minded leftists inevitably return to one flytrap after another. "The working class will not arise by advocates demanding that it does so," he lectures us. Physician, heal thyself. We in the LRP have never "demanded" that the working class arise; we merely predict that it will. It is Cohen & Co. and the various APC's who undertake to galvanize it. The revolutionary vanguard, like the far left in general, is very small and without mass influence. The idea that this little force will build a mass movement is sheer fantasy. Capitalism, by its own retrograde development, will create a movement in response; we cannot, nor can the APC. What we can influence is the choice of program, what way out the working class movement will seek when it arises. A program that corresponds to the real material needs of the class must be fashioned and honed by those who would lead. What the LRP does is fight for such a program in the factories and among the oppressed.

In contrast, what Red Balloon, the WWP and the others work to create is not a movement but a reformist political organization committed to what each of them thinks is the necessary admixture of militancy and minimalism to attract the broadest support. Inevitably it builds actions which avoid challenging capitalism and the parties, bureaucrats and petty-bourgeois misleaders who defend it. Inevitably it rests upon programs which call for almost anything but the overthrow of capitalism.

Contrary to Cohen, constructing the vanguard party requires the most intense participation by Leninists in the genuine mass organizations and movements of our class. We seek the unity in action of the entire working class. The vast majority obviously do not agree with our ideas. But only united action will make the workers conscious of their own strength and its ability to transform society. Only when the class realizes what it can do will communist ideas have meaning to masses of workers. For example, under Reagan's attack we call for a general strike. This, unlike membership in the APC, requires no political agreement beyond the action itself. Unity in action, not of words, is totally counterposed to the APC type of "mass" organization (or "network," in the current jargon) of people united around agreement on certain reforms.

In brief, our way is the united front in action which will necessarily bolster the ideas and strength of the vanguard party. Cohen's is the reformist popular front which obstructs the ideas and growth of the revolutionary party. It comes down to reformism versus revolution.

Cohen invites us to reprint his organization's pamphlet "Turning Motion into Movement." We wish we had the space, for it is a classic of its kind; a genuine fossilized version of the 1960's New Left, slightly damaged by the forces of time. The



pamphlet is obtainable from Red Balloon, Polity, SUNY, Stony Brook, NY 11794.

The All-Peoples Congress was a failure not only for Red Balloon but for Workers World itself, despite its enthusiastic hype. As we explained in our previous article, the WWP (despite its early, absurd hopes) could not compel the union bureaucracy to come to its show. It believed that the presence of a few radical petty-bourgeois leaders of oppressed groups would attract bureaucrats who were scared of the prospect of ghetto rebellions and minority strength in the unions.

But whatever hopes the WWP had of organizationally dominating the coming upsurge were ended in September by Solidarity Day. Not only did its numbers vastly outweigh the May 3 Washington march over El Salvador built by the WWP, but the working-class character of Solidarity Day showed incomparably more potential power than any middle-class protest. What meaning can Holmes's "guerrilla actions" have in contrast to that? How can the APC's vague "Days of Resistance" compare to the general strike that Lane Kirkland so visibly fears (see the Kirkland interview reprinted in this issue)? The APC was decisively upstaged by one instance of workers' unity in action.

### Left Turns PAM toward Workers

The other large far-left outfits (DSOC, SWP, CP), who had no choice but to grudgingly allow the WWP to take the lead on May 3, were able to blithely ignore the post-Solidarity Day APC. Not that they had any fundamental political differences — the method of building reformist blocs to ensnare the developing movement is common to all. But despite all their appeals for "unity," they are primarily interested in building themselves and saw the APC, correctly, as a device for building the WWP.

The common reformist method also extends to the far left groups who were critical of the APC's denial of democracy. Consider the Revolutionary Workers League, which led the demand for an open mike. This pseudo-Trotskyist group is just as New Left as Red Balloon. The RWL objected to APC becoming a front group for Workers World. In reality, the RWL wanted a "united front" front group, a facade constructed by several left groups to hide their politics and differences in order to "build the movement." This would be more democratic than the APC, but even more chaotic (as we explained above) and no less reformist.

Further, in its critical endorsement of PAM and the APC, the RWL proposed that PAM be "turned toward ... the working class" by adopting a "working class approach" (*Workers Struggle*, September 1981). This is a dreadful idea, but one that runs rampant on the left. The working class is already infested with enough middle-class strata and their approaches; it does not need another class-collaborationist bloc of leftists and social-work reformers to turn its way. Likewise, Red Balloon's letter bemoans the lack of unionists in the APC. We do not. The communist idea is the opposite: let the working class lead, the black, white, male, female, etc., etc. working class. It will have to decide how to approach the non-working class oppressed and how to work with the lower strata of the middle class.

For the self-styled Marxists and Leninists among the New-old Left, the justification for the approach to the working class from outside is taken from Lenin. In its pamphlet, for example, the Red Balloon bases its petty-bourgeois notion on the supposedly Leninist conception that socialist ideas must be brought to the workers from outside. We have dealt with this enormous misconception before (in a polemic against the

Spartacist League in *Socialist Voice* No. 4). Suffice it to say for now that Lenin correctly abandoned this early view borrowed from Kautsky — as a result of the lessons of the 1905 general strike in which the working class moved ahead of the ideas of the petty bourgeoisie and even ahead of the socialist working-class parties. Leninism stands above all for the intransigent fight for revolutionary ideas within the working class by the vanguard party of advanced workers.

The Red Balloonists admire Marx and Lenin when it suits them, yet they attack the far left for its "strident" positioning and polemics. Marx and Lenin, of course, fought over every programmatic point with unmatched zeal. Their polemics are classics, not only for their political lessons but for their unbridled rage. Our New Left friends talk a lot about "love" for the people. Well and good — but what about hate? Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky et al were deadly polemicists because they knew they were fighting the class struggle on the level of ideas. We, like they, hate the betrayers and enemies of our class who time and again inject the poison of class collaboration.

We have no need to win people with protestations of love. We prefer to tell them the truth about capitalist society and its various politicians — that represents the only serious form of "love" in politics, class solidarity. We hope to use considerable patience in explaining the truth, but even so it often hurts. But there is no other way. Our "conceptualization of PAM" and the APC, based on Marxism, proved valid. The alternative of building a class-collaborationist, anti-working class front group for liberal bourgeois politics, once again proved a farce and a fraud. If people's "feelings" were hurt because the APC as "history in the making," as the "embryo of the new society," turned out to be a pitiful joke, we are not responsible. The false preachers of "love" that bridges the class struggle are the ones with a lot of explaining to do. ■

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## Nicaragua

*continued from page 2*

Salvador and Guatemala. But their real purpose is what they tell the imperialists privately. Julio Lopez, the Sandinistas' international relations secretary, was in Washington in October to lobby the State Department and Congress. He insisted that "private enterprise is the dominant force in the economy" and that the government was trying to stop arms traffic to the rebels in El Salvador (*Washington Post*, October 29).

The emergency decree that led to the joint arrests also makes this intent clear. It slashed subsidies for public services and forbade strikes, calling them "economic sabotage." Even the *Wall Street Journal* (September 15) observed that "the measures are viewed as generally beneficial to business."

Undoubtedly, beneath the surface the Sandinistas are polarizing toward a split between those who will immediately play the capitalists' games and a more reformist tendency which will try to placate the workers as their struggle unfolds. At the moment both tendencies are united in trying to forestall that development by buttering up the bourgeoisie.

Despite the Sandinistas' pleas, Reagan and Haig would love to force them out of power in order to directly reassert American imperialist hegemony. We join with all those in the U.S. who are protesting the administration's threats. But we have nothing in common with the fake leftists who, like Reagan, are falsely embellishing the anti-working class policies of the Sandinistas.

**U.S. Out of Central America!**

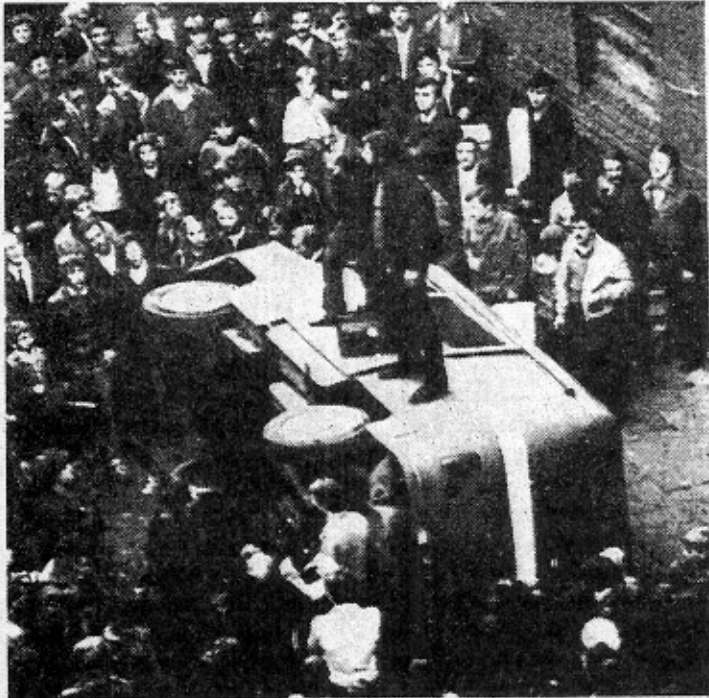
**For Socialist Revolution in Nicaragua and El Salvador! ■**

# Polish Workers Under Siege

With the country poised on the edge of economic collapse, the biggest strike wave since August 1980 has broken out over Poland — and the leadership of the mass workers' movement Solidarity, echoing threats by the government, is treacherously maneuvering to halt it. At a time when a decisive program is needed to end the misery, when bold action is called for to maintain the momentum of the year-long workers' struggle against an enfeebled state capitalist regime, Solidarity has taken the opposite course. The reason is that Solidarity's leaders are committed to capitalist reforms rather than working-class revolution, a program that can lead only to catastrophe.

At the first national congress of Solidarity held in September, the several wings of the leadership combined to adopt a program of reforms designed to woo the ruling Communist Party into strengthening the state. This strategy is handing the initiative back to the government, enabling it to begin recovering the authority the workers had seized from it. The reformists are setting the stage for the demoralization and defeat of the working class, not by the present "moderate" government but by a resurgent fascist-like wing of Polish Stalinism and its Russian overlords.

The regime took full advantage of the initiative granted it by Solidarity in the weeks after the congress. Army general Wojciech Jaruzelski, previously appointed defense minister and then prime minister, took over the party leadership. Although he remains a moderate at least for the moment, the change was the result of increasingly vocal pressure from the hard-liners encouraged by Moscow. He then extended military tours of duty and sent teams of troops around the country to distribute food, organize transport and above all to combat "provocations" by strikers and union activists. This move was aimed at placing the blame on Solidarity for the economy's



*Solidarity leaders atop an overturned police van trying to restrain workers in Katowice. Workers rioted when cops moved to prevent a literature distribution.*

disruption and winning support for the discredited party, which was responsible for the exacerbated crisis.

In Poland today shops are empty, there are three-day food lines to get meat, barter is replacing the worthless zloty, vital medicines are unavailable except by bribery with U.S. dollars (Poland's unofficial but real second currency), whole factories do not function because of the lack of Western-made parts, and regular blackouts are planned under a severe power shortage — the only planning the so-called "planned economy" is capable of. The debilitating food shortage is the viciously circular outcome of Poland's version of the "scissors crisis" so familiar to Marxists. The peasant farmers withhold their products from the cities because the money they are paid buys nothing; workers spend half their waking hours hunting for food supplies and thereby are forced to cut back production even further.

The precipitating cause of the collapse was the Gierk government's policy in the 1970's of plunging an already weakened economy into debt to buy industry and technology from the West in the utopian expectation that the imports would quickly pay for themselves. This was a desperate attempt to buy off the Polish working class and prevent uprisings like those that had shaken the regime in 1956, 1970 and 1976. And like the "voodoo economics" that U.S. policy makers are currently carrying out, it could only mask temporarily the underlying decay and inevitable crisis that every capitalist society faces in the epoch of imperialism, when capitalism survives only as a menace to the forces of production.

Whether or not the party succeeds in blaming the crisis on Solidarity, it seems clear that the union is beginning to lose the confidence of many workers. Since its congress, mass strikes have broken out against the hopeless conditions, in defiance of union spokesmen who continually urge caution. Twelve thousand women textile workers on strike in Zyrardow near Warsaw complained that Solidarity leaders were uninterested in solving the food crisis. (*New York Times*, October 21). More than 150,000 workers in 400 factories in the province of Zielona Gora on the East German border struck to get oppressive provincial officials dismissed; the local union spokesman commented that the national leaders' call to end the strike was "stupid," and vowed to "carry on, no matter what they order" (*New York Times*, October 25). The mood of growing anger against both party and union was summarized by a party member in the industrial center of Lodz: "They'll burn down the party headquarters and then set about 'he Solidarity building'" (*Economist*, September 26).

Solidarity even went so far as to call a one-hour general strike on October 28 whose primary purpose was to control the numerous local outbreaks that had spread to three quarters of Poland's provinces. And when this maneuver failed and the strikes continued, Solidarity's head Lech Walesa threatened that the union would take "disciplinary measures" against them.

## Behind Solidarity's Reformism

Solidarity's unwillingness to act against the government follows from its leaders' assumption that they can pressure the government for reforms but must do nothing to bring it down or challenge its right to rule. This assumption has been part of the ideology of the intellectual dissidents like Jacek Kuron of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) all along; at the





*September Solidarity Congress raised workers' hopes but offered no alternative to capitalist misery. Lech Walesa narrowly maintained his grip.*

*Republic*, "many of the early strike leaders have lost their places to more cautious types." At the congress, there was "an overrepresentation of the technical intelligentsia, lower-level managers..." He cited sociologist Ludwik Dorn: "They are stabilized workers, members of Poland's middle class." Speeches by rank and file workers at the congress, angry at the leadership's alienation from the workers, made the same point.

With these elements in the saddle Solidarity cannot be a revolutionary vehicle; it is rather pursuing a fantasy, a return to stability and an end to class polarization. That is why the congress issued its program of reforms and its calls for free elections. Contrary to the slanders by the Polish and Russian rulers and their sycophants in the West, these resolutions were not designed to destroy the pseudo-socialist system. The leaders are counterrevolutionary because they seek to shore up the Stalinist state, not overthrow it. Karatnycky provides an accurate interpretation of what Solidarity is about:

"Solidarity has likewise called for open election to the local and national government. But this push for broader freedoms should not be viewed as an attempt to seize total power. Rather, its purpose is to strengthen the government apparatus — a strengthening that cannot take place, however, without a restructuring and opening up of that apparatus. Poland has begun to fulfill Marx's prediction of the withering away of the state; the irony is that Solidarity is finding it can't get along without one. In the view of Adam Michnik, a young historian and founder of the Workers' Defense Committee, 'The government apparatus is without power. It is a paper tiger. The government has no means for implementing its decisions. What we need to do is to create a situation in which the trade union is able to deal with a real partner.'"

Lech Walesa, too, is quite open about it. He recently told the press of the need to "rebuild the authority of the government." He has even hinted at the possibility of Solidarity entering a coalition regime with the present rulers. The real irony is that the reformist social democrats in Poland and abroad find themselves in defense of the Stalinist state apparatus they so often fulminate against. The fundamental allegiance of all forms of reformism to the preservation of even their most hated forms of capitalism has been brought to light by the Polish workers' struggle as never before.

Of course, the decay of the Polish government has nothing whatever to do with the withering away of the state predicted by Marx. Marx was referring to genuine workers' states on the road to socialism; what is happening to the Polish rulers is the exposure of their inability to "rule in the old way" that Marx and Lenin noted as one of the pre-conditions for a revolutionary situation under capitalism. What Solidarity is now doing is preventing the ripening of the other vital precondition, the workers' revolutionary consciousness. And if Solidarity is successful in reforming the regime (from either inside it or outside), the result *will* be to strengthen the government apparatus; it will put teeth back into the paper tiger and pave the way for the bloody suppression of the workers.

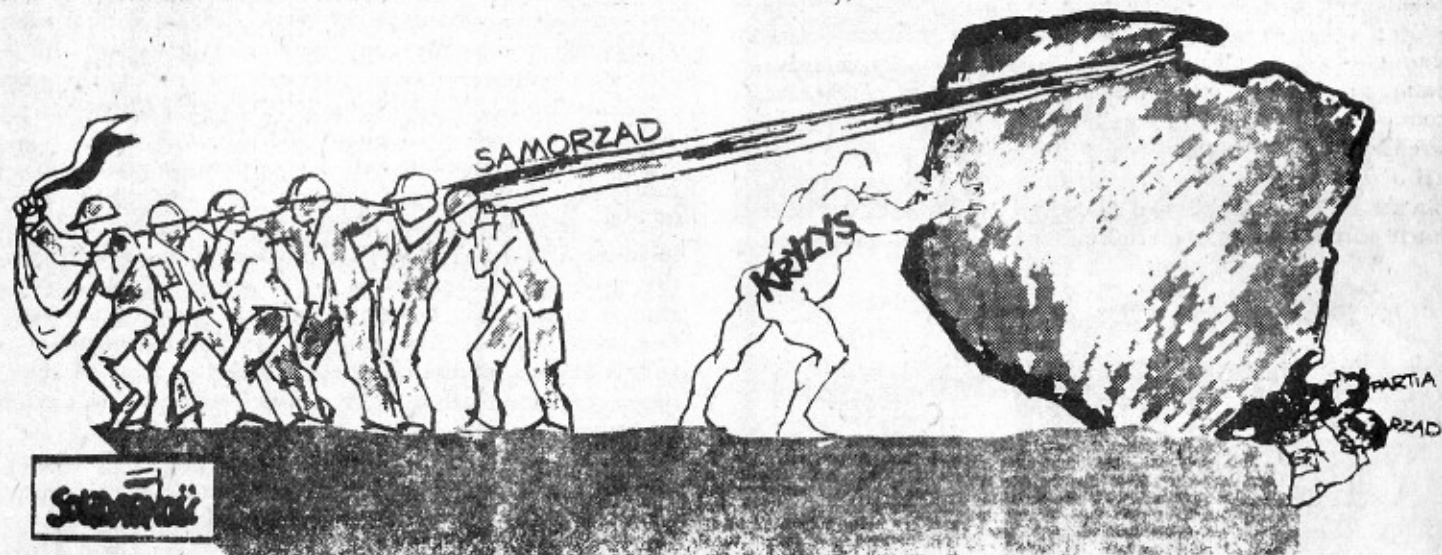
Solidarity's proposed reforms revolve around decentralizing the economy into the hands of enterprise managers elected with the workers' approval. This would only replace one form of capitalist crisis, the inefficiency and technological backwardness of Stalinist state capitalism, with another, the unemployment, inflation and looming depression of the West. This will do nothing to solve the crisis; moreover, it will get the ruling Stalinists off the hook. The Polish rulers themselves

time of the mass strikes of August 1980 that created Solidarity, it meant turning the Inter-factory Strike Committees (MKS's), the nascent organs of dual power similar to the Russian workers' soviets of 1917, into mere trade unions with economic reform programs only (see "Polish Workers Shake the World," *Socialist Voice* No. 10). The policy was motivated aloud by the fear of an invasion by the USSR to crush the workers; however, a Russian invasion became less likely as the workers' confidence and solidarity advanced. On the contrary, if the present trend continues, the Russian rulers may well be able to sit back and let their Polish underlings crush Solidarity without risking outside intervention. No, the real reason for the reformists' conservatism is what it always is: the fear that a full-scale proletarian revolution would destroy not only incompetence and mismanagement but the whole fabric of capitalist exploitation.

There is a class basis for Solidarity's reformism. Most of the prominent spokesmen for the reform schemes were identified as professors or other intellectuals. Most of the delegates to the September congress were not the leaders of the militant movement of the glorious summer of 1980. According to a report by a social-democratic sympathizer of Solidarity's leadership, Adrian Karatnycky, in the September 30 *Ne...*

have been proposing the same sort of devolutionary reforms that Solidarity wants; their hope is to use various incentives and simulated market devices to achieve technological creativeness, greater productivity and lower labor costs. Such experiments have been tried before in Hungary and Yugoslavia, with temporary successes in times of prosperity. But now Yugoslavia has skyhigh inflation and unemployment rates, and the situation can only worsen, given the international economic crisis.

If Solidarity takes the responsibility for these schemes it will deserve the blame it gets from the workers when they learn that rationalizing the appropriation of surplus-value is not in their interests at all. As we wrote in *Socialist Voice* No. 12:



*Gdansk Solidarity poster reprinted by Western leftists shows Poland pushed to the brink by the crisis which the feeble party and government cannot stop; only the powerful workers' movement can save the country. The poster also reflects Solidarity's reformism by suggesting that self-management and nationalism [the Polish flag] will rescue the state.*

"The trend towards devolution under Stalinism is inevitable, but there is a built-in contradiction. The workers, at the start of a struggle, are frequently lured by the reformists' ideas of decentralization and anarchistic pluralism, falsely called democracy, because they want the Stalinist dictatorship off their backs. This is dangerous for the rulers, reformists and conservatives alike, because in the course of struggle the workers are nevertheless liable to recognize the need for central control over the economy in order to reorient production and trade in the interests of the working class. The tendency of the proletarian struggle eventually asserts itself against devolution in favor of their own centralized state."

### What Is To Be Done

The program for a workers state is what the leadership of a genuine workers' movement should be fighting for, and what revolutionary Marxist workers in Poland should be raising in Solidarity and in every action and organization of the workers. For without it the Polish workers are caught in a bind. National general strikes under Walesa's leadership are sold out or used to divert militancy. Sections of workers are growing resigned, while others are left conducting local struggles without tangible lasting victories. Solidarity's leaders engage in endless palaver about sharing power in the factories as a substitute for material needs. A different proletarian strategy is vitally necessary to halt demoralization and decimation.

Let the workers win control in the only way possible: seize the factories and run them! Reconstruct the MKS's now to

carry out these tasks! Distribution of food and other goods must not be left to the government and army to manipulate shortages. The MKS's must take these tasks over to manage production, credit and distribution. This calls for centralization in a permanent workers' congress for overall political control.

Such a strategy can win the workers' movement away from the leadership of capitulatory aristocratic layers who are, in effect, agencies of the capitalist state power within its ranks. Solidarity is no vehicle for socialism, although it is an arena that can be won. The MKS's, the councils for action, can tap the deeper layers of the rebellious proletariat.

Today, hundreds of thousands of workers are on strike for

defensive reasons, forced by Solidarity's inaction in solving the crisis. These strikes, and the right to strike, must be defended. But a better answer is at hand, the MKS. Naturally, the state will not tolerate the dual power character of the MKS's and the workers' mass actions and seizures. A genuine general strike will be necessary. Defensive in origin, it would soon go over to an insurrection.

The revolutionary strategy of seizing the factories and building workers' councils is poles apart from the conception of "active strikes" put forward by Walesa and other reformists. In such a "strike" the workers keep working but distribute their output as they see fit. As presented by Walesa this was just a scheme to get strikers back to work: it was not recommended as a tactic for non-striking workers! For many workers, however, it is a desperate attempt to find some solution to the crisis. But it is an attempt that, by itself, is sure to fail. Only an open challenge to the state provides a real answer.

No matter what happens short of total capitulation, the workers' movement will have to defend itself militarily. It is critical to take control of the armories and obtain arms. The movement must appeal to the soldiers of the Polish army (and to Russian and other Warsaw Pact troops stationed in Poland) to ally with the workers; come to their aid and give them additional arms.

Further, the workers councils would announce the cancellation of all debts to the Western and Russian imperialists and appeal to the workers of these countries to send aid and food unconditionally. They would promise technological support to the peasants and urge the voluntary collectivization of farming in the interest of greater productivity and less



wasted labor. And they would make the word Solidarity ring true by declaring an alliance with all workers, East, West and South who fight against oppression and imperialism. Worker unrest is spreading throughout the Stalinist empire; West Europe also faces turmoil. There is no economic solution within the bounds of one nation. The collapse of Poland once again proves the necessity of internationalism.

The threat of a Russian invasion to smash the workers is real, of course, but must be assessed accurately. It would cost Russia a fortune. Further, the USSR depends upon its economic ties with the West, and Moscow is very frightened of an invasion that would push West Europe deeper into the U.S. pocket and end all schemes for detente.

More significantly, given the spread of economic crises throughout Eastern Europe, a Russian attack on Poland could easily trigger sympathy strikes and rebellions in neighboring countries. A revolutionary policy by the Polish workers that strengthens their class ties across the borders is the best political defense. There is still no guarantee against an invasion, but any other strategy aimed to avoid a Russian attack is absolutely sure to lead to the crushing of the workers' movement.

first to villify every step forward the workers make.

As for the support by the Pope and the Polish Church for trade unionism, let nobody be fooled. They serve to defend the existing social order by expanding their own influence and have backed Solidarity only for that purpose. Their constant calls for moderation, their constant whisperings of advice to Walesa, and the explicit Papal statement favoring the trade unions as a means of preserving the present social system have had an effect. When it comes to a choice between the state, even the Stalinist state, and working class revolution, there is no question which side the Church will be on. It will connive with the Stalinists even through crocodile tears for its "beloved Polish people," just as pro-Nazi fascists linked with the Polish Church ended up supporting the Stalinists' fascist-like wing years ago.

Solidarity's reformism and inaction can only buttress these forces. The program of moderation and reform will only be accepted by the rulers as a decoy: as soon as the workers are demoralized the bosses will strike back. Their only course ultimately is to restore fascist-like central political power. There is no decentralizing solution, no possible power sharing.



*Polish and Russian troops prior to recent war games. Polish soldiers can be won by workers through revolutionary action. Russian troops are also susceptible: even in 1956, the USSR had to pull back its initial forces from Hungary.*

The most advanced workers in the struggle, those who see the need for a revolutionary program and strategy, would form the nucleus of a revolutionary communist party to fight for them, in Solidarity and out. This is not only a route to the socialist revolution — it is also the only way forward for the workers' struggle. Anything else spells demoralization and defeat. There are already currents of reaction in Polish society: the Pilsudskian nationalists who cannot tolerate an independent labor movement any more than their idol did, the anti-Semites encouraged by the ruling party who are the

Either the workers or the state must be crushed.

There were open right-wing nationalists even more conservative than Walesa, the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN), operating at Solidarity's congress. These reactionaries presumably reflect the most aristocratic layers. As well, there apparently are leftist wings of Solidarity that oppose the reformism and total devotion to the Church of Walesa and his middle-class intellectual advisers. According to the Western press, the most outspoken radical is Jan Rulewski, the union leader in Bydgoszcz whose beating by the



*Polish workers kneel while confessing. Current agreements among Church, state and Walesa are aimed at forcing workers permanently to their knees.*

state police led nearly to another general strike last March. Rulewski clearly stands on the left. At a July meeting of Solidarity's National Coordinating Committee, he recalled an earlier revolutionary situation:

**"I have the impression that it is 1917 and I am at rallies in Moscow and Petersburg where Lenin is appealing to workers' and soldiers' councils. As he did, we are taking power. We are finally fulfilling the slogans for which mankind has been waiting." (Solidarnosc Bulletin, October 1981)**

Rulewski reportedly also believes that Russia cannot afford to invade militarily if Solidarity remains strong. He has also called on Solidarity to declare itself a political party to "guarantee democracy in this country." (*New York Times*, October 13). The meaning of this abridged statement is not clear; however, Rulewski has also stated that "the Catholic Church has proved to be the best ally and we will continue this cooperation" (*New Statesman*, August 14). This shows that his understanding of the situation is not a Leninist one but instead is based on the idea of a "democratic" debate among the existing forces.

### **Bolshevism Incarnate**

There are small forces who consider themselves Trotskyist operating in Poland today, but they are still marginal and to our knowledge they lack a thoroughgoing revolutionary perspective. The "deformed workers' state" theory of Trotsky's epigones has proved bankrupt. In practice it becomes just another reformist rationalization. The absence of revolutionary communism, however, can change quickly, given the pace of events and the massive proportions of the proletarian movement which has proved its willingness to fight despite and against a miserable leadership.

The reason for the lack of genuine Marxist currents in Poland (aside from their demise generally throughout the world) is painfully clear. Despite the long history of Marxism and revolutionary communism in pre-war Poland, the Polish Communist Party was annihilated by Stalin in order to replace it by a crew of bureaucratic yes-men who could be trusted to betray the Polish workers to Russian overlordship. And nearly forty years of Stalinist rule in East Europe has been sufficient to discredit the name of Marxism and Leninism in the eyes of

many workers. The task of Polish Marxists is consequently exceedingly difficult. Nevertheless, it cannot be avoided in favor of the diversions that are advocated by pseudo-Marxists in the West. The results of syndicalism and schemes for "workers' control" under capitalism are only too plain in Poland: they are embodied in Lech Walesa and the more radical Solidarity leaders who pose every solution but socialist revolution to the Polish catastrophe.

Genuine Trotskyists do have one inestimable advantage. The overwhelming fact bringing Poland to the attention of the whole world is the massive working-class struggle that forced the governmental apparatus to its knees. That fact is Bolshevism incarnate. The Polish upheaval proves the power and organizational capacity of the working class, even under conditions of dictatorship, and it has naturally inspired workers everywhere: Solidarity Day in Washington in September was only the latest example. On the other hand, the efforts of all the non-Marxist currents inside and outside Solidarity to crush or to hold back the workers' struggle shows that only Marxism can lead it to its conclusion, the genuine socialism of equality, democracy and abundance that the workers are striving for. The Polish workers in practice have provided the greatest confirmation of Marxist beliefs in many years. Marxist workers in all countries now have the task of reconstructing the revolutionary international and its national sections everywhere, to lead that struggle to victory. ■

### **Forum: POLAND ON THE BRINK**

**The Crisis of the Stalinist State and its Lessons for Revolutionary Class Struggle and Marxist Theory**

Speaker: Walter Dahl, Central Committee, League for the Revolutionary Party

Date: Saturday, December 5, 7:30 pm

Place: Parlor, Washington Square Church, 133 West 4th Street, New York City

Donation: \$2.00



# Solidarity Day

*continued from page 32*

smashing it. This assault was also meant as a club against the postal workers whose miserable contract was up for a vote in August; as well, it was a direct threat against the huge American Federation of Government Employees whose contract was approaching. In fact it was a challenge to the entire working class. If Reagan could do this to a largely white, aristocratic union that voted for him, what was in store for blacks?

So far his attack has worked. The defensive postal workers accepted the contract, not because they liked it but because they had learned not to trust the union leaders to wage a fight. And for good reason. The AFL-CIO did absolutely nothing to defend PATCO. From President Kirkland, on the right to the Machinists' William Winpisinger on the left, they offered nothing but crocodile tears — no sympathy strikes, no effort to shut down the airports, nothing.

Reagan knew his bureaucrats. To close down the airports would have meant breaking the law and tackling the president head-on, on an issue he

could not back down from. Kirkland would have had to extend even minimal defensive acts into a general strike, which for him was anathema (see the adjoining article). That would have brought the whole working class together in a mass action that the bureaucrats fear more than they do Reagan.

So they called Solidarity Day instead. Secondary bureaucrats whose heads were first on the chopping block pleaded with their leaders for some sort of action. If Reagan kept at it he could kindle an explosion over the bureaucrats' heads. Kirkland made this point at an AFL-CIO meeting called to approve Solidarity Day:

**"That we speak for the interests of our members has been assumed as part of the implicit social contract which governs the conduct of political relations in the country and which places prudent restraints on the passions of class warfare.**

**"Now, in our Centennial Year, that mandate is challenged. The challenge comes not from the political fringes but from the White House...I do not believe that we can quietly turn our backs..."**

But the bureaucrats faced a dilemma. They had to mobilize hundreds of thousands of workers, but do so in such a way as to prevent them from tasting the power they really have in united action. Pandora Reagan was letting the "passions of class warfare" out of the box.

The political content of the demonstration reflected the bureaucrats' concern. The speakers at the rally included a number of labor tops (Kirkland, United Automobile Workers president Doug Fraser, Sam Church of the United Mine Workers) and "civil rights" bigwigs (Coretta Scott King, Jesse Jackson, Benjamin Hooks and Bayard Rustin) as well as Eleanor Smeal of the National Organization for Women. Aside from expressing opposition to Reagan and vague ideas about resisting, the speakers had no concrete political prescriptions. None of them suggested that the working class might mobilize its power through mass actions to fight back. The pressing need to defend PATCO *immediately* was



carefully avoided; in fact, despite the fact that PATCO was key to the very calling of the rally, its contingent was confined to the rear of the march and its speaker put at the end of the list.

The labor fakers did not emphasize their ties to the Democrats, and in fact no Democratic politicians spoke from the podium. The motive for this was purely tactical; it enabled the bureaucrats to put on an "independent" face before their audience and avoid the jeers that had greeted Hubert Humphrey at a labor rally in 1975. At the same time, it kept them from coming to blows with each other in the developing Democratic battle between the "left" wing under Senator Ted Kennedy and the "moderates" under former Vice President Walter (Fritz) Mondale. The bureaucrats' continued support for a purely electoral strategy and the capitalist Democrats is clear, as indicated by their much-repeated slogan, "Solidarity in '81 — Victory in '82!" and their innumerable comments to the press. Their hope is that a relatively painless mobilization like Solidarity Day and heightened electoral commitment will strengthen the "pro-labor" politicians and avoid the terrible danger of mass action.

But given the Democrats' capitulations to Reagan and the mass contempt that the party enjoys after Carter, the bureaucrats can't simply sit back and turn over their blessings

and money as in the past. As *Business Week* magazine (October 5) accurately stated:

**"In a radical break with its hands-off approach to internal Democratic politics, the AFL-CIO has decided to shed any pretense of non-partisanship and embark on a plan to become the dominant financial and political force in the Democratic Party. Labor's goal: to block a Republican takeover of Congress in the 1982 elections and to grab a pivotal role in choosing the Democrats' Presidential nominee in 1984."**

The Democratic Party electoralist strategy has a wider intent as well. The large number of black political figures on the dais and the deliberate emphasis on the past civil rights movement were very significant — especially knowing the AFL-CIO's rejection of the black struggle when, as opposed to now, it was a mass movement. The bureaucrats are worried that explosions like the Miami riots will multiply and spread to the factories and ignite the whole working class. They also have to fear the opposite potential: class warfare could be steered by reactionaries into race war which would tear the unions apart and destroy the AFL-CIO. Reagan's actions threaten to provoke one or the other, so he must be stopped. Hence the bureaucrats' new-found concern for black interests. But the middle-class civil rights leaders can't afford to risk mass actions any more than the labor bureaucrats. So the allies have collectively adopted the strategy of electoral diversion through rebuilding the old Democratic Party "liberal-labor-Negro" coalition in the form of a "new" liberal-labor-black-women's alliance.

The trumpeting of this new coalition at Solidarity Day highlighted the contradiction at its very heart. The leadership's "unity" strategy could undermine their entire labor pacification program. Mobilization of the working class on a unified basis — black and white, male and female, public and private sector, working and unemployed — sets up an enormous potential for real class unity against capitalism. Hence it must be limited to the level of safety-valve rallies and the passive goal of electoral solutions.

### **The Workers' Dilemma**

The composition of the rally, despite its broad character, revealed some important limitations. There were thousands and thousands of "ordinary" workers present — machinists, auto workers, construction workers, government workers, etc. But there was a notable absence of unorganized workers, unemployed minority youth, and others of the more dispossessed sections of the working class. Moreover, a disproportionate share of the participants was rooted in the labor aristocracy. This included, besides elements of the skilled crafts, layers grouped around the trade union apparatus of industrial and skilled unions: stewards, committeemen, staff, etc. These people derive their relative privileges from the existence of viable unions and react particularly to the threat against these privileges. It is they who set the tone for the mass of participants.

The rally reflected the fractionalization of the working class and could not by itself overcome it. The most oppressed sectors of the proletariat, those minority workers lumped into marginal jobs or consigned to the unemployment heap, have a seething hostility toward the system. Unorganized by the capitalist work process, *by themselves* they cannot achieve class consciousness; they act out of despair. This combustible force will prove invaluable to struggles if given a lead by the organized workforce, in which black workers occupy key industrial positions. It cannot be won by more rhetoric and more electoral sleights of hand which it views with knowing

contempt; only serious class action which points to real alternatives will succeed.

Until now the mass of organized and heavy industrial workers has been locked into the system by virtue of the unionist mentality, varying degrees of aristocratic privilege and the dominance of the labor bureaucracy. As the rally demonstrated, however, there has been real ferment in these ranks. People who have worked hard for every nickel they've gotten are keenly aware that their "middle-class" lifestyle (indebtedness and all) is gravely threatened. The increasing sense of unity and power that is inevitable for these workers, especially the heavy industrial proletariat, will lead to class-conscious social explosions capable of providing leadership and direction for all the working and unemployed masses, a true "majority coalition" in the future. But for this workers must tackle the bureaucracy head-on.

### **Social-Democratic Obstacles**

For their confrontation with the bureaucracy, workers will have to quickly learn considerable political sophistication. The bureaucrats are not the slow-witted Neanderthals they often seem but an experienced crew with renegade ex-left counselors who specialize in confounding the historical lessons of Marxism.

For example, teachers union president Albert Shanker and Bayard Rustin (one of the official speakers on Solidarity Day) are leading members of the Social Democrats USA, an organization which has a warm relationship with Lane Kirkland and is an intellectual and practical force of no small proportions in his wing of the AFL-CIO executive board and on the staff. The primary historical ancestor of the SDUSA was Max Shachtman who led a major split from Trotskyism in 1940. After years of fruitless propaganda to create a Labor Party, he led the bulk of his tendency into the Democratic Party; he had finally come to understand that it was a more practical vehicle for reforms. His original intent was to transform the Democratic Party into a Labor Party but this was jettisoned over time since the labor leaders could not possible sever their relationships with liberal bourgeois politicians for fear of alienating the capitalist class and provoking open class war. The Shachtmanites soon joined and then replaced the dying generation of Lovestonites and other ex-far leftists inside the labor bureaucracy; they became the bastions of its most conservative cold-war wing in support of Scoop Jackson, Hubert Humphrey and now Fritz Mondale.

Another more leftist segment of the old Shachtmanite coterie is led by Michael Harrington; it also moved into the Democratic Party. It forms the core of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), a "left" reformist group which counts in its membership such trade union bureaucratic luminaries as IAM head Wimpisinger and Victor Gotbaum, a leader of District Council 37 of AFSCME; it also has close allies like Doug Fraser. Within the Democratic Party and the union leadership they spearhead the pro-Kennedy wing. They too have succeeded in "realigning" not the Democratic Party but themselves. Gotbaum's analysis of the Washington demonstration made absolutely clear what the purpose of the affair really was for all wings of the social democracy. He concluded that "...Solidarity Day will put some backbone in the Democratic Party and that Democrats will start acting like Democrats again for their own survival, if nothing else" (*Public Employee Press*, October 2).

Solidarity Day was dominated politically by the forces surrounding Kirkland and the SDUSA with their base in craft, professional and some industrial unions. However, they desperately needed a united bloc with the DSOC-oriented



industrial and government union leaders. Kirkland's concession to these "leftists" was to not stress his strong support for a big military budget, while the Winpisingers agreed not to fight for military cuts.

Reactionary columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak (*Washington Post*, September 25) took Kirkland to task for collaborating with leftists like Winpisinger and for welcoming the participation of communists at Solidarity Day. They quote Kirkland's response to a question about communist participation: "We're turning no one away." They further quote Kirkland's response to their criticism: "I've been called a hawk and a cold warrior. That's the first time I've been red-baited."

Indeed Kirkland did leave the door completely open for leftist participation, and Winpisinger overtly invited it. This does seem strange, give Kirkland's hysterical anti-communism. But in reality it is not strange at all. The bureaucracy understood that the biggest sections of the "far left" would not only work might and main to build the demonstration but would also discipline the most volatile

know it probably won't run right now — it may not run for another 10 years, but eventually we have to have a labor party, or a workers party or a people's party, whatever you want to call it" (*Daily World*, October 8).

Scarborough's seeming fudge between class-based and all-class formations neatly exposes the fundamental identity of all the leftist electoral strategies. A mass working-class party growing out of mass actions could become revolutionary. But a party led by the labor officials and other "people's" leaders on the Solidarity Day dais would be hardly different from the openly bourgeois Democratic Party; it could serve as a diversion against mass action and nothing more.

The "people's party" slogan is an old CP device that is meant to sound anti-elitist but in reality lures the workers into a party with middle-class leadership and a bourgeois program. "Labor party" clearly means one led by the union bureaucrats, as in Britain. The slogan can be adopted by revolutionaries under specific circumstances, as when a "left" section of the

*Tiny PL demonstration for a general strike was held on Solidarity Day in competition with the mass march.*



elements among the workers to stay in line, at the rally and in the future. But more to the point, the bulk of the left goes along with the bureaucracy in its strategy of diverting the workers' struggle into electoral channels. This is true not only of SDUSA and DSOC but even the more extreme leftists.

For example, the once-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) made the focus of its Solidarity Day campaign the need for a labor party. The more radical pseudo-Trotskyists of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and the Spartacist League (SL) put up banners asking labor to "Build a Workers Party!" Various socialists and do-gooders carried placards for the Citizens Party and its class-collaborationist populist appeal. The Communist Party (CP) in its press suggests a sort of independent party based upon labor but also speaks highly of various "left" Democrats and labor bureaucrats. It quotes Carl Scarborough, the president of the United Furniture Workers of America: "We ought to have a labor party in this country. I

bureaucracy has been forced to lead militant struggles and the task is to force them to take purely economic struggles into the political arena; however, this strategy has become an all-purpose panacea for pseudo-Trotskyists (see "The Labor Party in the United States" in *Socialist Voice* No. 6). "Workers party" is only a euphemism: it is a "labor party" but pretends to avoid depending on the bureaucracy. For some leftists it is a "broad" way of not calling openly for a revolutionary party, or for pretending to revolutionaries that they really are doing so. It is only the old shell game of left reformists hiding their differences under radical phraseology.

All these "alternatives," at a time when labor is not engaged in mass struggles, are substitutes for the actions the bureaucracy also wants to avoid. But in a period when major reforms are unavailable, the masses will be reluctant to vote at all or will simply keep their disgruntled attachment to the Democrats. An abstract party with basically the same program

as the liberal Democrats' is no alternative. Thus the leftist calls for new parties are simply part of the electoral diversion.

We of the LRP were in Washington with a mass action strategy. We marched in the demonstration with our fellow workers but offered a sharp counterposition to the bureaucrats' and leftists' electoralism. Our banner called for a "General Strike to Stop Reagan's Attacks!" and also carried the slogan "Democrats, Labor Bureaucrats No Answer." It was the only banner we saw in the demonstration that attacked the bureaucrats and Democrats straight out.

### Why General Strike Needed

As Kirkland's dilemma over PATCO shows, the general strike is a necessary defensive weapon for the working class today; nothing short of it will succeed in fending off the onslaught of Reagan and the bosses. It will come in an outburst of indignation against the attacks, and it will prove to the working class how large and powerful it really is. Although it begins as a defensive move, it has the potential of making the working class into a political challenger for state power: it directly paralyzes the governmental apparatus and sets up the workers' own alternative production, transportation and communication networks. This has been the theme of many general strikes, most recently the Polish workers' uprising in August 1980. The PATCO slogan "I would rather be a controller in Poland" may simply have been a wish for the right to strike, but it also points to the power workers have by acting together and organizing themselves independently. As communists, we do not hide the revolutionary implications of the general strike. Workers who at present reject proletarian socialism because they think it impossible would see the world in a new way once they feel their power and unity in action.

It is no wonder that the bureaucrats and future bureaucrats in the left wish to divert the movement to safer channels. Some leftists have more to offer than mere electoralism. After all, many of them *are* distinguishable from the bureaucrats by being more militant. For example, both the RWL and the SL raised "Shut Down the Airports!" in defense of the PATCO strike. The SL sneers at other leftists whose demands fell short of this, and it dismissed our slogan as a "general strike in the sweet by-and-by." But closing the airports is far from enough, even in terms of immediate action. What must workers do when Reagan inevitably moves to smash the "illegal" picket lines? And what is needed in response to the class-wide economic and political attack waged by Reagan? Picket lines are necessary but hardly an answer. Electoral diversions *are* an answer — the bureaucrats' — and that is what the left's talk reduces to.

When it comes to broad solutions, the RWL can only point to its "workers' party" electoralism. The SL at least realizes that it has a problem, and it finally ran a headline *after* Solidarity Day saying "No 'Solidarity' with Democrats! For Labor Action to Bring Down Reagan!" Of course, "labor action" is deliberately vague and can mean anything from writing nasty letters to Congressmen (as the social democrats propose) to advocating a workers' party. Given the range of slogans at Solidarity Day, the SL's opposition to the general strike was significant. This left-talking outfit is just as electoralist as the rest.

Others besides the LRP did raise the general strike, but badly. Most notable was the Progressive Labor party. PL held a separate "breakaway" demonstration, a pathetic attempt by less than a hundred people to counterpose themselves to the hundreds of thousands who marched by. Thus a slogan whose purpose is working class unity was invested with the content of

divisiveness. Moreover, PL advocated the general strike for reformist demands, in particular "30 hours work for 40 hours pay." Revolutionaries use the "30 for 40" slogan as a means to convince workers of the need for a workers' state to implement gains of this depth; PL posed it as realizable under capitalism. PL's role at Solidarity Day was typical of its brand of Stalinism: despite its revolutionary rhetoric, in practice it proclaims a reformist program — coupled with a sectarian refusal to join masses of workers (and other reformists) to carry it out.

Then there was *Labor Notes*, a magazine published by leftists pretending to be nothing more than union militants. They promoted a petition at the demonstration calling on the AFL-CIO bureaucracy to organize a general work stoppage in defense of PATCO "to last at least one-half day." Such warning strikes have been used effectively in Poland, *Labor Notes* adds, disingenuously overlooking the fact that the Polish workers had staged massive, unlimited general strikes to win their gains — thereby giving teeth to their later warning strikes. The petition merely echoed the calls of local AFL-CIO officials for one-day strikes, calls largely meant to fool workers into thinking that something was being done about PATCO.

Politely asking Lane Kirkland and friends to lead a general strike is barking at the moon; a general strike will come about only when the workers are aroused to act *against* the bureaucracy. Such action either would force the bureaucrats to give nominal (and treacherous) leadership to the strike or would cast them aside. Demanding is different from begging. The *Labor Notes* strategy can only demoralize workers who know the bureaucrats don't want to lead anything, much less a general strike, and create the greatest illusions among those workers who take the "socialists'" word that they can.

Another tendency that raised the general strike slogan was the Trotskyist Organization of the USA, whose newspaper *Truth* carried the full-page headline, "General Strike to Bring Down Reagan." *Truth* criticized bureaucrats who talk about one-day work stoppages for not acting in defense of PATCO, it cited the example of the Polish workers for achieving their general strike against the official union leaders, it pointed to the revolutionary significance of the general strike throughout the world, and it insisted that the general strike is a realistic goal that today's situation demands. But it negated all this by motivating the general strike through the goal of bringing down Reagan.

The general strike has to be posed as a defensive weapon to a working class that does not yet know its own strength. The Polish general strike, for example, began over immediate questions of defending wages and living conditions and then broadened, after the workers had realized their true power, to a general offensive against the government's political and economic crimes. *Truth* is correct to indicate that a general strike is not simply a large-scale economic action but a political one that confronts the government. But willingness to challenge the state must not be a pre-condition. Only a minority of advanced workers today are prepared to bring down Reagan by non-electoral means, whereas a much broader layer — including many who still have illusions in Reagan — can be brought to support a mass strike in defense of the working class. Precisely because the general strike is a realistic goal for millions of workers, a defensive formulation is required.

Hence the LRP's slogan for a general strike to stop Reagan's attacks. In contrast, *Truth's* general strike is a vehicle only for those workers who actively support its revolutionary implications. *Truth* suffers from the delusion not only that the consciousness of masses is already revolutionary, but also that



its own tiny organization wields enormous influence.

Moreover, *Truth's* revolutionary implications are notably vague; its "clear political goal" of bringing down Reagan is hardly clear enough. What is to replace him? Is the goal reformist or revolutionary? By no means is Polish Solidarity the model that *Truth* claims: its reformist leaders are opposed to bringing down the Warsaw government, much less creating a workers' state. *Truth's* answer for American workers is no better. It speaks of a "mass working class party," and says that "the concrete preparation of the American Revolution will already be underway." But a working class party that is not specifically revolutionary is no answer, since reformists easily call for the same thing. And centrists will always claim that "preparation" for the revolution is under way — any action can be labeled "objectively revolutionary." The point for revolutionaries is to clearly pose the revolutionary workers' party and the workers' state as the goal.

## Reagan's Dilemma

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collapse of Stalinism's dynamism, however, a successful and lasting restoration of totalitarianism is unlikely.

The trend toward more pluralistic forms of capitalism, already apparent under Stalin's centralized rule, would be accelerated if a fascistic restoration occurred in today's world. The present "moderates" cannot carry out their desired decentralization and market forms because doing so would endanger their faltering grip on power. But a centralized totalitarian regime might make the effort toward privatization of the economy — despite its radical pretensions of even better planning and true "socialism."

All wings of world capitalism are frightened by the weakness of Stalinism, not just the Kremlin. After "championing" the Russians as a powerful menace for so long — to the titters of the West European bourgeoisie — even Reagan had to back off from this nonsense. But admitting Russia's weakness left his anti-communist truculence unsupported. So Reagan

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adopted the line that Russia's very weakness was the force propelling it to expand. But this "threat" leads only to Russian pressure for influence (in the Middle East, Africa, etc.), not to costly conquest in reality. It is not enough to weld the West together again.

The dissolution of Stalinism is a key reason for the fumbling of U.S. foreign policy makers. The same fact endangers more than policy: the Stalinist underpropping that allowed world capitalism as a whole to survive World War II is becoming too feeble to continue in that role. In this far more basic way, the erosion of Russia's power ironically undermines Reagan's.

The most perspicacious of the bourgeois commentators understand that the world is at the brink of a fundamental change but they grasp it only vaguely. They know too that it affects the entire globe, Russia included. For example, David

The LRP raised the general strike on Solidarity Day in such a way as to make its necessity accessible to thousands; at the same time, we explained its revolutionary implications to the most advanced layer of workers who must, over time, win over their comrades. In contrast, *Truth* aimed its agitational slogan at a narrow layer while watering down its more elaborate explanations to the level of the most backward. This is another example of opportunism and sectarianism combined, parallel to PL's but less clear in that it was done through words and not action.

Solidarity Day showed the workers their potential for unity and power. As well, it brought to light the bureaucrats' developing strategy for betrayal, a new more activist one than in the past. And it offered new evidence of the far left's total inadequacy as an alternative to the bureaucracy for the leadership of the working class. The task of building the vitally needed revolutionary party has rarely been so clearly posed. ■

Broder, the dean of the *Washington Post's* foreign correspondents, summed up their fears:

"... the suspicion lurks that there is some deeper force at work, requiring massive adjustments in both the communist and the capitalist worlds. The suspicion is that we may be at one of those hinge points in history, when the old order vanishes and a new system brings new leaders to the fore." (*Washington Post*, July 22)

At one time world leaders could name the "deeper force at work." Leon Trotsky cited a diplomatic discussion in 1939 to illustrate the bourgeoisie's fear of the proletariat.

"In the French yellow book, a conversation is reported between the French ambassador, Coulondre, and Hitler, on August 25, nine days before diplomatic relations were severed. Hitler sputters and boasts about the pact which he concluded with Stalin: 'not only a theoretical pact but, I would say, a positive one. I will vanquish, I believe, and you believe you will vanquish; but what is sure is that German blood will flow and French blood will flow,' etc. The French ambassador answers: 'If I actually believed that we would be victorious, I would also have the fear that as a result of the war there would be only one real victor — Mr. Trotsky.' Interrupting the ambassador, Hitler shouted: 'Why do you then give Poland a blank check?' The personal name here of course bears a purely conventional character." (*Writings, 1939-40*, pages 121-2)

The rival imperialist leaders used Trotsky's name as a convenient designation for what they both feared most from the approaching world war, more even than each other — the proletarian revolution. Today capitalism is hurtling into a world depression deeper than that preceding World War II, and the destruction that war can bring is more devastating. Yet our contemporary "statesmen" have greater difficulty than their ancestors in naming the enemy they really fear most. Stalinism stole the name of communism and gutted the meaning of the October revolution. With Stalinism's present collapse along with all forms of "progressive" nationalism, the proletariat has a new chance of power. The Stalinist rug pulled out from under Reagan will floor the capitalist system with him.

The choice is neither Reagan, nor Brezhnev, nor the military dictators nor the popular-frontists. These are all for the moment only. Their gyrations portend their demise in the battle with deeper forces. The world has the choice of maintaining capitalism through fascism or of proletarian communist revolution. ■

## Labor after Solidarity Day

Every wing of the U.S. labor movement from union bureaucracy to far left has eulogized the AFL-CIO sponsored Solidarity Day rally of September 19, 1981. But not even time has led to much real evaluation of its sharply contradictory character.

It was a great event. A massive flood of workers poured into Washington to protest the anti-working class program of the Reagan administration. It was probably the largest labor demonstration in American history, a milestone for the proletariat. Workers across the country gained a new sense of what their united action could mean, a new sense of potential power. Yet the very labor leadership that was forced to summon the ranks to display their strength is working overtime to direct that power away from united mass actions into safer channels.

Over 400,000 people descended on the nation's capital. The disciplined march of labor's ranks was a welcome contrast to the straggling tramps through Washington that have characterized other, middle-class dominated demonstrations. The whole affair was an organizational success, owing not only to the financial resources committed by the AFL-CIO (for example, it bought free access for all to the Washington subway system), but the fact that the unions themselves provided the technical know-how for every aspect of the massive effort.

### The Bureaucrats' Dilemma

The union bureaucracy, justly renowned for breaking all records for endurance while in a state of self-induced coma, really exerted itself. Its motivation, however, was not the genuine plight of the workers but the need to preserve its own neck.

Times have not been good for bureaucrats. Union membership, the dues base, has been dropping continuously. The ranks, if not in open rebellion, do little to hide their contempt for their misleaders. After so many local and national union setbacks, many workers recognize that collective bargaining contains no answers and that national political power determines their living standards, employment and even survival. But now the bureaucracy's political clout in Washington, such as it was, has been reduced to zero. Ronald Reagan not only claimed greater influence with workers, but he publicly humiliated Lane Kirkland & Co. by demolishing a union, PATCO, before their very eyes.

The bureaucrats have begun to wake up to the fact that not just the ranks of the working class but the union hack profession itself is in trouble. The responsibility is theirs alone; it is their past leadership that set the workers up for the present capitalist attack. Their undermining of the wildcat strike wave of the early 1970's coupled to their steadfast refusal to champion the struggles of blacks and others against racial oppression and super-exploitation, fed the fires of division among the workers.

The bureaucrats act to hold back (and even defeat) the

workers' struggles not simply out of cowardice. They accept the capitalist system which uses them as brokers for the sale of labor power, and they wish to avoid creating obstacles to profit. Knowing that capitalism cannot afford jobs and decent incomes for the mass of workers, they hope to protect the high-seniority and better-paid labor aristocracy which they really represent. And to do this they carefully break up any attempt at class unity — that is, any which might get out of hand and pose demands impossible for the system to meet. But contrary



*Cop shoves picketing teacher during recent Philadelphia strike.*

to the bureaucrats' ideology, the gains of labor do not come from the skill and statesmanship of its leaders but from the power of the workers to halt production and profits. When the capitalists saw that the power of the unions had been undermined, they understood that they could then attack the workers without much concern for the feelings of their own "labor lieutenants."

Previous capitalist attacks were insufficient to overcome the economic crisis. It therefore became necessary not only to whip the lower layers of the working class further into line but to cut back the gains of better-off workers as well. Reagan has mounted a general assault which includes undermining the skilled trades and construction workers as well as strongly organized workers in basic production industries.

With his 1982 budget, Reagan moved swiftly against workers' gains and was only temporarily stopped from gutting social security. Undeterred, he then attacked PATCO with the evident aim of not just restraining this particular union but

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