



Re-create
the Fourth International!

SOCIALIST VOICE

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Workers Begin Concessions Fightback

Starting with the New York City public employees' "givebacks" in 1975, workers have been forced to make economic concessions to capitalists and government bosses under the argument that cities and businesses are in big trouble. The 1979 Chrysler Corporation concessions set the trend for the rest of labor, and business after business — even

strike was broken, it took troops to do it. In the United Mine Workers, Rich Trumka ousted president Sam Church by a wide margin, taking advantage of the membership's strong wish for a fightback against the bosses.

The forefront in the resistance has been taken by Chrysler workers who have learned the truth about concessions the hard way. In an overwhelming 70 percent vote, U.S. Chrysler workers rejected the contract negotiated in September, the first time the rank and file has overturned a major auto contract. On November 7, ten thousand Canadian auto workers rejected Chrysler's poverty pleas and went out on strike.

By their actions, Chrysler workers in Canada and the U.S. have opened the road for a possible working class counter-

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many that were not hurting financially — took advantage of the unions' cave-ins to get in on the national trend.

But lately resistance has been picking up. Detroit teachers went on strike this fall to resist concessions. Rubber workers in Waco, Texas, recently ended a four-month anti-concessions strike; 20,000 Caterpillar Tractor workers in the UAW are still out; Northwest Airlines workers held off company demands for months. While the Iowa Beef Processors workers'

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Stalinism, Fourth International, Unionism Reassessed

LRP Convention Charts Course

The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) held a convention in New York City in October, the first since our founding in February 1976.

The LRP was founded after our tendency was bureaucratically expelled from the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL); see *Socialist Voice* No. 1 for the political background. In its first years our group operated under the perspective that had been worked out within the RSL before its rightward degeneration. In the course of time we made substantial advances over these preliminary efforts, so much so that it became increasingly obvious that our world view and course of action had to be re-codified. Thus, after a lengthy examination of our practical work and theoretical founda-

tions, a Tasks and Perspectives document was drawn up, embodying both our past gains and our new understanding. The document was thoroughly discussed, debated and amended before and during the convention; its adoption constituted a substantial step forward for our tendency.

The convention was animated by the feeling that the present passive mood in the working class is drawing to a close. While our perspective does not assume any immediate explosion of radicalism among U.S. workers, it does point to very real, expanding opportunities opening up — a considerable contrast to the entire period since the League was formed.

Recent years have not been good for the left in general nor
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Exchange on Anarchists

The following letter was sent to the League for the Revolutionary Party by the Workers' Emancipation group in San Francisco. We reprint it here together with our reply.

We received the open letter which you sent concerning your debate with the International Communist Current. We understand that the ICC was mistaken in attributing to you — or the political heritage you identify with — a position of support for one or another side in the inter-imperialist conflict of 1939-45. The ICC has also made a similar false accusation against the anarchist left — the accusation of having supported the anti-German side in World War I. Although it is true that certain individual anarchists — such as Kropotkin — did side with one bourgeois faction against another (just as did certain Marxists — and indeed, whole organizations claiming the mantle of Marx), the anarcho-syndicalist movement generally took an internationalist position at the time — this is why the anarcho-syndicalist labor organizations — such as the Spanish CNT and the Italian Syndicalist Union — rallied to the Red Trade Union International when it was first formed.

However, your protest really has an air of false virtue. You reply to false accusations by making false accusations of your own. I am referring to your false accusation that the Libertarian Workers Group — our sister group in New York — supports the FMLN — or arms to that organization — in the Salvadorean conflict. In order to show the falsity of your charge, I include a copy of the joint leaflet we did with the LWG last March (reprinted in the summer 1982 issue of our joint journal "ideas & action"). In it we explicitly dissociate ourselves from the FMLN-FDR — and the authoritarian and statist politics of so-called "national liberation movements" —

and advocate an alternative strategy of independent armed organization — workers militias — by a democratic mass Salvadorean workers movement — so that it will be the working class that ends up in control when the smoke clears — and not some new state power. So your slogan "Guns to the workers, not the FMLN" is a slogan we could agree with. Of course it is very likely that all the people fighting the bourgeois Terrorist-State in El Salvador will find it necessary to subsume their differences in a given moment to fight the immediate, common enemy — the State. But as libertarian socialists, we don't support the FMLN — and in El Salvador the FMLN has murdered and persecuted Salvadorean anarchists.

Your accusation against the LWG seems to be based on the ICC's accusation that the LWG was collecting funds for the FMLN. That accusation was based on the fact that funds for CISPES were collected at a meeting of the Libertarian Book Club in New York. However, the LWG does not control the Libertarian Book Club and they are opposed to funding the FMLN or CISPES. When this was pointed out to the ICC, they retracted their accusation against the LWG. We suggest that you do likewise.

When we call for "Guns to the workers not the FMLN" we mean that the working people of El Salvador have to ensure that the FMLN does *not* acquire state power — that its domination of the revolutionary process be replaced by a mass, democratic workers movement. By contrast, your position of "military support for the FMLN" means support

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Key Articles in Back Issues

- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party (on the origins of the LRP).
- No. 2: Capitalism in the Soviet Union (including a polemic against Ernest Mandel's workers' state theory).
- No. 3: The Class Nature of the Communist Parties.
- No. 4: The "Marxism" of the Petty Bourgeoisie — the Spartacist League and State Capitalism.
- No. 5: U.S. Labor and the Left; A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism.
- No. 6: The Labor Party in the United States; Is Nationalized Property Proletarian?
- No. 7: The Black Struggle: Which Road Today?
- No. 8: Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program — "Workers' Government" vs. Workers' State.
- No. 9: Marxism and the Draft; Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism.
- No. 10: Polish Workers Shake the World.
- No. 11: Iran — Revolution, War and Counterrevolution.
- No. 12: No Shortcuts to Stop Klan; For Socialist Revolution in El Salvador; Church and State vs. Polish Workers.
- No. 13: "Left" Betrays Salvador Revolution; Marxist Response to Reaganism; Poland: Solidarity Forever?
- No. 14: Anti-Reaganism vs. Anti-Capitalism; Spartacist Popular Frontism on El Salvador; Britain's Hot Summer.
- No. 15: Reagan's Russian Dilemma; Polish Workers Under Siege; Labor after Solidarity Day.
- No. 16: How Solidarity Snatched Defeat from the Jaws of Victory; Marxism vs. Reformism — A Test of Theory.
- No. 17: On the Road to Capitalist Crash; Peace Movement Sets Stage for War; Open Letter to ICC; Malvinas War.

Corrections

Two lines were inadvertently dropped in the production of *Socialist Voice* No. 17, making whole sentences incomprehensible.

On page 18, the last sentence at the bottom of column 1 and the first at the top of column 2 should have read: "All over, the capitalists and pro-capitalist bureaucrats and minority leaders are worried about explosions of angry working people. *1199 News* (June 1982) bragged about a new coalition of bureaucrats, civil rights and religious leaders formed in New York to increase voter participation among minorities."

On page 31, the first sentence under the photograph in column 1 should have read: "For the RSL, that is, the program of 'its movement' is perfectly all right as a first step; it is proper to call on the capitalist rulers to tell (read: lie to and fool) people that they will disarm."

We apologize to our readers for the confusion.

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Polish Solidarity Liquidated

On November 10 the underground Solidarity leadership's call for an eight-hour general strike across Poland failed badly. In the same week, the military dictatorship announced a state visit by the Pope for 1983, released Lech Walesa from his eleven-month "internment" and hinted broadly that martial law would be ended by the end of 1982. It was a triumphant week for the Polish regime: it had certainly not won the confidence of the working class whose tremendous accomplishments in 1980-81 had brought the Stalinist state to the brink of collapse, but it had proved that the workers' mass resistance was leaderless and therefore subject to defeat.

Only a few months before, the situation was by no means so gloomy. On August 31, the second anniversary of the Gdansk Accords that had created Solidarity, protest demonstrations were massive, despite the junta's warnings that it would react in force. There were protests in 54 cities in 34 out of 49 provinces; tens of thousands of people took part. Although several thousand were arrested, at least four people were killed and many were wounded, morale was high. At that point it was the regime that appeared shaken at the overwhelming show of opposition.

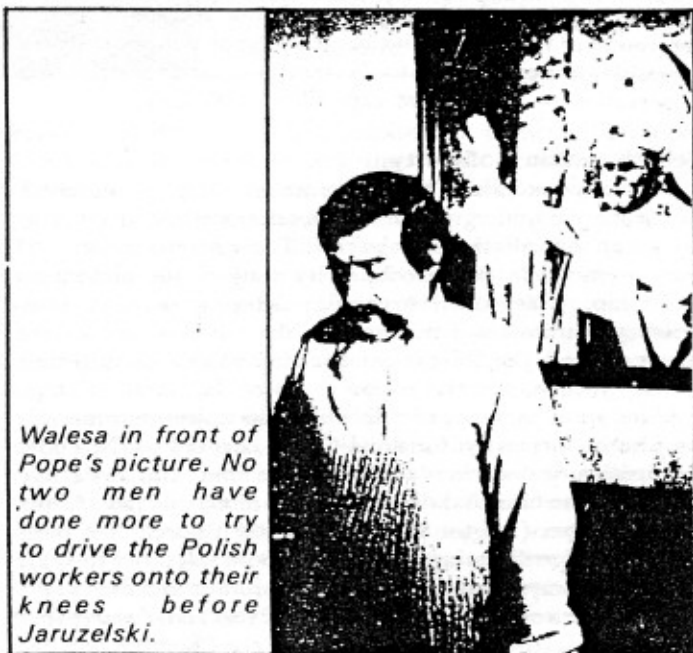
Solidarity, however, followed up with a show of political feebleness. A letter was sent to junta chief Jaruzelski by seven underground leaders and backed by union head Walesa. According to Western press reports, the letter offered deep concessions to the regime in return for freeing the imprisoned unionists: Solidarity would agree to a three-year strike prohibition and would reorganize as a federation of domesticated local and craft unions rather than the nationwide workers' powerhouse of the past.

The regime quickly took advantage of Solidarity's capitulation. After ten months of indecision, the military government finally moved to outlaw Solidarity on October 8. Again thousands protested: in Gdansk, shipyard workers struck quickly but had no idea what was happening in the rest of the country, where many workers heeded the underground's frightened call to wait until November 10. Several days later others, like the work force at the giant Nowa Huta steel plant in Cracow, did go out in support of Gdansk — but by then the Gdansk strikers had been cowed by the regime's massive show of police force and threats of court-martials. Despite the underground's call for the November 10 strike, other actions in December and an all-out effort in the spring, it was clear that the workers' struggle had been stifled for the present. The leadership's late-November cancellation of all protests and call for a "truce" indicates that it recognized the defeat.

Junta Has Not Resolved Crisis

But the junta's triumph over Solidarity's lack of coordination and leadership does not mean that it has solved any of its underlying problems. The government has been unable to find a solution to Poland's crushing economic crisis. Industrial production for the first nine months of 1982 under martial law was lower even than in the comparable period of 1981, when workers frequently asserted their power through strikes. The cost of living has risen by more than 100 percent since 1981, while average wages have gone up by less than 50 percent (*Financial Times*, October 19); the combination amounts to a 29 percent fall in the average worker's standard

of living. Food sales have gone down 16 percent from the critical levels of a year ago, and sales of consumer durables have fallen by 22 percent. But even this squeeze on the workers has not enabled the state to pay off its now \$29 billion debt to Western banks and governments. The economic reforms aimed at decentralizing management which the regime has formally adopted have meant little; for one thing, the regime is afraid to institute its promised "self-management" fraud lest the workers take even that as an opportunity to strengthen their coordination; key industries are now under central military control. Under these circumstances the regime had to choose among dangerous political alternatives, since it has



Walesa in front of Pope's picture. No two men have done more to try to drive the Polish workers onto their knees before Jaruzelski.

not succeeded in building up any mass base of support. In addition to party, army and state apparatchiks, it has the backing of some professionals and managers who prefer Jaruzelski's "law and order" to the turmoil of 1980 and 1981; no doubt some of the Communist Party rank and file who retain limited privileges also go along. There are continuing reports of the neo-fascist trend in the regime that we have pointed to in the past. It wants to go further than Jaruzelski in tightening state power over the workers — in the workers' name, of course.

But no section of the working class has been convinced to work hard and loyally: the regime has no material incentives to offer, and its moral capital is zero. So it was left with two basic alternatives: either agree to a deal with Solidarity's leaders and the Catholic Church in the hope that the mass of workers would accept a very limited restoration of their rights; or take advantage of the obvious weaknesses of the Solidarity leadership, assume that the workers wouldn't resist effectively without clear guidance, and smash once and for all the workers' hopes that the heady days of 1980-81 could be restored.

If the first alternative had been chosen, there would still be no guarantee that the workers would go along with their

leaders' compromises without a struggle; any concessions by the regime might be taken as a sign of weakness by the most militant sectors of the angry working class. What tipped the balance toward the second alternative was the willingness, even eagerness, of Solidarity's leaders to capitulate on critical questions. The timing of events indicates that the rulers foresaw that workers wanting to fight would be led by people who wanted, at all costs, not to.

The Jaruzelski junta's willingness to use massive military force against every sign of opposition obviously presents a great obstacle to all those who want to fight what is one of the most unpopular regimes on earth. But the junta's lack of any semblance of legitimacy, compared with near-unanimity of working-class and popular support for Solidarity while it lived (10 million members out of a population of 35 million), indicates that the regime has more than mere force in its armory. Even under martial law Solidarity successfully published two dozen newsletters, some of them offset printed with justified margins, that circulate in the tens of thousands. No, the Solidarity leadership is weak not because it is underground or imprisoned but because, for all its opposition to Jaruzelski, it is committed to the reform — and therefore the preservation — of Stalinist capitalism in Poland.

Debate within Solidarity

At the point when the government "legally" dissolved Solidarity, the underground had no serious alternative but to call for an immediate general strike. This response in fact had been promised in advance by every wing of the movement leadership. The unconscionable delaying strategy was designed purposefully to dissipate the workers' immediate outrage, which the Solidarity leadership has all along feared just as much as has the regime.

Allied with Solidarity's leadership in its abject reformism is the Church hierarchy. Cardinal Glomp, backed by the Pope, repeatedly urged workers not to strike or protest in any active way — despite his ritual condemnations of martial law. As the *London Times* (August 30) observed, the Church "has been the principal moderating influence on both sides over the past two years, always urging restraint, compromise and dialogue." But only the workers' leaders obeyed. If the *Times'* worry that "at this crucial moment the authority of the Church is at a low ebb" among the workers is true, that can only strengthen the workers' mass resistance.

The fear of the masses' power permeates every document and every discussion that leaks out of Poland. For example, the late-summer Solidarity letter to Jaruzelski was reportedly linked to a set of theses issued by the Polish Catholic Church in April, calling for a social concord "to reinforce the structures of the state and the system" along with its international alliances (*Le Monde*, April 28). The Church document claimed that "responsibility for the deep crisis in which Poland finds itself is, in some measure, due to Solidarity" — thus absolving the regime and its economic system of the full blame for Poland's impasse. And it criticized the union for being

"NO DRAFT" IS NO ANSWER!

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On Conscription and Militarism**

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unable, "despite its efforts," to resist the demands and the political pressure from rank and file workers.

This last point is most significant for understanding the attitude of the Solidarity officials. A well publicized debate has been taking place within the underground, involving even some of the imprisoned leaders who have been able to get their views smuggled out. The two main positions were put forward by Jacek Kuron, formerly spokesman for KOR, the Workers Defense Committee that had allied with militant workers since 1976, and Zbigniew Bujak, head of the Warsaw branch of Solidarity before the crackdown. (The documents can be found in *Labor Focus on Eastern Europe*, Summer 1982.)

Both Wings Fear Workers' Militancy

Kuron called for the "liquidation of the occupation through an organized mass uprising"; in preparation, he advocated "agitation among the soldiers and police militia." This strategy was aimed, however, not at the destruction of the Stalinist regime of statified capitalism as the militant language might suggest, but "to prepare society...for major concessions directed at a compromise with the regime." It adds up to revolutionary methods for reformist goals — the replacement of the military junta by the more open Stalinist regime of 1980-1981. Soviet intervention would be forestalled as much by specific capitulation to Russian interests as by the force wielded by the Polish masses.

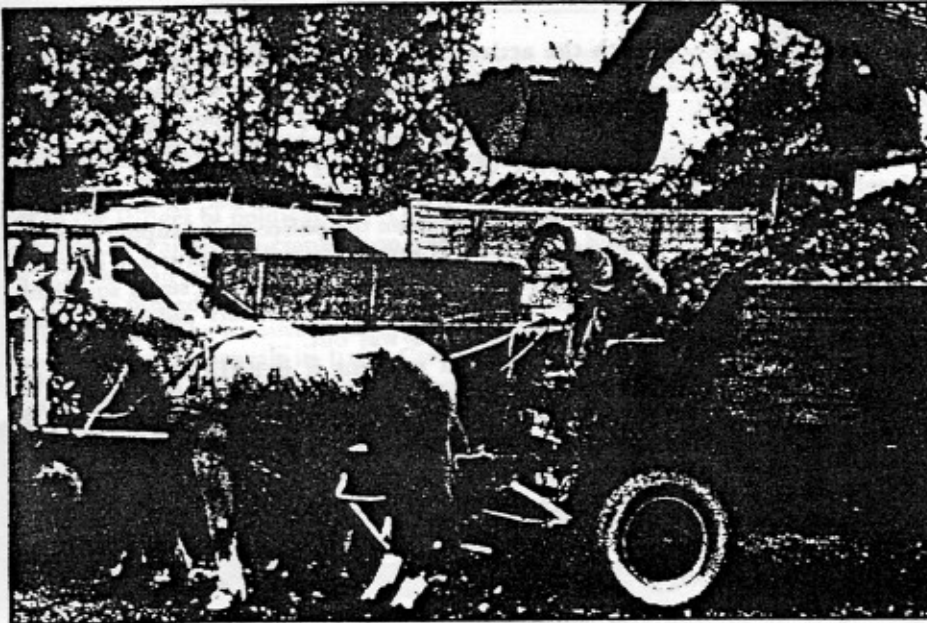
Bujak shared Kuron's reformist goals but advocated decentralized non-violent methods to carry them out: the construction of an underground society, in effect, with its own schools, press and market. His assumption was that the military regime would slowly disintegrate under relentless mass pressure. Only under the most extreme situations such as the dissolution of Solidarity, said Bujak, would he advocate militant measures like a general strike.

Kuron and Bujak agreed on one key point despite their differences: some step was necessary to prevent more radical workers from losing faith in Solidarity and taking matters into their own hands. "No appeals for calm will divert the young and hot-headed," wrote Kuron. "They can only force them into terrorism if they are prevented from other forms of struggle." Similarly, Bujak reportedly backed the late-summer Solidarity compromise offer because he feared that "Poland's political stalemate is driving many factory workers into the ranks of union radicals. 'They simply want to fight,' one Bujak ally said of the hotheads" (*Newsweek*, October 4).

Stalinist Double-Talk

The fact that Solidarity's reformist leaders were constantly searching for ways to contain the fighting anger of the rank and file workers and youth is blatant — yet it is almost universally denied. Polish Vice-Premier Mieczyslaw Rakowski, justifying the outlawing of Solidarity in October, argued that the union members had been unable to quell the "anti-socialist" militancy of their leaders; this was an obvious example of Stalinist double-talk that meant precisely the opposite. In early September the regime arrested several KOR leaders (most of whom were already in custody!), blaming them for the August riots. Anything, even the most ridiculous assertions, was resorted to in order to deny the masses the credit for acting for themselves.

It is understandable that the Stalinists and their apologists would try to portray Solidarity as a movement of dumb workers misled by hotheads. But an equivalent line has been argued by bourgeois and social-democratic "defenders" of the workers' movement, who insist that the leaders' moderation is



Horse-drawn cart unloads coal in Warsaw. Beneath veneer of modern industrialization and "socialism," Stalinism reveals capitalism's desperate attempt to cover over outmoded technique and reactionary class relations.

necessary if the workers are to follow them. Any attempt to fight for a thoroughly revolutionary policy that would aim at the destruction of the ruling bureaucracy is declared out of bounds by the threat of Russian invasion. Or at least it was before the December crackdown. That turn of events should at least have demonstrated that Solidarity's moderate policy was far less practical than a revolutionary one, since it led the movement, unprepared and unarmed, to disaster. But no, we are still told on all sides that it was radical statements by Solidarity leaders that brought the crackdown upon their heads.

Socialist Voice has explained all along that the radicalism of the Solidarity leaders, such as it was, was aimed at keeping up with the more militant workers in order to tie them to reformist policies. Thus the call by Solidarity's national leaders in December 1981 for a referendum to define Poland's relationship with the USSR was seized upon by Jaruzelski as a hostile act; it became his chief excuse for arresting the "counterrevolutionaries." We noted at the time that it was really an attempt to pacify Moscow ("How Solidarity Snatched Defeat from the Jaws of Victory," *Socialist Voice* No. 16). This was confirmed in a recent article by John Darnton, the *New York Times* correspondent in Poland throughout the Solidarity period. He wrote (in the *New York Times Magazine*, August 22):

"At the end, the union tried — naively, it turned out — to bypass the Polish party altogether and address itself directly to Moscow. This was the significance of Solidarity's call, at its final meeting on Dec. 12, 1981, for a national referendum on membership in the Warsaw pact. The union counted on a vote for continued membership; the idea was to convince Moscow that the military guarantee the Russians needed could be provided not just by the Polish party but by Polish society as a whole."

The regime, of course, knew better. It correctly feared that the masses, given the chance to express their opinions, would defy both their oppressors and their reformist misleaders and reject the Russian "alliance." And then the Stalinist bureaucracy would have stood naked without even the protection of the union leaders between them and the masses.

It was a similar compromise that both Kuron and Bujak

hoped for under martial law, despite their tactical differences. Their scheme would reform the Polish economy through decentralization and "workers' control" while keeping it tied to the Soviet bloc (perhaps with some degree of independence). This is a pipe-dream, differing little from the "reforms" adopted by the Stalinists themselves. Poland's economy was wrecked by the disastrous policies of the Gierek regime, but it is not an isolated case. All of Stalinist Europe is facing backward productivity and massive foreign debts; and the world capitalist financial system is living very dangerously with a dozen or more countries, all holding vast debts, at the brink of default. Capitalism as a whole is heading into another great depression, for which the only alternative is proletarian revolution. The only solution for the Polish working class, whose achievements have placed it among the vanguard of the world proletariat, is to build a party on the principles of genuine Marxism and Leninism to lead the way to socialist revolution. This cannot mean an immediate insurrection, but it does mean immediate advocacy of an internationalist revolution so that masses of workers will be prepared when the opportunity arises again. And given the capitalist crisis, it surely will.

Whenever the genuine Trotskyists have called for such a revolutionary program and strategy, the reply from the Solidarity apologists has always been that this is impossible for the workers will never accept it. It is true, of course, that workers (and intellectuals even more so!) under most circumstances hope to find peaceful and reformist solutions to their problems. But Poland today is different. There the workers (but very few of the intellectuals) have learned through their own achievements that the Stalinist society they

El Salvador: Revolution or Betrayal?

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Solidarity workers display underground paper. Sophisticated press shows that real problem is political leadership, not communication.

live under is corrupt, decadent, reactionary and unreformable; they despise it and want to get rid of it. Listen to Zbigniew Romaszewski, a top Solidarity leader arrested by the regime after the August 31 demonstrations, interviewed in the underground paper *Mazowsze Weekly* last spring (see *Solidarnosc Bulletin*, New York, August 1982):

"We should begin preparations for a general strike. We don't have much time. The strike should start in the fall, before a Brezhnev-Reagan summit. Its prospects will deter the USSR from taking drastic steps. The strike will place the Polish problem at the center of international attention.

"It should be a nationwide general strike coupled

Socialist Stock Ownership?

According to the *Financial Times* of London (October 19), "the Romanian government is to put a bill through its Parliament by the end of this year which would allow workers to buy shares in state-owned enterprises."

The British business newspaper notes that this would be the "first such workers investment scheme in a Comecon country." Yes indeed. These are the countries, remember, where the workers are already supposed to own the factories collectively because private ownership is abolished. This report simply proves what we have argued for years, that the real owners are not the workers but the ruling state bureaucracy installed by Stalin's army after World War II. After all, if the workers owned the factories all along, why would they have to buy them now?

The rulers of Romania's statified capitalism are introducing their "socialist" stock-ownership scheme for the same reasons that capitalists often do the same thing in the West. The *Financial Times* account quoted the Communist Party explanation: the plan was designed to "heighten workers' responsibility in their capacity as owners, as well as their preoccupation with the smooth running of economic activity." Any worker, East or West, will recognize the flavor of this management double-talk. It simply means that the bosses hope the workers will be bamboozled into working harder.

Romania has a further reason for this scheme. Its economy, like those of Poland and the other Eastern European Stalinist states, is suffering from lagging productivity and is heavily in

with the active defense of workplaces and enterprises. In Warsaw twenty or thirty large enterprises would go on a sit-in strike, the rest on a supportive, 'absentee' strike. In addition, demonstrations and marches would divert part of the regime's forces. If the situation becomes grave the authorities will not, in my opinion, be able to count even on the police units' support, never mind the army's. If just one battalion refuses to shoot ... It happened in February 1917 when a small squad of Cossacks crossed over to the protesters' side, and after one month the Tsar was out. ...

"At the present moment it is difficult to organize brief strikes. People say that they risk dismissal for a 15 minute walk-out which achieves nothing. But they are ready to take a much greater risk if they know that 'this will be their last battle.' This also held true before December 13th."

That is the kind of strategic thinking that is worthy of the sacrifices and accomplishments of the Polish workers. It draws on the revolutionary lessons of the past to confirm revolutionary conclusions for the present. We don't know Romaszewski's general political thinking, but it is clear that the bulk of Solidarity's leadership is far behind. The Polish workers have to purge their leadership of the compromisers and backsliders and replace them with revolutionists.

At the hour of the regime's triumph the workers have been defeated but not crushed. The memory of the sixteen months when they led Polish society is still with them. The militant outbursts during martial law were a tremendous show of strength and conviction. If revolutionary workers can draw the lessons of the failures of their leadership, if they can win the masses away from the criminal Church that deplores oppression but preaches acceptance, then the Polish workers will remain in the vanguard of the world proletariat and show the way to genuine socialism. ■

debt to Western banks. The West-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been concerned about "excess cash" in the hands of workers, a problem which the Romanian government has tried to counter through inflation and food rationing. The *Financial Times* noted that "it may be no coincidence that (President) Ceausescu proposed the scheme after he had just renegotiated terms with the IMF for continuing Romania's standby loan." For all the Western capitalists' complaints about the evils of "Communist" societies, when it comes to intensifying the exploitation of Eastern workers they are the first to demand their share of the profits.

Romania's plight poses a different problem for leftists who consider the Stalinist states to be workers' states of some sort. In the West, Marxists oppose employee ownership plans as class collaborationist frauds designed to squeeze more surplus-value out of the workers. If, however, Romania is a workers' state and its rulers are not an alien class but simply a petty-bourgeois layer within the working class — as the pseudo-Trotskyist theory of Pabloism would have it — such schemes are not class collaborationist and so cannot be rejected as unprincipled. There was already talk about similar plans in Poland in the days of Solidarity, but so far we have seen no sign that any of the "deformed workers' state" theoreticians have criticized them. A theory that opens the door to the workers' "participation" in their own exploitation deserves to be buried. ■

LRP Convention

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for revolutionary communists in particular. Our small size, combined with isolation from mass struggles, has condemned us to the fringes of political life. This form of exile was made even more galling by comparison with the high hopes with which we had entered the mid-1970's.

In the preceding years, the black ghetto uprisings in the United States, the massive French general strike of 1968, and working-class upheavals in Italy, Czechoslovakia, China, the Caribbean and Latin America had announced the resurgence of the proletariat on a world scale. The series of eruptions promised to wash away the effects of the defeats inflicted upon the working classes during and after World War II. A new

IS had developed a small but serious cadre within the industrial working class, but it held a "shop-floor control," factory by factory outlook that led to advocacy of a "rank and file" struggle instead of building a revolutionary workers party. In this it tailed the efforts of the labor bureaucracy, which at the time was dividing up the workers' rebellion by its policy of local, separate and therefore weak strikes doomed to failure. The bureaucracy's "Apache tactics" defused the rebellion, reinforced the workers' sense of impotence and isolation and above all prevented a political generalization aimed at confronting state power. The IS's politics added their bit to this defeatism.

Origins of Our Tendency

Within the IS, a new tendency arose in 1972 that groped for a new alternative to the reformist bureaucrats here and abroad. Reflecting the mass upsurges, the tendency dedicated



Japanese and West European robots at Soviet fair in Leningrad, October 1982. Russia's faltering statified capitalism depends upon Western imperialism for new technology.

generation of advanced workers was leading the way, impatient, angry and contemptuous of the old reformist and Stalinist parties which had held back struggles in country after country. Even in the U.S., unionized workers were wildcatting in rebellion against the labor bureaucrats and their no-win strategy.

Russian Question Is Key

In the early 1970's the founders of the LRP had been members of the International Socialists (IS). Our politics reflected illusions derived from the long prosperity bubble that came in the wake of World War II. But the IS's intense cynicism towards the revolutionary capacities of the proletariat was rooted historically in the triumph of the Stalinist counterrevolution in the USSR in the late 1930's that overthrew the first workers' state.

The IS espoused the Shachtmanite theory of Russia as "bureaucratic collectivism": a non-capitalist but also non-proletarian society in which every vestige of the workers' revolutionary gains had been destroyed. Stalinism appeared to be an eternal dictatorship built around a monstrous centralized state. Its totalitarian economy was subject only to the interests of the bureaucracy and not to socio-economic laws like the law of value, which both drives capitalism forward and produces its crises and decay.

But in rejecting Stalin's brutal centralization policies the IS implicitly rejected as well the very different centralized rule that characterizes a genuine workers' state. This view meshed neatly with the petty-bourgeois outlook that dominated the New Left milieu of the period with its devotion to "small is beautiful" and localist community struggles. The

itself to the resurrection of Leninism and Trotskyism and rejected the entire Shachtmanite outlook. It was expelled from the IS in 1973 and formed the RSL, adopting a state capitalist analysis of the USSR and the countries modeled after it.

The RSL's state capitalist view began to distinguish itself from others, notably that of Tony Cliff's British IS (now the SWP). Cliff, like Shachtman, denied that the Russian system was driven internally by the law of value; likewise, he shared the bureaucratic collectivist emphasis on the strength of the new system and the undesirability of the proletariat fighting for centralization; further, he credited Russia's rapid growth in the 1930's not to the survivals of proletarian rule but to the newly developing capitalist class. The Cliffites, not by accident, were also devotees of rank and filism.

While rejecting the Shachtman-Cliff wing of ex-Trotskyism, the RSL found no sign of revolutionary Bolshevism among the "orthodox" Trotskyists, either. Trotsky had believed the USSR to be a workers' state until his murder in 1940. But he also understood that Russia's degeneration was accelerating, that it was a "counterrevolutionary workers' state" so weak and distorted that it could not outlast the coming world war: he predicted that the Soviet Union would either be reconquered for capitalism or go forward through a new workers' revolution to become once again a healthy workers' state.

Stalinism, however, survived the war and expanded across Europe and Asia. It proved to be stronger than Trotsky thought possible because, in the course of what he had described as a "civil war" during the mass purges of the late 1930's, the last vestiges of the workers' state power had been destroyed and the bureaucracy was exploiting the crushed Soviet workers as a restored capitalist class. The post-war

Trotskyists had initially described the East European conquests of the USSR as state capitalist. But under the guidance of Michel Pablo, they soon came up with the alchemic notion that Stalinism had produced "deformed workers' states" in East Europe, China and North Korea without the working class playing any role in this series of pseudo-socialist revolutions.

Thus both the Pabloites and the Shachtman-Cliff current embraced the idea that petty-bourgeois formations could successfully undertake progressive measures (the massive expansion of the means of production, the socialist revolution) despite the defeat of the proletariat. Both world views were capitulations to the outlooks of the proliferating middle-class layers that developed during the imperialist prosperity bubble. Thus the RSL found itself alone in its attempt to reconstruct the Marxist revolutionary program that had been degraded and dogmatized in the interest of alien class views.

In retrospect, we can now see that the RSL had made only primitive beginnings in the revival of Marxism. The labor bureaucrats' betrayals together with the 1974-75 recession halted the resurgence of American workers, and they became cynical and grudgingly passive. Under these conditions the RSL succumbed to the rapid shift to the right by the U.S. far left as a whole. Today it is indistinguishable from the general run of centrist groups. And its analysis of Stalinism is, if anything, now more conspiracy-based than most and less dependent on the operation of objective laws of political economy. The RSL sees a world polarized between a strong U.S. and a strong USSR fighting it out for domination, a misperception common to all centrist tendencies.

"Statified Capitalism"

In order to stress the uniqueness of the LRP's theory on the Russian question, the convention resolution adopted the name "statified capitalism" for the Stalinist system. This term is meant to show the separation between our understanding and that of the state capitalists (RSL, British SWP, etc.) who regard the essence of Stalinism as its statification. In contrast, we draw attention to Stalinism's subjection to the laws of capitalism as opposed to its supposed obedience to pure state control. Likewise, the document labeled Stalinism "pseudo-centralist" in opposition to both the Shachtman-Cliffites and the Pabloists. The high point of centralization in the USSR occurred under Stalin when the system was already eradicating its ties to the proletarian revolution of 1917. Since then, decentralization, polycentrism and the anarchy of production in general have been dominant tendencies. The LRP holds that only a genuine workers' state is capable of centralizing capital and thereby laying the basis for the material abundance that can rid the world forever of poverty and misery.

From the start the LRP has pointed out that Stalinism is by no means a successor system to world capitalism, either progressive or reactionary. It is a weak, patchwork operation clinging to Western technology and loans for survival — not a planned and powerful alternative in real contention for world domination. Its military might makes its economic fragility even clearer. Its bloc has shattered not simply for surface ideological differences but because of economic necessity. Like the neo-colonial nations, East Europe has achieved minimal progress at the expense of huge debts to Western banks and a dependency on the world capitalist market. Russia is unable to guarantee or even partly satisfy its satellites' economic needs.

These bastardized capitalist economies have been unable to uphold all the proletarian achievements made through revolution. They have been forced to try to turn those gains

against the workers, and so they adapt the nationalized industry, foreign trade monopoly and planning structure into instruments for exploitation. But these weapons also work against the efficient operation of statified capitalism. Full employment, to the extent that it really exists, hampers exploitation; and while competition certainly exists among firms and states of the Eastern bloc, the absence of an open capital-market hampers accumulation. Thus, unlike in the 1930's when the still-proletarian Soviet Union developed despite the all-out world depression, today Russia and its semi-empire are subject to the same economic crisis as world capitalism as a whole.

The Capitalist Future

The Tasks and Perspectives document realistically assesses the impasse faced by the ruling classes without falling into either the "war and fascism are around the corner" rhetoric of leftists eager to electrify workers and to embrace sympathetic bourgeois forces, or the false, business-as-usual "let's be practical" attitude of petty-bourgeois elements still hoping for sops from the decaying system.

"The growing world crisis and class struggle have moved the U.S. bourgeoisie to begin the Cold War again. Russia has been used as the target, but the real enemy is the struggle of the masses. Given Russia's weakness and dependence, the Cold War drive has floundered. The USSR, like the U.S., has an interest in locking its bloc together but even for this needs Western aid. Thus it moves towards war with greater reluctance than does the West.

"The imperialists of all countries still wish to avoid war. They seek to preserve their international arrangements but are being forced into increasingly jingoist and protectionist policies. If the Cold War should break out into a hot war in the short run, the main enemies will be the U.S. and the USSR. However, in the greater likelihood that world war is staved off for a time, the main enemies then will be the U.S. and one or more of the major 'Western' rivals such as West Germany or Japan. Russia, like China, would serve as a junior ally to one side or the other and as an area of exploitation in such a case.

"The only alternative to war is the proletarian revolution. Therefore capitalism will have to crush the reawakening proletariat in major countries before world war can be risked. This requires fascism, which can temporarily subdue the workers but cannot solve the crisis short of war. Its victory will signify the imminence of the third world war.

"In the present conjuncture the ruling classes of all the major powers believe that it is still possible to avoid playing the fascist card. While still seeking to squeeze more surplus-value out of the workers, they hesitate to risk a head-on confrontation with an undefeated proletariat."

Today the international working class is massive in size and highly concentrated in huge industries. Objectively its power is enormous. It is restive and discontented. But the workers' understanding of their own power, their consciousness of their ability and need to create a new society is missing. This is only another way of saying that revolutionary leadership is missing; our times demonstrate with a vengeance Trotsky's observation that the real crisis of the proletariat is the crisis of leadership.

There is of course leadership within the working class. Given the failure of the centrists (the leftists who talk revolution but practice reformism) to provide an alternative to the social-

democrats and Stalinists, these parties still dominate working-class politics internationally. But this domination is shaky. The erosion of the Russian economy has lessened both the appeal of Stalinism and its ability to prop up world imperialism as it has done. Likewise the conventional reformists in the West are being undermined by the developing depression and the weakening of the middle-class layers, including the labor aristocracy.

Wedded to a program strictly limited to capitalism and its narrowing bounds, the workers have suffered massive unemployment and a sharp decline in real wages. As a result, the labor misleaders have been able to deepen the nationalist and sectoralist false consciousness which pervades the workers' movement everywhere. The Tasks and Perspectives document points out that just when the interdependent world economy has again proved that nations, even the most powerful ones, are unable to halt the crisis, the workers' leadership advocates protectionism for their national capitals and concessions to their particular industries. Under the guise of pacifism they follow a path to trade war and racism, leading inevitably to real war in the interests of the imperialists' redivision of the globe.

Neo-Colonial Nationalism

Nationalism is a deadly trap in the advanced imperialist countries and is an absurdity as well in the neo-colonial world. The mass movement against imperialism that flourished in the decades after World War II succeeded in overthrowing direct colonial rule. But under the misleadership of petty-bourgeois

suppress efforts by the masses to expropriate bourgeois property in favor of negotiations with European and even U.S. imperialism. With the dimming of the Stalinist beacon, moreover, some of the petty-bourgeois nationalists have raised a social-democratic banner. As in the case of the Central Americans, one purpose of this is to curry favor with West European (chiefly West German) imperialism now maneuvering for its independence from the United States.

Such Popular Front policies are a menace to the working classes. The Popular Front can no more halt the collapse of capitalism than can any other "democratic" alternative, neither in the advanced countries nor in the ex-colonial ones. By entrapping the working class within stringent capitalist limits, Popular Frontism drives masses of petty bourgeois and backward workers into the arms of the fascists with their radical-sounding "alternative" to capitalism, and this begins the inevitable march towards World War III.

Class Struggle in the U.S.

The American working class suffered severe setbacks in the middle 1970's: strike action has been considerably reduced; the momentum towards union "givebacks" has deepened divisions among workers. Unemployment is at depression levels in many cities, while only the economic collapse holds inflation down temporarily. The black and women's movements too have receded and are on the defensive.

The bleak economic picture at this point holds the profound discontent of the workers in check; in the last great depression it took four or five years before the giant explosions occurred

U.S. Steel blows up Ohio blast furnace. Collapsing industry, plant closures, layoffs and lower living standards for workers cannot be stopped by concessions and protectionism. Revolutionary struggle and communist internationalism are the only answers.



nationalists, both Stalinists and ordinary pro-capitalists, the new nations quickly lapsed back into the quagmire of the imperialist world market and today are sunk up to their necks in debt, backwardness and economic malformation.

The hallmark of petty-bourgeois leadership of the proletariat is its attempt to forge class collaborationist coalitions - "Popular Fronts" - with bourgeois national forces on bourgeois terms. The theory is that the only way for the masses to advance is to depend on capitalist investment. Thus, after the self-sacrificing struggle of the Vietnamese people waged for years against the greatest imperialist power on earth, we are treated to the degrading spectacle of the Vietnamese Stalinist regime begging U.S. capital to re-enter Indochina and exploit it anew. We see the nationalist rebel leadership in El Salvador seeking a coalition with the butcher junta and its U.S. sponsors, while the Nicaraguan Sandinistas

in the form of citywide general strikes (Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco) that led to the formation of the CIO industrial unions. Predictions of the pace of struggle are always risky. The Tasks and Perspectives document was careful to note that the underlying anger of the working class, its racially oppressed sectors particularly, could produce actions that ignite class upheavals far more rapidly than can be foreseen now.

The labor bureaucrats still hold their grip on the working class. But their allies in the bourgeois Democratic Party suffered a bad defeat in the 1980 presidential election. Many middle-class people turned to Reagan's fake-radical message of prosperity under "free enterprise" and cheap government. As well, many of the aristocratic layers of the working class switched from the Democrats to Reagan, representing the start of a process of polarization, of increasingly rapid right

and left swings, as masses search for a political alternative.

Even before Reagan's election the LRP predicted the failure of his economic program just as we had exposed the hollowness of the liberals'. We also foresaw from the beginning the inevitable disenchantment of the workers drawn to Reagan as well as the alienation of the most extreme elements among his petty-bourgeois supporters. Reaganism has revealed itself as representing the interests of the dominant sector of capitalism, the monopoly bourgeoisie alone. But the quick-fix tax rake-offs, arms subsidies and loosening of state regulation proved feeble. Under Reagan the bourgeoisie is willing to crack a few unions and pressure others into concessions. It is willing to slice the social budget on which many workers depend. But the system needs far greater exactions from the working class — which neither Reagan nor the bourgeoisie as a whole are yet ready to risk imposing. And since the trend, in this epoch of capitalist decay, must be toward stronger centralized state power Reaganism can only be a brief interlude.

Still, Reagan has squeezed the working class far harder than has been done in decades and even the aristocratic layers are feeling the pinch. This accounts for the howl of indignation heard from the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Its strategy, of course, has been to divert all potential industrial militancy into safe electoral channels. It mobilized the workers for the enormous Solidarity Day rally in September 1981 to kick off its Democratic Party campaign. It has had some success in that there has been a shift of blue-collar workers back to the Democrats, from both Reagan and not voting. Further, the collaboration of the black petty-bourgeois leaders, likewise seeking a "responsible" protest and not a fighting one, helped produce a slightly higher turnout by black workers in 1982 that reversed a long-time trend toward not voting out of contempt for the lack of real alternatives.

Our document predicted that the workers would seek more radical choices. This was borne out by the marginal nature of the Democrats' victory in the November elections: their gain of Congressional seats was slightly above average for a mid-presidential term vote, but far less than the shift customary at times of economic crisis. Clearly the labor bureaucrats have far to go to convince workers that the Democratic corpse means anything for them.

The U.S. Left

The convention document noted that the bureaucracy's campaign to rebuild the Democratic Party constitutes the American version of the Popular Front. The bureaucracy's present intent is to build a pre-emptive Popular Front (like Mitterrand's in France) by 1984 in order to prevent any mass eruption through early cooptation. Should the struggle develop more rapidly, the Popular Front would have to be more radical in character.

As in Europe and Latin America, the far left will be called on to play a crucial role in the development of a Popular Front strategy. The left bureaucrats rely on centrist radicals, people whose socialist convictions make them tireless workers for the causes they espouse but who can nevertheless be counted on to subordinate their revolutionary hopes to the "practical" reality: the present sway of the bureaucrats and Democrats.

Evidence for this is the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a mildly leftist reform group with close ties to the left labor bureaucracy that has an important near-centrist left wing. But DSA cannot offer the harder cadre that the centrists and Stalinists have trained. The moderate centrists and Stalinists including the IS, various ex-Maoist networks, the Socialist Workers Party, the Communist Party, the Communist Workers Party and the Workers World Party all maintain formal independence from the Democrats. But

given their constant harping on Reaganism as the enemy rather than capitalism as a whole, their political work serves to promote a future Popular Front. More radical centrists like the RSL, the Pabloite Revolutionary Workers League and Internationalist Workers Party, and the increasingly Stalinist Spartacist League, attack the liberal Democrats and favor a labor or "workers" party. But they furnish these would-be parties with reformist goals disguised as Trotsky's Transitional Program (see below), and so form only a barrier to the proletarian vanguard.

The far left has been moving steadily to the right as the crisis deepens in an effort to meet the anticipated mass movements halfway. When the masses do go into motion, undoubtedly leftward-moving centrist currents will separate out. The absence of working class activity at the moment accounts for the lack of such currents as well as for the far left's overall retreat from industrial activity. Even the DSA, unhindered by revolutionary pretensions, has been unable to grow more than modestly so far.

The Fourth International

While there was substantial discussion of the world and national perspectives outlined above at the LRP convention, there was unanimity on the overall analysis and strategy. On the other hand, there was some sharp disagreement on the tasks of the organization. This is a normal and expected process in our ranks, since politics consists of life and death questions for the masses; politics without passionate debate is the business of dilettantes and compromisers. Our discussion had none of the bureaucratic character so common on the left today; it was designed to draw out differences, not suppress them. Our understanding of Marxism specifies that revolutionary politics develop through combat on both the practical and conceptual levels. This principle is jealously guarded by a membership which well remembers the RSL, where petty bureaucrats, unable to deal with political opposition, resorted to organizational punishments, character assassination and repression of opponents' views.

In the LRP discussion, by the time the disputed questions came to a vote the two remaining minority amendments received one vote each from different comrades. The differences on both questions were tactical in nature.

The major task the LRP has set for itself is to take the lead in re-establishing the Fourth International, the "World Party of Socialist Revolution" launched by Trotsky and his followers in the 1930's. In our view the Fourth International degenerated after Trotsky's death. Its small cadre barely survived the campaign of physical and political annihilation waged against it by the Nazis, Stalinists and "democratic" imperialists. Concessions to nationalism and the mistaken "defense of the USSR" during the war were further weaknesses. But the final collapse did not come until the International had to confront the massive post-war defeats of the working class in East Europe at the hands of the Soviet Army, and in West Europe and the colonial countries through the betrayals of Stalinist and social-democratic parties. The defeats allowed Stalinism to prop up capitalism worldwide and laid the basis for a new world order under U.S. hegemony.

Under these blows the International turned conservative. Pablo introduced a strategy of "deep entry" into the social-democratic or Communist parties, depending on which dominated the working class in a given country. The Pabloites' adaptation to the reformists and Stalinists of their own countries coincided with Pablo's theory that labeled Eastern Europe's Stalinist countries "workers' states": both promoted petty-bourgeois alternatives to workers' power. Finally, the series of capitulations led to an outright betrayal of the

Bolivian revolution in 1952.

In Bolivia, the size and influence of the Trotskyists in the workers' movement, especially among the vanguard tin miners, put the International's politics to a practical test that it miserably failed. It was no longer a question of bad theoretical positions: the Bolivian section gave active support to the bourgeois nationalist government, a deadly enemy of the working class. This betrayal was decisive, and not for the Bolivian workers alone. A genuine socialist revolution in Bolivia, obviously a world apart from the fake ones of Eastern Europe, would have catapulted Trotskyism into contention for the leadership of the world proletariat. Given the mass upheavals that developed soon afterwards, a victory of the revolution in Bolivia would have had a worldwide impact. The Bolivian Pabloites violated every basic tenet of Trotsky's program of permanent revolution, encouraged by the International's leadership with hardly a whimper of protest from any section. From then on the International existed only as a cadaver; the already dim flame of proletarian revolution in it had been snuffed out.

Subsequent splits between Ernest Mandel, the U.S. SWP, the Healyites, Lambertists, Morenoites, Spartacists and others were based not on fundamental questions of principle but on disputes over which pro-capitalist force to tail after. Some oriented toward Russian nationalism, others toward Mao's China, still others toward the reformist parties; many admired the merits of guerrilla warfare in the "third world." Indeed, every sectoralist and nationalist current imaginable had its little squadron of "Fourth Internationalist" supporters and supplicants. Even Qaddafi's Libya and Khomeini's Iran were deemed by "Trotskyists" to be acmes of progress. The cadaver had become dismembered.

From its inception, the LRP has distinguished its call for reconstructing the Fourth from any idea of simply uniting the existing shards of pseudo-Trotskyism. At a time of mass action and leftward motion, political maneuvers that place one's program in the sightlines of the workers are perfectly principled, so long as the truth is not tampered with; a strategy of regroupment with forces moving leftward under mass pressure, for example, might well be called for. But with the present rightward shift of the left, there are only small isolated groupings that have any immediate potential of moving toward the revolutionary program. Thus today the LRP must advance its revolutionary program as a distinct political pole without any maneuvers whatever.

The Transitional Program

The LRP stands for the original program of Trotskyism whose essence is that socialist revolution is necessary for the survival of humanity and can be achieved only by the proletariat, led by its independent vanguard party organized internationally. In addition, we have begun re-analyzing the meaning of Trotsky's much-abused Transitional Program; a common understanding of this would be necessary for the formation of an international tendency.

We understand the Transitional Program to be a program of action demands to lead workers to the socialist revolution. It is a substitute for the minimal reformist program which accepts the limits of capitalism, but it is no substitute for the program of socialist revolution. The present-day epigones of Trotsky have reversed this, using the demands of the Transitional Program as a way of *avoiding* an open fight for socialism. Just as Marx and Engels had to update fundamentally the demands of the Communist Manifesto a century ago, we too must treat our program not as sacred scripture but as a living statement. The convention document

stressed the need of updating the Transitional Program and self-critically evaluated our past efforts and future needs:

"We have stated the need to treat the Russian question, the degeneration of the Fourth International, etc., but we have not treated the matter in an organized way aimed at a concrete result. The elaboration of all these questions has to be synthesized and crystallized into a concrete hierarchy and terse analysis, tying them to a strategy. We must now draw the lessons of this work in the form of programmatic demands.

"We understand that this means not simply the alteration of the Russian section of the Transitional Program but also additions elsewhere, given the interrelationship among the various capitals. As well, as a result of our investigations in statified capitalism and the workers' state, we can now take a major step toward elaborating what Trotsky called the 'missing' section of the draft program, the nature of the transitional society itself and the tasks revolutionaries must pose for it. We now also have the benefit of years of various practices and interpretations (misinterpretations generally) of the Transitional Program. Thus sections of the Program must be rewritten to eliminate all possible excuses for reformist misunderstandings. The link between the Transitional Program and the program of socialist revolution must also be explored. We must further elaborate and crystallize our work on permanent revolution and democratic demands so that the relationship may be rendered more explicit.

"This does not mean that we can immediately proceed to the wording of the program. It does mean that we redirect our work on the Russian question, the epoch and the period, the international economy, the general American experience, the lessons of Portugal, Chile, Iran, Poland and Central America, tactics in the unions, the black question, the woman question and other unfinished questions — toward reaching concrete lessons and demands which belong in our program."

Re-create the Fourth International!

In the course of refining our position we decided to change our leading slogan from "Reconstruct" to "Re-create the Fourth International" in order to avoid any implication of glueing together the present false claimants to Trotskyism. We noted that the epigones may be making a sizeable contribution to our effort in their march rightward. For example, the SWP in the U.S. is dreaming of a fantastic new "International" including themselves, the Cuban Stalinists, Grenada's ruling New Jewel Party, Nicaragua's Sandinistas — and possibly even the Walesa leadership of Polish Solidarity, whom the other candidates condemn almost as much as they do Trotskyism. Likewise, the Mandelites and Lambertists in Europe are moving steadily into the social-democratic orbit. The Morenoites are perennially sucked into Peronism. In this light the struggle for proletarian independence from alien class forces takes on added significance.

A small opposition arose within the LRP on this question, proposing that the International we strive for should be labeled the Fifth. This minority argued, however, that the name "Fourth International" was so compromised in the eyes of the advanced workers by the Pabloites' betrayals that using it would prove an obstacle rather than an aid in the re-creation of genuine Trotskyism as a world force. The majority replied that the Trotskyist label had been at least equally sullied by the epigones; moreover, at a time when the leading Pabloites were abandoning their claim to the Fourth International and Trotskyism, revolutionaries must defend both.

The convention assessed our past work on internationalism with a critical eye. We had long ago corrected our initial hesitation at sending comrades abroad to promote discussions with the few revolutionary-minded groups we knew of and to countries in revolutionary situations; we have since made several trips to Europe and Latin America. Further, the convention was critical of our past propaganda which did not adequately explain the need for the Fourth International, often leaving it as a slogan at the end of magazine articles. Although we have constantly combatted nationalism while defending the struggles of oppressed peoples for self-determination, we must do more to present propaganda on the iron necessity of internationalist consciousness and organization within the working class.

Revolutionary Press

The convention was also critical of our past publishing activities and our industrial work, feeling that changes were necessary in both areas.

For Leninists the organization's press is designed to organize its work. Our practical activities must carry out our Marxist program. Unless a group's press leads its actual work and records it for evaluation, a group will degenerate into petty maneuverism.

The LRP is a propaganda organization. We address ourself to politically advanced workers and others who identify with the paramount interests of the revolutionary proletariat. Of necessity in these times, this means communicating relatively complex ideas to a narrow audience. We also have the enormous task of re-elaborating in our press the most basic ideas of Marxism to generations who have seen only the bastardized product created by middle-class radicalism, Stalinism and reformism. For this we decided at the beginning to publish a political and theoretical magazine; hence *Socialist Voice*.

But we also knew the danger of a small organization turning into a study group that ignores opportunities for practical revolutionary action within the workers' movement. If a revolutionary group is isolated from the working class, that means that it relates chiefly to the petty-bourgeois milieu. An active presence in workers' struggles is vital. But we cannot manufacture struggle, as so many centrist groups attempt to do by reducing their program to whatever they think workers are thinking at the moment; a phony agitational newspaper was out of the question for us. We needed a popular propaganda organ with room for agitation when called for, more easily understood by political workers than the analytic and theoretical material that *Socialist Voice* had to carry.

From the outset a majority of the members of our organization were workers carrying out political tasks in industrial situations. We built an open presence in workplaces and unions as the communist LRP wherever security permitted, in contrast to the pseudo-independent caucuses of maneuverist outfits like the RSL and the Spartacists. We began to publish a small industrial bulletin in newspaper format, *Socialist Action*, to back up our industrial work.

Socialist Action faced several serious problems. It tended to reflect a line placing union work at the core of its politics. Although it stressed the need for revolutionary leadership in the unions, it underplayed the centrality of creating the revolutionary party. When we moved to correct this deficiency by adding broader political coverage, the paper naturally became not simply an industrial organ but a central LRP publication — in effect a newspaper, but a miserably small and infrequent one. As well, the attempt to produce it with monthly regularity sharply cut into the production of *Socialist Voice*. We were therefore forced to abandon *Socialist Action*

in order to maintain our magazine as our central organ with regularity. It now is published quarterly (with last summer's issue skipped to prepare our convention); it also contains some of the material that once went into *Socialist Action*.

Industrial Bulletins

We have also experimented with various leaflets addressed to workers at the workplaces we are politically active in. We found, however, that since the pressure on us was to issue leaflets chiefly when a union issue arose that merited agitation, our propaganda for industrial workers slackened. A newspaper was necessary, but we lacked the resources for that plus a magazine. So the convention document mandated the regular publication of one-page bulletins for several industries in New York. So far we have begun a Hospital Bulletin and will add others as we can. They will be party-building organs containing popularly written propaganda, with occasional agitation. The convention majority turned down a minority resolution that called for one central bulletin for all our New



The LRP convention was an important victory. A real test of communist cadre and politics is the ability to advance in times of adversity. While the "far left" moves right, loses members and leaves industry, the LRP remains steadfast.

York industrial work, on the grounds that such a bulletin would tend to become a newspaper with all the problems we had faced with *Socialist Action*. (Sample bulletins are available to our readers; just send 25 cents to the *Socialist Voice* address to cover costs.)

The discussion over industrial bulletins reflected deeper underlying political questions. It has become axiomatic for the far left groups to identify their industrial work with unionism. That excludes, of course, the infantile leftists who reject unions entirely as bourgeois institutions that workers could ignore and that communists must not defend. While we have moved away from nearly exclusively union-centered work in favor of stressing the revolutionary party, we still insist on loyally participating in and defending the unions not only against the bosses but also against their own bureaucratic officials.

Our evolution has retaught us lessons which Lenin and Trotsky emphasized. The trade unions are defensive

organizations of the workers but cannot serve as instruments for revolution. The economic struggle cannot be avoided, but only the revolutionary political struggle can advance or even defend economic gains. Tied to the bourgeois labor market, the unions defend workers' wages and working conditions but also act as disciplinary agencies for capital — in Trotsky's term, they are "concentration camps" for the workers. Our propaganda bulletins must reflect this so that our revolutionary workers are not identified simply as left trade union militants.

This perception also made us aware that our practical workplace activity still overshadowed revolutionary propaganda work. Our industrial cadres frequently served as elected union stewards and delegates. While their fellow workers for the most part do not accept their communist views, our comrades are accepted as fighters who have proven themselves in struggle. Sadly, they were forced to give more time to fundamentally hopeless grievance procedures than to revolutionary cadre building. While by no means abandoning the possibility of undertaking union tasks, the weight of our work is being redirected towards building discussion groups of bulletin and *Socialist Voice* readers in order to recruit workers to the LRP.

This perspective is based upon our view that slow but sure changes are taking place among small layers of workers towards radical alternatives. The petty-bourgeois leftist assumption that workers are interested only in "practical" questions immediately before their eyes could never explain, for example, the wide inroads that "extreme" religions have made among potentially radical working class people. Today, our comrades believe that interest in politics in general and revolutionary politics in particular is widening and can be tapped directly.

A Labor Party?

The change in the focus of our industrial work does not halt the League's concern with politically defeating the treacherous labor bureaucrats: too powerful to be sidestepped, they must be exposed head-on. As well, the convention reconfirmed our opposition to raising the Labor Party slogan at this time, a demand that can only have reformist consequences today. When the Trotskyists raised the slogan in the late 1930's the idea was to transfer the widely admired militancy of the CIO unions into the political arena, in opposition to the Roosevelt Democrats who held the loyalty of most union officials. A break by the working class with bourgeois politics would have had revolutionary implications at a time of mass struggle; that is why Trotsky insisted that the Labor Party demand be accompanied by slogans for workers' defense guards and a militia, precisely to douse any illusion that working-class political independence had a reformist or pacifist meaning.

Today leftists call for a Labor Party for opposite reasons, precisely to avoid fighting for a "far-out" revolutionary party; unlike Trotsky's, the slogan is universally given a reformist content. This is due not just to the leftists' conservatism but to the tenor of the times. The idea of a party reflecting today's unions' economic "militancy" is a joke. Of course, times will change and the slogan will perhaps become useful again as a revolutionary weapon.

Under today's conditions our political propaganda work has to show the advanced workers that their class has the power and unity to achieve its goals; only then can talk of socialist revolution become actionable. That is why the convention reaffirmed the centrality of the General Strike slogan. This idea is no longer an abstraction: the Polish events of 1980 showed precisely how the working class can bring state power

to its knees through a mass, organized and centralized general strike. (They also show, negatively, how an unchallenged reformist union leadership can derail even such massive accomplishments.)

The convention also took note of the League's failure to adequately propagandize its understanding of the black question in the United States. Our tendency was responsible for the application of the theory of permanent revolution to blacks in the U.S., and an updating of this analysis must be made if we are to deepen this area of our work. Black workers are key in the most strategic U.S. industries and are in the front line of the bourgeois attack; on the other hand, the traditional nationalist and assimilationist leaderships serve only to tie the black masses to capitalism. The development of black cadres is critical for the success of the American socialist revolution.



The convention discussed not only the organization's external work but its internal state as well. The LRP has withstood the conservatizing impact of the period far better than other tendencies. While the far left has been losing members fairly steadily, we have remained stable. While other groups burn out their cadres regularly, we have not. Still, we have been far from impervious to the effects of the present period. In assessing the favorable opportunities opening up we took a square look at the elements of pessimism that affect comrades in touch with the feelings of helplessness overwhelming many workers today. We are not, after all, an organization of footloose radicals. Our members have children, debts, and illnesses like other workers; only one comrade has a high-paying job. In personal terms, hard times do not make revolutionary work easier.

But capitalism provides a convincing antidote for working-class passivity and obstacles to revolutionary politics: over time, its crises, pressures and threats force advanced workers to the forefront and deepen the class struggle. Generations have not seen a real proletarian movement in the U.S.; the radicalism of the 1960's was overwhelmingly middle-class in its composition, leadership and direction. Unlike the bulk of far leftists who yearn for a return to the sixties that created them, we look forward to a revival of the 1930's rebellions — so that the working class can take up where it then left off. There is no question for Marxists that the proletariat will soon go into mass motion. The question is who will lead it: petty-bourgeois radicals to deepen its sectoralism and keep it divided, congenital trade unionists who likewise will seek to imprison the class within capitalism, nationalists who oppose world proletarian unity — or an international revolutionary working-class party. ■

Exchange on Anarchists

continued from page 2

for the creation of a new state machine — a new armed apparatus that would rule over the masses of Salvadoreans — since we see the FMLN as a new state-in-the-making — which means that it will be an instrument to maintain class oppression and exploitation in some form — either a “mixed” capitalist set-up — as in Nicaragua — or the creation of some new form of exploitation and oppression based on State property — as in Cuba.

As we see it, the partyist and statist character of your politics is inconsistent with proletarian self-emancipation. Such politics, when realized in social life, can only lead to changing the form of oppression and exploitation, not their abolition, since statism and partyism mean top-down rule over social and industrial life by a small section of the society — a ruling, exploiting class. Self-emancipation means the working class running the whole society — all of social and industrial affairs — through mass organs of their own creation, based on direct democracy of the base. This can only happen through a mass workers' movement that has the same self-managed character — it can't be a top-down, partyist affair.

LRP Reply

We acknowledge with regret that we do seem to have unjustly accused the LWG of advocating the collection of funds for the petty-bourgeois nationalist FMLN in El Salvador (in our “Open Letter to the ICC” in *Socialist Voice* No. 17). As our article noted, the ICC press was the source of our information — and we should have recognized, given its studied inaccuracy with regard to our own positions, that it is not to be trusted for honestly reporting the views of its opponents. However, we do not see any evidence in the ICC press that it has retracted its accusation against you, as you state; its article on the LWG in *Internationalism* No. 33 made no mention of any such thing. For us, your joint leaflet is evidence of your opposition to the FMLN, so we stand corrected; we will publish a correction in our next issue.

Despite our error, our charge against the ICC that its “revolutionary milieu” is an unprincipled bloc still holds up. The ICC included the LWG among revolutionaries at the time when it was accusing the LWG of advocating arming the FMLN. Even though the information was false, the ICC asserted it to be true and still blocked with the LWG. Moreover, even if it has retracted the specific accusation, the ICC ought to consider your actual position on El Salvador to be seriously wrong. Your position of “fighting the immediate enemy — the State” seems far closer to our own position of a military bloc with the FMLN (which means, as we have repeatedly noted, that revolutionary workers turn their guns against the junta while not *militarily* attacking the FMLN for the moment). The ICC must regard both your position and ours as capitulations to the bourgeoisie. So the ICC's world view is as inconsistent as it ever was.

Workers' State Necessary

Your letter makes a serious mistake with regard to our politics. After stating that “the working people of El Salvador have to ensure that the FMLN does not acquire state power,” you charge that “by contrast, your position of ‘military support for the FMLN’ means support for the creation of a new state machine ...” Yes and no. Our position means no support for an FMLN-FDR state machine (read any of our articles on El

Salvador!); but it does mean that the working class will have to create *its own state* on the road to communism and the international revolution. As anarchists who oppose every state no matter which class rules it, you do not see any difference between a workers' state and a bourgeois state. As Marxists, we do, and we support one and not the other.

Arming the workers and not their FDR-FMLN misleaders, which both our tendencies argue for, will in our opinion be a big step toward the workers' forming their own centralized state (as part of the future world federation of workers' states). Your anti-statist “direct democracy,” in our view, is a petty-bourgeois illusion — equivalent to the populists' calls for trustbusting or the DSA-IS “rank and file socialists'” call for local, shop-floor and community control schemes instead of proletarian state power. Since economic and political power are inexorably centralizing, by abjuring and attempting to exorcize the state you leave it inevitably in the hands of the bourgeoisie or its regents.

Scarcity cannot be eliminated by capitalism in its death agony. Nor can it be eliminated by fiat, proclamation, prayer or malediction — by even the most sincere advocates of proletarian self-emancipation. It will take the resources of the working class to translate existing technological capacity into actual production of abundance. So long as scarcity and therefore the law of value continue to exist, capitalist forms and capitalist classes (both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) will persist. To maintain the workers' rule until all classes have been eliminated, an agency for its rule is necessary. That agency is the state, the workers' coercive power expressed democratically through soviets (workers' councils), a class dictatorship over the remaining bourgeoisie and other restorationist elements.

The most advanced consciousness of the proletariat must fight for this understanding among all workers and their potential allies. That requires the workers' own vanguard party — so Leninism teaches us and reality demands, in contrast to the morality plays schematized by libertarians of the right as well as subjective revolutionaries of the anarchist left. ■

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D.C. Klan March Halted

The leaflet below was distributed by the LRP at two separate demonstrations in Washington, D.C. on November 27 protesting the planned march from the Capitol to the White House by the Ku Klux Klan.

The demonstrations were successful. In all, several thousand angry people came out; the few dozen Klan Kowards who showed up were forced to cancel their march and were able only to sneak away for a tiny rally in front of the press under massive police protection. The news media gave much attention to the rioting and police tear gassing that broke out when the cops hid the Klansmen from the demonstrators. But, as one protester told the *Washington Post*, "I feel it was a victory for poor and working people. I feel very proud and honored and I would go back again."

The LRP leaflet proved accurate. The All-Peoples Congress speakers played a pacifist role, continually urging their audience to stay away from the police and the Klan mini-rally. The more militant Spartacists made no attempt to combine the two rallies in a united front and thereby to expose the APC leadership in front of its supporters. Thus when activists from the APC demonstration did go to confront the police, they were leaderless and isolated from fellow militants who engaged with the cops at a different time. Injuries and arrests could have been avoided and a greater lesson in unity could have been learned, in opposition to the liberal pacifist "unity" of the APC.

The Spartacist rally, although well carried out from a technical point of view in the face of hostile cops, embodied a political fraud. Its publicity boasted the names of endorsers like Thomas Gleason, president of the International Longshoremen's Association and other union and black leaders, whose statement promised to "help build a mass labor-black demonstration against the Klan." But of course the luminaries did nothing of the kind; few of them were even present in Washington. Two dozen union names does not add up to a "labor" rally. The workers and blacks who showed up did not come because of them. And the labor fakers were handed a cheap claim to a militancy they never earned.

The APC rally had its list of do-nothing union endorsements too, including that of the Hospital Workers' District 1199. The APC leaders were more honest in this regard. Their passive behavior was faithful to the political line of their union, clergy and bourgeois political endorsers; whereas the militancy of the Spartacists would not have been appreciated by the likes of Gleason.

The Spartacists counterpose their strategy to "small-group confrontationists who have given up on the working class and want to bash the Klan-Nazis all by themselves" (*Workers Vanguard*, November 26). But a private Spartacist effort, even if run with cool heads, is no real alternative to the liberal pacifists in building toward the mass working-class united actions that are needed to halt fascism in its tracks.

Capitalist Decay Breeds Fascism

The League for the Revolutionary Party is in Washington today to join in demonstrating against the fascistic Confederation of Klans. Such demonstrations by themselves, however, are hardly the way to smash fascism and racism. Even worse, these demonstrations are not being run as genuine united front actions but to serve particular political programs. And these programs are a barrier to the fight against fascism.

The major demonstration led by the All-Peoples Congress and run by the Workers World Party offers liberal politics;

the split-away action conducted by the Spartacist League is sectarian. The politics of both groups feed the fascist fire.

To fight fascism it is necessary to locate its cause, capitalism. The fascists and the Nazis are rising again because the capitalist system is sinking into depression and mortal crisis. The Nazis *claim* to be anti-capitalist and use the term "national socialist" in order to win people who will come to hate the system. They hide the fact that they really *support* the system, blaming its ills instead on Jews, Arabs, unions, gays, communists, foreigners, etc. They say Blacks and Latins are getting everything instead of "real white Americans." They demagogically promise to return prosperity to white Americans if they fight.

Already capitalism's police and national guard are being used to terrorize Blacks and Hispanics and to break strikes conducted by white as well as minority workers. However, the



Cops throwing black youth through shop window during Washington, D.C. anti-Klan protest. Bourgeois press called this "looting" to defame black fighters and defend police rioters.

system is not yet at the point of economic crisis when it will push millions of desperate people into the fascist movement to completely crush minorities and unions. But if capitalism is not destroyed in time, its last resort, fascism, is inevitable.

The various groups blocking together under the leadership of the APC and WWP to run the McPherson Square demonstration today attack "Reaganomics" and not capitalism as the cause of fascist revival. It was the failure of liberalism to stop the crisis that led many white workers to support Reagan in the first place. By attacking Reaganism only and not the equally bourgeois anti working class Democrats, the APC is serving to rebuild liberal capitalism through a popular front effort to tie the workers and oppressed to the liberals. But when the liberals *again* show they have no answer to the deepening crisis, masses will be attracted to extreme solutions, right and left. If leftists only raise more militant versions of liberal demands like those of the demonstration leaders today, then many will turn to the extreme right wing "solutions."

The McPherson Square demonstration leaders also fail to call for popular armed self-defense by beleaguered minorities and striking workers against both the fascists and the police attackers. They apparently call for enforcement of anti-Klan laws and the enactment of new ones. They favor government action against the fascists.

In opposition to this liberal program, the revolutionary program tells workers they must prepare to defend themselves with arms in hand. It is far more realistic than calling on the anti-worker, racist capitalist state to defend us - which will never happen.

The same argument applies to the touching defense of the fascists' "First Amendment rights" by some of the demonstration's liberal endorsers. Once again this is a defense of bourgeois liberal "democracy," whose abject failure is part of the problem, not the solution.

In adopting liberalism, the APC leaders reject the only program which can smash fascism. Only a program designed to achieve full employment, workers' control over the economy and production for abundance and human use *instead* of profit and scarcity, for genuine equality for all in short, a

making a genuine revolutionary attempt to oppose pacifism and popular frontism, it would coalesce with the original demonstration and try to reach its ranks who want to fight the KKK. It could thereby turn them against their capitulatory misleaders.

When the SL tries to win over people from the main demonstration to its own separate affair it is inevitably viewed as divisive raiders by the very people who want a united fight. Thus the SL allows the APC misleaders to attack genuine anti-popular frontiers as being like the SL frauds who put narrow organizational sectarianism and publicity in the place of unity against fascism.

Frequently the fascist scum cannot be driven away at these events because their pals, the police who protect them, are proportionately too strong. For the serious confrontation the SL claims it really wants, its task would be not to divide the anti-Nazis who really want to fight, despite the many differences which divide them on a political level.

The question of unity on the one hand and revolutionary politics on the other is present in Washington today only in microcosm. In the coming years as the crisis deepens, the need



The LRP says:

Pacifism is no answer to fascism and racism: for armed self-defense by the organizations of workers and the oppressed!

Popular frontism and liberalism are no answer to fascism and racism: for socialist revolution!

Small-group manipulations are no answer to fascism and racism: for genuine united fronts!

For a real labor-black mobilization: a general strike to stop the capitalist attacks!

revolutionary communist program for a workers' state can provide an alternative to fascism.

In catering to the liberals the APC creates "broadness" at the expense of real unity in action. The oppressed masses will inevitably fight back, but they will never mobilize behind a liberal pacifist reliance on the welfare state and its cops.

The Spartacists are conducting a counterposed demonstration. It attacks the popular frontism of the APC and its unwillingness to actually confront the KKK. This sounds good, but the SL has a history of dividing off radicals from even more massive actions than this one on grounds both ostensibly good and obviously contrived. In one case in Ann Arbor they openly sabotaged the speaking equipment of their rivals who were actually fighting Klansmen while the SL stayed behind. Their much ballyhooped anti-Klan events have generally been as tepid in action as those they criticize, sometimes more so. They like to call for labor-black self-defense but in Detroit raised it for Southern blacks only. They have separated themselves from large marches on the grounds of popular frontism when their own popular frontism was barely distinguishable, as in the case of their El Salvador demonstrations. If the SL

for both will appear even more crucially as the masses polarize. Even today capitalist violence is aimed at minorities and workers. There is a long history of capitalism attempting to use white workers, unemployed and petty bourgeois against their black brothers and sisters. Capitalism has to divide the working class in order to conquer.

Genuine revolutionary communists say that only an anti-capitalist struggle can overcome racism and fascism. Now white workers are facing unemployment and maltreatment in great numbers, the conditions once limited to minority ghettos. The time is ripe for a general strike based on the need of all workers for a decent life against the system's need to bleed us dry. The general strike will show the working class its real strength.

The revolutionaries of the LRP are the most ardent fighters for a genuine united front, which can only be achieved through class-wide action. When the workers and oppressed see their own power, then the idea of revolution becomes real. Such united class action, not liberal political blocs or small-group maneuvers, is the essence of what revolutionaries aim for in the struggle against fascism. ■

Women's Gains Face Capitalist Attack

In the early 1970's millions of women were electrified by the heady idea that they no longer had to accept a lifetime of submission. The women's liberation movement, inspired by the black upheaval and student struggles, won a number of victories. Tragically, the hopes raised for masses of women are now turning to dust; prosperity under capitalism is over, and with it have gone many of the gains women thought they had secured forever.

It is no consolation that past gains won by the working class are also being eradicated. Most women are part of that class, and given their special oppression, they are facing inflation, unemployment and eroding living standards even more harshly than men. The reason for these losses and those of minorities as well is the same, the enemy is the same, and the struggle to defend past gains and win new ones must be the same: it means overthrowing capitalism, whose recent history has again proved that even minimal gains for women cannot be tolerated for very long.

The enemy is not only the system itself but its overt defenders. Galvanized by the economic crisis and Reagan's election, right-wing and "pro-life" groups have concentrated their fire on women's rights. They are desperately attempting to preserve capitalism by reasserting the tradition of the male-dominated family through their defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment and crusade against abortion rights.

There is also an enemy within. From its birth the women's liberation struggle has been led by middle-class feminists, and this has proved its Achilles heel. Feminism is an ideology shared by both moderates and radicals which says that women's liberation can be achieved under capitalism and denies the decisive need for a united, class conscious working-class movement with a revolutionary program. This road has led to the present disaster.

NOW's Bourgeois Logic

The reformist strategy of the leading middle-class feminist organizations has backfired in failing to win the ERA. While this defeat by a resurgent right wing has dangerous implications for all women and the entire working class, the misdirection of women's struggles into a fight for the ERA was particularly bad for working-class women. As we pointed out in the article "Why We Oppose the ERA" (*Socialist Action*, November 1978), the bourgeoisie saw in the ERA a potential anti-working class weapon. This is why many capitalists threw their support behind it as early as 1923 when it was first drafted by the Women's Party, a middle-class women's organization that grew out of the suffrage movement.

The ERA encountered immediate opposition from labor and women's leaders as well as socialists who recognized that once the ERA was passed, protective legislation would be wiped out. While these laws were discriminatory against women in certain jobs and had not been extended to men, they nonetheless represented important concessions won by the working class from the bosses. They included minimum wages, specified rest periods, overtime pay and limitations on hours, heavy lifting and night work. The ERA would give the capitalists the excuse they needed to eliminate in one fell swoop these important protections.

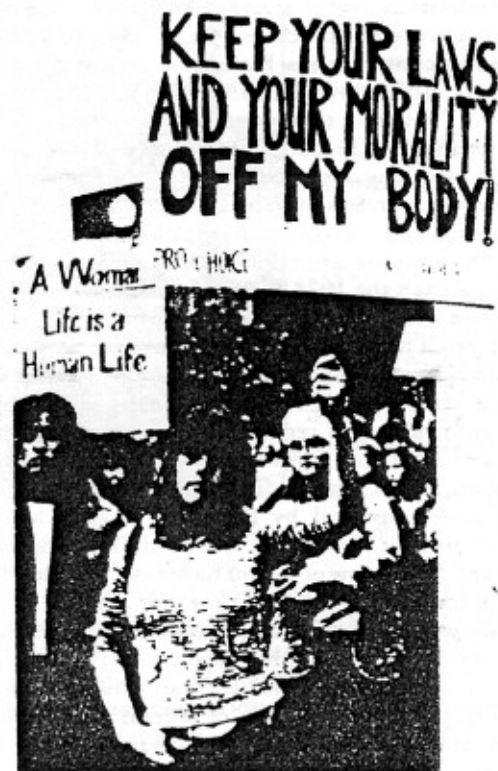
It wasn't until 1971-72 that the ERA passed Congress. By 1979 the ERA was only three states short of ratification and passage seemed certain. The unions, women's groups and leftists this time climbed aboard the ERA bandwagon. One argument used in defense of the ERA was that it would open

up rights previously denied women and that the ERA would prevent attacks on protective legislation. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, they said, would guarantee it. The opposite was true in fact. The ERA was deliberately vague legislation designed to appeal to divergent views. Its interpretation and implementation would have been left to the capitalist courts which do not serve workers' interests.

Groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW) also argued that protective labor laws were not only restrictive but unnecessary:

"These laws ... originally were passed to put a stop to serious exploitation of women workers in earlier days. Today, with the steady growth of unions and their influence, working conditions in general are far different from what they were at the turn of the century and these laws no longer protect women or they serve to restrict their chance for advancement."

This garbage could only have been written by upper-class women blinded by the temporary prosperity of the 1960's and ignorant of working conditions faced by proletarian women.



Such leaders who, together with the union bureaucrats, fail to fight capitalism bear a heavy responsibility for the defeats suffered by working women as capitalism attacks all workers to solve its crisis. The illusory ERA could never have guaranteed equality for women, nor could it have defended women against capitalist attacks. That is why the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and anti-union groups had no difficulty in supporting it before its defeat last June.

The potentially reactionary uses of the federal ERA were made clear in the case of Bonny Ann Fritz, a Maryland woman who planned to have an abortion against the wishes of her estranged husband, who took the issue to court. Anti-abortion

groups seized upon the ERA to press the courts into halting her abortion. The judge defended his decision to do so by saying that the husband and father's consent was necessary under the Maryland Equal Rights Amendment! Thomas Marzen, a lawyer for "Americans United for Life," admitted that the ERA has long been viewed as a "potential legal tool" of anti-abortion groups.

The more serious ERA supporters did not claim that it would result in new gains but held that its passage would be symbolic. But it would only have been a symbol of the illusion that equality can be achieved with the help of the NAM and its system! This upper-class attitude was further demonstrated by the women's groups who attempted to enlist the support of bourgeois politicians for the ERA by refusing to take a stand against the Hyde Amendment, which eliminated federal funds for abortion.

Given its potential use as an anti-working class weapon and given its diversionary character, why did sections of the bourgeoisie succeed in burying the ERA? Even an empty symbol of women's rights was too much for the reactionaries. They realized that the bourgeois family, especially in times of crisis, is essential to capitalist survival so that even a formal nod to women's liberation is threatening.

Moralist Enemies of Women

The abortion rights strategy carried out by feminist and even left groups has produced equally disastrous results. While right wing conservatives have been unable to gather enough support to strike down the 1973 Supreme Court ruling which legalized abortion, they have grown considerably bolder in their attempts. The latest in a series of amendments being debated in Congress include the "Human Life Federalism Amendment" of Sen. Orrin Hatch. The Hatch Amendment would eliminate the constitutional right to abortion and allow the states to pass abortion legislation only if it was more restrictive than the 1973 ruling. It would be left to Congress to determine whether or not a law was more or less restrictive. Sen. Strom Thurmond, another ardent reactionary, amended the Hatch proposal to eliminate Congress' role and give the states a free hand in passing anti-abortion legislation. Thurmond hoped to remove any liberal obstacles that might delay anti-abortion legislation from being enacted.

Another anti-abortion amendment introduced by Sen. Jesse Helms and supported by President Reagan led to a Senate filibuster until it was finally scrapped. The original version of the Helms Amendment would have reversed the 1973 Supreme Court decision by stating that life begins at conception. Abortion would therefore be considered murder. When Helms could not muster enough support for the bill, he then introduced a watered-down version which would have permanently prohibited the use of federal funding for abortion.

The assault on abortion rights has not been confined to Congress. Widespread violence against abortion clinics by extreme right wing groups has escalated. In Granite City, Illinois a gynecologist and his wife were kidnapped by a group which called itself the Army of God; it threatened to kill him unless he denounced abortion by signing a statement which declared the government to be "an instrument of evil" in "defiance of God's will." The same group took responsibility for arson attacks on two abortion clinics in Florida last May.

The bourgeois feminists and the leftists who tail them bear responsibility for cultivating the illusion that democratic rights are secure under decaying capitalism. The attacks by thugs, judges and politicians show that a mass struggle is needed. But if the democratic "rights" are aimed at undermining working class gains, no such movement will get off the ground. The

anti-working class bias of middle-class feminists is counterproductive to winning genuine gains for women's rights.

Women have also been fed the lie that in winning abortion rights they would have a real choice, whereas the truth is most women who have abortions are forced to do so by economic circumstances. Given the possibility of supporting them, many women would choose to have more children. Abortion is an ordeal; abortion clinics, like everything else in capitalist society, are run for profit. Working class women who go through these mills are often given poor medical treatment risking infection or worse. There are no greater enemies of women than the capitalist moralists who force women to have abortions and then label them murderers for doing so.

Marxists do not fight to destroy the family now. In crisis it is one of the few institutions that working people, women and men, feel they can cling to. Under communism it will disappear along with all other oppressive structures. But we do fight to defend every gain won under capitalism, many of which weaken the family but in such a way as to strengthen the



Dick Gregory talking to Women's Fast for the ERA hunger strikers in Illinois. ERA 'symbolic' struggle helped undercut real fight for abortion rights.

unity and confidence of the masses. We have participated in struggles for free abortion on demand, paid maternity leaves, an end to forced sterilization, free day-care centers, and others. In addition, it is vital that the working class lead a fight for jobs for all — men and women. We join with all who are willing to fight for these goals but openly explain that they cannot be made secure under capitalism.

That is, we support the struggle for democratic and economic rights for workers and all oppressed people not as a bourgeois abstraction but through the struggle for communism. Only the socialist revolution can create a state in which any of these democratic gains can be preserved. Only the workers' state can begin to end the fraudulent "democracy" which promises equality to exploiters and exploited alike. Freedom begins with the elimination of the oppressor and can only exist where there are no oppressed. For this task it is necessary to build the revolutionary party and program. This struggle will not be easily achieved, nor will it ever be achieved without a fight for state power and the rule of the working class. This is the real alternative for the women's struggle. ■

Trotskyism vs. Ultra-Leftism

The original Communist International which grew up as a result of the Bolshevik workers' revolution in 1917 had a vibrant internal life with numerous political tendencies: good, bad, but few indifferent. In the 1920's, however, the developing Soviet bureaucracy crushed or expelled oppositionists in both the USSR and the Communist Parties (CP's) abroad in its quest for monolithism. Not only the Left Oppositionists led by Leon Trotsky, but also the Right Opposition linked to Nikolai Bukharin and various strands of ultra-leftists, mainly German and Italian, were cast off as the degeneration deepened.

Stalinism finally triumphed outright with the restoration of capitalism in 1939 after the infamous purge trials accompanied by the murder or enslavement of millions. Overseas the Stalinists undermined revolutions in China, Germany and Spain, paving the way for World War II. The end of the imperialist war brought massive defeats for the workers engineered by Soviet troops in East Europe and by class collaborationist parties in the West. The defeats suffered by the proletariat quantitatively added to the growing cynicism about the working class's revolutionary potential.

Stalinism polluted not only the Communist Parties but virtually every niche and cranny of working class politics. The defeats themselves ushered in capitalism's Indian summer of post-war prosperity and led to the complete political destruction of official Trotskyism and the Fourth International by the early 1950's. All of the left was contaminated. The Bukharinites had already fled into the arms of imperialism. For all its intransigence, the ultra-left adopted political views whose content was frequently as right-wing as the more openly opportunist leftists.

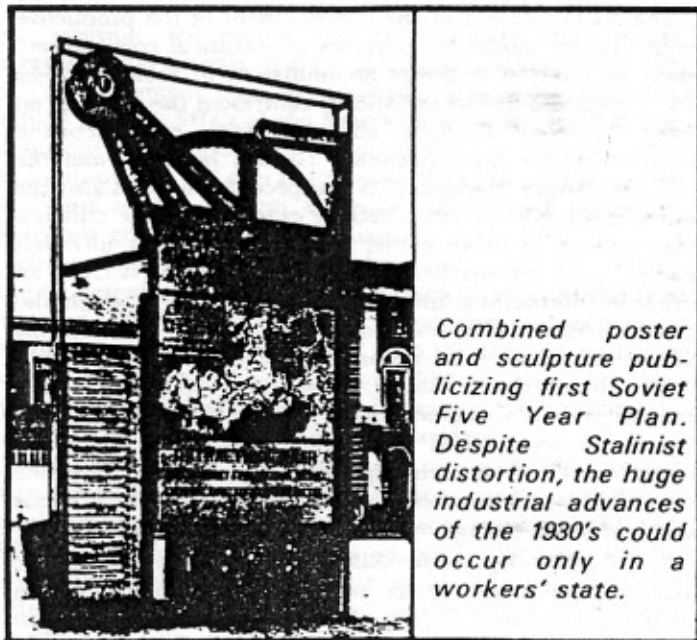
Today, there are substantial differences among the various pseudo-Trotskyist groups even though they all lack genuinely revolutionary politics. Some are more devoted subjectively to the proletariat, and when the workers' struggle revives there is hope for elements among them; we have frequently made these distinctions in the pages of *Socialist Voice*. The same, we must add, is true among the ultra-lefts.

One of the more serious groups in the "communist left" milieu that we are familiar with is the Nuclei Leninisti Internazionalisti (NLI) of Italy. The NLI descends from the founding leader of the Italian Communist Party, Amadeo Bordiga. Unlike other ultra-left currents, the NLI seems to be a staunch defender of the Bolshevik revolution, to understand the necessity of building the revolutionary party and to avoid sectarian fears against working in the mass working-class institutions, the trade unions.

In its journal *Il Lavoratore Comunista* (No. 7, June-September 1981), the NLI published a spirited polemic against the League for the Revolutionary Party and *Socialist Voice* entitled "LRP: Critical Trotskyism Is Not Enough." While paying tribute to the revolutionary character of the "Trotskyism of Trotsky" as opposed to the pro-Stalinism it finds in his present day epigones, the NLI sees strong elements of capitulationism inherent in authentic Trotskyism. It charges that the LRP, despite a certain revolutionary steadfastness, still falls victim to these contradictions of Trotskyism. In particular, the NLI feels that the seeds of pro-Stalinism are contained in Trotsky's (and our) analysis of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state in the 1930's. Likewise the NLI casts severe doubt on the Trotskyist "tacticalist" emphasis on the united front and takes issue with the tactic of giving "military support" to alien class forces in struggles

against other bourgeois enemies. As a cure for these problems, the NLI recommends that we learn and understand more, through discussions, of the views of the historic "Italian Left."

For us, however the polemic reveals an underlying contradiction not in our position but rather in the politics of the NLI. In its movement away from calcified Bordigism, it has not come far enough toward genuine Trotskyism — that is, Leninism. Lenin once remarked of the ultra-leftists of his day that many were honest revolutionary workers who had become impatient with the slow political development of the rest of the working class, so they substituted ultimatism for the necessary patient work of going through common experiences with more backward workers. Today, unfortunately, the progeny of these elements are frequently separate from, cynical towards and contemptuous of the actual living working class. Serious communists would do well to break with this milieu, which



Combined poster and sculpture publicizing first Soviet Five Year Plan. Despite Stalinist distortion, the huge industrial advances of the 1930's could occur only in a workers' state.

acts as a stumbling block in the path of forming a revolutionary proletarian party.

We will take up the main issues raised by the NLI in its polemic against us. But we note first of all that the NLI is careful to point out that it has not yet made a full analysis of the LRP. Therefore it confines its examination to particular articles in our press: on the Russian question, the Iranian revolution and the Polish workers' upsurge.

Evaluating Soviet Accumulation

The NLI attacks us for placing the date of the triumph of capitalist restoration in Russia in 1939 rather than 1926. Notwithstanding our final recognition that Stalinism is bourgeois and counterrevolutionary, it argues, our conclusion that the rapid industrialization of the 1930's was due to the proletarian character of the state sets us on the road of opportunism towards Stalinism, since we endorse its goals of accumulation.

The LRP has indeed pointed out that despite the terrible exploitation of the proletariat and peasantry by the Stalinist regime, the industrial expansion of the Soviet Union reflected the survival of the workers' revolution. The workers' state had furnished the basis for the build-up by centralizing industry,

credit and foreign trade to an extent that no bourgeois force ever could. Placing an earlier date on the victory of capitalist restoration overlooks the Marxist understanding that the proletariat is the only creative and revolutionary class of this epoch; it credits qualitative capital accumulation to a capitalist state in the epoch of decay, a view of capitalism's progressiveness that should have died in the 19th century. Readiness to acknowledge the quick demise of the great revolutionary achievements is the opposite of the Marxist approach, which defends the surviving gains up through the last possible moment. The proletariat's conquests mean something!

On the level of factual evidence, the NLI disputes us by asserting that

"...The development of the productive forces is not in itself a prerogative of the 'workers' USSR': in the decade 1948-58 it was greater than in the alleged 'workers' decade' of 1928-38; in addition, imperialist Japan underwent a concomitant development in the 1930's that was equally prodigious."

The NLI's citation of the "development of the productive forces" is very vague for purposes of statistical comparison; when we referred to Soviet accumulation in *Socialist Voice* No. 5, pages 28-29, we specifically contrasted the statistics on Gross National Product and industrial manufacturing compiled in the book *Economic Growth in Japan and the USSR* by Angus Maddison. We suspect this book is also the source of the NLI's claims, because exactly the same criticism was made of us in an earlier polemic by another ultra-left tendency, the International Communist Current (ICC) in an article in *Internationalism* No 18, Winter 1978-79, which also cites Maddison. Curiously enough, neither the ICC nor the NLI seems to have noticed our previous reference to the same book, whose figures clearly refute their accusations! The responsibility for this oversight lies with the ICC, since the NLI appears to have relied on the ICC's account for its information. However, trusting the ICC's word on anything is inadvisable; see our reply to its slanders of us in the previous issue and our exchange on the LWG on page 2 of this issue.

As far as the figures for Russian GNP are concerned, the NLI and the ICC are correct: using Maddison's figures we can calculate that from 1948 to 1958, GNP growth was at an annual rate of 8.0 percent as compared to an annual growth of 5.7 percent from 1928 to 1938. But as we pointed out, the Gross National Product figures include the output of the backward agricultural sector that Stalin's counterrevolution laid waste and nearly destroyed in the early 1930's; our conclusion about growth was based on the more significant industrial manufacturing statistics. And here the comparison refutes our critics: in 1928-38 manufacturing output grew at an annual rate of 11.4 percent, compared to an annual growth rate of 9.3 percent in the period 1953 to 1965. (Maddison does not provide figures on manufacturing for the years 1948 and 1958, so we use the closest years given.) Of course, it bears emphasizing that all these numbers are at best approximations: Soviet statistics under Stalin and after have been notoriously self-serving and unreliable; the figures here have been interpreted by Western scholars and, as Maddison notes, "are still a matter of controversy." Nevertheless, this is the source cited by us and also used by the ICC to back up its claims; therefore the NLI's case rests on it as well.

The same error crops up in the ultra-leftists' comparison of Japan with the USSR. Taking the GNP figures, Japan's annual growth rate in the 1928-38 period was 4.9 percent compared to Russia's 5.7 percent. The advantage lies with the USSR, although we grant the NLI that the figures are similar (but

hardly "prodigious"). The industrial manufacturing figures, however, are impressive: 8.2 percent annually for Japan, compared to Russia's considerably larger 11.4 percent. Here the NLI and ICC are simply wrong.

It is also revealing to note that Japan's post-World War II growth rates were not only higher than in the 1930's but also higher than the USSR's, which by then was no longer a workers' state. This rapid expansion was based in part on replacement of war-damaged facilities, which permits a high percentage growth. But it is also true that *all* advanced capitalist nations grew during this period, and world trade expanded tremendously. The extraordinary fact about Russian growth in the 1930's is that it took place in the teeth of the world-wide capitalist collapse and the stagnation of world trade. That is what brings the class character of the Soviet state into sharp relief.

As well, compare backward Russia's uneven and combined development before the revolution with its leap to become the world's second military and industrial power by the end of World War II. Capitalist nations in this epoch are capable of sporadic growth (Japan in particular developed at the very end of capitalism's progressive epoch and took advantage of a high degree of centralization, state intervention and a favorable world market), but the organic creation of such a modern powerful state as Russia became in this epoch is not possible. Those who think it possible not only deny the unique role of the proletariat but also reflect capitalism's false self-confidence at a time of defeated proletarian revolutions.

All this having been said, it is crucial to point out that the core of the NLI's case against us does not lie in the dubious statistical claims which it borrowed from the ICC. Our difference is political, not mathematical; the NLI believes that accumulation, or "capitalist productive efficiency," is a Stalinist criterion for assessing the Russian state. It asserts that we fail to understand that the enormous impulse given to the productive forces was "an affirmation of the interests of rising capitalism *against* the interests of the Russian world proletariat."

But of course we do understand that Stalin's industrialization drive was conducted for reactionary nationalist and capitalist restorationist aims. What we have pointed out is that Stalin's very ability to carry out his industrialization campaign was due to his usurpation of the proletarian state's achievements; he built a prison house for the workers using the tools that he could get only by conquering the workers' state. Trotsky (and we) would have carried out a far different industrialization policy, dependent not on a reactionary nationalist utopia and an imprisoned working class but on the international revolutionary struggle. The NLI does not understand our position that nationalized property is a proletarian form which the Stalinists increasingly used *against* the proletariat. (See our article, "Is Nationalized Property Proletarian?" in *Socialist Voice* No. 6.)

The NLI's claim that accumulation and capitalist productive efficiency are Stalinist, not Marxist, criteria reveals the elements of anarchism and conservatism which are both inherent in "ultra-leftism." A workers' state is bourgeois but not under the rule of a bourgeoisie — according not only to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky but also to material necessity. In a purely bourgeois state the capitalist class and its domination of production become a fetter on the productive forces which inevitably works to maintain scarcity, even though the world is capable of abundance. Thus the initial tasks of a workers' state include the need to accumulate under capitalism's laws; Marx fought for this program against the anarchists of his day who saw no need for a transitional state between capitalist scarcity

and communism. Under an advancing workers' state the importance of capitalist laws (like the law of value and the imperative to accumulate) will decline and finally be overcome as material abundance increasingly makes possible the broadening of human consciousness and its planned development of all human resources.

Thus it is vitally important, as Trotsky pointed out, that a workers' state exhibit a qualitatively higher productive technique than capitalism, not so that workers are forced to work harder but so that they will work less. Indeed, it is just such a "Stalinist" argument about "capitalist productive efficiency" that today proves how backward Stalinist capitalism really is!

Accumulation is a key "criterion" to be eliminated not by fiat but only by workers increasing their power and command over resources. Moreover, the backwardness and international isolation of the early USSR made it all the more imperative that accumulation be undertaken. In the 1920's the Trotskyists fought for this program against both Bukharinists and Stalinists. When Stalin later adopted a program of accumulation it was the opposite of Trotsky's, aimed not to emancipate the workers from capitalism's laws but to further enslave them.

Since the NLI does not counterpose a proletarian program of accumulation to Stalin's, what is its alternative? International revolution, no doubt — an excellent choice. However, as the NLI reminds us later with respect to Poland, revolution cannot simply be willed or called for by ultimatum. In the meantime, the only practical alternative was Bukharin's: advance at a "snail's pace" to conciliate the peasantry. But as Trotsky argued throughout the 1920's, if the workers' state did not produce the industrial goods demanded by the peasantry in exchange for food, the imperialist-peasant connection would not only puncture the state's monopoly over foreign trade but would lead directly to imperialist restoration. That is why Bukharin was properly accused of capitulating to the logic of imperialism and why Bukharinists abroad became servants of their own bourgeoisies.

Ultra-leftism is normally characterized by its claim to lofty principles. Marxism, of course, is based on principles, but not immutable ones suspended over the reality of social change and development: the class struggle. Marxism's principles are already interpenetrated with the contradictions of the world. But ultra-leftism's formalist abstractions (which give it its highly moralistic tone) are remote from the actual class struggle and cannot guide it when it confronts reality — instead they break down and opportunism surfaces. In this way a "leftist" anti-accumulation position for Russia leads straight to the rightist Bukharin — who, not accidentally, was once a sort of ultra-leftist himself!

The NLI's problems are spotlighted by its assertion that we ignore political criteria ("consciousness and organization of the world proletariat" according to Trotsky, notes the NLI) in favor of Stalinist ones in assessing the class character of the Soviet state in the 1930's. The accusation is totally in conflict with everything we stand for. We are Marxists: our first task is to weigh the material situation, as we have outlined here, and then the question of consciousness, which is derivative. But it is by no means unimportant — in fact, consciousness is the *decisive* element in our analysis of Stalinist degeneration. Given Russia's isolation and enforced scarcity, the bureaucracy expanded, Soviets withered, the Communist Party was bastardized, alternative political expression was subdued, and the proletarian opposition was exiled and crushed — all by the end of the 1920's. The proletariat — the carrier of the revolutionary consciousness needed to control

its state — was removed from all levels of power and was subject to terror, enslavement and murder.

The bureaucracy did not consolidate itself as a class in one day. But it was seizing the levers of power, rearranging the content of state power to suit its interests, learning to transmit its power to its offspring. By the end of the 1930's the Stalinists had destroyed every vestige of Bolshevism in the core institutions of the state: the party, the army, the GPU — even purging long-time Stalinists who wouldn't totally accept the new class relations. Every last carrier of proletarian consciousness was wiped out. Trotsky called the period a "civil war" and so do we, even if we know now that it was deeper than Trotsky thought at the time. We have written a great deal about this, but the NLI misreads us because the comrades underplay the material questions that determine consciousness in the final analysis. In questioning the need for accumulation, the NLI demonstrates the idealist roots of its argument on consciousness.

On the Iranian Revolution

With that in mind we can understand the NLI's attack on our position concerning the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary events in Iran. Let us first acknowledge the NLI's compliment that we behaved in an internationalist fashion over the affair of the American hostages, fighting the chauvinist capitulations of elements on the U.S. left. Also, the NLI approves of our overall exposure of and opposition to the Khomeini regime and our analysis of the roots of the petty-bourgeois character of the Iranian left groupings.

However, it then accuses us of abandoning the revolutionary line by defending Iran against the Iraqi invasion in the first stages of the Gulf war. The NLI asserts that our tactic of a "military and not political front" with the Iranian bourgeois state (*Socialist Voice* No. 11, Winter 1980-81) must objectively mean political and not simply military support to the regime and therewith the end of class independence.

First, we note that we actually used the word "bloc" rather than "front" in order to avoid the slightest confusion with the "anti-imperialist united fronts" and other such Stalinist and reformist covers for subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. In contrast, we are guilty of what the NLI criticizes as Trotsky's "tacticalism" on the united front. That is, while we have a *strategy* of advocating united fronts at particular conjunctures of history, each of these must be necessarily *tactical*, temporary and very specific in intent. Otherwise the result will be political capitulation, because the revolutionary party — the physical manifestation of the proletarian program — becomes obscured by the front, a bloc with other parties. A permanent united front teaches that the independent revolutionary party can be dispensed with. In the case of Iran, our military bloc was indeed temporary: we openly abandoned the tactic less than a year later ("Counter-revolution in Iran," *Socialist Voice* No. 14).

Nevertheless, we consider our defensist position to have been correct at the time we held it and so we will defend it from the NLI's criticism. Its significance goes well beyond Iran, as the NLI recognizes.

In contrast with Stalinists, we oppose *political* blocs or fronts with the bourgeoisie. In contrast with the pseudo-Trotskyists, we oppose military defensive blocs with bourgeois elements that are in reality calls for the political victory of the latter (see "Spartacist 'Anti-Imperialism'" in *Socialist Voice* No. 14); this amounts to the Stalinist line slightly veiled. Like Trotsky and Lenin, by a military-technical bloc we mean simply that if present in a specific military confrontation between bourgeois-led forces we can if necessary fight against

one side and, momentarily, not against the other. Lenin advanced such military support for Kerensky against Kornilov during the Russian revolution, while Trotsky advocated it on several occasions later on. Likewise, our position on Iran was as follows:

"In the present war a genuinely communist vanguard, not yet able to take power and overthrow Khomeini, would offer a military bloc to the regime to the extent that it actually fights the Iraqi counterrevolution. But it would not cease its revolutionary political opposition to the regime and would continue to work for its overthrow."

Now the NLI recognizes that a revolution did take place, that it was made but not completed by the masses and that Khomeini was able to deflect and attempt to destroy it. It further recognizes that workers' institutions like the shoras (factory councils) were important to keep out of Khomeini's and the bourgeoisie's control. But despite our clear opposition to Khomeini, it says of us that "they take for revolution Khomeinism's tight noose around the neck of the masses; they take for counterrevolution not the joint attack by the Iranian and Iraqi bourgeoisies against the proletariat of the two countries" but only the attack by the Iraqi bourgeoisie.

In typical ultra-left fashion the NLI starts with a chronic truth — the counterrevolutionary character of the entire bourgeoisie — and turns it into a principle standing above reality. In the immediate situation the Iraqi bourgeoisie was attacking the Iranian revolution, which means not just Khomeini but the achievements of the masses underneath that Khomeini also opposed. At that moment, Khomeini was not engaged in a "joint attack" with Iraq against the workers; his forces were shooting back at the Iraqis. That was the time for a military bloc.

Let us pinpoint the situation hypothetically. Suppose the Iraqi invaders are attacking a factory with the aim of wiping out the workers' council (shora) there. Khomeini's army for its own reasons is not attacking the factory workers but is shooting at the Iraqis. If the NLI (or its hypothetical Iranian colleagues) were present, would they take no sides and risk letting the shora be obliterated? Would they shoot at the attackers but also fire at the Khomeini forces at the same moment? Revolutionists would shoot at the Iraqis first to defend the workers and the shora and would hold back, for the moment, from shooting at the Khomeini army. Even if NLI comrades on the spot were to share our temporary defensist position, however, there is the additional danger that, guided by false principles, they would follow them to a different disaster. Those who believe that a military bloc with the bourgeoisie automatically leads to a political capitulation would be prone to carry out that logic — not us.

The problem in Iran was not that our tactic would encourage the workers to surrender their class independence to Khomeini — in the absence of a real revolutionary alternative, they had already done so! The real problem was how to warn them, how to expose and defeat Khomeini's inevitable attack against them. At the same time that we called for a military bloc with Khomeini, we noted that this required mass mobilizations for the war independent of the regime, voting against war credits to the government, fraternization with the Iraqi soldiers, etc. Our tactics provided an opportunity to warn workers that their autonomy from Khomeini was vital. The NLI's apparent tactic, firing at Khomeini and the Iraqis equally, would have given him the cover for the repression he was planning against the workers in the future but could not accomplish at the moment because of the Iraqis.

Far from capitulating when, as we repeatedly warned,

Khomeini like Kornilov turned his forces against not only the bourgeois "democrat" Bani-Sadr but against the workers as well and every vestige of their revolutionary gains, those workers who followed our lead would have been prepared to break their military bloc in time. And the bulk of workers would have seen that the most advanced had been right about Khomeini. The NLI's attitude would instead have convinced them that the revolutionaries were responsible for Khomeini's "retaliation." Thus moralism arms the enemy and disarms the masses.

Advancing the Polish Struggle

It is a truism that formalist, immutable "principles" are not real principles but rather barriers against one's own feared opportunism. The NLI's discussion of Poland makes this observation even more concrete. Again the NLI indicates that our basic positions on Poland were revolutionary and substantially correct. But here it charges us with exaggerating the revolutionary character of the 1980-81 events and thereby distorting the tasks of the proletariat.

First the NLI accuses us of having presented the Gdansk Inter-Factory Strike Committee (MKS) as "an organization of dual power" which it could not have been in the absence of a revolutionary party. This is a fundamental misconception. The NLI must recognize that we make it more than clear that the mass of workers were not conscious of the MKS's potentially revolutionary character and that there was no revolutionary leadership. Still, the Gdansk MKS effectively ran the city in late August 1980 and controlled the means of production, the food supply and vital services. It exercised power at the same time that the Stalinist regime remained the official state power in name. That was precisely "dual power." When the Mensheviks led the Russian soviets early in 1917, that meant that the soviets were not aiming to displace the bourgeois provisional government, since the Mensheviks supported it; but in wielding certain reins of government the soviets were literally a dual power. With a revolutionary Bolshevik leadership later on, the soviets did not become a dual power but rather had taken a step towards resolving the duality in favor of a revolutionary power alone.

Soviets are precisely dual power instruments; they are not necessarily revolutionary — that depends upon the vanguard party winning the mass of workers to its program. The MKS was a dual power institution. Whether or not it could have served as a revolutionary vehicle depended upon the working out of the balance of forces within the workers' movement, between backward and advanced consciousness. It turned out that reformists gained the leadership in the absence of a revolutionary alternative and replaced the MKS with a reformist union, but that outcome had to be fought and our propaganda did precisely that.

The NLI is not content with claiming that we exaggerated the character of the MKS; it questions our assessment of the entire situation. After quoting our statement that "the fundamental mistake was the decision to turn the MKS into a trade union rather than an alternative organ of state power" ("The Great Contradiction," *Socialist Voice* No. 10), the NLI mockingly continues:

"In sum, the error was not having made the revolution neatly and immediately, as we all would certainly desire. But this does not fall from the skies in the absence of its objective and subjective preconditions, among which are first of all (as Trotsky taught best!) a sufficient adjustment period of advances and retreats, outbursts and pauses in the struggle, and, through these experiences, a sufficient growth in the organizational

and theoretical level of the class. The temptation to demand too much of the Polish workers is strong and we can understand this, but we must be careful not to exaggerate the kinds and the timing of slogans; for it is precisely in this way that we can carry to the end the early symptoms of revolution. One example: the LRP poses 'immediately' the tasks of 'arming the workers, withdrawal of the Russian troops and the cancellation of the Western debt.' It all seems very beautiful and can even be thrilling to those who do not understand the difference between the proclamation of a principle or a strategic objective and the concrete steps for moving in such directions."

The NLI believes that we ignored the necessary immediate steps in favor of our exaggerated hopes for revolution. One would think from its account that we had proclaimed the goal of immediate revolution in some starry-eyed fashion. But this is simply not so. In our account we said exactly the opposite; it is almost as if our original article had been written in response to the NLI!

"A revolutionary program would not have required the Gdansk MKS to issue immediate calls for insurrection. That would have been sheer adventurism. But it would have meant an unceasing effort to inform the workers of the truth that revolution and insurrection are necessary and that the basis for it must be laid for them immediately. It would have meant using the workers' organization and strength in the strike to promulgate a revolutionary program: organize political demonstrations, appeal to the soldiers to solidarize with the workers cause, explain to the peasantry the benefits of workers' rule, send delegations to other workers throughout Poland and even to other European countries, East and West. A revolutionary leadership would also have placed demands on the government to undercut its excuses that its hands were tied: asking that it call for arming the workers (as Gomulka had once threatened to do), for the withdrawal for Russian troops and the cancellation of the Western debt."

In addition, we called for use of the general strike weapon and pointed to the necessity of combatting the Church, the nationalists and the reformists. We called for the restoration of the MKS. Are these not correct demands, the immediate steps the NLI insists on? We note, by the way, that the NLI offers no concrete steps of its own in this article, which is certainly an abdication of responsibility given its criticisms of us. And it also evidently regards those slogans of ours which it does cite (arming the workers, withdrawing the Russian troops, cancelling the debt to the West) as being provocative, for it calls particular attention to the word "immediately."

We would have liked it if these things could have happened "immediately," but unfortunately they could not, given the workers' acceptance of the reformist leaders. We knew that they would not be accepted, much less carried out, immediately — and so we did not say so. The NLI's location of the word "immediately" is its own invention; what we did say, as the reader can see, was that the basis for revolution and insurrection must be laid immediately. What is more, we also said precisely the opposite of what the NLI "quotes." Just after raising the slogans the NLI finds so objectionable, we went on to say:

"Such a program would *over time* have raised the consciousness of even the politically backward workers. From the most advanced workers, it would have helped form a proletarian cadre capable of explaining the vicissitudes of the struggle, inoculating the workers

against cynicism when the state inevitably breaks its agreement and preparing for the future revolution." (Emphasis added.)

"Over time," not immediately. All the NLI's mockery about our "thrilling" but ignorant rhetoric falls to the ground. And with it falls the charge that we ignored Trotsky's teaching about drawing lessons from "advances and retreats, outbursts and pauses in the struggle." That's why we pointed to "explaining the vicissitudes of the struggle" and so forth. The best one can say about the NLI's total misreading of what we wrote is that the language gap and its preconceptions about Trotskyists might have led it to anticipate what in fact we did not say and to deny what we did say.

Whatever the NLI might think, events proved the need for just the sort of revolutionary propaganda we called for. Didn't the state break the agreement? Wasn't it necessary to expose the fact that Polish government troops would fire on Polish workers and make preparations for armed self-defense?



1980: Gdansk strikers organized the dual-power MKS and celebrated victories. Retreat to Solidarity union was a step toward present defeat.

Wasn't it necessary to expose the "liberal" Stalinist governments of Kania and Jaruzelski as unwilling to arm and support the Polish masses against a Russian attack, so that workers would see soon enough (if not immediately!) the need for arms? Wasn't it necessary to call for the cancellation of the debt to the West so that "over time" the workers would learn that the regime was collaborating with another deadly enemy, the Western imperialists, to milk the workers dry? An enemy, moreover, whom many Polish workers had considerable illusions about!

What frightens the NLI about our slogans is that we openly proclaim our Marxist revolutionary program even while speaking of immediate, preparatory steps. The steps were there, but also there was the clear warning that the workers of Poland had only the choice of revolution or defeat. (The present partial defeat is obviously unstable and cannot last.) That's why we called for building a party on the basis of the most advanced consciousness, not simply the immediate steps immediately intelligible to all. In the face of fighting for an openly revolutionary course the NLI hesitates and draws back.

The NLI implies that since there is no revolutionary party and since it will be difficult to build one (against the views of

us Trotskyists, who are supposed to think that revolutionary parties appear when we snap our fingers!), revolutionary workers should hold back from raising the advanced program until the party is formed out of the mass struggle. But that would only ensure the production of a reformist party — and a disaster, since the Polish regime could not live with even the limited practical reforms that the reformist Solidarity demanded. No, the way to build a revolutionary leadership is to openly proclaim its goals and strategy while pointing to whatever immediate steps or reforms are possible.

The NLI's flight away from this task over Poland, and away from its ultra-leftist ultimatism in favor of immediate steps above all, is a concrete sign of the opportunist dangers arising when ultra-leftism meets reality. It ties back to the cynicism with regard to the proletariat's capacities that we mentioned at the beginning: those who give up too easily on the past gains of the revolutionary proletariat are in reality pessimistic about the potential of the workers' struggles today. Opportunism means holding the truth back from the workers. Moralistic principles are a weak defense against the eruptions of cynicism.

Interestingly, on all three issues on which the "ultra-left"

Concessions Fightback

continued from page 1

offensive. A clear message has been sent out: concessions don't work, they don't save jobs, they set the stage for greater losses. The principle is that the interests of the working class are opposed to those of the capitalists. However, it took the action of the workers themselves in opposition to their leadership to reaffirm this basic truth of the class struggle.

Thus Doug Fraser, outgoing president of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) was forced to resign his seat on the Board of Directors of Chrysler because he suddenly discovered there may be a conflict of interest. Yet it was Fraser who rammed through the removal of clauses from the UAW constitution that prohibited UAW members from sitting on the board of directors of a corporation, in effect eliminating the basic principle that one could serve the union or management but not both.

And what have been the results of having a labor representative on Chrysler's board? The Chrysler work force has been reduced from over 100,000 in 1979 to around 45,000 at present. In addition, Chrysler workers have wages nearly \$3 per hour less than workers at Ford and GM. The contract negotiated in September offered them no relief. Except for the resumption of cost-of-living payments, the contract included no pay raise. Instead, Fraser negotiated an absurd profit-sharing scheme whereby workers would receive about \$88 each in any quarter the company profits reach \$20 million. At the same time, Fraser said Chrysler couldn't afford pay raises because its car sales were losing money! In return for this cynical scheme, concessions such as a new absentee program would have given management increased disciplinary power over the work force.

The overwhelming defeat of the contract represented a magnificent though limited victory. Chrysler workers stood up to the same kind of intimidation tactics of both the company and union that led to the original concessions. There is no money for pay raises, claimed the company; Chrysler would go under, chimed in Fraser. But the workers were adamant: we've sacrificed enough.

Yet two weeks later, Fraser was able to push through a vote

NLI chose to attack us its position proved to be to the right of ours. On two of the three (the Russian question and Iran), the NLI obviously sees itself as criticizing from the left, even though the result turns out to be opposite. But on the question of Poland, the NLI's position is more conservative even in its own eyes; that is why it has to misread our position to make us appear adventurist. Ultra-leftism is in truth just another variety of centrism that uses revolutionary phrases to cover its conservative program.

We are perfectly willing to accept the NLI's challenge to engage in discussion with the "Italian left" as well as the rest of the ultra-left milieu. But nothing that we have seen convinces us that we have any reason not to continue defending Trotskyism, both from the pseudo-Trotskyists and the ultra-left anti-Trotskyists. Trotskyism represents the revolutionary history of the working class; we defend it, albeit critically, because we stand on the workers' past gains — as long as they have not been demolished. This necessary task applies both to institutions like workers' states and trade unions and to proletarian conquests in the realm of theory. As Trotsky observed, those who do not defend these achievements will never be able to make new ones. ■

to postpone any strike action until January by a huge 2 to 1 margin. (Even this agreement to retain the old contract involved a concession, the loss of some holiday pay). Though disgusted with the contract, workers were afraid that a serious, long strike against Chrysler could be suicidal if it sent the corporation under. Fraser used this fear, which underneath was a lack of trust in the UAW leadership (as well as workers' reluctance to go out during the holiday season), to win the vote. For good measure he loaded the question on the union ballot.

By not striking immediately, Fraser gave Chrysler more time to brace for a strike. Postponing action until January was aimed at cooling off workers' anger. A January strike would be at the least favorable time, when car sales will be down even further.

However, the best-laid maneuvers of the UAW leadership received a severe blow with the Canadian Chrysler strike. The more militant Canadian section had resisted concessions from 1979 to 1981 but was outvoted by U.S. Chrysler workers. As a result, earlier this year the Canadians voted to negotiate a separate contract from the U.S. agreement. Faced with even higher inflation than in the U.S. and suffering lower wages as a result of the exchange differential between U.S. and Canadian dollars, Canadian Chrysler workers were solidly for the strike. As we go to press, Fraser is claiming a victory without yet revealing the package. We shall see. If it is a victory, it was won in spite of Fraser.

Because Chrysler operations in the U.S. and Canada are more integrated than at Ford and G.M., the Canadian strike added to the thousands of layoffs in the U.S. and threatened to shut down Chrysler plants altogether by January. Chrysler did not want to settle with the Canadians before reaching agreement with the larger U.S. workforce, since any gains made in Canada would be demanded by U.S. workers. For the same reason, the UAW leadership fears any gains made by Canadian workers. As a result, the bureaucrats and Chrysler were seeking to collaborate in settling the U.S. contract before January. The Canadian strike ripped apart the tenuous logic of waiting until January. And so did Chrysler's demand that its U.S. workers produce the struck Canadian-made parts — in other words, scab.

All this pointed to the need for an immediate joint strike. If the U.S. workers had settled first, the Canadians would have

been high-pressured by Chrysler and the UAW leaders to accept similar terms.

Some UAW leaders, with the help of the bourgeois media, were attempting to build hostility toward the Canadian strike because of the resulting layoffs in U.S. Chrysler plants. However, many U.S. Chrysler workers looked to the Canadian strike for leadership, and some U.S. locals have given active support. For example, the Sterling Heights Chrysler stamping plant sent dozens of demonstrators across the border to join Canadian pickets. What makes this especially noteworthy is the fact that 300 workers at the



UAW's 'Buy America' campaign has whipped up anti-Japanese chauvinism to fever pitch. Yet Democratic Socialists of America chair Michael Harrington covers for Fraser & Co.: "Understandably, angry American workers could assume that their enemy is the foreign worker — or worse, the 'yellow' worker — rather than the multinationals playing the workers of the world against one another. The United Automobile Workers union, chief advocate of this bill, has been quite forthright in fighting this reactionary interpretation of it" (New York Times, December 2).

Michigan plant were laid off as a result of the strike in Canada.

Real support to the Canadian workers, however, had to take the form of demanding an immediate strike in the U.S. and not waiting until January. While the U.S. vote to postpone was no solution, the workers' reluctance to strike Chrysler was understandable. A long strike would have seriously damaged Chrysler and weakened the corporation's competitive position. What was and still is necessary is an industry-wide strike of all

Labor Leftists' "Network":

Sponsored by Labor Notes magazine, a conference of 750 self-described "union activists" labeled "Organizing against Concessions" took place in Detroit over the November 12-14 weekend. An organized fightback against trade union concessions to the corporations is clearly called for, given the deepening capitalist depression, the companies' campaign for lower wages and benefits — and the growing resistance exemplified most recently by the Canadian Chrysler workers' strike. But at the Labor Notes Conference none of the key

auto production. Ford and G.M. workers also took severe blows when concessions swept the entire industry. At the same time as Chrysler workers in the U.S. were defeating the contract, Canadian G.M. workers voted to accept a contract that included new losses, including the Annual Improvement Factor (an annual raise of 3 percent) and the Paid Personal Holiday program. A joint international strike against all concessions in the entire auto industry has the power to defeat the giant auto companies and turn back their efforts to pit workers against each other across the border. Such a strike would involve militant tactics such as sitdowns and plant seizures which challenge the capitalists' control over the means of production.

But militancy alone is not enough. Those who argue that because Chrysler is doing a little bit better it is possible to resume "trade unionism as usual" can only mislead workers. There will be no return to the era of post-war prosperity when the auto industry grew by leaps and bounds. The working class can no longer simply fight for more, it must pose its solution to prevent economic collapse. Capitalism's solution is to attack the working class in order to squeeze out more profits. Unless workers expropriate the capitalists, entire sections of industry will be in ruins and the working class will go down too. Auto workers have seen 200,000 layoffs already, most of the jobs being permanently lost. In the face of this, to simply propose militancy and limited strike action as usual will only meet with disdain from workers.

What's necessary is to take the industrial struggle onto the political level. This is why revolutionaries advocate a general strike. The general strike challenges the power of the capitalist class and confronts the capitalist state in particular. It unites the entire working class in shutting down the bosses' system, and thereby shows workers who were previously demoralized and isolated by the union bureaucrats how powerful their class really is.

Though the outcome at Chrysler is still to be determined, the militant challenge to concessions appears to already have had an impact. Local leaders of the United Steelworkers of America voted 231 to 141 against a tentative agreement that included concessions. This despite the endorsement of Lloyd McBride, president of the union and unanimous support by the executive board. The local presidents, in opposing their top leadership, reflect the shifting mood among workers toward opposing concessions.

Resistance to concessions is growing. However, there is no real movement with any clear goals or leadership. Workers have little use for those would-be leaders who have no alternative to offer. It is the task of revolutionaries to give real leadership, to raise far-reaching alternatives such as the expropriation of industry and the banks that finance it. We fight for measures leading to a workers' state to reconstruct the collapsing economy. Also, real action slogans — general strike, factory committees to conduct strikes and sit-ins — are needed to transform a growing mood of resistance into a movement that can roll back concessions and the capitalist offensive. ■

No Action, No Answers

issues were seriously debated, no action was undertaken nor planned for the future. In brief, the Conference seemed purposely designed to lead nowhere.

The reasons for the Conference's failure was that it was organized and led by fake socialists who worked overtime to keep the discussions within the limits of reformist trade unionism. Labor Notes was set up and is edited by members of the International Socialists (IS) and their friends; various other leftist tendencies from the pseudo-Trotskyist, Democrat-

ic Socialists of America, Communist Party and Maoist milieus were at hand. But all openly socialist politics was ruled out; the distribution of explicitly socialist literature was prohibited; and most of the hundreds of "socialists" identified themselves to each other and the other workers present as just "rank and filers." If the underlying issues were not so critical, and if some of the participants had not been genuine class fighters, the Conference could have been taken solely as a weekend of farcical theater.

Take the opening session. Joe Jurich, a UE steward at the Westinghouse Air Brake plant in Pittsburgh gave a rousing report on the seven-month strike that stopped the bosses' demands for contract concessions. Georgia Ellis, a leader of the 1977 strike by a largely female work force at Essex Wire in Indiana, showed how union betrayal by the UAW had led to defeat. But such serious reports led to no serious conclusions. Rich Gibson of the Michigan State Employees Association repeatedly hinted about "their system" and said that it would be a "swell idea" if the workers ran the country; moreover, "we have to go way beyond traditional American trade unionism." It was a political striptease with the G-string kept securely in place. That the system is called capitalism, that "way beyond" it might mean socialism, and that workers can run the country only through a socialist revolution was not stated. Likewise, in answer to a question from the floor as to how workers could control investment when the capitalists own the companies, Jurich answered: "Go into the streets and get rid of them." Does this mean revolution? Privately, perhaps. But publicly the Conference kept it a big secret. No other spokesmen came close to such daring suggestions.

ISers were not loathe to tell us, off the floor, that the beauty of Labor Notes and its conferences was that they promote a "dialogue between socialists and non-socialists." In reality the "dialogue" was like one hand clapping. The non-socialists spoke up boldly for non-socialism. So, however, did the "socialists."

At the session called "The Big Picture," Kim Moody, editor of Labor Notes and a leading member of the IS, was particularly coy about big answers. He urged labor to "reformulate the pillars of unionism" and noted that labor needs a political and economic plan in order to "take charge of the economy." He got lots of applause, presumably for his successful concealment of what precisely he might have meant.

Pro-Democrats Not Challenged

Other speakers weren't so shy. Bob Weissman, a Chrysler local president from Cleveland and a leader of the oppositional Locals Opposed to Concessions (LOC) in the UAW, took the offensive. He attacked various social-democratic writers (Stanley Aronowitz, David Moberg, Harley Shaiken) and Labor Notes itself for issuing statements accepting certain concessions. He correctly attacked such capitulations as union participation on corporate boards, stock and voting rights schemes and utopian campaigns for "ending management prerogatives." But he came to conservative conclusions: fight concessions through collective bargaining only, not the "diversion" of independent political action; take on Chrysler now because it supposedly has the ability to pay (leaving aside what to do if a company doesn't); demand a reduced work-week rather than regain past concessions; and above all, stay within the Democratic Party (where the capitalist "friends of labor" are).

Don Tormey, a retired UE international rep, was explicit: he touted the program of the Congressional Black Caucus — the black Democrats whose occasional radical noises keep working people entrapped in this bourgeois party. This line



was echoed by Ed Vargas, the President of the Hartford (Connecticut) Central Labor Council.

The Labor Notes people couldn't go along with outright endorsement of the Democrats, so they timidly offered a labor party instead. Presenting the official Labor Notes viewpoint in a handout to the Conference, Bill Parker stated, "Ideally, the U.S. labor movement should take a page from their Canadian brothers' and sisters' book," meaning create a union-based party like Canada's New Democratic Party. Canadians present bitterly described the NDP's penchant for bowing to capitalist austerity programs and commented that if Americans were so eager for a labor party, "take ours."

Several other speakers also favored some sort of labor party. Tony Mazzocchi, a former OCAW vice-president who twice narrowly lost votes for his union's presidency, is now operating through the Campaign for Corporate Concessions. He wants a "labor party without candidates" — a tiger deliberately left toothless. Mazzocchi is admittedly a "militant bureaucrat" and thinks like one. He is trying to arrange a meeting of one or two thousand "elected union officials" to set up a forum independent of the Democrats where labor's program can be debated. Obviously, if you want participation even from lower echelons of the AFL-CIO officialdom you can't challenge the Democratic Party head-on. Mazzocchi's brainchild would adopt a "corporate concessions" program which would have to be won legislatively, he admits, but couldn't run for the legislatures. For the foreseeable future, it is nothing but an anti-concessions lobby aimed at the pro-concessions Democrats.

None of the labor party champions at the main sessions condemned the pro-Democrats, so there was no debate. But at the well-attended workshop on political action, an LRPer from the floor spoke as an open revolutionary socialist and denounced both the Democrats and the Labor Party advocates. He pointed out first that the "new," "flexible" tactic of radicals working inside the Democratic Party was very old. They would meet all the past generations of "socialists" who had gone in to change or "re-align" the Democrats but were now leaders of that unchanged outfit or of the AFL-CIO. In

turn, the labor party proponents offer nothing but reform programs for capitalism (Mazzocchi openly, the secret socialists by reason of elimination since they don't offer socialism); all they could accomplish would be to convince people that reforms are possible and therefore why not vote for liberal Democrats?

Workers would form their own party, the LRP representative explained, when they realize their own power — by overcoming the years of division and misleadership through mass actions. Then masses will move toward building a revolutionary party, while the Labor Notes closet socialists will even resort to socialist talk in their attempt to harness the movement to a reformist labor party. In the meantime, revolutionaries work to show the workers their true power when united in action by propagandizing and, where possible, agitating for a general strike. Accordingly, LRP leaflets addressed to the Conference called for support to the Chrysler strikers and for urging all UAW members to support the Canadians and repudiate the UAW's hatchet job on them. A unified auto strike would combat the U.S. Chrysler workers' sense of isolation and fear and would be a major step toward a general strike in depression-ridden Detroit.

There were a few actual debates that broke out in some of the workshops. One came in a session over the domestic content bill now being pushed in Congress by the AFL-CIO and the UAW especially. This bill aims at ensuring that automobiles sold on the U.S. market must contain an overwhelming proportion of U.S.-made parts. It fits right in with the UAW bureaucracy's racist anti-Japanese "Buy America" campaign. Some of the Conference leftists opposed it on the traditional socialist ground that protectionism only divides workers and protects inefficient capitalists; but, desperate to stuff all their arguments into purely trade unionist formulas, they ignored the deeper questions.

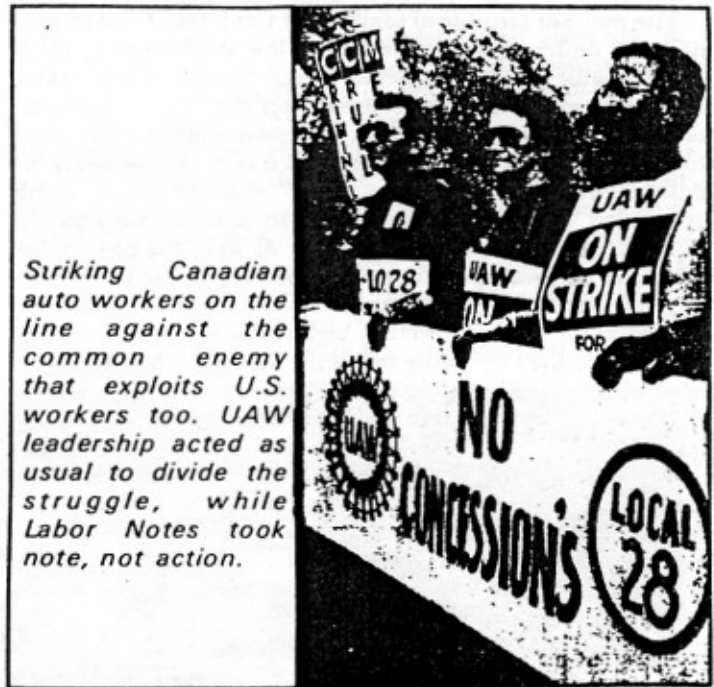
Far worse, some, including ISers, tried to justify the bill as a form of workers' control over capitalist investment — as if a U.S. bourgeois law restricting Japanese capital has anything to do with workers' control. Frankly, we did not expect that the "left" protectionist trend would be so open or that the swamp-like "International" Socialists would already be divided on so elementary a question for socialists. But, in retrospect, that result was inevitable. People who have spent ten years practicing concealing their "socialist" opinions, who believe that workers have to be protected from radicalism, who decapitate every program in order to present it as mere trade unionism, might just as well search for soft approaches to racism instead of condemning it outright. There may be no new thing under the sun, but there sure are pathological variants.

Protectionism cannot be accepted as a part of any movement designed to liberate workers. It is one thing for pro-protectionist, even racist, workers to participate in united working-class actions with anti-racists. Marxists know that such experiences teach the value of workers' solidarity and undermine chauvinist beliefs. But it is a different story to appear on a platform with protectionist leaders and ideologists as part of the same alliance and not to expose their deadly program.

Protectionism in the auto industry would mean unemployment among Mexican workers in an already collapsing economy. Even among Japanese workers the threat would be great, given the weight of the American market. Does anyone doubt that rival capitalist powers would not respond with tariff walls of their own, that the trade wars of the 1930's which contributed to World War II would not recur? Would not the filthy chauvinist sentiments already stirred up be

escalated, as we know from the fascist movements of the past? Because of the built-in racism of U.S. society, such campaigns also pose the threat of race war to divide the working class here at home.

Moreover, protectionism is class-divisive and racist *immediately*. Two sections of the working class suffer directly when imports are cut off: those in export industries faced with overseas counteraction, and poor workers — many black and Hispanic — who can't afford the higher prices of domestic goods. The toleration and encouragement of protectionism among "progressives" is a startling confirmation of the fact that those who bought their way into the lower labor bureaucracy by "temporarily" hiding their socialist politics



Striking Canadian auto workers on the line against the common enemy that exploits U.S. workers too. UAW leadership acted as usual to divide the struggle, while Labor Notes took note, not action.

have paid the price of adopting the outlook of the most aristocratic sections of labor. Searching for "minimal programs" acceptable under capitalism, the "activists" have emerged with the elements of capitalism's "maximum program": racism and imperialist chauvinism leading to fascism and world war.

Given the Conference's orientation toward the auto industry, given the occurrence of the key Canadian Chrysler strike, given the presence on the podium of speakers from the LOC which favors the domestic content legislation, given Labor Notes' expressed opposition to working-class disunity, it would have been the least to expect that perhaps one speaker might criticize the UAW's vicious anti-Japanese campaign. But no: the "dialogue" took the most modest, gentlemanly and theoretical forms. It was a total disgrace.

The next-sickest thing about the conference was its inaction on the on-going Canadian Chrysler strike. Yes, money was collected for the strikers' families, but all action was ruled out. At a Detroit-area workshop billed as the place to take up the Chrysler strike, one black militant noted that the best support would be for U.S. auto workers to join the Canadians on strike; he proposed in particular that the Conference's "750 people march over to Canada today" to show support to the picketers just across the river from Detroit. This excellent suggestion was weaseled out of by the time-honored method of bureaucrats everywhere.

"We have to talk to the Canadians first," said UAW local president and LOC leader Pete Kelly — a "practical" idea

meant to rule out a Conference march completely. "If you go public and the Canadian local leaders denounce you," opined IS supporter Ken Paff, organizer of the rank-and-filist Teamsters for a Democratic Union, "then the result is negative." "Go along with people more experienced in the UAW," he added, referring to Kelly. But why would local strike leaders denounce a support march? Of course, top UAW officials and their local followers were not at all happy about the Canadians' temerity in striking, but "union activists" aren't supposed to be cowed by that sort of thing. Local bureaucrats, however, are very conscious of officialdom's prerogatives. Two black women from an unemployed auto workers committee in Flint, Michigan also demanded such action, but the question was ignored by all the other "activists" on hand.

The militant attitude of some of the Conference's black participants underscored the noticeably low attendance of black and Hispanic workers, especially in the context of depression-ridden Detroit. Many undoubtedly feel that contract concessions are chiefly a problem for well-paid white workers who have a lot of benefits to concede. This is false. In the heavy industries like steel and auto where concessions are being demanded, it will be the lower seniority minority workers who will suffer first from union weakness. As well, the concessions drive has hit lower-paid workers, especially in the public sector. But the focus of the bosses' attack does undermine the pro-capitalist illusions of many highly-paid workers, the labor aristocracy; they are being forcefully shown by the system just what their real class position is. Unfortunately the Conference's lack of answers and action failed to drive these lessons home.

What was the real purpose of this Conference dedicated to non-debates, non-confrontations and inaction? It is obviously true that no political unity could have been found among the melange of Democrats, laborites, pro-protectionists, anti-protectionists, hidden socialists and pro-capitalists. Our leaflet noted that "as revolutionaries we know that workers of different, even conflicting, views can be united in common struggles," but the Conference rejected action too. All that remained was the currently trendy solution of "networking." As the Labor Notes organizers put it in the introduction to the Conference program. "This weekend presents a great opportunity for activists within the unions to develop and expand their existing networks."

All this trouble to exchange stories and telephone numbers? It hardly seems likely. After all, an even more extensive network could be woven simply by polling the Labor Notes subscription list; the one thing the IS has accomplished in its years of rank and filing has been to tap into the layer of leftists and others plugging away in their locals for reforms. Indeed, at the workshops where horror stories of union concessions were reported, several participants complained that the stories could have been collected in advance and presented to the Conference in writing so that there would have been both more concrete information and more time to discuss what to do about it.

No, networking is not intended to be a tool for finding answers or engaging in common actions — it is a substitute for them. A network is an organization without specific content. Each local group or set of militants, or better yet each left bureaucrat, out-bureaucrat or local official, jealously guards his base while preserving a loose alliance of contacts.

The IS and other operators are well aware that they are not a movement or part of one; in fact, Labor Notes' motto is "Let's Put the *Movement* Back in the Labor Movement." These inveterate gimmickers have tried to prod the working class into action with various schemes — a safety committee

here, union democracy there, now some anti-concessions rhetoric — but never a unified program. Unlike Marxists, they spend no efforts trying to convince workers of what the class's real interests are and how to achieve them. They prefer to repeat back what they think they hear from the ranks. The network simply does this in a multiplicity of different ways; but now the maneuverers see an upsurge coming, so they unite as broadly and with as little content as possible in order to cast their net widely over the future outbreak.

Networks (the IS's isn't the only one around) resemble a reformist party without its mass membership. Such a party typically is built upon "pluralism" — many points of view, many local officials with their own angles to play. It reflects the petty-bourgeois outlook and petty-bourgeois conditions, the "democracy" of small competitors. The leadership is tolerant of disagreements as long as it is left to carry out its program when in power; it lets the others jabber away. It controls its apparatus as its power base in order to deal with the capitalist rulers.

The Labor Notes Conference was a mild success from this point of view because of its size and the names it attracted. But of course the network's power is severely limited by its lack of a movement. Moreover, Labor Notes lacks an official minimal platform. Petty-bourgeois dominated mass parties have something cobbled together for public relations, even though what they carry out when in office is different. Reformists with dissident programs stay in the party because it has the masses; they swallow their differences. Without the magnet of masses to hold its components together, a network must avoid a formal platform at all costs.

And even action is too much: common struggle may unite the workers, but it can't satisfy the layers of local officials, staffers and out-bureaucrats with their various degrees of links to the top union bureaucrats — whose peace-keeping role is threatened by workers' action. So a network has no explicit purpose at all — only a hidden one. Like a reformist party, it tolerates all points of view except revolutionaries'. That is the only way it can hold onto its playmates with overtly bourgeois politics — by keeping the reds out of sight. That is the only way it can promise the bureaucrats, or practice promising for the day when the masses move, that it can be trusted to stay firmly within capitalist limits.

That is why the Conference strove mightily to divert leftist dissent, why it sent out squads of ISers and other pseudo-socialists to prevent those like us who tried to circulate openly socialist material, why the sponsoring "socialist" groups didn't even allow their own literature on the tables! Catching this spirit of self-censorship, the Socialist Workers Party's *Militant* newspaper, whose hawkers were ushered out of the Conference corridors, did not even mention its own suppression in a lengthy laudatory article on the meeting.

Whether they like it or not, the networkers are actually carrying out the hidden program of capitalist reform, meaning the defense of capitalism when masses are prepared to move against it. The only viewpoint excluded is the only one that opposes capitalism; while the overt pro-Democratic line is welcomed and in no way challenged; that is why Labor Notes' Parker called for his labor party "ideally" — not just because he thinks it's a nice idea, but because he is making absolutely clear that such ideas are for the remote future.

The Labor Notes network may or may not survive the coming working-class upheavals. If it dies it will not be missed; even its devotees will find other vehicles. If it lives, it will not be the first organization formed by people intending to lead workers out of the Democratic Party that ends up leading leftists into it. By then, we hope, the aspiring socialists and militants trapped in the net will have gotten out. ■

Palestinians

continued from page 32

the summer. Moreover, they seem to want to move fast, while the P.L.O. is disorganized and malleable."

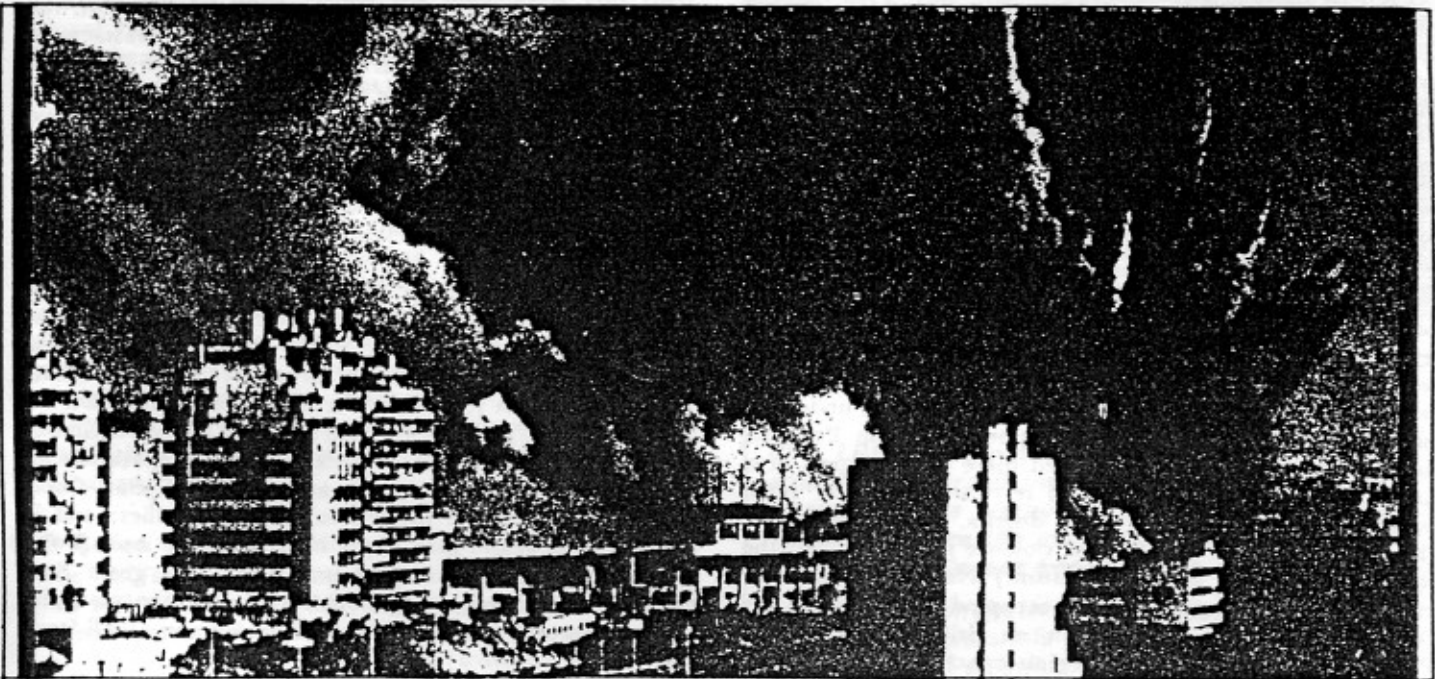
The Palestinian problem has been a constantly burning match in a tinderbox region where the exploited masses identify strongly with the Palestinians. After Israel's rout of the Arab armies in 1967, the struggle of the Palestinians came to the forefront of Middle Eastern politics. Now the PLO's defeat has provided the Arab rulers the opportunity to seize the initiative. Given the world crisis, of which the Middle East is a major theater, an Arab peace with Israel would accomplish several goals: 1) the Arab states could adhere more openly to U.S. imperialism with the Israeli short-circuit removed; 2) they could also move discreetly toward ties with the most powerful, stable and reliable counterrevolutionary army in the area, Israel's — a necessity, given the mass upheavals they face. But even with the Palestinian resistance weakened, no one in the Arab world believes the crisis can be even temporarily solved without giving it a safety valve.

It is no accident that talk of a Palestinian state has become active only with the defeat. This tells everyone in no uncertain terms that the "homeland" is meant not to reward a living struggle but only to blow out the embers of a smoldering one.

because he is an Arab too. But his rule over an enlarged Jordan would be threatened by the big increment to the existing Palestinian majority in his kingdom; U.S. backing would have to be stepped up, with Israel's compliance.

In September, the Arab League met in Fez, Morocco to adopt an amended version of last year's Saudi peace plan, calling for a Palestinian "mini-state" of the West Bank and Gaza under the PLO's rule. It differed from Reagan's plan in that it awarded Jerusalem to Palestine, whereas Reagan was ambiguous on this point (East Jerusalem, originally part of the 1967 conquest, has been annexed by Israel); and also in that an independent state, even a tiny one, is something more than Reagan's "association" with Jordan.

The Fez resolution has been widely, and correctly, interpreted as a diplomatic bargaining counter preparatory to the acceptance of some form of the Reagan plan by the Arab states. Thus PLO head Yasser Arafat, who for years has been forced by the masses' militancy to turn down automatically any proposed solution that does not accept Palestinian self-determination, declared that Reagan's idea "contains positive aspects." In November the PLO's Central Council refused to reject the Reagan plan even while denouncing its failure to support self-determination. Likewise, the Fez plan calls for "peace among all states of the region," both an implicit recognition of Israel as a state and an agreement to end the



Israeli bombers explain Western democracy by example: Palestinian men, women, children alike murdered without discrimination.

The flurry of diplomatic activity in the past months has therefore sought to enforce settlements on the Palestinians offering a flicker of national recognition in return for substantial fundamental concessions. The Reagan plan ballyhooed since August advocates a partly autonomous but not independent Palestinian "entity" on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (territories conquered by Israel in the 1967 war), federated with and subordinated to the Jordanian monarchy. Such a scheme would require the acceptance of King Hussein, who would serve as policeman over the Palestinians and, the Americans hope, would be more acceptable than the Israelis

formal state of war that the Arab states maintain against it.

The Fez plan was accepted by all the Arab governments except Libya (which maintains the old "rejectionist" policy at a safe distance from Israel's armed forces) and Egypt (whose position is of course even closer to Washington's.) One faction of the PLO rejected the "peace" point, arguing that it meant granting concessions to Zionism in return for "imaginary" Palestinian rights; the implication was that if a deal was struck and some *real* gains were won, peace with Israel could be accepted. Interestingly, one of the left-wing PLO components, the pro-Moscow Democratic Front for the Liberation



Striking El Al workers battle Zionist stormtroopers at Tel Aviv airport. The rising class struggle in Israel shows that the Jewish working class will play a role in the fight for a Palestinian workers' state and for socialism in the Middle East.

of Palestine (DFLP), has spoken openly — not just implicitly — for a policy of mutual recognition by the Palestinians and Israel. This is presented as a tactic to expose the intransigence of the Begin government before world opinion.

None of the schemes are practical, however. The difficulty is that all of the parties are bourgeois and so cannot contemplate any solution for the unresolved Palestinian national question except capitalist ones. And this is a problem for which no such partial solutions are possible.

Even in those countries where nationalist struggles have succeeded in getting rid of direct colonialism, the masses yearning for liberation have been betrayed by the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists because their nominally independent capitalist states are still dependent on the imperialist world market. The Palestinian struggle, far more militant than most, has not been allowed to get even that far.

Palestinian Rights Threaten Zionism

The reason is that the entire Israeli ruling class (not just the Begin government) as well as the great majority of its Jewish population views any Palestinian state as a basic threat to its legitimacy. Abandonment of Israel's claim to all of Palestine would destroy the ideology that binds the state together. Israel was founded as an exclusively Jewish (Zionist) state under the proposition that only Jews have national rights in Palestine and that the Arabs who have lived there are only part of a larger Arab world with plenty of territory elsewhere. (One basis for this doctrine is religious dogma, but far stronger is the memory of anti-Jewish mass violence in Europe and the still-present reality of anti-Semitism.) Not only does Israel exploit the working people of the occupied territories like any colonial power; it is also bent on driving most of the Palestinians out so that the region can be safely annexed. Were Israel to admit any semblance of Palestinian nationhood on the West Bank, that very admission would raise the question of the rights of the Palestinians who formed, before 1948, the majority in present Israeli territory. Thus Israel's basis for existence would be undermined.

Accordingly, as long as Israel is militarily powerful and maintains its tie to U.S. imperialism (an alliance which neither side can give up, no matter what difficulties it engenders), any purely bourgeois nationalist solution is doomed. If the endless struggle continues on its nationalist basis, notably the PLO's program of a "democratic" (meaning capitalist) secular state in Palestine and non-interference with the Arab regimes, the Palestinians will inevitably get the worst of it at the hands of Israeli state terrorism (and tacit complicity by the Arab rulers). The only way, *practically*

speaking, for the Palestinians to achieve the right of national self-determination is to break the bourgeois leadership of the PLO and the Arab rulers, crush the Zionist state and smash the power of imperialism. This will take an upheaval perhaps sparked by the Palestinians but involving the multitudes of the entire Middle East. It means opening up the class struggle in all the Arab countries and in Israel as well. Any solution short of socialism and internationalism is utopian, and that is being proved in blood every day.

But the deathtrap of nationalist politics continues as usual. In October, Arafat traveled to Jordan to meet Hussein, the perpetrator of the notorious "Black September" massacre of Palestinians in 1970 that was no less bloody than Beirut in 1982. Hussein and Arafat are the Arab figures with the most at risk in the present maneuvering. Hussein is reported to feel that he has to choose between "playing Sadat or fleeing to Switzerland" (*New York Times*, October 31); he has insisted that he would not accept the dangerous Sadat role of peacemaker unless he is authorized to do so by the PLO and the Arab states.

For the moment, Arafat has less pressure on his left from radical PLO elements than before, since most factions, like the DFLP, are willing to deal under certain circumstances. But the willingness of the Palestinian masses on the West Bank to accept Israeli or Jordanian rule is another matter. On the other hand, Arafat is pressed from the right by the continuing Israeli policy of settling the West Bank in preparation for annexation. Israel has already annexed the Syrian Golan Heights in defiance of the wishes of even its allies; and in response to Reagan's plan Begin hastily ordered more Jewish settlements. Under such pressure, Arafat has given King Hussein his approval to negotiate over the Reagan plan with the U.S., according to a leading PLO spokesman (*Wall Street Journal*, November 5).

Mini-State No Answer

What alternative is there for the Palestinians? Given Israel's military strength at the moment and the PLO's willingness to accept a solution that U.S. imperialism finds comfortable, many workers and peasants might feel that getting a West Bank mini-state would be a victory. The fatal problem is that such a "victory" could be gained only as a gift from Reagan with puppet strings attached, creating a Bantustan rather than even a mini-independent state, ruled by either Jordan or Israel or a combination of both.

In any case, given the threat of a Palestinian state to Israel's existence, even American diplomacy cannot make Israel yield on this; mass force is necessary. On the West Bank there have been frequent protests against Israel's stepped-up dispossession

of Arab residents; there is seething anger over continued Israeli oppression; and there is also widespread economic misery in common with all the peoples of the Middle East as the world crisis deepens. There is real potential for a full-scale general strike involving not just shop-owners and students but the Arab workers who commute into Israel proper as well. It would also stimulate the Arabs living in Israel who have been less militant against the government than those in the most recently occupied territories.

Israel Out of the West Bank!

For this reason we support the struggle of the Palestinians who are fighting to throw Israel out of the West Bank. The slogan "Israel Out of the West Bank" does not mean that we accept a mini-state or recognition of Zionism's right to rule even within the pre-1967 borders; the point of the slogan is the existence of the struggle on the West Bank, whose final outcome is open-ended. It does not surrender the legitimate bourgeois-democratic goal of the right of self-determination for the *entire* Palestinian people (including those living in what is now Israel and Jordan). Nor does it exclude the Marxist program for a socialist federation of the Middle East, in which national borders would be of little importance but in which the guarantee of the right to national self-determination would be real for the first time when the people want it. The slogan does demand that the Palestinians' fate not be settled by deals among the imperialists and their national capitalist satraps. Only by bringing working class power to bear against Zionist and other capitalist property will the Arab workers come to see that their future does not lie in a political alliance with the Arab bourgeoisie and their states. And the struggle to oust the Israeli occupiers, once begun, could not be confined to the West Bank alone.

The PLO will never accept such a strategy. It is a thoroughly bourgeois organization, despite the Marxist pretensions of some of its components. Not only does it operate capitalist businesses in several countries, but its bourgeois nationalist ideology compels it to defend the status quo in every Arab state, even when Palestinian workers are striking against their Arab or imperialist bosses. As long as the Palestinian resistance is channeled through the PLO framework it will necessarily remain on a pro-capitalist basis — and therefore one that ultimately defends imperialist domination.

PLO Relies on Imperialism

The PLO's reliance on imperialism was most dramatically shown by its call for the U.S., French and Italian troops to cover its departure from Beirut. The reason given was that the "peace-keepers" were needed to save lives, to defend the Palestinian and Lebanese Moslem civilians from the Lebanese fascists, the Phalange. The need for defense has been brutally demonstrated by events, but the capacity of the imperialist forces to do it is quite another matter, since the massacres took place despite U.S. guarantees of the refugees' safety. Even afterwards, U.S. defense secretary Weinberger noted that American troops would have done no more than the Israelis in preventing them had the troops not been previously withdrawn. Afterwards the PLO supported the troops' return, but their role was even less defensive than before. As the *New York Times* of October 31 reported from Washington, "a number of officials acknowledged that the presence of the multinational peacekeeping force and the Lebanese Army was serving as a screen behind which the Christian Phalangist militiamen, now the strongest of the Lebanese factions, were disarming leftist Moslems."

In this light the actions of those Western leftists whose program is uncritical support of "third world" nationalism have been treacherous. The several coalitions set up in New York to protest Israel's invasion were dominated by PLO supporters. A week after the Sabra-Shatila massacres, at a demonstration policed by the Workers World Party, an LRP placard warning against the PLO's call for U.S. troops to Beirut was excluded. Similarly, the pseudo-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party has been running a journalistic campaign against those on the left who criticize the PLO in any way. It even denounced the SWP's own "comrades" in the United Secretariat for making the perfectly obvious observation that the Western troops returning in September were no better than those who left in August. Blindness to the capitulations of petty-bourgeois nationalism leads straight to blindness to imperialist crimes.

Far worse than the false friends of the Arab masses, moreover, are those "leftists" like the Democratic Socialists of America who chastise Israel for going too far and appeal to it



The LRP participated in many united actions against the Israeli invasion. In contrast to PLO supporters, we warned against Phalange rule in Lebanon before the massacres and attacked the call for U.S. "peace-keepers."

At above demonstration in September, Workers World Party marshals refused to permit our placard warning Palestinians against PLO decision to leave them in the hands of their enemies.

to be nice to the Palestinians, but above all defend Israel's "right to exist." This is not simply an even-handed call for one people's rights alongside another's. It can only mean the preservation of the racially exclusive Zionist state and its continued support, subsidization and massive rearmament by U.S. imperialism. It is equivalent to defending the apartheid South African white regime's "rights" alongside the blacks', or demanding chivalric behavior by a slave toward the slavemaster. The memory of one people's murderous oppression does not justify another's. For communists in the United States, the fight against Zionism and its massive admiration in the media is essential for promoting the genuine internationalism that only socialism can ensure. ■

What Now for the Palestinians ?

The success of the Israeli blitzkrieg in Lebanon has reshuffled the political and diplomatic cards of the Middle East. Three conclusions must immediately be recognized. One is that the Palestinian resistance forces led by the PLO have been decisively defeated. Their struggle was heroic; they were able to hold off an incomparably better armed force for weeks. But the result was that they were compelled to leave Beirut and Lebanon in the hands of the most vicious enemies of the Palestinian people — and the massacres in the Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila were the result. In this light the

since the Suez-Sinai war of 1956, Arab politicians from radical to moderate and reactionary were able to talk openly of the recognition of the Israeli state, hitherto considered an unacceptable intrusion of Western colonialism on Arab territory. Recognition of Israel amounts to the sanctioning of mass pogroms against the Palestinians, their expropriation and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands from their homeland since 1948. When Egypt's Sadat did this four years ago, he was treated as an outcast in the Arab world and later murdered for his betrayal; he was mourned in Washington



Above: Israeli soldiers detaining West Bank Palestinians in Nablus after clash. Right: Despite defeat in Lebanon and heightened repression on the West Bank, Arab masses continue to rebel against Zionism. Resistance can lead to success only if bourgeois nationalist PLO is cast aside.



photographs of Yasser Arafat smilingly waving his "V" sign for moral victory when the PLO evacuated Beirut were nothing short of obscene.

The second conclusion is that the greatest victor was the ruling class of the United States. This is due partly to the reality of the world balance of power today, partly to a fortuitous play of the cards. But not since Vietnam has the Pentagon been able to send its troops abroad under near-universal approbation in the guise of "peace-keeping forces." Undoubtedly future mass struggles somewhere will pay for the relearning of lessons about America's imperialist reality. It was the Palestinians' defeat, the embarrassing inaction of the USSR — together with the muddying of Israel's moral image in the West after the massacres — that left the U.S. sitting above the battle with supposedly clean hands, ready to play the role of "honest broker" in settling Palestinian affairs.

Lastly, the fact must be faced that the mass struggle throughout the Arab world was set back. For the first time

and Tel Aviv but reviled in the streets of Cairo. Many other Arab rulers would have liked to follow Sadat's lead but could not risk the outrage of their peoples. That they can contemplate such a move now, after their total non-support for the PLO during the Lebanon war, shows their delight in Israel's body blow to the Arab masses. Still, they are desperate for a U.S.-imposed deal to preserve the momentary stability.

From another point of view, *New York Times* reporter Thomas Friedman summed up the Arab rulers' dilemma as follows (November 22):

"Many Western diplomats in the Arab countries believe that the moderate Arabs are only pursuing the idea of a settlement with Israel because, they say, the Arabs are frantically trying to produce some tangible political gain toward the Palestinian cause before they are brought to account by their people for their silence over