
TRUTH

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**ORGAN OF THE TROTSKYIST ORGANIZATION USA/FRATERNAL SECTION/FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
FOR A TROTSKYIST CONGRESS REBUILDING THE U.S. SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**

STOP GM!

UNITED WORKERS FRONT TO STOP THE LAYOFFS

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Organ of the Trotskyist Organization of the USA,
Fraternal Section of the Fourth International,
For a Trotskyist Congress Rebuilding the U.S. Section of the Fourth International

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Elections and Reagan crisis show need for Labor Party

By David Mark

It is important for every worker and young person to consider the situation surrounding the 1986 elections. The electoral gains of the Democratic Party, once again having a majority in both houses of Congress, will not change the general state of the working class — neither the miserable conditions of unorganized workers nor the attack on unions and unorganized workers — in any fundamental aspect for the better. At the same time, the recapture of the Senate by the Democrats was achieved on the basis of only 37.3% of the eligible voting population, the lowest since 1942. Clearly, this fact, together with the dramatic increase in strike activity, shows that the American working class was mainly preoccupied with a mobilization against concessions. It also shows that overall, there was no direct political expression of the workers' struggle against the capitalist parties.

The main lesson of the elections, the strike wave that led up to it, and the crisis over the Iranian arms deal and funneling of funds to the contras — leading to a general loss of credibility by the Reagan administration — is the necessity of building a party of the working class, a Labor Party, against the parties of American bosses, the Democrats and Republicans. This will require a struggle on all fronts, the unity of all workers against the bosses' attacks, the building of a Labor Party based on the trade unions as the only mass organizations of the US working class, and the struggle for a program of militant working class struggle and of political independence from the capitalist class and their government. But this whole struggle is blunted without the key lever, that is, the fight for a Labor Party.

This demand for a Labor Party, and the tactic of uniting all working class organizations behind this fight in an alliance for a Labor Party was, and remains, the axis of the Trotskyist Organization's (TO) campaign in the 1986 elections. The TO ran Barbara Putnam, a member of UAW local 2071, as an independent

candidate in the 13th Congressional District. In the last two weeks before the election the TO also formed an alliance for a Labor Party with the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and the two organizations issued a joint statement of support to Barbara's candidacy. Two thousand copies of the TO's election brochure, containing the joint statement of the TO and RWL, were distributed at three important Detroit factories — the Chrysler Jefferson Assembly plant, the Ford River Rouge plant, and the General Motors Chevy Gear and Axle plant. The TO also called for a vote for other candidates of working class organizations including the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers League, and the Communist Party.

Political situation

Both on the national and international scale, and in the direct experience of the TO in the Detroit area, the signs of a resurgence of the workers' struggle was evident. A strike wave involving hundreds of thousands of workers continued through the elections representing an about face in the situation opened up in 1975 with the concessions taken from Chrysler workers and followed by similar agreements in every major industry. Whereas in 1980 the airline controllers' union, PATCO, was abandoned by the official trade union misleaders, in 1986 the struggle of a small local of meatpackers from Hormel Minnesota, local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) gained widespread national solidarity of the ranks of the trade unions and working class political organizations. This is only one example of the fact that a significant section of the American working class has turned its back on granting more concessions to the bosses. In turn, this worker militancy coming up against the capitalists' demands for more concessions has put the union tops in a pinch and has introduced a deepening crisis and polarization in the trade unions. As the bureaucrats try to follow their past course of capitulation, they run up against an increasing opposition from the ranks of the trade unions.

Our own direct experiences supplemented these conclusions. Only a few weeks before the election UAW local 2071, where our comrade and candidate Barabara Putnam works, went on strike. The TO was able to play an active role both in the strike itself, in introducing the importance of a Labor Party and a vote for working class candidates, and finally after the strike in working with a group of unionists to reform their local and prepare for the next strike on more solid foundations. At a rally in support of the strike, Barabara Putnam spoke in favor of the Labor Party.

This resurgence of worker militancy takes place against a backdrop of the struggle of oppressed nations and peoples against American imperialism. This situation in the world, which the Fourth International and its fraternal US section the TO has characterized as a **turn**, should draw the attention of American workers. This is why the election platform of the TO concentrated on the **struggle against concessions and the active solidarity of American workers with the oppressed of the world.**

Once again, this time on the eve of the elections, the attempt of the Reagan administration to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution has been exposed for what it is — a CIA financed operation gathering together the former military butchers of the Somoza regime to overthrow the government of the Nicaraguan people. The downing of a US plane delivering arms for the contras, as the butchers are called by Nicaraguans, uncovered a top level connection to the White House itself that had been hidden from the American people. Taken together with revelations that the US state department conducted a "disinformation" campaign against Libya, these exposes of US policy show that the platform of the TO that called for a **union boycott of the South African apartheid government** was right on the mark. American workers must be mobilized as allies of this revolt against their imperialist government.

But the situation is not simple. At every turn the workers' strikes come up against the bankruptcy of the official union tops. The American working class is still without an

organization that can both express and lead forward their fight against the bosses. They are without a party that can elevate their struggle and their consciousness to an assault on the entire old order of capitalist rule. Failing this alternative, as the elections show, a large sector of the working class still abstains from politics. Even the electoral gains of the Democrats cannot be taken as an "anti-Reagan" vote as some would say. Furthermore, just as the Reagan administration is pressured on the left, and must respond to the new worker militancy, so also is it pressured from the right. Victory will not simply go to the best fighters. No, it will go to the most consequent defenders of their **class.**

The workers movement and the elections

In general, the entire workers' movement of the world is in a state of **crisis** and **ferment**. The big working class parties and in the US, the unions, and their policies are rejected by the workers. This is a consequence of their class collaborationist leaderships. In the specific situation of the US where the workers' political organizations and parties are still a tiny minority, this calls for a tactic in relation to the elections that emphasizes the unity of the working class against the capitalists in the largest and most open way. Thus the TO called for a vote for all parties historically coming from the workers movement who ran candidates against the Democrats and Republicans. At the same time, this tactic should not hinder a serious critique of the role of these parties and organizations in the elections. In fact, the tactic is designed to amplify this whole discussion.

Beginning from the working class parties that have had the greatest electoral influence among advanced workers in the US, the Communist Party (CP) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the results of the elections in terms of votes does not represent a qualitative advance over other years. In fact, the results and campaigns of these parties underline a **retreat.**

Certainly this is the case with the Socialist Workers Party. The break of the SWP from its

historical claim to represent Trotskyism was expressed in the 1986 elections in an effectively abstentionist position. In the past, the SWP put forward a very passive line of "socialist education" but in the wake of the expulsion of its oppositions this fundamentally spontaneist line took another form — abstention from any large scale effort to appear on the ballot — based on an ultra-left justification. Not only in the state of Michigan, where the SWP did not even appear on the ballot as a party, but also in other states, the SWP made a conscious decision against any effort in the elections.

The Communist Party ran on a line of supporting the Democrats, even though in some areas it ran candidates as independents. Its line is summarized in a pamphlet by the statement that "the only way to defeat Reaganite candidates is to elect Democrats." On the basis of this line it concludes, "the irony of the situation is that the people found a way to express themselves through Democratic Party candidates in spite of the Democratic Party." Besides ignoring the large abstentionist vote, which most certainly undercuts this analysis of the 1986 elections as an expression of the "will of the people", the CP has discovered the wrong irony. The true irony of the situation is that the masses of American workers would still consider the CP to be a "communist" organization despite the fact that its whole history is bound up with betraying the American working class to the Democratic Party.

In other cases, working class organizations did pursue an active line in the elections. This is the case with the Workers League which ran its campaign around the demand for a "Labor Party pledged to socialist policies." But despite the reference to the Labor Party this line has a very sectarian content. Not only does it insist on the "pledge to socialist policies" even before engaging workers in a fight for the Labor Party, but the Workers League has introduced its campaign of slanders against the SWP into an analysis of its role in the Hormel strike. The group formed of SWP oppositionists, Socialist Action also ran a candidate or candidates in local elections though at this time we do not have

their results.

The UAW also took an active line in the elections — but on the wrong side. As the labor bureaucracy has done for decades, it supported the Democratic Party.

TO results

Against the actual total number of votes that any one of these organizations received in the national elections, the campaign of the TO and its votes are very small. But taken out of the context of **what line** formed the basis of their campaigns, these results are misleading.

The TO ran only one candidate in the 13th Congressional District in the state of Michigan. Its candidate received a total of 644 votes. Its campaign probably therefore directly touched and influenced only hundreds of workers. But the advance of this campaign, joined in the last weeks with the RWL, is in its **line** — the fight for a Labor Party, its **link** to the workers in struggle — a campaign led in the midst of a strike at Wayne State University and answering to the whole movement against concessions, and its **united front** against the bosses. Therefore, while the line of the major working class organizations was one of **retreat**, ours was a line of **advance**.

Furthermore, our results, taken in proportion to our forces and in comparison to other working class organizations, were quite good. Barbara Putnam received 605 votes, running in the 13th congressional district, which is in its majority composed of Black workers, and running against a liberal Black Democrat, George Crockett, which represented .7% of the district. This compares to the vote for the candidates of the Workers League who ran for Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Michigan, and were on the ballot as a party, of 8,680 representing .4% of the statewide electorate. The SWP, which ran Andrew Pulley in the 1st congressional district, received 526 votes representing .5% of his district. The vote for Putnam also represents an advance in support from the past mayoral elections in Detroit. Running in a district that covered only a fraction of the number of voters in

the mayoral elections, she received roughly the same number of total votes.

Overall, we consider these results to represent a good solid campaign for a Labor Party in the elections. But the most important results, which prepare a basis for future campaigns, is the signing of a joint declaration with the RWL for a Labor Party, including the joint statement of the two organizations supporting Barbara's candidacy, and the active struggle waged in the strike at Wayne State University. We succeeded in this campaign, not only in calling for an Alliance for a Labor Party as we have in the past, but also in forging the first step in building this Alliance on a national scale. In this sense, the election campaign is our most significant success to date.

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Discussion with RWL

The declaration of the RWL and the TO for an **alliance for a Labor Party**, and the **joint statement** on Barbara Putnam's candidacy (see **Truth #214**), represent an advance. In this context, both documents should be considered seriously in relation to the results of the elections themselves, and in relation to future work. It is in the context of this generally positive character of the agreements that each and every formulation should be appreciated. And it is on this basis that we, the Trotskyist Organization, wish to take up certain formulations in these agreements that, at least for us, are important to clarify further.

For the TO, it was far better to have a declaration which committed both organizations to an active struggle, than to insist on programmatic agreement beforehand. It is a question of method and of objectives. The objective of the TO is the rebuilding of the American section of the Fourth International on principled foundations, a struggle that must be rooted in the workers' actual struggle. Our method is therefore to carefully consider the actual principles upon which our two organizations have agreement, and to avoid programmatic agreements **on paper** that would compromise (or even hide) fundamental principles. We also wish to avoid dissolving the unity of the workers' struggle against the bosses into a dispersion of movements or a fake platform of "left unity". The declaration achieves this and spells out in detail the type of activity that is called for in the first steps of building an Alliance for a Labor Party.

"The RWL and TO will campaign for an Alliance for a Labor Party in propaganda and agitation in our newspapers and other publications, in unions and other workers' organizations, in the solidarity movements, and at gatherings of working-class political organizations. This in no way limits the freedom of each organization to criticize whatever it perceives as the failings of the other organization." (point 4. of the declaration)

At the same time, the declaration does not

specifically adopt a tactic toward elections - a point on which we have not reached full agreement with the RWL. At one point, after explaining that the labor party will represent a great advance of the class struggle in the US, the declaration states, "This will require a fight against the reformist bureaucrats who want to limit the party to elections." On the face of it, ~~this statement is correct~~, the bureaucrats could try to limit the existence of a Labor Party to a purely parliamentary struggle, like the Labor Party in Great Britain. But this desire of the bureaucrats should neither stop us from building the Labor Party, nor from an active tactic in relation to the elections. In fact, in the present situation, the trade union bureaucracy wants to avoid the appearance of the Labor Party in the elections, even as a goal, precisely because of its ties to the capitalist Democratic Party.

This dispute over tactics came up in public discussion with the RWL. While insisting that it must first have a high level of programmatic agreement before it could even support another working class organization against the capitalist parties (the RWL did not call for a vote for other working class organizations), the RWL itself was not running its own candidate. Thus, what we are left with is effectively a tactic of abstention, which is no tactic at all. Moreover this is not only a problem of an electoral tactic. Whenever the program of the proletariat is abstracted from the living struggle, it leads to such confusions — or worse.

In a sense, the joint statement tends to clarify this point by calling for labor candidates, and also a vote for the TO's candidate. Again, this represents an advance, and a principled agreement. In our public meeting with the RWL it raised a criticism of the TO platform on the Black question. It raised this in connection with the fact that our comrade was white, while she was running in a district of Black workers. The TO refused to modify its platform on these grounds, not only because it had the basis in **its actual struggle** to legitimately claim being

a working class alternative to a Black Democrat, but also because to modify its propaganda would only confuse disagreements that had, and still have to be fought out between two separate organizations.

We maintain that the development of the discussion, and the joint statement itself show the validity of this method. Despite the fact that the joint statement raises a number of demands that the TO considers secondary in the actual situation, it does clarify further the actual terms of the struggle against George Crockett, the Black liberal that Barbara Putnam was running against.

We also feel it is necessary to clarify again a point in the statement, "Run workers' candidates against the candidates of the bosses!" We consider that this demand is correct, but that it also applies in the situation that we have described to candidates of working class political organizations, such as the SWP, and the WL, that the TO called on workers to vote for in the 1986 elections.

Lastly, we want to explain the reason why the TO has used the term "Labor Party", rather than "Workers Party" (the TO itself once used the formulation "Workers Party"). In the English language, there is little or no difference between the two formulations. But in the language of Marxism, that is not necessarily true. For the TO, which bases itself on the tactic elaborated first by Lenin, and then by Trotsky in relation to the work of the early Trotskyists in the US, the term "Labor Party" has always meant an identification with Trotsky's tactic and even with the struggle to adopt this tactic that Trotsky led among the early Trotskyists. That, in fact, is why only organizations that claim Trotskyism have ever raised this demand in this form. But "Workers Party" has always tended to be identified with a sort of criticism of Trotsky's tactic, and opposition to the method behind his tactic, of appealing to the historical need of the American working class for its own mass working class party against the capitalists. For this reason, albeit small on the surface, we prefer the term "Labor Party", and certainly, the tactic developed by Trotsky.

Looking ahead

What is clear and important in our election campaign is that the question of party, in all its dimensions, was clearly at the center of our struggle. This is indeed the road forward for American workers. We call once again on workers and militants everywhere to fight with us for a Labor Party based on the trade unions. We state openly that our aim is not only the building of a mass working class party, but the rebuilding of the American section of the Fourth International and with it the establishment of a clear revolutionary leadership and program for raising the workers to power in America, the heart of imperialism, and in every country of the world. We intend to advance the process opened up in the 1986 elections, with the RWL, and with other organizations, in order to open up a national fight for the Labor Party based on a larger and more effective Alliance, and to regroup on principled bases the healthiest elements among the vanguard in the US for a Trotskyist Congress, rebuilding the American section of the Fourth International.

Unite Labor Against GM

By FRED VITALE

On November 7, General Motors Corporation, the largest manufacturer in the world, announced the largest cut back in its history with layoffs of over 29,000 workers and the shutdown of at least 9 plants over the next two years.

This is the beginning of a **second** round of restructuring of American industry. The Reagan administration's second term has been marked by an unprecedented number of factory closings and capitalist mergers in the basic industries of America including rubber, electronics, steel, transportation, and farming.

This restructuring has one purpose: to increase capitalist profits at the expense of US workers and working people around the globe.

The working class has begun in the last year to respond with strikes and strike support to these kinds of attacks. Now the working class can turn the situation to its favor if it adopts a fighting program. Answer GM with a nation-wide working class mobilization! The Trotskyist Organization calls on all unions and working class organizations to join in a united front against GM — a common fight against these plant closings. This is the elementary responsibility of every organization that claims to represent the workers, from unions to political organizations. We must defend the workers who are fighting concessions and plant closings unconditionally and with unity against the bosses.

But this is only the beginning. The whole nature of the crisis necessitates a definite political response, a platform of struggle and of working class solutions to the capitalist crisis. Short of this, the political response will be left in the hands of the misleaders and collaborators at the top of the trade unions. It is their program and policies that have divided the workers in the face of the capitalist attack. The Trotskyist Organization proposes to all organizations who favor a line of class independence, an action program to respond to this attack on all

levels.

1. Solidarity Against GM

The plant closings are slated to take place over the next two years. The workers must begin now to prepare a national strike of auto to demand: Keep the plants open!

Workers, much is at stake in this struggle. GM is looking to divide the workers against each other — the Delco strike in Kokomo, Indiana is an example. It is even possible that GM might provoke local conflicts in order to dissipate the workers energies, a sort of safety valve to head off a national strike. In the strike against Delco, GM consciously attempted to divide the auto workers on the basis of layoffs at other plants. No "target" companies, no "Apache" strategy (the UAW tops tactic of striking only one or a few plants at a time). Solidarity and unity against GM!

The strike preparations must include demonstrations to win the support of unemployed and non-union workers, and delegations to other unions to organize strike support committees.

We must show that autoworkers are fully united against GM, that we are prepared to fight GM's entire global plan of restructuring the auto industry to the favor of the bosses. **Give GM of South Africa to the workers union immediately!** Any worker seeing dogs and whips used on striking GM workers should realize how far GM will go for profits. Unity with our brothers and sisters in South Africa!

2. Not a single layoff, not a single plant closing! Nationalize the Auto Industry under workers control! 30 Hours Work for 40 Hours Pay!

A national strike to keep the plants open is an important step, but the working class will only be safe and secure when it takes control of jobs and wages away from the auto barons and the other capitalists.

The auto industry must be nationalized under

workers control! No more payments to the bankers that own the auto companies — they have made enough money already off of the workers and society. All autoworkers, working and laid-off, must be given jobs, by reducing the work week (with no cut in pay). The workers cannot suffer anymore because of the profiteering of the auto companies and the chaos of their capitalist economic system!

3. Labor Party!

These solutions require an organization dedicated to this program, they require a political struggle against the bosses' representatives, the Democrats and Republicans in Congress and the White House. Above all else, the struggle requires a Labor Party supported by the unions.

The struggle for a Labor Party opens up the fight against GM to the larger questions. Only if the working class has its own party devoted to its interests can it offer **working class solutions** to the problems of the economy and the society at large.

The UAW leadership was informed in advance of these closings, and, instead of fighting GM, Bieber blames the ~~Japanese~~ auto workers for the plant closings! Bieber blames the Japanese instead of GM because he accepts the framework of profits and markets that the capitalists have established. But as their profits fall they can only get them from one place — the workers. The UAW's policy, ever since it accepted the closing of Dodge Main in 1979, has worsened the workers lives and weakened the UAW. If it continues, it will destroy the UAW.

Therefore, the leadership for this struggle falls to the union oppositions and the working class parties who have taken a stand against concessions and against the UAW leadership's policies.

Only this program can insure the victory of the workers. Join with the Trotskyist Organization in organizing a united front against GM!

Introduction to Tenth Congress Manifesto

A manifesto is not just another document. Its significance lies in the fact that it is a document that presents openly, in *public* — that is what its name means — the whole political orientation of a party. The Manifesto adopted by the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International is just such a document.

The Manifesto, in summary, calls for the building of the Fourth International at a particular moment and on the basis of specified foundations. These are, respectively, the ferment existing in the vanguard internationally on the question of the leadership of the proletariat, and the continuity of the Fourth International (it was not "still-born," it was not "destroyed"). The continuity is concretely expressed in 1) the struggle of the International Committee; 2) after 1972, the struggle that led to, based on the IC's fight, the rebuilding of the Fourth International.

One example of the ferment in the vanguard in the US is the Trotskyist/Revolutionary Conference being held in December. The groups participating, in one way or another, have different origins and different evaluations of the nature of the FI. We have no intention of hiding these differences. Indeed, we want to bring them to light in order to achieve clarity.

The first fact is that every one of these groups is the result, however indirectly, of the attempt to resolve the crisis of the Fourth International.

The fact staring these groups in the face is that none of them would exist if it were not for the resistance of the IC to the destructive work of Pabloism! And that is true for Socialist Action, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and others as well. To deny this fact means denying their own right to exist.

Flowing from this is a hard question. If we defend the IC, what conclusions must we draw from this? Is it possible to simply wave your

hand in dismissal? Not if you are serious. What were the IC's weaknesses and strengths? And, most important — given the desertions of, in turn, the SWP, the SLL and the OCI — was the IC's fight just a dead end, after all; or was that fight completed, on a higher basis and by correcting that body's weaknesses, by an element arising from it? The first alternative leads, again, to nothing. The second means that the analysis of the rebuilt Fourth International, and its organizational conclusions, deserve the most intense consideration. We urge, therefore, a careful study of the Manifesto, of the other documents of the Tenth Congress, and of all the propaganda and activity of the FI (rebuilt).

Our position is hardly a secret. We stand on, and represent in the US, that analysis and those conclusions. But we are not brandishing an organizational club over anyone's head; our method is quite the opposite. As a development of the fight of the IC and the rebuilt FI, we pose the necessity to drive forward the discussion, to overcome the weaknesses of the American vanguard — the result of the disintegration of the SWP and the incomplete fight of the IC here — by marching toward a *Trotskyist Congress*, which will represent the completion of these tasks and its organizational expression, the rebuilding of the US section of the Fourth International.

Our Manifesto calls for a "decisive step forward in building the world party, through convergence and unity, on the basis of principles and of the continuity of Trotskyism," between us and the healthy elements of the vanguard.

We invite you to that discussion and that fight. *Truth* is open to your responses to the Manifesto and to the questions that it raises. Now is the time to act.

The Origin and Foundation of the Trotskyist Organization

By David Mark

The Trotskyist Organization was founded in February of 1975 as the US section (fraternal) of the International League — Rebuilder of the Fourth International (ILRFI). In the year that followed, the TO fought alongside the ILRFI to rebuild the Fourth International, a struggle that culminated in the Fourth Open Conference, which transformed itself into the Fourth World Congress of the Fourth International in 1976. This objective, the rebuilding of the Fourth International, was initiated by the International Committee and continued by the ILRFI. It was the cornerstone upon which the TO was founded and its work developed. In this article, which is written in a new turn of the class struggle internationally, we wish to clarify for our readers the significance of the foundation of the Trotskyist Organization in relation to the current situation of Trotskyism in the United States and in terms of our fight for a Trotskyist Congress, rebuilding the US section of the Fourth International. In our opinion, all the discussions and debates over the program of Trotskyism, the problems of the building of the Fourth International, make the preparation of a Trotskyist Congress the most pressing task of the day.

It is necessary in a new situation not only to hold on to what is valuable and worthy in the lessons of ones past struggle but also to reconsider in all the fundamental aspects the experiences and bases upon which ones organization has developed. The relevance of the foundation of the Trotskyist Organization to the preparation of a Trotskyist Congress — rebuilding the US section of the Fourth International, is that this objective was itself a product of the political development of our section after its foundation and of the development of our International as a whole.

Origins of the Trotskyist Organization

By the late sixties the Socialist Workers Party was playing a leading role in the student anti-war movement in the US. But by no means was its place one of complete

hegemony. It had just emerged from a period during the fifties where it, along with all working class political organizations, were relatively isolated. The SWP oriented its policy in this period on the basis of a political adaptation to this whole milieu, deeply influenced by the petty bourgeoisie and even by the bourgeoisie itself through the Democratic Party.

While its policy, codified at one point in the Breitman theory of "new radicalization", and Mandel's theory of the "new mass vanguard", which rejected the working class as the basis for the construction of the revolutionary party, allowed the SWP for a few brief years to have an important place in the student mobilization, it also resulted in yielding the work of revolutionaries in the working class and the trade unions to a range of organizations from pro-Stalinist to the Shachtmanite International Socialists. In other words, the adaptation of the SWP to the general milieu of the petty bourgeoisie meant a deep dispersal of forces among the youth and the student movement who sought a continuity to Bolshevism.

The importance of the SWP in this period is that every tendency in the United States today that claims to represent Trotskyism, has been shaped by the foundation of the SWP as the American section of the Fourth International and by its subsequent degeneration. In his last discussions with SWP leaders, Trotsky warned against an adaptation of the party to "progressives" in the trade unions (who eventually supported Roosevelt). After the war, in which the cadres of the Fourth International were decimated and Trotsky himself was murdered, the SWP had a major responsibility for rebuilding the Fourth International as a world party. Once again, it withdrew, allowing a young and inexperienced international leadership to fester a pro-Stalinist tendency under the leadership of Pablo. Only at the last moment, when the very existence of the Fourth International was at stake, did the SWP issue an open letter to regroup the sections and cadres opposed to Pablo's liquidation in the

International Committee of the Fourth International. Finally, compounding all its errors in a qualitative retreat, the SWP rejoined the revisionists in an unprincipled unification in 1963. Thus, by the beginning of the upsurge against the Vietnam War in the United States, and the upsurge internationally that culminated in 1968, the SWP had become a centrist party, permeated with opportunism. And yet, it was precisely in these years that the cadres that today make up the organizations claiming Trotskyism were all formed.

Our own development, and that of many tendencies, was deeply influenced by the degeneration of the SWP. It is even doubtful if the Shachtmanites, where the cadre that made up the founding members of the TO initially came together, would have existed in this period were it not for the degeneration of the SWP.

The Workers League, the US section of the International Committee since 1964, should have benefited from the crisis of the SWP and from the emergence of a pro-Trotskyist tendency in the Shachtmanites. So much the more so because most of the cadres (and certainly the leaders Wohlforth and Robertson) of the 1962 minority opposition in the SWP came from the Shachtmanite youth organization (Young Peoples Socialist League, YPSL). But the Workers League played a sectarian role in relation to the SWP and the student movement (an assessment that eventually it correctly made itself), and in relation to the SWP oppositions that emerged during the sixties and early seventies (Proletarian Orientation, Communist Tendency, and Internationalist Tendency). Far more important, in a Marxist sense, is the fact that the International Committee never sufficiently oriented its American section toward a fight against the American SWP, as if the mere existence of the Workers League solved the problem. Finally, by the time the Truth group joined the ILRFI in 1976, after Healy's precipitous and sectarian split and proclamation of his "International Committee" in 1971, the IC had become, pure and simple, an extension of Healy's national office, which had a tremendous negative impact on the development of the Workers League.

Historically speaking, the Shachtmanite organization which had benefited from a wing of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) that sought an orientation toward the working class, was little more than a loose affiliation of tendencies in a process of differentiation. For some it represented at least an attempt to engage in serious trade union work, for others it represented an all-inclusive party in formation, an answer to what they perceived as the sectarian squabbling of the American left, and it had a definite Shachtmanite stamp — an abhorrence of a centralized leadership and a third camp position on the Russian question.[1] As some of the forces within it began to seek a continuity to Bolshevism and to Trotskyism, a factional crisis developed in 1972-73. Not surprisingly then, the Communist Tendency which had come out of a factional struggle in the SWP saw the IS as fertile ground for an entry, and the Shachtmanites dutifully obliged them by granting them admission.

In short order the IS split, giving birth to a new organization half-way between a Shachtmanite and Trotskyist type, the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). It was from a convergence of the leadership of the Communist Tendency, which itself had undergone a change, and the Soviet Defensist minority in the RSL that the original cadres of the Trotskyist Organization came.

This development was neither spontaneous nor national. Right back to the origins of both the Communist Tendency in the SWP and the Revolutionary Tendency in the IS could be traced the influence of the International Committee. And despite the proximity in physical terms of the Healy wing of the IC through the WL, the political influence was that of the OCL. It was this influence that made the rebuilding of the Fourth International a central idea, to the point that it even appeared on the masthead of the RSL's newspaper. And it was this influence that produced the understanding that the program of the Fourth International was valid **in its totality**, today as yesterday. This is what made the "Russian question" the central point of the split in the RSL; the Fourth International vs. those who claimed that on what everyone saw was a fundamental point,

"Trotsky was wrong."

This influence was indirect, consisting of the regular reception of the OCT's material by CI and the RI, and direct, consisting of actual meetings between OCI representatives, the ILRFI, and the leaders of the Soviet Defensist minority in the RSL. We had been able to see the first signs of the creation of the "Faction for the Maintenance and Development of the International Committee", and to arrange for the translation and production of the initial document in the split between the OCI and that faction while we were still in the RSL (Sep 1973).

The move from the split in the RSL, the "Truth" group, to the TO developed in a struggle on this basis. If the program had survived and was valid, could it then be without any organizational expression? Where could we find that expression except among the forces that had taught us these ideas in the first place? It was thus, in a discussion and a struggle with the ILRFI, that we moved to understand the continuity of the Fourth International as the keystone of understanding the rebuilding and the survival of the program: it held together and gave significance to them.

In this whole period, where the cadres and programs of the workers movement were being sorted out, two things stand out. Despite the adaptation of the SWP to the petty bourgeois milieu of the student movement, and its opportunism, cadres managed to assemble themselves on the basis of a reference to Trotskyism and the Fourth International. And secondly, the International Committee and its American section, largely under the influence of Healy from the very beginning, played virtually no role in this process, essentially because it never carried the fight against the revisionism of the SWP to the end. (This is particularly true if one considers that the Spartacist League, formed on the basis of a national break with the IC, did in fact manage to gain cadres from the SWP and the Shachtmanite split.) It was therefore not accidental that at the moment the cadres regrouped around the newspaper Truth were joining the ILRFI, the Workers League was about to launch under Healy's direction a

campaign of slander against the SWP and Trotskyism that would insulate it completely from having to make a political struggle against Hansen's, and later Barnes' revisionism.

situation

The foundation of the TO took place during a period characterized internationally by an upsurge of the working class. This upsurge was linked to the year 1968, the May-June days in France, the "Prague spring" in Czechoslovakia, and the anti-war movement against the imperialist intervention of the United States in Vietnam. A second resurgence had begun in 1974 with the Portuguese Revolution and the crisis and fall of the Franco dictatorship in Spain. In the United States, the Nixon administration was trying to stop up the Watergate crisis that eventually led to Nixon's resignation.

The upsurge in the Iberian Peninsula represented for the ILRFI, and the TO, the grounds in the international struggle of the working class for enlarging its fight to rebuild the Fourth International, differentiating itself from the centrist usurpers of the banner of the Fourth International and carrying through the International Committee's objective of rebuilding the Fourth International. This international upsurge also had a particular expression in the United States.

In the United States, the student movement had already exhausted its historical role — each of its components having either defined itself politically or, as with a large portion of the youth, having been dispersed. The Shachtmanites captured a significant portion of those forces who were interested in engaging in union and working class struggles (and for that matter, linking the anti-war movement to the trade unions). The SWP, still operating on the basis of the "new radicalization", did not definitely engage a turn toward the unions (Barnes "industrialization") until the mid-seventies. Long before the SWP's turn, the Shachtmanites had already established national trade union caucuses in the primary trade unions and had undergone a split in 1973 in which the balance sheet of several years of work in the trade

unions figured prominently.

The upsurge on the Iberian peninsula did not catch either the international apparatus of Stalinism nor the American bourgeoisie completely unprepared. Under the international collaboration of the Kremlin with imperialism, what Moscow termed "peaceful co-existence" and was later termed "detente", the Nixon administration with the help of the Democratic Party had engineered a strategy of "peace with honor" in Vietnam. Nixon's strategy counted heavily on the historical collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy. (This strategy also neatly dovetailed with the SWP's opportunist policy of opposing anti-war work in the trade unions.)

Prior to the upsurge in 1974-75, the influence of the American Communist Party (CP) in the anti-war movement increased, while that of the SWP had declined. The terrain of struggle was beginning to shift more and more from the campuses to the struggles of young workers in industry and even the older generation of workers was losing its confidence in the "American dream" (national strike of General Motors in 1970). A strike wave developed in the early seventies in which young militant workers from places with names like "Lordstown" and "Norwood" figured prominently. These were factories which had been set up by the capitalists in small towns with the most efficient means of intensifying production, the strikes were therefore doubly significant. Not only the number of strikes, which in 1970-71 nearly equalled the post-war high of 1949, but also their character were important. It is fair to say that the SWP was quite simply, only marginally active in this development. This holds as well for the powerful mobilization of Black workers in Detroit, the main stronghold of automobile production. Because of the SWP's policies and adaptation to the petty bourgeois milieu it had no orientation toward these important struggles.

Nixon's Watergate conspiracy and subsequent resignation should be seen in the context of both an upsurge of the working class internationally, and an attempt of American imperialism to overcome its crisis, stimulated both by the defeat in Vietnam and the development of a working class upsurge at

home. The answer to Nixon's discredited administration, after a brief breathing spell under Ford, was Jimmy Carter and "human rights."

For the ILRFI, and as well for the particular situation that existed in the US, the foundation of the TO and one year later the rebuilding of the Fourth International took place in a period of transition. What was necessary, and what was correct as well, was to base oneself on the upsurge, attempting in this way to root the rebuilding in an active struggle of the working class and amplifying also in this way the conclusions and lessons of this struggle for the construction of the party.

The alternatives, equally clear, were those of the SWP, adapting itself first to the Euro-Communist wing of the Stalinist apparatus, the popular front, the "democratization" in Spain, and then to Carter's "human rights". In the 1976 presidential elections, this adaptation combined with the beginnings of Barnes "industrialization" drive to produce the "Bill of rights for working people" (a campaign with a great similarity to the one put forward by the American CP and Browder in the 1940's to amend the US constitution). Or, the Workers League, which after expelling Wohlforth under Healy's precipitous intervention, a false solution to its failure to engage the SWP in a political struggle during the sixties, split into several factions and became completely isolated in the course of Healy's campaign of cop slander against the SWP, "Security and the Fourth International".

Thus, the Manifesto of our Tenth World Congress explains:

"The rebuilding occurred while the proletariat, betrayed once again by the old Stalinist leadership, was beginning to retreat and while its younger generation was dispersed and brutally cut off from the workers movement. The rebuilding above all allowed the Fourth International to stand fast on the ground of its program, while other currents claiming its banner were thoroughly permeating themselves with opportunism and democratism, amid a wave of ideological reaction that seemed to be swamping everything."

"Rebuild" or "build"

It was in this situation that the cadres that made up the TO had to pass from simply being in favor of rebuilding the Fourth International, to actually assuming responsibility to lead this struggle. Thus at the time it joined the ILRFI, the TO explained in Truth:

"When our organization emerged as an independent group, we had already fought through the Russian Question. But we were immediately faced with a question even more fundamental than the Trotskyist theory on the class nature of the Stalinist states. On every point, in every aspect of our work, it became more and more clear to us that we could not hope to proceed successfully without a correct understanding of the question of the Fourth International." ("For the International League," Sep 15, 1974, Truth)

The foundation of the TO could not, in the given situation, resolve all the problems of the American working class, particularly when the International Committee itself, whose fight we continued, had only begun to take up the crisis of the Fourth International in America before Healy's precipitous split, taking the then US section, the Workers League, with him. Where the IC had been weak, never posing to its section in the United States the necessity of rebuilding the American section through a struggle to the end against the revisionism of the SWP, the ILRFI initially tended to pose the objective of its section as "the proclamation of the party of the proletariat in the United States, politically supporting the Fourth International." (Founding Resolution of the TO, February, 1975) The content that the ILRFI and its US section gave to the work of building the party and resolving the crisis of the Fourth International in the US, of the proclamation of a party, still was not centered in a political struggle to regroup the healthiest forces among the vanguard — of the workers movement at large, of organizations, and factions — differentiated against the revisionism of the SWP.

One could expect, and naturally so, that a young section would not be able to resolve

such questions overnight. In fact, this question of the relationship of the section to the International, has been a problem of the American working class — firmly rooted, at the same time, in its revolutionary traditions and the experiences of its working class parties. In both the early Communist Party, and the Socialist Party before it, the initial cadres were, by and large, not wholly of American origin. The Third International even had to resolve a key dispute between the foreign section of the early founders of the CP and the native American communists, who existed initially in separate factions after splitting from the SP. One can see, with proper proportions, that this question is linked to the fact that the American working class has never had an experience with a mass working class party. In fact, the tactic of the Labor Party itself was rejected by the Second Congress of the ILRFI. Later, in the Seventh Congress of the rebuilt International, it was revived on the basis of a more careful appreciation of the traditions and problems of the American working class.

But to examine the the principled bases of our foundation, outside of the living cadres, the party, and above all else the effort to continue the Fourth International through an international center based on democratic centralism would be false and idealist. As we noted in our founding documents, the decision of the Truth group to join the ILRFI represented a qualitative change of the state of existence of our organization. The principles we defend and base ourselves on today are mainly to be found in this change which raised all the questions of program from the point of view of this continuity. Outside of this change we would not today have anything but a program defined in national isolation and a general adaptation to the framework of centrism.

Thus the 1888 Founding Congress of the Fourth International, in relation to the British movement, declared:

"It is possible to maintain and develop a revolutionary political grouping of serious importance only on the basis of great principles. The Fourth International alone embodies and represents these principles. It

is possible for a national group to maintain a constant revolutionary course only if it is firmly connected in one organization with co-thinkers throughout the world and maintains a constant political and theoretical collaboration with them. The Fourth International alone is such an organization. All purely national groupings, all those who reject international organization, control, and discipline, are in their essence reactionary." (The Founding Conference of the Fourth International, Program and Resolutions, published by the SWP, 1939.)

Thanks to this change of our state of existence we were able, with the Fourth International (rebuilt), to develop a struggle along a strategic line of the dictatorship of the proletariat as opposed to the progressive adaptation of the usurpers of the Fourth International to the framework of bourgeois democracy.

The foundation of the TO then prepared our section to resist during the years immediately following the rebuilding of the Fourth International this tremendous ideological attack. It meant that the difficulties that would inevitably only become clear in the **struggle** of the new section would begin to be clarified starting from the fact that the Fourth International "exists and fights" as the headlines of Truth announced. These difficulties were themselves a part of the dialectic of our development as the American section of the ILRFL.

What comes through in our struggle, in which we have come to see the construction of the revolutionary party of the American working class as a **rebuilding** of the American section of the Fourth International against the revisionism of the SWP, is the tremendous weight that the adaptation of the SWP to the petty bourgeois milieu and its split with the International Committee has had on the consciousness of the class and the development of the most advanced workers and militants. In this sense, and in the most profound way, we reject categorically any conception that the continuity of Bolshevism can be found in the United States through the existence or fight of any single nationally defined organization.

It is here, in this understanding of the meaning and significance that we give to the term "continuity" that is found the true relationship of our section to all other parties and organizations of the American working class. Our forces represent only part of the party that must be built. But we are distinguished by that fact that we represent that nucleus which has linked its development to the Fourth International, rejecting the successive attempts to destroy it as an international center, and maintaining up to now the principles upon which the Fourth International was founded. We are convinced that even if, in the worst historical case, our objective of a Trotskyist Congress — to rebuild the American section of the Fourth International were to be indefinitely postponed, and another generation was left to take up the work, that all such attempts would have to begin from this continuity that was firmly declared in the foundation of our organization.

Labor Notes Conference

By BARBARA PUTNAM

In the aftermath of GM's threatened layoffs of 29,000 workers and just following the elections, Labor Notes held a Conference in the Detroit area November 14-16, which was attended by 800 participants, most of whom were members or supporters of various working class political organizations. Unfortunately, the burning questions facing the working class, above all the threat of massive layoffs and plant closings by GM, were hardly dealt with by the Conference.

Organized by remnants from the International Socialists, now merged with a split off from Socialist Action (Socialist Unity) and the "Against the stream" into the new group "Solidarity," the Labor Notes Conference had an eclectic character and truly avoided the hard questions. The theme of the Conference was "New Directions for Labor," based on an article that appeared in issue number 83 of Labor Notes. Although its author, Kim Moody, paid lip service to the need for a Labor Party in the article, the Conference avoided this topic like the plague.

Trotskyist Organization (TO) militants distributed a leaflet concerning the significance of the GM closings and tried to get support for a real fight for the Conference to collectively decide to struggle against GM. It was difficult in that former ISers policed every move in a real "new direction" — for a Labor Party and a class front against GM. Doubly difficult in that no working class party was allowed to set up a literature table in its own name. Nevertheless, the TO successfully sold many copies of TRUTH and THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, subscriptions to both, and distributed the Manifesto of the 10th World Congress of the Fourth International, as well as 150 copies of the leaflet.

Rainbow Coalition workshop

In the entire Conference attended by a vast array of political tendencies and parties, only two parties fought *as parties*, with definite positions, the Trotskyist Organization and the

Workers World Party (WWP). In the two workshops the TO attended, the political struggle polarized around the line of each of these two parties. The first workshop was run by the Rainbow Coalition (the WWP is heavily involved in it) whose members constituted a panel. This was the *only* workshop set up to talk of anything remotely political. Their position was based on a mobilization for Jesse Jackson in 1988. The TO opposed this line of march, counterposing an independent mobilization based on the working class and the unions for a Labor Party and addressed the urgent need to respond to the GM plant closings.

In the ensuing political debate, those tendencies claiming Trotskyism, including Socialist Action (SA), Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT) and members of the "Fourth International" caucus in Solidarity, defended the fight for a Labor Party vs. throwing support to Jackson and class collaboration. Some present tried to do the impossible — reconcile the two positions. This was best expressed by a member of the Revolutionary Socialist League who declared herself 100% with Jackson, and said Jackson should team up with Jim Guyette, former president of the embattled P-9 local (and a dyed-in-the-wool New Deal Democrat) in 1988! Some passively withdrew from the struggle altogether, such as the SWP, and the Workers League (whose representative sat taking notes throughout the debate, but said not a word.)

One old-timer, formerly of the SWP, Ben Stone, got a good response when he said the labor movement should quit chasing rainbows and build its own party! This debate foreshadows a living polemic between the forces for class independence and those who would keep the working class tied to imperialism through the Democratic Party. It also shows the need for an Alliance for a Labor Party, to provide a concrete alternative to the Rainbow Coalition, a struggle which Socialist Action and the FIT still do not take up.

Plant closings workshop

The only other opportunity to intervene in the Conference was in a workshop on plant closings. TO militants tried to actively recruit support for a definite position to be taken on the GM plant closings among the militants who undertook a fight for a Labor Party in the "Rainbow" workshop. Disappointingly, most members of SA, FIT, and the FI caucus of Solidarity would not come, seemingly not attaching much importance to the fight against GM in the Labor Notes Conference. However, a few militants, one a former member of the SWP and a few others, fought side by side with the TO in the "plant closings" workshop.

In that workshop, three speakers droned on about plant closings in general without mentioning the GM threats. Their approach was not only academic, but also oriented toward pressuring for legislation only. Workers World supporter, David Sol took a moment of "personal privilege" to address the workshop about the GM plant closings as a member of the Executive Board of Local 15, one of the threatened locals. At last, someone had a word to say on this subject! He was genuinely upset about the closing, and undoubtedly as frustrated as members of the TO with the avoidance of this question by the Conference and its organizers. However, he put forward a conciliatory line. He pleaded for support for a "Congressional Moratorium" on the plant closings, urging all to attend a demonstration organized by John Conyers, a local liberal Democrat, on the following day.

Margaret Guttshall of the TO spoke first from the floor underlining the absolute necessity for a sustained workers front against the GM threats enjoined by all working class parties, and programmatically, a struggle in the ranks of labor to demand 30 hours work for 40 hours pay, and workers control of the industry. She did not oppose going to Conyers' demonstration *per se* but disagreed with Dave Sol on the question of the Congressional Moratorium, saying it was a question of relying on liberal Democrats that would only lead to a dead end as it did in 1978 around the "Save Chrysler" campaign. In the debate two positions came out clearly; one for class independence, the other, an adaptation to "democracy" and class collaboration. Margaret

put forward a motion for a National demonstration against the GM plant closings. Workers World members present did not like the way the meeting was going, but backpeddled a little on the "Congressional" aspect of their line in face of scalding criticism from a large number of those present against dependency on Congress and Conyers. Workers World was ready to walk out if the word "moratorium" was not put in the motion! The TO's position on this was: "Put in 'moratorium' then because the fight over what that means is not going to be settled in this room, but in the struggle to organize the workers against GM." A member of the SWP put forward a good amendment to the motion to include an Emergency National Labor Conference to respond to the closings. The amended motion passed. It was to go back to the last session of the Conference, but that session was abruptly cancelled.

Much as the TO had to wage an almost "underground" struggle against the GM plant closings and for a Labor Party at the Labor Notes Conference, results were overall excellent in terms of the political struggle opened up and in terms of sales and subscriptions of the party's press. As we have always found though, these results must immediately be reinforced, sustained and continued to be lasting gains. Now, the real task in front of us is carrying out the only meaningful proposal to defend the working class that came out of the Labor Notes Conference, that is, to build a movement against the GM plant closings, including a national demonstration and an emergency national labor Conference.

GM's threats of closings and layoffs signal the end of Reagan's so-called recovery and mark a new stage in what has up to now been euphemistically called "concessions" and "union busting." Any labor organization or working class party that fails to seriously respond, fails to build a common working class front to unite the workers against the bosses, is only preparing a retreat.

Free Eleuterio Gutierrez

The appeal below is translated from **La Verite**, newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International, the Ligue Ouvriere Revolutionnaire (LOR/Revolutionary Workers League). But its importance to American workers is direct. The struggle of the workers of Bolivia, today and yesterday, is and has been one of the most heroic and important in the Americas — North, South and Central.

The current repression in Bolivia, the state of emergency declared in response to the latest upsurge of the working class, demands a response from us. That is why we have substituted the address of the Bolivian Embassy in the US in the appeal. Sending protests will, we hope, be a point of departure for a broader campaign. But it is the very least we expect.

Please send copies of your letters to: **Truth;**
PO Box 32546; Detroit, MI 48232.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

APPEAL OF THE COMMITTEE

We are asking you to support the campaign in favor of the immediate liberation of the Bolivian political prisoner, Eleuterio Gutierrez.

This miner is one of the trade union leaders of the Bolivar Mines, in the Ururo region of Bolivia, and has several times been elected a delegate from his mine to the congress of the Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers Unions [Spanish initials: FSTMB — trans.]

He has already spent eleven months in prison, without any trial being held! He was arrested last year at the end of the great five-week Bolivian general strike, following complaints lodged by the mine management. Imprisoned for political and trade union reasons, he has been supported by his fellow workers to the end.

Eleuterio, a miner since an early age, is a revolutionary militant. He was well-known as a

trade union leader in his region. He took part in the March 1985 marches on La Paz, the capital of Bolivia. He was one of the leaders of the struggle in the privately-owned mining industry for the expropriation of the capitalists and the defense of jobs and wages. Eleuterio also ran as a candidate on the slate of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario [POR/Revolutionary Workers Party, headed by Guillermo Lora — trans.] in the elections for the Ururo Council, although he was not a member of this party. That is why he is now in the prison of San Pedro.

We therefore ask you to:

— write to the following address demanding his immediate liberation:

Embassy of the Republic of Bolivia
3014 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008

— to have resolutions of support adopted by your union or political organization;

— to publish this appeal in the press of your union, political organization, etc.

We likewise propose that you participate in a demonstration in front of the Bolivian Embassy in Paris on September 30 (at 6:30 PM), the anniversary of Eleuterio's imprisonment.

Collective for the Liberation of Eleuterio Gutierrez

Contact the collective by writing to:

Mme. Stenberg
BP 166
75564 Paris CEDEX 12
France

Global Conflict

Ireland

In early November the national conference of Sinn Fein ("We Ourselves"), the major organization of Irish nationalism (republicanism) whose military arm is the Irish Republican Army (IRA), made a major break with its traditions.

The conference decided that from now on its candidates running in the south of Ireland (the Republic of Ireland officially) would take their seats if elected to the Dail (parliament). This break with the petty bourgeois tradition of "refusing to recognize" the Dail and the government, since they were composed of traitors to the unity of the republic, provoked a split in the organization. A faction lead by a former chief, Rory O'Brady, left to form Republican Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein, the expression of what used to be the "Provisional" IRA, has seen a rapid leftward development over the last few years under the leadership of Gerry Adams. This reflects one thing especially. It is, *due to the default of the socialist organizations* which either adapt to or ignore republicanism, the repository of the hopes and recipient of the energies of the Irish working class, especially the youth.

Sinn Fein remains a petty bourgeois organization, committed to military adventurism and not to the organized power of the working class, despite its call for a "socialist republic." The task today is to politically confront this formation, exposing its fantasies and linking the Irish Revolution to the coming upsurge in Europe. This demands the perspective of the anti-imperialist united front as a framework for a battle of principles.

Iceland

On October 12, the "summit" meeting between USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Reagan broke down with no results on the issue of "arms control," basically due to Reagan's

insistence on a free hand on his "Star Wars" program. Since then, the two sides have tried to present these talks as everything from just short of international disaster to the most hopeful thing since "ping-pong diplomacy."

The reality is that these wide veerings and sharp changes in course, the hopes and tensions, the bragging and charges, reflect the extremely tense relationship existing today between imperialism, led by the US, and the Kremlin and its international apparatus. In this situation, the US demands virtual capitulation from the USSR on every issue of negotiations. The Stalinist bureaucracy finds itself torn between its desire to meet these demands, for the sake of international collaboration with imperialism, and the fact that the demands themselves can only weaken the USSR — and thus the bureaucracy — in face of imperialism.

It is imperialism that developed, stockpiled — and has used (on Japan, another imperialist power) — nuclear weapons in order to protect and expand its domain. Fundamentally, on the other hand, the possession of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union is a measure of defense against these imperialist threats. The economic and social burden of armaments falls heavily on both sides, and to that extent there is a mutual interest in limiting them. But this purely secondary factor can in no way be seen as the motive behind the various talks and summits that go on in a nearly constant stream.

Instead, these reflect the desire of imperialism to fully harness Stalinism to the wagon of counter-revolution, while for the Kremlin they represent an attempt to reach a *modus vivendi* with imperialism. These goals have never been more incompatible than today.

Mozambique/South Africa

On October 19, a plane carrying Samora Machel, the president of the Black African republic of Mozambique, crashed in white-ruled South Africa. Machel and a number of others died in the crash. While South Africa is trying to

pass this off as an accident, no thinking person can look on it as anything other than cold-blooded murder of a Black leader by the apartheid regime. Whether this was accomplished through shooting the plane down or by interfering electronically with its radar or navigation systems is merely a question of method.

This attack takes place at a moment when the first impact of the international struggle against apartheid, in the form of limited "sanctions," is being felt by the South African regime. This has led to increased repression inside South Africa — and to Machel's death. The Afrikaners are striking out in blind rage.

A key lesson of this assassination is that there is no coming to terms with apartheid. In March 1984, Machel and South African leader P. W. Botha signed the Nkomati Accord, in which Machel agreed to drive out the guerrillas of the anti-apartheid ANC in return for South Africa's dropping support to anti-Machel rebels in Mozambique. South Africa, of course, never kept its bargain. And a week before the "accident" Machel called, along with other African leaders, for world intervention against South African aggression.

Libya

With the news of the "disinformation" campaign waged by the Reagan regime against Libya's president Moammar Khadaffy (as well as the capture of the American mercenary Eugene Hasenfus in Nicaragua), the "credibility gap" has re-opened with a bang.

"Disinformation" is the name today for a more sophisticated version of what the imperialist Hitler called the "big lie" and the imperialist Churchill called "black propaganda." Part of today's technique is to claim that it is the Soviet Union, Reagan's "evil empire," that practices *dezinformatsia*. But in reality, as in many other things, here too the Kremlin bureaucrats can offer only a pale imitation of what their imperialist masters are doing.

The "credibility gap" was the name given to the fact that during the Vietnam War and Watergate, the population of the US, especially the working class and youth, came to see that

its government — supposedly democratic, peace-loving, etc. — lied in its teeth as a matter of course. This revelation was at the heart of the opposition to the Vietnam War, the fall of Nixon and the radicalization of a major sector of the youth. Over the last dozen years, with the interregnum of Gerald Ford, the administration of Jimmy "I-will-never-knowingly-lie-to-you" Carter and now the "Teflon presidency" of Reagan, the capitalist class felt it had filled in this "gap." But things are beginning to stick again.

On October 2, Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post* (who helped break the Watergate story) revealed that on August 14, national security adviser Admiral John Poindexter had issued a memorandum calling for a campaign of intimidation against Libya, hinting that Khadaffy was up to more — alleged, but fabricated — "terrorist activity," and that this would lead to US "reprisals." In Poindexter's words, the plan "combines real and illusionary events — through a disinformation program." On August 25, this plan hit the news, not in Libya, but in the pages of a major bourgeois paper, the *Wall Street Journal*, and was quickly picked up by the news media as a whole. Woodward's story revealed once again that a major target of US imperialism's lies is the working class of the US itself. The response of the Reagan regime was to put the FBI on the track of the person who informed Woodward.

In turn, Admiral Poindexter (first in his class at Annapolis, where they teach the "honor code") stated: "Is deception going to be a tool that the government can use in combatting a very significant national security and foreign policy concern? And I think the answer to that, in my opinion, has to be yes... You must distinguish between deception and disinformation."

In his novel *1984*, George Orwell wrote of the Ministry of Truth, where three slogans stood out on its front: "WAR IS PEACE; FREEDOM IS SLAVERY; IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH."

What can we add?
K.F.