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## The Specter of Economic Collapse

by Arthur Rymer

A hundred and fifty years ago, as Europe faced a wave of revolutions, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* that "a specter is haunting Europe, the specter of communism." The beginning of capitalism's industrial expansion had created a working class whose role in socialized production drove it to oppose private ownership and strive for a classless society.

Today, another specter haunts the world, the specter of financial collapse and economic depression. The reason the specter is not communism is that the leadership of the working class in every country accepts the capitalist system and is thus unable and unwilling to defend workers against the capitalists' attacks.

Waves of financial crisis have crashed upon one country after another: from Southeast Asia in the summer of 1997, through Japan and South Korea in the fall, to Russia this year, and now threatening the shores of Latin America, India and even Europe and North America. The bourgeoisie fears that its celebrated "New Economy" of computerization and globalization is going under — less than a decade after the sinking of the East-bloc "communism" that appeared to be Western capitalism's only mortal enemy.



Indonesia, March 1998: Workers battling troops in protest against price hikes.

The foundations of capitalist prosperity have been undermined by the system's own internal contradictions: periodic crises of overproduction and the long-term tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

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# LRP/COFI Report

We apologize to our readers for the long delay in producing this issue. Not only has it been a busy period, but we also had the problem of having more items contributed than we could fit. We expanded this issue to 48 pages, but we still had to leave out articles we hope to print in the near future.

In our previous LRP/COFI report we talked about our commitment to polemicizing against centrist organizations, in the tradition of Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, and Trotsky. There are several polemics in this issue. Today the numbers of workers and youth coming toward revolutionary politics are relatively small; those recruited into centrist organizations often become trained in the cynicism of the established centrist leaderships or soon become demoralized. Thus our polemics are geared toward winning workers and youth to genuine revolutionary politics, a cause we consider very important.

LRPers have been active in the defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal, attending the major rallies in Philadelphia as well as demos in New York, Chicago and Connecticut. (See below and p. 48.) To send contributions for Mumia's case, make your check payable to Black United Fund/Mumia Abu-Jamal/LDF, earmark it for "Mumia Abu-Jamal legal defense" and mail it to Black United Fund, 2227 N. Broad St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19132-4502

Another major focus of our work was protests against Clinton's bombing of Iraq in December and the earlier imperialist attack on Afghanistan and the Sudan. At the December 19 demonstration in Chicago, the LRP speaker from the podium was alone in pointing to the principle of military defense of Iraq against imperialist attack. He also noted that the imperialist crime had been carried out by the Democrat Clinton and his British Labour Party sidekick Blair — both of whom are regarded as "lesser evils" by some in the anti-war movement.

Our leaflets and bulletins on these questions and others are available upon request.

In the past few months, the LRP has sponsored a number of educationals and forums on questions including Marxist methodology, the *Communist Manifesto*, the national question and permanent revolution, the economic crisis, South Africa, the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the Black struggle in the United States. Upcoming talks are planned on Puerto Rico, Russia, historical views on the depression, the political economy of oppression and the economic crisis.

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Readers in the New York or Chicago area interested in participating should contact us.

A supporter in Germany has contributed two items for this issue: an account of his experiences in the International Socialist milieu, and a COFI leaflet distributed at an anti-Nazi demonstration in Bonn.

## CHICAGO

Chicago LRPers traveled to Flint, Michigan, to support the General Motors strikers last summer. We also intervened at a Spartacist League forum on the Flint and Puerto Rican telephone workers' strikes. At the meeting, we pointed to the SL's longstanding opposition to propaganda on the general strike. Although it hailed the general strike that took place in Puerto Rico to back the telephone workers, the SL has continually opposed the LRP's advocacy of the general strike as the best way to unite workers in the U.S.

In October we attended the Chicago conference of Coordinadora 96-2000, with a leaflet in English and Spanish. At this meeting of union officials, community activists and immigrant workers, our contributions on the question of the need to build a revolutionary party with the goal of socialist revolution were greeted well — a welcome change from the reception communists often get from the U.S. left.

We have been involved in an important campaign in Chicago to exonerate Aaron Patterson, a Black death-row inmate framed for a murder in 1989. The Aaron Patterson Defense Committee can be reached at 312-409-4076.

The Chicago LRP attended the Spartacist League/Partisan Defense Committee's rally to Defend Mumia Abu-Jamal on November 21 at the Federal Plaza. The LRP had led a successful fight inside the Chicago Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal to endorse it, against the sectarian opposition of the ISO.

At the rally, when Democratic Congressman Danny Davis spoke, he noted that Mumia has been victimized by the system, but of course did not take up the role of the Democrats in supporting that system or his own endorsement of U.S. atrocities abroad. As well, an SL supporter went out of his way to compliment Jerry Zero, president of Teamsters Local 705, for endorsing the rally — but failed to point out that Zero had brought neither himself nor his members. In light of all this, it was outrageous that the opportunist SL later performed a typical cheap smear job on the LRP and other left groups, while refraining from any criticisms of its honored guests and no-shows.

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## Proletarian Revolution

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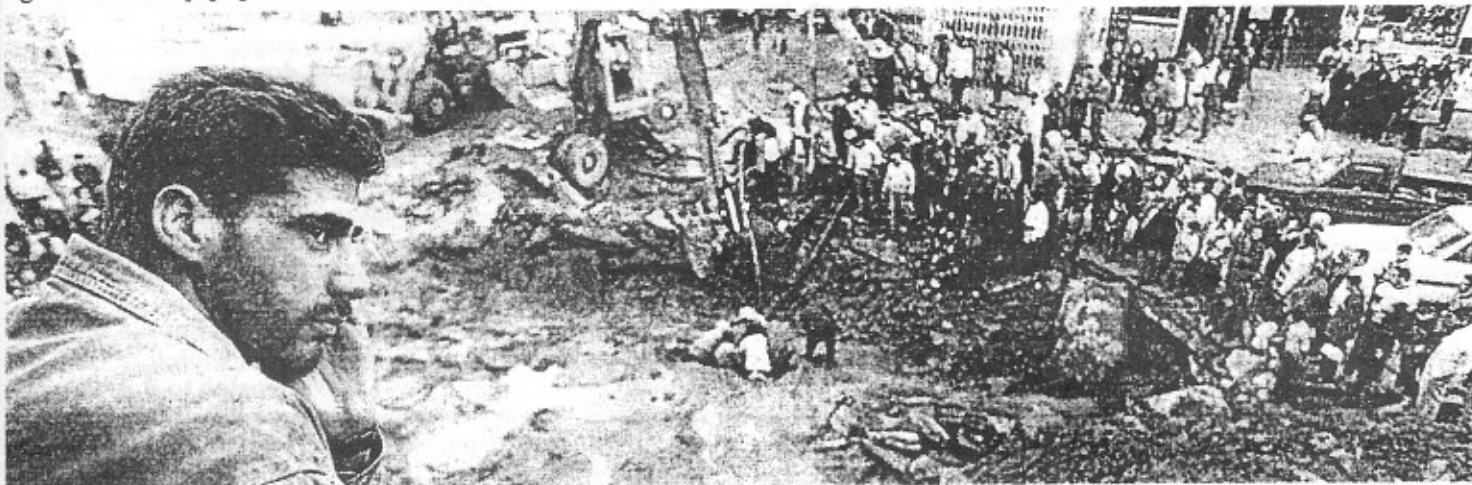
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# The Bloody Imperial Presidency

In December American and British bombs once again rained down upon Iraq, allegedly to curtail Saddam Hussein's development of "weapons of mass destruction." This murderous attack ordered by President Clinton, however, was the continuation by other means of imperialism's ongoing war against the Iraqi population. The U.S.-sponsored economic

The oil connection to the bombing is not direct, since the U.S. itself gets little oil from the Persian Gulf. But Japan, and to a lesser extent Europe, are still dependent upon oil from the region, so Washington was reminding its fellow imperialists that it still runs the show. Europe is trying to flex its muscles as a monetarily united economic force, whereas



*U.S. bombs devastate Iraqi masses, not rulers.*

sanctions, enforced since the Gulf War of 1991, are truly a weapon of mass destruction — of genocidal proportions, for they have caused the deaths by disease or starvation of over a million people, including 750,000 small children.

## U.S. TO WORLD: DROP DEAD

In the eyes of the U.S. ruling class, the Iraqis who were killed are merely pawns to be sacrificed for "higher" needs. Oil was a factor, as many protesters have said; and so was the squalid impeachment brawl now consuming Washington. But above all Clinton and his advisers were trying to teach the lesson of who is boss, first to all oppressed and exploited peoples who toil under the whips of the global masters — and secondarily to the rival imperialists.

Saddam Hussein's Iraq provides a durable and handy address to which Washington can deliver its arrogant message whenever it deems it necessary. The message says: Workers and peasants, know your place, do as we say, work for a pittance until you drop. If this means that you starve, fall victim to plagues or die in fratricidal wars fighting over the scraps we allow you, then have the decency to do so quietly without breaking out into rebellious eruptions that disturb the orderly flow of profits. If you even think of misbehaving, we will blast you and your children to kingdom come.

Against this message, hundreds of thousands took to the streets across the Middle East, as well as in Bangladesh, India, the Philippines and Indonesia. The U.S. embassy in Syria was stormed. In Khartoum, Sudan, where the U.S. had bombed a pharmaceutical factory in August, outraged protesters threw Molotov cocktails into the American embassy. There were also anti-war demonstrations in the U.S., Britain and other imperialist countries. In the U.S., it is heartening that the usual initial expressions of patriotic support for the recent bombing were noticeably less fervent and much more laden with suspicion than in past such episodes.

Japan is wallowing in a depression that can only worsen. By showing once again that it has a chokehold on the oil lifeline, the U.S. hoped to wrest further economic advantages from its trading partners and imperialist competitors.

In this regard, oil is not the only factor. The White House was also telling France and the rest of Western Europe that it has the power to act independently of their will and their interests. The same assertion was telegraphed to Russia, China and the U.N. as a whole.

Imperialism's neo-colonial junior partners and pawns in the Middle East and elsewhere in "the third world" were also put on notice. After all, Saddam got his start by being a regional overseer for American imperialism. When he used poison gas for mass destruction of Iranians and Kurds, he was supported — and supplied — by the United States. Only when he strayed from his assigned plantation by invading Kuwait on his own account did the U.S. draw the line. That was eight years ago, but Washington believes that potentially disloyal regional lackeys, as well as the masses they exploit, need to have the lesson periodically reinforced.

## DID IMPEACHMENT WAG THE DOG?

These are the fundamental reason why imperialism bombs Iraq. Nevertheless, it is clear that the timing of this particular attack was largely determined by Clinton's need to detour the impeachment drive in Congress. The fruitless assault on Afghanistan and Sudan last summer, an ineffective reply to the bombing of two embassies in Africa (and occurring right after Clinton was forced to testify before Kenneth Starr's grand jury), embarrassed the White House internationally and therefore dictated an imminent return to the old standby target, Iraq. Clinton's personal need fixed the date.

With impeachment in the air, Clinton had to remind Wall Street of the need for a stable imperial presidency, especially given the financiers' understandable nervousness

over the economic and political crises abroad. By bombing Iraq the White House was telling the U.S. ruling class, "You need a strong leader who can act in an emergency: so get your servants in Congress to stop undermining the presidency." Killing a few faceless foreigners, especially with dark skins, to make such a point is well within the U.S. presidential job description and Clinton's personal moral code.

It is likely that a secondary factor in the timing was the need to demonstrate the U.S.'s continued support for Israel, a vital subimperialist junior partner in the Middle East. After all, Clinton's recent visit to Yasser Arafat, even though its purpose was to help restrain the Palestinian masses, was not popular among the Zionist rulers.

No matter how many other factors one can point to, it is incontestable that Clinton timed the bombing to put a speed-bump in the way of the Republican drive to impeach him. Coming abruptly before the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the attack's effectiveness was predictably limited. The same haste that caused the U.S.'s botched foray in the Sudan now hobbled the attack on Iraq, so that even the devastation of Saddam's military concentrations was inhibited. Once again domestic politics demanded *immediate* military action, however unproductive.

To rationalize its attack on Baghdad, the White House had to imply that its purpose was to accomplish what Bush's Gulf War didn't do, get rid of Saddam Hussein. But in reality, Clinton, like Bush, fears to eliminate the Iraqi dictator. The U.S. has no alternative ruler capable of keeping so effective a military lid on the Kurds, whose justified drive for independence could destabilize not just Iraq but Turkey as well, or on the restive working class in the entire region. The suggestion that ousting Saddam Hussein was a goal of the military operation was another convenient lie designed to cover the precipitous launching of the bombing attack under the pressure of impeachment. It further exposed U.S. imperialism's dilemma over Iraq and actually weakened its hand.

#### THE POLITICS OF IMPEACHMENT

The fatuousness of the impeachment drive is proved by the fact that it is based on Clinton's third-rate lies over sex, and that it peaked when his hands were dripping with the blood of imperialism's latest victims. Congressional whining that Clinton deserved to face trial because "this is a nation of laws, not of men" was drowned out by the blasting of missiles hurled in violation of the U.S. Constitution, Congress's own War Powers Act and the powerless decrees of the United Nations. No U.S. politician, Republican or Democrat, pointed out that committing mass slaughter is truly a "high crime" even by bourgeois legal standards.

Just as imperialism's international rivalries form the background for the assault on Iraq, capitalism's internal instability sets the stage for the impeachment crusade at home. American politics is just completing its second decade of Reaganism, a government-led attack on the working classes at home and abroad under the fiction of "less government." Whatever the cover story, an imperialist power needs an imperial president to execute the ruling class's interests. But even though Clinton has served as loyally as Wall Street and the ruling class generally could desire, were it not for the ballooning stock market and the U.S.'s temporary insulation from the international economic collapse, domestic politics would have done him in long ago.

While both bourgeois parties are loyal to the needs of the system, the politicians do not always see eye to eye with

the big capitalists. The Republican Party has its own institutional interests and its own view of the best interests of capitalism. Most Republican congressmen share the outlook of the hardcore cadres of their party, the right-wing petty bourgeois who detest Clinton as much the liberal Democrats hated Nixon. For them, Clinton reflects the "the sixties" they despise — the anti-war movement, the Black rebellion, women's liberation and abortion rights struggles, the fight for gay liberation, welfare rights, federal spending, the so-called sexual revolution, etc.

For his part, Clinton relies upon his nominal links to these causes in order to betray the masses who identify with them. No right-winger could have done as much to undermine and roll back the gains of the 1930's and the 1960's without meeting massive resistance. Only a Democrat like Clinton could have presided over the attacks on the unions and their members with no organized resistance. Only Clinton could have engineered the war on welfare recipients and built up the police attack on the ghettos while maintaining the support of mainstream Black political leaders and thus avoiding an explosion of mass struggle.

That is why Wall Street likes Clinton. But the financial moguls rely mainly on Republican pols; therefore they did not step into the snarling war in Washington to stop the vote to impeach him. However, barring some devastating new revelations, and assuming the economy doesn't soon founder, the most powerful capitalists would certainly intervene if the Senate were to move to toss Clinton out of office. They understand their need for a strong Presidency.

#### CLINTON'S "PROGRESSIVE" DEFENDERS

In his charlatan work, Slick Willie has had the support not only of the Democratic party hacks and middle-class liberals who enjoy the profits of Wall Street while shedding a tear or two for the deprived. We note with disgust that the Congressional resolution approving Clinton's bombing was endorsed by all but three members of the Congressional Black Caucus and numerous other "progressives" as well as the union bureaucrats.

The capitalist system, in order to preserve itself, relies on a divide-and-conquer strategy. It turns workers against each other by any means necessary, including racism, sexism and national chauvinism. Politicians whip up sections of the population and convince them to endorse the killing of their brothers and sisters across the seas, so that U.S. capitalists can increase their share of the exploited wealth at the expense of their rivals. So Clinton and his predecessors not only terrorize Iraq and the masses in the rest of the world; they wave the flag while doing so to enlist the masses at home. That's where the "progressive forces" come in.

On the eve of the bombing of Iraq, the victims of which were not Iraqi bosses but working people, union heads like John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, and Dennis Rivera of 1199, New York's "most progressive" union, were mobilizing for rallies to defend Clinton from impeachment. These are "leaders" who never made similar efforts to defend even their own workers from massive layoffs and cutbacks in public services, much less to defend workers in general from mass layoffs and wage losses. And if that wasn't obscene enough, joining in their plans were purported champions of the oppressed like the Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton — just as bombs were dropping on another oppressed people, the Iraqis.

In contrast to these traitors to all working people,

Marxists take no side in the impeachment skunk fight now stinking up Washington. To defend Clinton — now more than ever — is to defend the crimes of imperialism. Even though Clinton has proved himself more capable of carrying out the right-wingers' program than they are themselves, throughout his presidency major sections of the left have acted as Judas goats, trying to enlist working-class people into imperialism's Democratic Party army.

As communist revolutionaries, we do not hide our views or intentions. We are no patriots; we identify with the international working class. When the butchers wage their imperialist wars, we defend the other side. Today we stand with Iraq and work for the defeat of U.S. imperialism. Our first enemy is our own ruling class.

Each time Washington engages in a criminal war, the phony left tries to find the lowest political common denominator — a false way to build the "broadest" opposition. Inevitably, they mean not challenging the misleaders of the workers and oppressed or the Democratic Party. By failing to expose these misleaders, they help carry out the work of imperialism. With each new horror, anti-war activists train their vision only on the immediate symptom, not on the

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## Collapse

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*continued from page 1*

Depression conditions already prevail in Russia, sections of East Europe, much of Africa and Latin America, and many Asian countries. Aside from the U.S. and Western Europe, the world is undergoing conditions worse than anything since the 1930's. And even in the U.S., where pundits and politicians like to claim that the "free market" immunizes the economy from the world's economic ills, profits are now declining again — the first time this has happened since the recession of the early 1990's.

The renewed mass protests in Indonesia, where millions face starvation as a result of that country's economic plunge, are only the initial actions that millions of people worldwide will be forced to take. The regime's brutal repression also points to the state repression that workers in every country increasingly face, as capitalist ruling classes defend their state power against the very real threat of revolution.

Nothing the bourgeoisie can do can keep its economy above water for long. One of the leading capitalist journals, the London *Financial Times*, concluded its year-end analysis of 1998 this way: "The world needed a good deal of luck to struggle through 1998. It will need just as much in 1999." (Dec. 23.) And the *Economist* journal summed up the year by saying that "the world teetered on the edge of the worst financial crisis since the 1930's." (Jan. 2.)

The bourgeoisie has no strategy for economic progress or stability. Only the international working class, whose fundamental interests are tied to no nation, no capital and no claim to profit, can save the world from the linked threats of depression, fascism and war which define capitalism in its epoch of decay. The politically advanced workers, the cadre of the future international proletarian revolutionary party, have to prepare themselves theoretically and programmatically for the critical period to come.

To further this task, the LRP is publishing as a pamphlet a collection of articles which have appeared in this magazine

cancer underneath. As long as capitalism remains, all the left chatter about putting "people before profits" is a utopian hoax. Even more destructive has been the "broad" line that we can "fight the right" by defending Clinton. Revolutionary Marxists gladly work alongside all opponents of Washington's wars, but we will not bury our message.

The only answer to imperialism is the overthrow of capitalism by the working class. A new vanguard party of revolutionary Marxist workers must be built; in this country it will inevitably be led disproportionately by those who suffer from the system's oppression at home most directly. The revolutionary working class will claim the right to remove the two rotten parties of the bourgeoisie and punish them for their real crimes against the human race.

Clinton's lawyers have a point when they warn that a long impeachment trial could paralyze the government and prevent it from carrying out its business. Given that its business is imperialism, austerity and repression, we would prefer it if full-fledged rigor mortis set in. But it will take revolutionary action by the working class to actually put capitalism, its statesmen and its other murderous thugs in the grave they so richly deserve. ●

over the last 15 years, resurrecting and developing the scientific analysis of capitalist economy developed by Karl Marx. The theory spelled out in these articles has proved invaluable in understanding the drive toward crises in general and foreseeing the nature of the current crisis. The pamphlet also presents an opportunity to test our theory and conclusions against the experience of the present conjuncture.

The LRP has been studying the world economy since our organization was formed in the 1970's, when the falling rate of profit tendency reasserted itself at the end of the long boom that followed World War II. All capitalists face the tendency to decline inherent in their system. But the giant banks and monopolies of the imperialist countries are better able to absorb the impact of the crisis and shift its burdens onto weaker capitalists and the masses of working people.

### BACKGROUND TO TODAY'S CRISIS

So the deepening crisis claimed the least developed national economies as its first victims. The "third world" debt emergency of the late 1970's and '80's saw nations only recently freed from direct domination by colonial powers unable to achieve the economic development necessary to repay their loans from the imperialist banks. The imperialists in turn saw the opportunity to tighten their grip on these neo-colonies. Led by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, imperialist financiers extended loans at extortionate rates of interest, demanding in return intensified attacks by the neo-colonial bourgeoisies on their workers and peasants, and increased access to their markets.

Capitalism has historically made use of depressions to rescue profits — by pushing down workers' wages and forcing weaker capitalists to sell their property at bargain prices. But in this century the world's banks and monopoly industries have grown so large that the fall of a few threatens to drag down the rest. And the working class is an even greater problem for the bourgeoisie: in the imperialist countries, it has undergone retreats and is rife with self-cynicism, but it has suffered no major defeat for decades, of the order of Indonesia in 1965 or Chile in 1973. In the U.S., for example, the "Vietnam syndrome" stands for the ruling class's fear of

subjecting American working-class soldiers to a bloody war, knowing as they do the explosiveness of a class that is not aware of its own strength. Likewise, workers cannot be trusted to sit through a depression without resisting massively. So the ruling classes has sought to delay the onset of crisis.

The bleeding of the neo-colonies since the debt crisis has provided one method. But that was not enough. In the U.S., the capitalists' desire to avoid depression led to government interventions to forestall economic collapses: the rescue of Chrysler in 1979 under Jimmy Carter, the effective nationalization of the Continental Illinois Bank by Ronald Reagan, and the Savings & Loan bailout by George Bush. Reagan also pioneered the deregulation of finance to allow much

Thatcher whose names became synonymous with this sharp turn to austerity.

Reagan and Thatcher's free-market rhetoric, domestic austerity and aggressive pursuit of exploitation abroad became known as neo-liberalism; it set a pattern that was soon followed by both openly capitalist and social-democratic parties across the world. In the U.S., these policies have been loyally continued by the Clinton White House, with budget cuts, the dismantling of welfare and attacks on health care hitting the oppressed hardest. As a result, industrial wages have been declining for a quarter-century. (The slight upturn in real wages in the past year or two is temporary, reflecting the uneven effects of the world financial crisis and consumer spending boosted by overblown stock market values.)

### THE FALL OF STALINISM

Elsewhere, the most dramatic consequences of the growing economic crisis were the end of the Japanese boom in the late 1980's and the collapse of Stalinist rule in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Indeed our analysis of Stalinism proved essential to developing our understanding of Marxist economic theory. In magazine articles and in our book *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, we argued that Stalinism represented a stultified form of capitalism. We saw that the contradictions of cyclical crises of overproduction and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall that Marx identified as core contradictions of capitalist economy were exaggerated under Stalinism. Its highly concentrated state ownership of capital severely limited the Stalinist rulers' ability to use

market competition to set worker against worker and drive down wages and working conditions; it also prevented the Stalinists from purging the economy of its weakest elements by forcing the least profitable enterprises to collapse. Instead, the rulers propped-up inefficient industry. While this avoided short-term cyclical crises, it expanded the bubble of fictitious capital (the overvaluation of enterprises) and debt, contributing to long-term economic stagnation.

This analysis enabled us to identify Russia's Stalinist economy as the weakest link in the chain of the world imperialism. While both pro-capitalist and pro-socialist theorists were almost unanimous in calling Stalinism as economically robust throughout the 1960's, '70's and '80's, we — almost alone on what passed for the Marxist left — predicted its downfall, its rulers' turn to Western market methods and their inevitable failure.

We saw that these contradictions of Stalinist stultified capitalism were an extreme manifestation of the contradictions of capitalism in its imperialist epoch of decay, and that the domination of the Western imperialist economies by monopolies and the state had similar effects as the rule of the Stalinist bureaucratic capitalists. Thus we explained how the economic laws that Marx developed in *Capital* worked under the conditions of the imperialist epoch which he did



*Mexican workers demonstrate as crisis spreads.*

riskier profits. As well, he greatly expanded military spending, in order to force-feed economic growth as well as drive the U.S.'s Russian rival to the wall.

With the system's profits declining, capitalists turned to speculative financial deals that boosted their income on paper without significantly expanding production or productivity. (Productivity is averaging less than 1 percent annual growth, despite the fact that the U.S. economy has allegedly been booming for over seven years.) The long-term result of speculation and unprecedented state and corporate borrowing was the balloon of fictitious capital whose collapse looms ahead today. From the 1970's on, the imperialists also moved to take advantage of cheaper labor abroad, locating a great deal of their own industrial production in the neo-colonies, and lending enormous funds to build up the economies of several countries, including South Korea, Thailand, Brazil and Mexico.

Most importantly, the imperialist ruling classes launched an escalating offensive against the gains won by workers in their post-war struggles. Massive privatizations dismantled nationalized industries, sweeping budget cuts dismantled welfare and other benefits. In the U.S., the first steps were taken under the Democratic president Carter. But it was Republican President Reagan, and British Prime Minister

not live to see. And amid Western capitalist triumphalism over the collapse of Stalinism, we predicted that the same crisis which brought down Stalinism would soon infect the Western capitalist economies.

With the fall of Stalinism, the now-unchallenged Western imperialists turned to more intensive austerity: opening up China to wider superexploitation along with regions of the



Paris, November 1998: 25,000 French high school students clash with cops in demonstration for decent education.

“third world” that could no longer bargain between Russia and the West for international aid. “Free trade” agreements like GATT and NAFTA have further opened up the neocolonies to plunder, and to increased international competition among workers over jobs and working conditions. Accompanying this was a stepped up attack on the welfare state at home. The result was some boost in profits but no significant increase in productivity, plus of course falling living standards for masses worldwide. In 1997 the acute crisis of industrial overproduction exploded in Southeast Asia and began rolling across the globe.

### FEARS OF DEPRESSION

Since the financial crisis first hit in mid-1997, bourgeois analysts have been waxing cold and hot over the state of their economy. At first there were trepidations; then came assurances that the U.S. is in great economic shape when the first tremors on Wall Street led neither to an immediate crash nor to stagnation like Japan’s. Then, when Russia’s economy gave out last summer, worries of “global economic meltdown” made headlines again. But by mid-Fall, triumphalist noises were again heard from Wall Street and Washington, only to be followed by new rounds of ideological booms and busts.

Alan Greenspan, head of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, is a one-man barometer of ruling-class vacillations. In December 1996 he complained about the stock market’s “irrational exuberance.” Then in June he told Congress that “it is possible that we have . . . moved beyond history,” — that is, conquered the business cycles that have plagued capitalism

for two centuries and entered into an epoch of endless growth. But this fall he had to lower interest rates twice to keep growth from slowing, and then to engineer Wall Street’s bailout of the multibillion dollar Long Term Capital fund, managed by a team of economists who had just won the Nobel Prize for their now-collapsed theories! When markets calmed down after the bailout, the *New York Times* (Nov. 18) quoted a “senior official of an international organization”:

**In those weeks it could have gone either way. And the fact is, we got lucky — at least for a while.**

Working-class people have no cause to jump on to any roller-coaster of expectations. We have to prepare for the worst. No sustained capitalist recovery of the order of the post-World War II boom is possible, and a great depression even deeper than that of the 1930’s is inevitable if capitalism continues to rule the world. The financial crisis of the past year and a half marks a new stage in the post-boom economic decline and has brought the world economy to the edge of depression.

It is even possible that a stock market crash like that of 1929 could occur at any time. But not every means the bourgeoisie has of postponing depression has necessarily been exhausted. Capitalist confidence in the viability of superinflated stock-market portfolios has been shaken. But the capitalists’ states and central banks might further delay a cataclysmic crash by issuing new loans to postpone bankruptcies and debt defaults, boosting state spending once again and controlling capital movements. The ruling class is aware of the need for drastic

action, and may be able to plug the financial dikes until leaks start springing up in too many places at once.

Most importantly, the low level of working-class struggle, organization and political leadership internationally gives the capitalists opportunities to postpone their crisis further. They can potentially squeeze more profits out of the proletariat by deepening their downsizing, austerity and speed-up campaigns. This can help sustain illusions in their system’s invulnerability and future profitability — a key to maintaining the fictitious capital bubble on the world’s stock markets.

But all these efforts can at best only postpone depression for a relatively short time, not prevent it. As has been true for a half-century, the intertwining of the major capitalist entities internationally means that the collapse of any one of them risks bringing down the entire financial structure. Hence there is no possibility of gradual recovery from the conditions of overproduction; further wipeouts are inevitable even in the imperialist countries themselves. Japan is the weakest link in the imperialist “triad” at this point, and given Japan’s major financial links with the U.S. and Europe, the inevitable Japanese depression will not be limited to that country alone.

Further, the anarchy of bourgeois economics, reflected in the rivalry among imperialist states, prevents a coordinated response by the ruling class internationally. At moments of crisis, even conscious awareness of the overall interests of global capitalism cannot forestall nationalist steps like protectionism, competitive currency devaluations and other measures of economic warfare that in the end only tighten the

economic noose. The looming trade war between the U.S. and the European Union over banana imports shows the arrogance of U.S. imperialism in dealing with even its economically powerful rivals.

And in this epoch, even a depression is not enough to recharge a failing world economy. The bourgeoisie's only real "solution" is brutal repression of the masses, and world war.

### PROGRAM FOR THE CRISIS

Decaying capitalism cannot afford any lasting improvements in the masses' living and working conditions. Indeed,



Russia, 1998: Hammer and Sickle near workers' housing spray-painted with swastika and English words, 'The Exploited.' Devastated workers search for answers.

it cannot even sustain the miserable levels it currently imposes on billions of people. As we explain in the adjoining box, *How Socialism Can Answer the Economic Crisis*, a world of peace and plenty is possible. The world economy could be made to produce for the masses' needs and put an end to want and suffering. But for this to be achieved, capitalism will have to be overthrown by workers' revolutions.

Mass struggles against the capitalist attacks are inevitable, and revolutionaries look to initiate and further these struggles wherever possible. Because of the depth of the economic crisis, workers will find that their struggles for partial economic demands are not sufficient to resolve the capitalist crisis. Broad political solutions are necessary.

But workers will only come to revolutionary socialist ideas through their own experience. For that reason, revolutionaries accompany their explanations of the need for socialism with a program to advance from the masses' immediate struggle toward socialist conclusions. This program would include demands like:

- *Expropriate the Banks and Big Businesses;*
- *Jobs for All: a Public Works Program* to provide decent housing, health care and education for everyone; and a *Slid-*

*ing Scale of Hours* to divide all necessary work among all available workers and thus wipe out unemployment;

- *An Escalating Scale of Wages* to raise wages to keep up with increases in the price of goods.

### REPUDIATE THE IMPERIALIST DEBTS!

In countries like the United States where the class struggle is still at a low level, these policies cannot be raised agitationaly for the masses to take them up today. But to prepare for a movement that would be open to such transitional demands, revolutionaries can explain in their propaganda to the most politically advanced workers how these demands can be used in the course of future mass struggles.

In many countries, however, from Indonesia to South Africa, where the crisis is already acute and the masses are mobilized, transitional demands are essential for revolutionaries to use today in seeking to guide the current mass struggles in a revolutionary direction. Still, the crucial issue at this stage for revolutionaries is the misuse of transitional demands as a radical reformist program.

To examine this problem further, we will take a closer look at one particular demand, *Repudiate the Imperialist Debts!* The demand to reject paying back the massive debts held by the banks is not in the transitional programs of earlier generations of Marxists because it has become a burning issue only in recent decades.

Today, state debt is used by the capitalists everywhere as a weapon against workers. In the imperialist countries, national debts are a cover for slashing social services like welfare and education while directing the wealth taxed from the working class into the pockets of the bankers. So we raise the slogan *Repudiate the Debt!* — that is, reject debt payments to the banks — as a demand that all popular leaders should fight for. If these leaders refuse to struggle for this demand, that further exposes their pro-capitalist allegiances and shows workers the need to struggle to *seize* the wealth of the banks and big industries.

The debt crisis is clearest in the case of the neo-colonies of the "third world," which are being bled dry by the imperialists' demands for debt repayments. This year the world's poorest countries have been forced to hand over \$750 million a day. Yet even this massive transfer of wealth doesn't reduce the total debt; it simply covers the ever-increasing amount of interest owed, so the total debt actually grows. Thus between 1980, when the debt crisis first exploded, and 1994, the total debt of the world's poorest countries increased by some 250 percent to a total of \$2.5 trillion.

The imperialist vampires are literally sucking the neo-colonies dry. The human costs of this crisis — in the form of famine, epidemics of treatable diseases and wars over scarce resources — are barely quantifiable. It is staggering to consider, for example, that while the total cost of meeting basic health, nutrition, education and family planning needs for the whole of Africa is estimated to be \$9 billion a year, the governments of sub-Saharan Africa pay the imperialists \$15 billion annually in interest.

Therefore, revolutionaries should raise the slogan *Repudiate the Imperialist Debts* as an internationalist demand that workers in the imperialist countries should fight for against the banks and governing parties in their countries. As well, it must be raised as a demand on the neo-colonial governments to expose their refusal to challenge imperialism.

A struggle to repudiate the imperialist debts would strike a blow against the capitalist system. If successful, massive



amounts of wealth would be freed that could be used to address the masses' needs. The opposition the capitalists would put up against such a struggle would go a long way to proving the need to overthrow them.

But even a repudiation of the imperialist debts would not solve the problems faced by the neocolonial masses. The debt is only one means by which the imperialism superexploits the neo-colonies, along with their direct exploitation of labor in sweatshop factories, and their unequal trade relations. Moreover, the small capitalist classes of the neo-colonies are tied by a thousand threads of economic interest to the imperialist system, and would themselves vigorously oppose a struggle against the imperialists' superexploitation. Thus the

struggle against the imperialist debts could also prove to workers the need to overthrow capitalism in the neo-colonies and support the spread of socialist revolution internationally.

Given the seriousness of the debt crisis, it is not surprising that there are several ongoing campaigns for canceling debts, including Jubilee 2000, an organization based on churches and charities in several countries (including Britain, South Africa and the U.S.) which aims for the cancellation of "third world" debts by the year 2000. There are also efforts to relieve the devastated Central Americans of their debt burden. All these efforts focus on pleas to the rich countries to cancel the poor countries' obligations.

As one leader of Jubilee 2000 put it:

## **The Socialist Answer to the Economic Crisis**

The forces driving the economic crisis could actually work to make our lives better. But under capitalism they are turned against us.

The immediate trigger for the current world crisis is a massive overproduction of goods: capitalism has produced more cars, electronic products and food than can be sold profitably. But the surplus goods are not given or sold cheaply to those who need them. Because no profit can be gained from them, they sit rotting in warehouses. While millions starve, capitalists dump grain into the oceans so that the surpluses don't drive prices down.

Crises of overproduction are inevitable under capitalism because the system is anarchic, unplanned and grossly unequal in its distribution of wealth and power. The current crisis is intensified by the reassertion of the tendency for the capitalist system's profits to decline. In its early years, capitalism could offset this tendency through the geographic expansion of markets and cyclical crises that purged the economy of inefficient industry. But since the turn of the century, the expansion of imperialism across the globe has ruled out further territorial expansion except through inter-imperialist wars of conquest, and monopolization and statification of capital prevent cyclical crises from purging the system as in the past.

Even the post-World War II boom in profits, which was based on the drastic intensification of exploitation through cataclysmic defeats of the working class that included depression, counterrevolution, fascism and war, failed to raise the system's profits to the levels of the previous century. Now even those days are gone, and the capitalist crisis of falling profits has reasserted itself.

This tendency derives from the capitalists' increasing replacement of workers' jobs with labor-saving technology. This gives some companies a temporary advantage over others and raises their profits. But the exploitation of human labor is the only source of the system's surplus value, of which profits are a part, and by proportionally reducing the proportion of workers in the production process, capitalism lowers its overall profit rate.

Just as overproduction would be a boon to humanity if production were directed to meeting the masses' needs rather than private profit, so too, technological gains, which could increasingly free people from hard labor, create mass unemployment and hasten depression under capitalism.

Scarcity is the source of most of the world's suffering.

Capitalism encourages workers to fight one another as individuals, races, nations or ethnic groups — over scarce jobs and resources.

### **A SOCIALIST WORLD OF PLENTY IS POSSIBLE**

But the productive power that has developed could provide abundance for all and free humanity from the dog-eat-dog world of combat over the crumbs capitalism offers. In a world of plenty, the material basis for every form of oppression would be removed. Over time, racism, sexism and all oppression would die out. A classless society of freedom and prosperity would emerge: *socialism*.

This understanding of capitalism's economy and the possibility of building a new socialist society was developed by history's most famous revolutionary thinker, Karl Marx. Marx also explained that to create socialism, the working class must seize the big businesses and banks from the capitalists who now own them. A workers' state would direct production toward human need, not private profit.

The capitalists defend their wealth and power through their state and government; they claim a monopoly of armed force through their police and military. The long history of repressive regimes and bloody counterrevolutions around the world proves they are ready to use their weapons against the masses. To break the capitalists' power, the working class (including working-class soldiers) will have to make a revolution that destroys the capitalist state and replaces it with a workers' state.

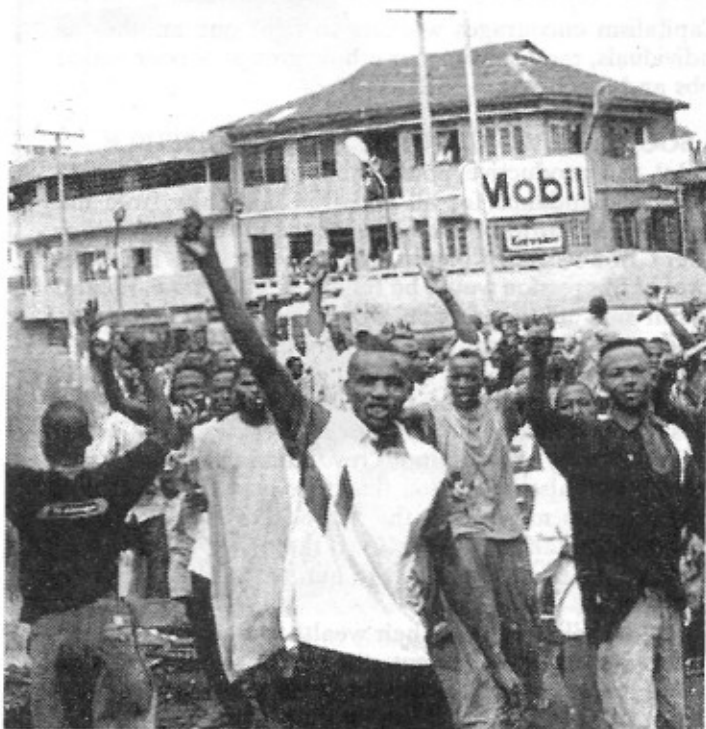
The great example of a socialist revolution is that of 1917 in Russia. Led by Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik party, the Russian revolution made great strides in overcoming capitalism. But building socialism depended on breaking out of Russia's isolation and economic backwardness through world revolution. There were other revolutionary upheavals at the time, but they were betrayed by phony socialists who remained tied to capitalism. Under these conditions, the Russian workers' state inevitably degenerated and was eventually overthrown from within by the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy under Joseph Stalin. The Stalinist society run in the name of socialism was in reality a state-run capitalist system. Stalinism's collapse, rather than a defeat for socialism, in fact shows the fragility of capitalist power and points to the need for international proletarian socialist revolution.

This is not about developing countries reneging on debt repayments which would affect their credit rating negatively. It is about those who provided the credit canceling the debt. (Jackie Boule, program director for the South African National Non-Government Organization Coalition, *Cape Times*, Nov. 6.)

Jubilee 2000 also spreads illusions in imperialism's intentions:

Governments of the wealthiest nations, including the U.S. ... should require that the debt be canceled in a way that benefits ordinary people and without conditions that lead to more poverty and environmental destruction. ("Frequently Asked Questions," Web page of Jubilee 2000/USA.)

Relying on the nobility and self-interest of the imperialists is typical of such a middle-class "moral crusade."



July 1998: Nigerian workers riot. Workers throughout world are rising, spurred by deepening economic crisis.

The international financiers cannot be appealed to as responsible men of honor; they are blood-suckers who must be challenged, defied and defeated.

The Central American hurricane has brought the debt issue to the forefront. Many bourgeois spokesmen, like the British journal *The Economist*, have been forced to ask, "Does it make sense to give [Honduras and Nicaragua] disaster aid with one hand, while hindering recovery by insisting on (far bigger) debt-service payments with the other?" (Editorial, Nov. 14.) The answer is obviously No — but the thrust of the editorial is to point out that the problem is much more vast. After all, "millions in some third-world countries live, year in and year out, with a horror called extreme poverty, and many die of it." Can emergency relief be extended to all such countries? "Reasonably, the rich world thinks not." Reasonably indeed — otherwise profits don't flow.

The U.S. in particular has done nothing about the

immense Central American debts. Since the hurricane disaster, imperialist countries like France, Spain and Britain have written off part of what they are owed, and even blockade-battered Cuba has canceled Nicaragua's debt. The United States, however, is the major beneficiary of the debt payments. The food, clothing and machinery it is sending is worth \$80 million, about a tenth of what it collects from the debt annually. The U.S. has also sent Tipper Gore, George Bush and Hillary Clinton to shed tears and warn of the potential flight of more refugees to the U.S.

If the "anti-debt" campaign sounds like an imperialist public relations stunt, aimed to take credit for debt cancellations that will be enforced in any case by inability to pay, that's what its initiators want. It was first pushed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the early 1990's, when these imperialist lending institutions faced a skyrocketing growth in debt-payment defaults. They set up a Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program, which offers partial debt relief under the condition that the countries continue to comply with the notorious IMF/World Bank policy prescriptions that impose horrific austerity formulas on the masses. This form of debt relief is designed to maintain imperialist domination and profiteering. Jubilee 2000 nevertheless takes the HIPC initiative as a starting point for its own goals.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The campaign for debt cancellation has to be taken out of the hands of liberal do-gooders who will never challenge imperialism. In countries victimized by the criminal burdens of the debt payments, communists should counter the deals with imperialism with the demand for repudiation of the debt. In the imperialist countries, the working class should demand the cancellation of debts owed to "their own" bankers and governments. These demands should be placed on the leaders of mass movements, so that the mobilized workers and peasants of the poor countries can learn that a program so necessary for their survival and well-being can only come through socialist revolution, the creation of states run by the working class.

This is an example of how Marxist theory, applied to the growing international economic crisis, is a guide to revolutionary action. The key to the success of the working class confronting the looming crisis lies in building a revolutionary party of the most class conscious and organized workers to lead the struggle. That is what the League for the Revolutionary Party is dedicated to. ●

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# Between the Devil, the Democrats — and the Dispossessed Today's Black Leadership Crisis

by Sy Landy

Contrary to the claims of many, there is no vacuum of political leadership in the Black community today. The virtually unchallenged leader of Black America is William Jefferson Clinton.

This does not mean that most Black people actively support or even care much about Clinton's political fate. The masses of Blacks, especially the most oppressed layers, are quite unenchanted with Clinton and his party. But the political leadership of the Black struggle remains in the hands of pro-Clinton middle-level Blacks who cannot provide an alternative to the powers-that-be.

The idea that "most Blacks support Clinton" is really spin put forward by self-interested politicians. During his impeachment traumas, Clinton has had no supporters more loyal than the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and the Black political leadership in general. CBC notables like Maxine Waters, Charles Rangel, John Lewis, John Conyers and Major Owens made impassioned attempts to rally the Democrats in the House of Representatives, in a vain effort to hobble the impeachment inquiry.

The Black Leadership Forum, composed of heads of prominent Black organizations, mounted an energetic campaign in support of the Democrats in the November elections, which everyone understood revolved around Clinton. Black preachers, publishers, and poets across the country weighed in to protect the beleaguered president and defend his conduct. Novelist Toni Morrison wasn't alone in suggesting that Clinton's hard-nosed response showed that he might have Blacks in his ancestry.

What nonsense! The masses of Black and Latino people, especially the youth, are not fans of Clinton. Moreover, the poorest layers do not like the system they are forced to live under. They just do not see a viable alternative yet, even if they are fed up. But even today they hardly think of Clinton as "Brother Bill."

Since the ghetto rebellions of the late 1960's and early 1970's, a significant minority within Black America has achieved middle-class status, although the large majority remain poor and working-class. This "middle class" is not a class in the Marxist sense; it has no special relationship to the means of production. It is an extremely varied layer containing professionals, government bureaucrats and labor aristocrats. At the top it blends into the bourgeoisie; at bottom, into the working class.

Black middle-class people have not been able to overcome systemic racism and therefore have not achieved social equality or incomes comparable with their white counterparts. Nevertheless, there is a sizeable income gap between the Black middle strata and working class. The contrast in

material terms between the different classes and layers within the Black community explains much about the difference among Blacks in how Clinton is seen.

Despite the prosperity hype pushed by the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations, the income gap between the better-off and the working class — Black, Latino and white — has been widening, and will widen more. It is up to the



Jesse Jackson and Dennis Rivera announce 'call to fairness' rally against impeachment. Meanwhile Iraqis got sample of Clinton's fairness.

working class, especially the politically advanced layers of the Black working class, to fight for a real alternative.

## IS CLINTON THE LESSER EVIL?

It is no accident that the same politicians who support Clinton's imperialist attacks abroad have accepted devastating cuts in domestic social programs too. In 1996 (see "The Bankruptcy of 'Progressive' Politics," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 53) we exposed the connivance of the labor and minority leaderships in the smashing of welfare and the imposition of workfare. We wrote:

Coming on top of Clinton's previous racist, anti-worker bills (immigration, "three strikes and you're out," anti-"terrorism"), this bill ended a pillar of liberal legislation won by the working class in the struggles of the 1930's and 1960's. ... Clinton not only managed to deliver the welfare crackdown but was still able to maintain social peace. ... The key reason was the support by the heads of mass labor, Black and Latino organizations, who didn't blink an eye in urging the president's re-election. They have the power to lead fights against the bourgeois attack — but chose instead to endorse the leader of the attack.

Before Clinton, welfare was a thin "safety net," a poor substitute for full employment at decent wages and real community care. (See "Stop Workfare — Jobs for All!" in *PR* 54.) Still, its destruction removed substantial past gains won by the poorest workers. This happened because the "leaders"

led nothing to stop it.

The welfare-to-workfare scheme dramatically exposed the gaping class fracture within the Black community. The liberal Black pols remained loyal to Clinton, grateful for the few patronizing dispensations that — to them — make up for the deadly backstabbing. They point to his appointments of Black officials and his lukewarm support for affirmative action. Can this make up for the hundreds of thousands of families knocked off welfare, denied health insurance, kicked out of housing, thrown out of jobs, beaten by racist cops or shoved into jail since Clinton took office?

The president whose legacy has been to put more cops on the street and wage a masquerade “war on drugs” — along with other efforts to brutally intimidate Blacks and Latinos — deserves hatred, not fervent support. The Black leaders’ enthusiasm for Clinton and the Democrats boils down to the old blind alley of lesser evilism. Their main claim is that Clinton’s right-wing opponents have a racist agenda of rolling back the social, economic and political gains won by Blacks. Whatever his faults, they say, Clinton remains the lesser evil.

It is obviously true that the Republican reactionaries do want to heighten racism and go after Blacks and other oppressed people, as well as the working class in general. In contrast, the Democrats do appoint Black officials and nominally defend affirmative action, in order to get Black electoral support — just as they offer token sops to women and unions. (This relationship has a long history: see our pamphlet *The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles*.) That is the material basis for the “lesser evil” view.

The ruling class understands this. For example, the Los Angeles riots that broke out after the cops were acquitted for the Rodney King beating in 1992, were a turning point for the ruling class. The top capitalists, frightened that George Bush’s barely hidden anti-Black stance would further spread “anarchy and rebellion,” moved to support Clinton for president. That didn’t mean they wanted to give substantive economic benefits or cede real social justices. Rather, they endorsed Clinton’s policy of a *relative* slowdown in taking back the past gains that had built up the Black middle strata. They also favored his strategy of dappling the political structure with more Black faces. The idea was to deepen middle-class Blacks’ support for the status quo, hoping they in turn would hold down the potentially rebellious ghetto masses.

#### **GREATER EVIL GETS GREATER VOTE**

The Democrats are just as driven to cut back the gains of minorities and the working class as the Republicans; they just use a somewhat different approach. And they get away with their attacks more easily than the Republicans because the masses’ misleaders are in bed with them.

No doubt the overt across-the-board attacks advocated by the Gingrich-Lott-DeLay conservatives have aroused anger in all reaches of the Black community. If it had been Republicans who pushed through their program, Blacks, Latinos, women, gays and trade unionists would have been outraged. At minimum, popular unrest would have forced their capitulatory leaders to organize mass protests. But as we explained in *PR 53*:

**When Clinton carries out a chunk of that same program, the liberals and reformists work overtime to prevent mass action, lest it endanger Clinton’s re-election. It’s at least an even bet that if Bush were still president the welfare system would still be standing. In sum, the lesser evil**

**cannot be seen as an unfortunately weak bulwark against the great evils’ assaults. It is Clinton’s program which delivers the greater blow, because Gingrich’s program cannot be carried out at this time. So, while Clinton is the lesser evil in theory, that makes him the greater evil in practice. As well, as the bourgeoisie is aware, it is part of a one-two punch, the left jab that softens up its victim for the later right cross — the knockout blow.**

The Democrats, once forced to go along with progressive gains, today use that past record as credit to enable them to carry out the reactionary rollback. The Black politicians are their partners and pawns, presiding over an attack on people of color, especially on poorer workers. This tactic has worked for the moment but it can’t last, mainly because it has not prevented a continuing polarization among Blacks. Over the years, as the number of Black politicians in government rose, takebacks of past gains have risen in lock-step.

When the ghetto riots broke out in the sixties and seventies, there was no leadership for the government to buy off that the masses would listen to. That is why the powers-that-be allowed the expansion of the Black middle strata and opened the door for more Black faces in government. But the tactic is losing its power as it becomes increasingly transparent.

As this becomes clearer, the trend of declining Black participation in elections has become clearer as well. There is a clear correlation between class position and electoral participation: voting has gone down among lower-income Blacks, most of whom vote even less often than poor white workers. They understand that whether Democrats or Republicans win will make no basic difference in their lives.

The leaders often give the excuse that the masses are the reason why they’re in the Democratic Party, but history testifies differently. The Black middle class, like the white, sees cause and effect upside-down. When the Black Democratic vote was plummeting in the late eighties, the political leadership clustered around the candidacy of Jesse Jackson, working overtime to bring the masses back to the polls and into the Democratic Party. When Jackson was not running, the Black vote diminished. And in the last two elections, which have essentially been referenda on Clinton, the Black vote has again been falling overall.

Nevertheless, over 80 percent of Black voters chose Clinton in his two presidential races, and both times they provided the margin for his victories. The reason for the apparent contradiction is the class differentiation among Blacks. In the 1998 elections, the Black vote in a few crucial areas in the country bucked the trend and swelled, and once again proved decisive. Surveys confirm the fact that it was better-off Blacks who provided the votes for the Democrats, not the younger and poorer workers.

#### **THE ATTRACTION OF BLACK NATIONALISM**

A vague form of “nationalism” is often considered to be the dominant ideology within the Black community today. But to the overwhelming majority, this ideology does not refer to the classical indicator of Black nationalism, the goal of a separate nation-state.

Black nationalism in the U.S. started out as an attempt by small businessmen (and those who aspire to that status) to secure some leverage within a racist society. The Black petty bourgeoisie aimed, consciously or not, to become compradors or middlemen exploiting Black toilers in a white-dominated economy. As the immediate exploiters of Black labor, they

hoped to govern a semi-autonomous economy — in effect, an internal Black colony. But then, as now, the overwhelming majority of Blacks worked directly for white-owned capital, a relationship that the latter has no intention of surrendering.

Today, along with the traditional petty bourgeoisie, layers of the new middle class are also caught up in Black nationalism. They do not fantasize about a distinct Black economy, but they do approve of a political outlook based on Black



'Million Youth March' in Harlem, September 1998.

identity. Having achieved some economic gains, they are understandably bitter that the race barrier is still very much in place. (One glaring proof: anti-Black police brutality does not discriminate by class.) They can't escape second-class treatment in the white world, so they seek redress via some form of "Black unity."

#### NATIONALISM VS. INTEGRATIONISM

The pervasive racist (and anti-working class) outlook in the U.S. automatically lumps together ghetto workers with the criminal lumpenproletariat that preys on them. Some middle-class Blacks share much of the negative image of the Black working class. Many of them not only admire Clinton but are also drawn to Louis Farrakhan, who demands that the Black poor "atone" and that Black men "take responsibility for their women and children" and "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." Farrakhan's clout in the ghetto holds out hope that the race as a whole can be "uplifted" — that is, achieve American middle-class values.

For these reasons, Farrakhan's base of support has been the petty bourgeoisie and important sections of the middle class, but he is also respected by many working-class Blacks as well. Nevertheless, the "nationalism" of the masses is still quite different than the "nationalism" of the upper layers, and the reasons for its attraction are different.

Nationalism's appeal in the ghettos has always been its stress on the need for a united Black defense in the face of perpetual racism. The working class, highly realistic, never bought the idea that this U.S. would turn color-blind. Therefore, while Black workers always welcomed every blow against Jim Crow segregation, they never took integrationism to heart as an ideology, even in its heyday. Black nationalists could speak on street corners in the working-class ghettos even when people thought they were wrong; the integrationist NAACPers rarely attempted to. Pro-integration ministers did have a following, but the reality of their all-Black congregations counted for more than idealist prayers for color-blindness.

To the masses, integrationism looked like a theory that would isolate and therefore disunite Black people in the face of a still racist and dangerous environment. That is why court-enforced school integration — dispersal of their children onto hostile turf — was often viewed negatively by parents in the ghettos. And given the inevitable failure of school integration under racist capitalism, the new middle class had to give up on its illusions as well. So integrationism is dead as an ideology, even though its former champions — including Mfume, Jackson, Waters, Rangel and Bond — have not replaced it with any other defined middle-class outlook, aside from a vague pluralism.

In 1995, the "Million Man March" led by Minister Farrakhan was one of the most massive events ever held in Washington. While the crowd was comparatively affluent, many poorer Black workers were attracted to the message of Black pride, assertion and self-organized unity that was woven into Farrakhan's mixed message. Indeed, any other Black leader who called for reconciliation with the U.S. government and its "greatness" would have been labeled a Clarence Thomas. But Farrakhan got away with it because of his long history of anti-white and separatist rhetoric.

#### WHITHER FARRAKHAN?

In saying that Clinton is in effect the leader of Black America, we mean that the post-integrationists are clearly no longer as authoritative or as independent in the eyes of the masses as in the past. With the Million Man March, Farrakhan moved to fill the vacuum. Because of his strong independent Black identification, he could rouse the community in a way that others no longer can. Thus he could force the post-integrationists to kowtow to him and thereby acknowledge that he has taken much of their base.

But there is also evidence that he cannot accomplish any more in the leadership position than they could. Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam (NOI), publicly derided Black participation in elections. Nevertheless, he always made NOI's power a factor in the machine politics of his Chicago home base, but in a cloaked fashion. Today, the cloak is impossible. Farrakhan's march loudly pushed voter registration, echoing the incessant calls from the post-integrationist leaders. In November 1998, the NOI pulled out all stops, including a motorcade parade and a rally in Chicago, in a campaign to boost the Black vote. The NOI's *Final Call* minced no words that this meant support for the Demo-

cratic Party, locally and nationally. The response was underwhelming from Black workers and poor.

Of course, Farrakhan makes clear that he's not as tied to the Democrats as other Black leaders are. In fact, he openly calls for a Black "third force." He says he wants to create a more independent electoral base, a new "political army" to carry out his economic program. He stresses Black petty capitalism, self-development and free enterprise, all of which have led him to laud a number of Republicans. But a formal link to the Republican Party is politically impossible. First, Farrakhan must appeal to Blacks who have moved upward by relying on the baby carrots doled out by the Democrats, and these "benefactors" will not buy a program which favors



*Khallid Muhammad backs off as cops attack platform.*

Black economic autonomy or anything besides the continuation of dependence on government power. Second, few Blacks are willing to buy the barely-shielded racism of the Republican right. So even though Farrakhan doesn't rely on elected office, he cannot seriously challenge the Democrat party any more than can the liberal post-integrationists. He is freer to play games within the structure and to posture as an independent, but he has no political gains to show for it.

Farrakhan's impasse became clear when the impeachment threat against Clinton mounted. On television's *Meet the Press* on October 16, he condemned Clinton's "immorality" but pointed out that all presidents have been immoral. He concluded that Clinton was being "wickedly mistreated" and suggested that Monica Lewinsky was part of a Jewish/Zionist plot to nail him. He acknowledged his poor opinion of the Democrats, indicating that the Republicans are worse, but still emphatically urged Blacks to register to vote. He asserted that "something different must be done" — but couldn't say what that is.

Farrakhan bemoans the troubles that afflict America because it is such a "great nation." But as a capitalist nation it will never allow Black people to escape their pariah status. That is the source of Farrakhan's impasse, for rocking the capitalist boat is not his game. And even though he has had

to ditch Elijah Muhammad's electoral abstentionism (occasional rhetorical flourishes aside), he remains just as conservative in rejecting mass action. Most obviously, he rejects any idea of mass armed self-defense against the increasing police violence. Bourgeois to the core, he rejects any course that would allow the Black working class to formidably challenge racism or private property. He is condemned to electoral and Democratic Party answers when they don't exist.

#### **KHALLID MUHAMMAD'S PSEUDO-MILITANCY**

As Farrakhan moved toward a more statesman-like role, his former lieutenant, Khallid Muhammad, made a move to out-militant him. Muhammad tries to give voice to the

growing anger among Black youth. His clout with the nationalist groupings, both Muslim and secular, is based on his claimed ability to attract alienated young Blacks, a capacity they lack. His actual base, although hyped as a tie with the street gangs, is to be found more among disaffected Black middle-class college students.

To a considerable extent, Khallid Muhammad has been able to make a bid for leadership among angry Blacks because of the attacks on him by prominent white politicians and the mainstream press. He obviously goes out of his way to press the right buttons that provoke the vituperation he feeds on. For example, he publicly embraced Colin Ferguson, the crazed gunman who indiscriminately shot and killed white people on the Long Island Rail Road a few years ago. And while other demagogues try to cloak their anti-Jewish rhetoric, Muhammad spews it out nakedly, gleefully escalating it in proportion to the reaction of the Jewish organizations and the white media. The

fight between Muhammad and New York's despicably racist Mayor Giuliani, which broke out last year over preparations for the "Million Youth March" (MYM), did a lot to enhance this reputation.

You don't have to live in Harlem to hate Giuliani. This arrogant demagogue used the MYM in September as an excuse to terrorize that community in a naked display of the armed power of the state. But defending the march from Giuliani's attack in no way meant that we politically endorsed it. The march was comparatively small, but thousands of people did attend, for various reasons. But the march in fact was designed for one purpose: to build Khallid Muhammad. It did not represent a fighting movement, and those who came with such hopes could only be disappointed.

Khallid Muhammad is bad news, unfortunately not for enemies like Giuliani but above all for Black people. First, Muhammad's outlook is openly capitalist and commercial, even if it is more 125th Street than Wall Street. Anyone who reached the MYM's Web site last summer faced a tidal wave of marketing data on its concessions and the sales potential of its young "targeted audience." The MYM's program vaguely called for jobs but mostly included standard nationalist dead-ends like the demand for reparations and Black business development.

In contrast to Farrakhan, Khalid Muhammad is willing to talk about armed self-defense against police brutality and racist attacks. But his stance is dangerous demagoguery, not an actual attempt to mobilize masses and organize them into disciplined military defense units. This was made evident at the Harlem rally. Contrary to Giuliani's lies, Muhammad didn't start a fight with the cops at the end of the affair. As he was winding up his closing speech, police detachments in riot gear made a clearly planned attack on the speakers' platform. What Muhammad did was encourage the unorganized and unarmed crowd to confront the organized and armed cops to try to seize their weapons if attacked. After delivering this recipe for a massacre, which thankfully the crowd ignored, he disappeared.

Muhammad is also no foe of the Democrats. An important fact that has generally been ignored is that, for all the fiery nationalist denunciations of the "white devil," Jews and Giuliani from the podium, there was no denunciation of the white-run, imperialist Democratic Party! Harlem congressman Charles Rangel and a variety of other mainstream Black Democrats who were unhappy with Muhammad and the rally came under attack, but not Clinton. Al Sharpton, who aspires to be the Democratic nominee for mayor or senator in future elections, was a featured speaker. Baptist minister Rev. Calvin Butts, another prospective Democratic candidate, was a major endorser. The former head of Harlem's NOI Temple No. 7, Conrad Muhammad, who was recently cast aside by Farrakhan, is another likely candidate for a local office. In fact, a good deal of the infighting around the MYM by various groups and local political figures behind the scenes concerned contests for control of the Democratic machine in Harlem.

In the short run, Farrakhan remains the only Black leader with commanding clout nationally. However, as more middle-class professionals become angrier and as the prospects for small businesses dim even further, the more militant wing of reactionary nationalism can expect to grow. Muhammad seeks to forge his cadres among those militants. To that end, he has launched his own Muslim sect and the New Black Panther Party, a reactionary mirror-opposite to the original party which, despite its political faults, rejected religious obscurantism, despised cultural nationalism and proclaimed itself to be revolutionary socialist.

Openly pro-capitalist nationalism like Muhammad's appears militant mainly because of its radical anti-white posture. It can win some hearing among the working-class and poorer sections of Blacks, who do not live in isolation from the influence of the petty bourgeoisie and middle class. But the systemic nature of the attacks that workers and working-class youth are increasingly facing also means that their very real but unformulated anti-capitalist consciousness will accelerate. The question is, can this sentiment be trans-

lated into an organization and program for action that truly represents the interest of the Black working class and the masses as a whole?

#### **THE BLACK RADICAL CONGRESS: NO "ALTERNATIVE"**

Earlier this summer another contender for Black leadership declared itself. Nearly two thousand Black leftists met in Chicago in June to launch the Black Radical Congress (BRC) as an alternative to Farrakhan and his ilk. The conference claimed to represent diverse progressive radical traditions among Black activists, "including socialism, revolutionary nationalism and feminism," and its program spoke of the need to address the interests of the working class and the poor. In the face of the reactionary male-dominated family theme evoked by the religious and cultural nationalists, the BRC openly identified with women's liberation and the rights of gays and lesbians. It explicitly rejected the Black capitalist path. Thus on the surface, the BRC appeared to be an avenue for advanced working-class Blacks looking for a challenge to pro-capitalist nationalism. But this was not to be.

The Congress adopted an 11-point Principles of Unity document, whose preamble carefully noted that the BRC would not "replace or displace existing organizations, parties or campaigns" but would mobilize around "common concerns." The principles are purposely vague as to how to achieve the BRC's chief goal: to "strengthen radicalism as the legitimate voice of Black working and poor people, and to build organized resistance."

The conference itself stuck to this vagueness by treating contentious issues as threats to unity. Political and organizational disagreements were diverted from the floor to the leading continuations committee each time they came up. "Unity" was maintained, but at the expense of working out a specific radical strategy for Black liberation that is so desperately needed. None of this was accidental.

Major roles in the BRC are played by the Committees of Correspondence (CoC) and the Communist Party (CP), both of which, in somewhat different ways, are proponents of the Democrats and the Congressional Black Caucus. But the days when the Stalinist CP or any group could singlehandedly dominate an event like the BRC conference are long gone: the sponsors included individuals and groups who at least nominally oppose the Democrats or who consider non-electoral actions important. Given this division, the BRC makes no explicit statement of support or opposition to the Democrats. This omission is supposedly in the interests of unity but in reality comes at the expense of political clarity. Thus there was no debate over the Democratic Party at a conference claiming to build a powerful radical alternative to the status quo.

The BRC's goal of unity precluded any open endorsement of Clinton or the Democrats. But in practice, by exclud-

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ing the possibility of a radical campaign for a political alternative, it in effect accepts the present dead-end strategy of the pro-capitalist Black leadership and its Democratic Party orientation.

This can already be seen in New York, in the wake of Giuliani's imposition of virtual martial law in Harlem in response to the MYM. All the politicians and political groups in the Black community made proposals about how to respond; the New York BRC came up with a petition for the recall of the Republican mayor. Such a campaign, leading only to a new electoral alternative, is the most passive form of action imaginable. Leaving aside the feasibility of a recall, the present balance of political forces in the city means that it could only be a pro-Democratic Party maneuver.

### THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

Revolutionaries want to eradicate racism root and branch; we believe that for this to happen capitalism must be overthrown. Socialist revolution is the only way to end racism. Yet there is an absolute crisis of leadership for such a struggle, an abysmal misleadership of all the potential struggles of workers and poor.

This crisis is not only in the Black community. The only existing leadership of the American working class is the trade union bureaucracy, which has proved itself a nightmare for workers of all colors. This article has cited the increasing alienation of Black workers from capitalist politics. But Latinos and the vast majority of white workers, unlike the most aristocratic layer that often identifies with U.S. imperialism and racism, are also at sea politically. There is an increasing contempt for capitalist politicians, labor bureaucrats and the like throughout the working class. What is missing is an alternative.

This enormous crisis will be resolved only through enormous acts. Massive, united struggle is the means by which significant numbers of advanced workers can make a qualitative leap in building a new party of the working class and oppressed. For this to happen, an immediate fight for mass action must be coupled with an open struggle against the current misleaderships. It must be led by conscious revolutionaries determined to win their fellow workers to the work of forging a new leadership and strategy.

How can this be done? A case in point came after Giuliani's attack on Harlem, when the December 12 Movement and other radical Black groups called for a general strike. Their leaflet urged Blacks to not go to work, adding "don't shop, don't go to school." But this attempt, long after the immediate anger had died down, failed to get support among Black workers. One reason was that it was hard to distinguish from the perennial calls by nationalists to boycott white-owned businesses. And, of course, a general strike can't be launched by a leaflet or word of mouth alone. It requires the machinery of powerful organizations with large resources and memberships, like the unions. Power has to be fought with an opposing source of power.

Imagine that, just when the anger in Harlem over the MYM events was at its highest, radicals had begun a campaign for a real mass mobilization. Suppose they had challenged the New York labor leaders to call a one-day general strike demanding a halt to the racist police assaults. Suppose they had called on the many anti-Giuliani ministers to mobilize their large working-class congregations to put pressure on the labor bureaucrats. Suppose they directly demanded that "progressive" labor bureaucrats like Dennis Rivera of 1199

support the call. Suppose they also challenged Black leaders like Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson to support such a strike.

Suppose also that radicals helped build committees for the general strike among militant workers, students and other youth, putting out a call to all workers who wanted to oppose police brutality — and Giuliani's other racist attacks. Such a campaign, unlike the electoralist petition against Giuliani, could have made a difference. Given the widespread anger, the misleaders would have been forced to go along or would have been put on the spot. Either way, a step towards a new leadership would have been taken, and possibly a mass upheaval would have occurred.

Blacks and Latinos are a decisive force in the big unions in New York. Even in a one-day strike, transport, production, services and the city government itself — the mayor notwithstanding — would grind to a halt. The impact would be tremendous. And it would open up a struggle which has been stifled by the labor bureaucracy and pro-capitalist misleaders of Blacks and the rest of the working class, for decades. Black, Latino and anti-racist white workers would be in the lead, demonstrating to less advanced workers that police brutality is their problem too — and that if they join with militant Black and Latino workers in fighting racism they will also be building the fight against the capitalist attacks. Workers, now cynical, would see their power.

Mass action by the working class is considered by many leftists today to be an old-fashioned idea to be cherished only in labor history books and conferences. Indeed, the working class has changed since the historic labor battles of the 1930's. For one thing, Black and Latino workers are now in a strategic position in both private and public workforces; they hold a power they did not have during the earlier periods of upheaval. They can now exercise decisive strength, as was already exhibited in the wave of wildcat strikes that Black workers led in factory after factory in the early 1970's. At that time, white workers followed Black militants in important union battles — a new phenomenon that did not go unnoticed by the bosses.

In response to those struggles the bosses have made conscious efforts to reduce the concentration of Black workers in key industries and locations. Layoffs have been one major tool, with more to come. But Black and Latino workers still wield powerful leverage because of their crucial role in production; their strength cannot be ignored when it is actually harnessed to fight the system.

### REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM

We are trying to paint a true picture of the leading role that Black and Latino workers can play. But we don't say that the struggles will automatically develop into the powerful united fight that is needed. Nor will politically advanced Black, Latino and anti-racist white workers automatically be granted leadership. None of this will come without preparation by a vanguard that adopts a revolutionary strategy from the start.

One fact is glaring: no present-day contender for leadership of the Black struggle is able to break with the Democratic Party. Thus Clinton rules over the Black community by default. Nevertheless, waning support for the Democrats among Black workers shows that openings already exist for building an alternative.

The economic crisis is about to erupt with devastating fury upon the U.S. working class. History shows that Black



and Latino workers will be hit the hardest. But white workers and the middle strata of all races will be smacked hard and also be looking for a way out. Inevitably, the ruling class will step up its attempt to divide the working class through an even more naked racist offensive.

The capitalist strategy doesn't have to succeed. History shows that not only Blacks and Latinos but white workers too will fight back against deepened exploitation. The question is whether advanced workers can show the way to a united — that is, a *successful* — fight. We do not know whether the next explosion will take the form of an upheaval against police brutality or other racist attacks, a resistance by workers against their bosses in industry, or another option. In any case, revolutionaries fight for the widest possible class unity.

The reason we counterpose mass action to electoralism is that action is the way a vanguard layer will congeal as the working class discovers in living practice its own enormous strength. At this juncture, the initiative is in the hands of the capitalists and their agents; the working-class and the Black and Latino masses think of themselves as powerless, doomed to rely on politicians, preachers, presidents, demagogues and bureaucrats. Even revolutionary-minded workers have serious doubts about the Marxist class strategy, given the low level of struggle, the obvious racism of many white workers and the demoralization fostered by leaders accepting attacks for decades. To break from this malaise, mass actions like general strikes can teach more than just the advantage of unity. They give the class confidence in its struggle, they help it build its own trusted leadership and they educate the more backward workers so that they can be won over.

In mass struggles, anti-racist and democratic demands like *Stop Police Brutality! Stop Racist Attacks!* are a key part of our program. In order to answer the immiseration of the working class, especially but not only in the Black and Latino communities, we champion the demands of *Jobs for All* and *Public Works*. We absolutely reject the idea that Black, Latino

and white workers should fight over a decreasing pool of jobs at a decreasing rate of pay, and that Black, Latino and white workers should put up with worsening hospitals, schools and housing. Workers in struggle should demand that society provide jobs for all its members, spreading the necessary work among the many people ready, willing and able to do it. If the capitalists say there are not enough jobs, we say create jobs — and we demand real jobs at good union wages to build the necessary schools, hospitals and homes, etc. This program begins to meet the workers' needs and therefore shows that all workers have common goals.

Workers know they have to fight for what they need. If capitalism claims it can't provide what's needed, that will prove that we must go on to fight for the workers' society that can. In sum, we need to fight for socialist revolution. And that means organizing a revolutionary party.

Racism can only be smashed if a revolutionary working-class party is built. To win over the many potential middle-class allies of the working class, the working class must champion a fight for all the needs of Blacks and Latinos. In particular, the revolutionary program must include a resolute defense of affirmative action and other gains important to the middle class and those who aspire to it. By making itself the tribune of all oppressed people against discrimination the working class can prove that its party is fit to lead.

Black liberation is only possible through socialist revolution. This means that united action must be led not by the elite but by the only class capable of making such a revolution, the proletariat. Once Black and Latino workers again go into mass motion, they will discover that reality in practice. And there is no doubt that Black and Latino workers will be found in the leadership of the revolution in far greater numbers than their proportion in the American population. The majority of whites too will become conscious of their material interests and the reality that racism is the profound enemy of all workers. ●

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# Russia: Yeltsin, CP Enforce Austerity

by Jeff Covington

Russia's economic disaster worsened last year. In mid-August, the government announced it was devaluing the ruble and defaulting on its loans; companies and banks closed across the country. Internationally, these events triggered a second wave of financial crisis that had started with the Asian collapse in mid-1997. At home, the Russian ruling class is turning to extreme measures to keep the working class in line, adding to the social catastrophe workers have been facing for years under the Boris Yeltsin regime.

In response, on October 7, millions of workers across Russia joined protests against Yeltsin, demanding payment of billions of dollars worth of unpaid back wages. Given the devaluation, workers and trade unions have been demanding that the wages owed be adjusted for inflation. But the Finance Ministry of the new government led by ex-foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov and supported by both Yeltsin and his supposed "opposition," the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), announced that the new emergency budget won't adjust wages and pensions to compensate for substantial inflation.

Nevertheless, the protests were smaller and less effective than they could have been with a strong leadership representing the genuine interests of the working class. Instead they were led by pro-capitalist trade union officials who spent much of the last decade cheerleading Yeltsin while industrial production and workers' living standards plummeted. They were also supported by the KPRF, whose Stalinist program is justly mistrusted by Russian workers who remember how Stalinism ran the economy into the ground and paved the way for Yeltsin's even deeper attacks.

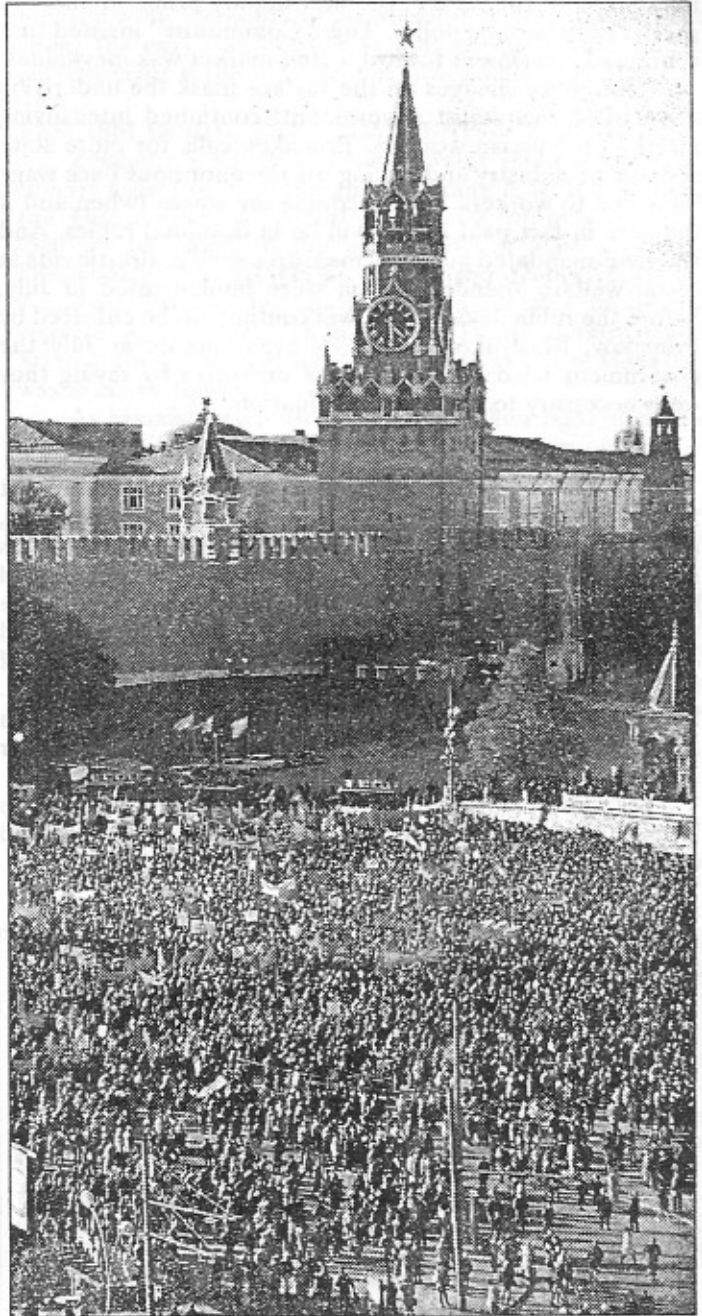
## THE SUMMER CRISIS

The Russian economic crisis first exploded in May, when the Asian financial collapse and falling world commodity prices undermined the Russian stock market. The Russian economy is highly dependent on exporting natural resources, especially oil and gas, since its industrial production collapsed. Interest rates on government bonds skyrocketed as high as 150 percent, and the Central Bank spent billions of dollars of its hard currency reserves to prop up the ruble. Then Yeltsin went begging for a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund, in return for which he pushed the austerity plan.

Yeltsin and the Western press emphasized the improved tax collection aspect of the plan, but in fact it included \$7 billion worth of budget cuts: drastically less federal spending for social welfare, education and Russia's struggling provinces. 20 percent of all government workers were fired, including 70,000 in Moscow alone.

The KPRF made a big show of indignant opposition to Yeltsin's plan for weeks before the July vote in the Russian parliament, the Duma, where it has an effective majority. But when the chips were down, they voted for many of the austerity measures, including one allowing regions to introduce a 5 percent sales tax, a direct attack on the masses that hits the poorest the hardest. Those measures that the Duma did not pass, Yeltsin declared law by decree anyway.

Many have speculated that the real reason the ruble was devalued was that several powerful private banks owned by



the richest men in Yeltsin's Russia were in danger of failing. The devaluation enabled them to pass the costs on to the Russian people. Indeed, the most notorious of the bankers (popularly known as "oligarchs"), Boris Berezovsky, owns the paper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, which had been calling for devaluation since May, saying Russia needed an economic policy "comparable to the shock therapy of 1991" when millions of Russians lost their life savings and pensions.

## KPRF CAPITULATES TO YELTSIN

In the aftermath of the ruble devaluation, the KPRF made a final capitulation to Yeltsin's regime when several of its leaders joined the government as ministers. The two sides

had agreed upon Primakov as prime minister. His government has made some noises about restoring some measures of state control over the economy, but the essence of its political program was made clear by none other than Yuri Maslyukov of the KPRF, the new deputy prime minister in charge of economic policy. This "Communist" insisted that continued movement toward a free market was inevitable!

The policy changes on the surface mask the underlying drive of the capitalist government: continued intensifying attacks on Russian workers. Primakov calls for more state support of industry and paying off the enormous back wage bill owed to workers. But of course the wages (when and if they are in fact paid at all) will be in devalued rubles. And the IMF-mandated austerity measures such as drastic cuts in social welfare spending which were implemented in July, before the ruble devaluation, will continue to be enforced by Primakov, Maslyukov & Co. — even though in July the government tried to justify those measures by saying they were necessary to stave off devaluation.

#### WORKING CLASS PROTEST ON THE RISE

The key factor in the crisis, usually hidden in the recent flurry of bourgeois analysis of Russia, is the working class, upon whose exploitation the capitalist system rests. For years now millions of Russian workers have obscenely gone unpaid for months or even years. Survival has been a struggle: one report from a Russian coal mine detailed how miners could only feed their families by buying up overpriced packets of barely edible meat the company provided at the worksite. Many firms have claimed that their customers have not been paying them and tried to turn workers' anger against other sectors of the economy.

Sporadic strikes and protests have flared up all across Russia the past few years, but nationwide coordination and organization had been limited. That began to change in May.

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At the same time that the Russian stock market was collapsing, Russian miners blocked all of the main railroad routes across Russia and shut down the transportation of goods for a week. The coinciding events showed clearly that the needs of the masses cannot be met in a capitalist world. At the same time that protesting workers declared that they would not put up with the old status quo anymore, international financiers decided the old status quo was not harsh enough and demanded more austerity.

On rare occasions the bourgeois press recognized this fundamental fact in a warped way. A *Chicago Tribune* article on May 28 concluded thus:

**That's why Yeltsin's announcement this week to tighten expenditures was important. Coming as it did when miners, teachers and almost everyone else in Russia was clamoring for pay increases, the vow to rein in the state's budget showed a strong commitment to the kind of reforms that the IMF and other economists say Russia must undergo to survive. Of course, executing those cutbacks is another matter.**

That is the essence of capitalism: the system must survive, at the expense of "miners, teachers and almost everyone else." But everyone else was not cooperating, and they continued to strike and protest through the summer and into the fall. A contingent of miners set up camp outside the headquarters of the Russian government in Moscow and stayed there all summer, demanding full payment of wages and Yeltsin's resignation. In October, police used force to break up the camp, forcing miners onto trains to take them out of Moscow and arresting many leaders of the camp.

#### PRO-CAPITALIST POLITICS OF RUSSIAN UNIONS

While the Russian working class has been growing more and more militant, the bureaucrats at the head of the miners' and other unions play a contradictory and fundamentally treacherous role in the workers' movement. They do stand at the head of the strikes, protests and other mass actions the workers have increasingly demanded and organized. But they always do so with a view to keeping the workers' struggle within the bounds of the capitalist system rather than confronting it head-on.

For example, the leader of the militant Vorkuta miners' union earlier this summer supported the demand "Down with Yeltsin!" but proceeded to suggest that "maybe Lebed, Luzhkov, or Yavlinsky" should be the next President — a right-wing general, a pro-Yeltsin crony mayor of Moscow, and an "anti-corruption" pro-market capitalist! The anti-communism of the union bureaucracy is so strong that they won't even mention KPRF leader Zyuganov as a possibility. But despite their hostility, the trade union bureaucrats and the CP bureaucrats share a loyalty to the existing order and a commitment to preserving it from workers' actions that go too far. In early October militant workers had picketed and blockaded an important bridge in Moscow, and the union heads and the KPRF government minister Maslyukov negotiated to end the blockade.

#### SEVEN YEARS OF LOOTING RUSSIA'S ECONOMY

Why did the Russian economy collapse the way it did this decade? The USSR, as we have argued in this magazine and in our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, was a society of statified capitalism whose rulers had usurped the nationalized means of production established by the Soviet workers' state. This system exploited the workers and collec-

tive farmers, but since the counterrevolution had been unable to destroy all the gains of the revolution, the Stalinists could not use all the tools of exploitation — including mass unemployment and rapid inflation — that were available to the traditional bourgeoisies.

The USSR was torn apart in 1991, when the ruling class, after years of zero or negative growth and growing unrest among workers throughout the Stalinist bloc, sought to save their disintegrating power. In the name of “democracy,” they



*Russian coal miners stop trains demanding back pay.*

turned the economy over to private hands, often their own. This internal counterrevolution was enthusiastically supported by the IMF and the West, who gladly joined in the looting.

For Russia, though, this had catastrophic results. Russian production has fallen by more than half since 1990, along with wages and pensions. Workers survive by foraging in the forests, growing food in small plots or apartment window boxes; a fraction of their pay comes in the form of factory-based services, like housing, medical clinics and movies. With the elimination of the remnants of central “planning,” Russia now has to import most of its food and consumer goods. Public health standards have declined terribly. Diseases like tuberculosis, which had been virtually wiped out, have returned to epidemic proportions. Malnutrition and starvation are widespread. A million people are homeless. Average life expectancy for males has dropped from an already-low 64 years to 57 in less than a decade.

The newly enriched entrepreneurs had no incentive or compulsion to build their industries in Russia. They used their assets to export massive amounts of capital — between \$150 and \$300 billion — out of Russia, the safest and easiest way to enrich themselves without subjecting their wealth to an unstable market and ruble — or pay taxes. For this reason the export of natural resources was favored over industrial production and came to dominate the Russian economy, leaving it vulnerable to falling world commodity prices. Investment is down to one fifth of what it was in 1990; in key

engineering industries, it is far less.

Importantly, none of the capitalists tried to make a profit by forcing Russian workers to labor more intensively for lower wages. The Stalinist rulers had not dared to do this for decades, fearing the power of the Russian working class and the surviving elements of its socialist consciousness. They chose the easy way out for as long as they could, but the current crisis is the price Russian capitalism is paying.

#### FASCISM INSIDE THE “COMMUNIST” PARTY

Zyuganov’s KPRF has considerably extended the reactionary aspect of its nationalist program. A KPRF deputy in the Duma, General Albert Makashov, promised in early October to “send to the next world at least 10 kikes.” Disgustingly, the KPRF faction in the Duma refused to repudiate his anti-Jewish threat and blocked motions of censure against him. Then, liberal Duma deputy Galina Starovoitova, who had led the move to censure Makashov, was assassinated on November 20.

As Marxists, we must call things by their right name: this is the nucleus of a fascist program. It is an alarming turn that poses a grave danger to the Russian working class: a leading political party with occasional anti-capitalist pretensions and rhetoric openly promoting racist scapegoating that can derail the class struggle. This harkens back to Stalin’s own fascist forms, including anti-Semitism, then superimposed on nationalized property. If not confronted and smashed by the working class, it will lead to fratricidal race war, fascist takeover of the state, and the crushing of the trade unions and the whole workers’ movement. Now more than ever, Russian workers and socialists must take great precautions when having any political dealings with the KPRF.

While this turn is alarming, it was not unpredictable to Marxists who have followed the KPRF in Russian politics. We noted in *PR 39* back in 1991: “The Stalinist hard-liners . . . speak in the name of socialism and appeal to workers, but their real ties are to the military and other Russian chauvinists, including the anti-Jewish, fascist Pamyat.” Indeed, Makashov is both a military general and an anti-Jewish, fascist chauvinist.

We further pointed out in *PR 52* in 1996: “After the December [1995] elections, [Zyuganov] wooed supporters of fascist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. . . . He even called on Zhirinovskiy publicly to form a coalition with him — it was Zhirinovskiy who refused!” It turns out Zyuganov has found fascist allies inside his own party instead. The KPRF Duma faction’s general decree against “nationalistic statements” — its only response to the Makashov debate — is more a joke than a mask.

The hypocrisy of the liberals in response to this affair is galling as well. They condemned Makashov’s statement, reacted with horror at the killing of Starovoitova, and now some are calling for banning the KPRF. But if it was Makashov who lit the match of anti-Semitism, it is the liberals and their bourgeois allies who douse society with the fuel of capitalist economic devastation that allows the fire to rage out of control.

Real communists oppose both the liberal capitalists and their Stalinist competitors, exposing them to workers as the class enemies they are. Workers in Russia need to build a revolutionary party that fights for the working class to take state power in its own hands and do away with all the pro-imperialist and chauvinist scum battling each other over how best to crush and exploit the working class. ●

# Hands Off DC 37!

Members of District Council 37, the largest municipal union in New York City, are under attack — by the bosses' government and their own union leaders. As news of the fraud and corruption in the union comes to the surface, workers face the prospect of having their union further weakened by the intervention of the Manhattan District Attorney and the national leadership of AFSCME, which has placed the union in trusteeship.

The grossest aspect of the scandal is the evidence that DC 37 officials fixed the vote in the 1995 contract as part of a sellout to Mayor Giuliani. Claims by DC 37's now former head, Stanley Hill, that he knew nothing about the fraudulent vote counting until recently are beyond belief.

The DC 37 contract was a centerpiece in the mayor's 1997 re-election bid and his ambitions for higher office. With the municipal workers setting the pattern for the rest of the city unions, the naked class collaboration of DC 37 leaders let Giuliani impose a five-year contract with a two-year wage freeze on all city workers. While Hill claimed the contract promised job security, in reality it gave Giuliani the green light to attack city hospital workers, who were excluded from any promise of job protection in this underhanded deal.

In addition to fixing the contract vote, DC 37 leaders are under investigation for embezzling millions of dollars, kick-backs schemes and racketeering. All this was done by union officials who already took home huge salaries (Hill himself got more than \$250,000) — while representing some of the lowest-paid municipal workers.

Hill's coziness with Giuliani led to DC 37's endorsing the mayor in his 1997 re-election campaign, alongside the city's Central Labor Council. Hill, be it noted, belongs to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Giuliani's feeble Democratic opponent in the election was another DSA member,

Ruth Messinger. The crackpot "realism" of the social democrats' bourgeois political games could not be clearer.

## GOVERNMENT AND COPS OUT OF THE UNIONS!

While many workers would no doubt love to see Hill and his cohorts rot in jail, supporting the government investigation is a dangerous mistake. The government is using the charges against DC 37 to prepare the way for further attacks. Intervention into the Teamsters union on the heels of the popular UPS strike should prove to class-conscious workers that the real aim of the state is to undermine workers' ability to defend their interests against the bosses' attacks. (See "Government Out of the Teamsters!", PR 56.)

In this light, it is outrageous that "reformers" in DC 37, the Coalition for Real Change (CRC), are cooperating with the bosses' government. Among them are two DC 37 local heads, Mark Rosenthal of Local 983 (motor vehicle operators) and Ray Markey of Local 1930 (library workers); they announced plans to file a federal lawsuit against the union under the notorious union-busting Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, which was used against the Teamsters and other unions. Thus they invite the state to engage in a long-term takeover of the union.

Another sickening development is that the most militant "union" in the Coalition is the racist Patrolman's Benevolent Association, whose vice president called for the contract to be reopened because "thousands of police officers and other city employees were denied a fair shake at the bargaining table." The cops are part of the state apparatus attacking the working class and should be kicked out of workers' coalitions and organizations.

Meanwhile, AFSCME's national president Gerald McEntee placed DC 37 under trusteeship. Hill and the DC 37

## Workers World's Deal with the Devil

City workers were not the only ones who got screwed by Stanley Hill's games with Giuliani. Hill and the mayor made a deal to force welfare recipients onto city worksites as virtual slave labor as far back as 1995, in the mayor's "Work Experience Program" (WEP). This was an important precursor to the Clinton/Gingrich "Personal Responsibility Act" of 1996, the anti-welfare bill that slashed core benefit programs. (See PR 54 for details.)

The Workers World Party (WWP) was one group that took up the necessary task of organizing WEP workers in 1996. By 1997, the Workfairness organization they sponsored claimed 5000 members. But instead of carrying out their promises of militant leadership and even illegal strike action to demand "real jobs at union wages," Workfairness and the WWP made an about-face and delivered their members into Hill's treacherous hands.

The pact was sealed at a meeting between Workfairness and a DC 37 representative that the WWP celebrated in its paper. In an article entitled "Workfare workers hold historic union meeting," *Workers World* cited Hill's claim that helping workfare workers win real jobs is "the union's number-one priority," and his promise to WEP workers: "I'm going to make sure you get a contract." (Dec. 11, 1997.)

Under the deal, Workfairness began signing up members for DC 37.

To cover their deal with the devil, the article added: **Hill angered many in the labor movement — including many WEP workers — when he threw DC 37's official endorsement to racist, anti-labor Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's re-election campaign in October. Giuliani has consistently opposed WEP workers' right to organize. . . . Despite these differences, Workfairness organizers said the meeting was a big step forward for the WEP organizing drive.**

This is hardly the full story. Hill didn't just endorse Giuliani: he helped bring about workfare himself, and had often sold out his own union members. Given his history, WEP workers needed to be warned about Hill, not marched into his fold. Predictably, Hill never lifted a finger to fight for WEP workers. But WWP and Workfairness dropped their proclaimed militancy in favor of Hill's line: pushing union cards as a substitute for the mass action needed to fight for real union status.

Now that Hill has left the scene, *Workers World* is caught with its pants down. It is embarrassing for them, but a disaster for the hundreds of WEP workers who turned to Workfairness to fight for their union rights.

bureaucracy have ruled undemocratically for years with the blessing of the AFSCME tops — union members don't get to vote for executive director. With McEntee's aide Lee Saunders now serving as trustee, workers still have no say in who runs the union.

By taking over, AFSCME is trying to guarantee a smooth bureaucratic transition without interference from the ranks, who might get ideas about organizing a fightback against the injustices of the contract and Giuliani's attacks. That the "rank and file" CRC supports the trusteeship shows the nature of this grouping of low level union bureaucrats. It is no accident that trustee Saunders appointed CRC members to the union's laws and rules committee.

It was also predictable that the CRC has not called for mass meetings of the ranks to discuss reopening the contract or fighting to break Hill's workfare deal with Giuliani. Nor has it proposed anything like a mass citywide rally against Giuliani, which is so desperately needed. The "reformers" haven't even called citywide DC 37 meetings to discuss a new program for the union, which would encourage the ranks to begin thinking that something positive was finally happening. The CRC clearly has no intention of mobilizing the masses of public workers for a real fightback in New York.

The fundamental corruption of the bureaucracy — its class collaboration and support to the decadent capitalist system — is not just a matter of outright greed and plunder-

ing. It's a secondary issue whether Hill himself defrauded his own members or merely looked the other way. Hill got into bed with Giuliani and let his underlings fix the contract vote



DC 37 hospital workers protest Giuliani's attacks in 1996. Corrupt union hacks rigged contract vote to support city bosses' layoffs, hospital closings, 'workfare.'

to cement his pact with the mayor.

While Giuliani's virulent anti-working class and racist character make this class collaboration especially gross, in reality it is not different from what goes on normally. The exploiters rob the workers every day, aided by the work of the labor bureaucrats whose main job is to stamp out genuine class resistance to the bosses. The bureaucrats get fat salaries and perks, but their straight-out theft pales in comparison to their complicity in the massive rip-off of the working class carried out daily by capitalism. ●

## ISO Joins Fake "Reformers"

It is no surprise that the bureaucratic Committee for Real Change supports government intervention. But it is shameful that a "socialist" group, the International Socialist Organization (ISO), only opposes it half-heartedly.

The ISO sponsored a meeting for the CRC on January 10. Tom Dawes, a former 1199 staffer who helped bring Dennis Rivera to power and is now an organizer for the CRC, was the featured speaker. Another CRC leader, Ray Markey, who is suing the union under the anti-union RICO law, was billed as a speaker but didn't show up.

The ISO chair welcomed the fall of Stanley Hill and claimed that it wasn't the government but rather the CRC that brought him down. He also ran the meeting tightly. Several ISOers spoke from the floor as CRC members without mentioning — let alone criticizing — the CRC's class collaborationist strategy. But LRP union activists, who had their hands raised throughout the discussion and who the ISO knew would condemn the CRC's treachery, were pointedly not recognized.

Why did the ISO hold a meeting to promote an outfit that stands for government intervention? It is not that the ISO itself wants the state to interfere. An article entitled

"Time to build a fighting union" in their paper (*Socialist Worker*, Jan. 1) states, "Another important issue for rank-and-file members is kicking the cops, politicians and government lawyers out of union affairs."

That's the opposite of the CRC's strategy, so the ISO should be warning workers directly not to support the CRC. But instead, the ISO joins the CRC and gives helpful advice to its leaders: "To bring real change in DC 37, the CRC will have to build rank-and-file chapters at city workers' job sites that can take on Giuliani's managers, as well as fight for union democracy." That's just using rank-and-file to cover the "reformist" bureaucrats. The CRC has never been a rank-and-file movement: Dawes is a career bureaucrat, while Markey has buried himself in the bureaucracy for years.

This meeting typifies the ISO's role in the unions, which we analyzed at length in *PR 51*. They act as cheerleaders for militant-talking bureaucrats, blocking criticism of their betrayals while touting their own "rank and file" activity. A "socialist" organization that shows such contempt for the consciousness and interests of the working class should be shunned by all revolutionary-minded workers.

# S. Africa: Austerity Provokes Mass Anger

by Matthew Richardson

National elections scheduled for May 1999 in South Africa will be an important test for the ANC. Since its election in 1994, the ANC has broken every promise it made to the masses during the anti-apartheid struggle. It has implemented severe austerity policies, and is now demanding that the masses sacrifice further as the world economic crisis takes hold in South Africa.

Growing numbers of workers and poor are enraged by the ANC's betrayals. This has put great pressure on the pro-ANC heads of the unions and other mass organizations to oppose the ANC. This pressure has been greatest on the leaders of the South African Communist Party (SACP) who control the COSATU union federation.

The SACP is caught between its claims to represent working-class interests and its alliance with the ANC. While the SACP remains a formally independent party, most of its members are also members of the ANC. Many occupy influential leadership positions and a number are government ministers and members of parliament. The SACP has begun to mildly criticize ANC policies, and in response, top ANC leaders have viciously attacked the SACP, bringing the ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance to the brink of collapse.

Dedicated above all to maintaining the capitalist government run by the ANC, the SACP has capitulated to the ANC, accepting its austerity policies. Thus the South African working class's crisis of leadership has never been greater. To prove this, we look back at the betrayals of the ANC.

## THE ANC'S HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

In previous articles we explained how in the course of its negotiations with the apartheid rulers, the ANC abandoned the commitments it made to the masses during the anti-apartheid struggle. Majority-rule democracy was replaced with rigged elections and guarantees to continue the positions of the apartheid bureaucracy and traditional "tribal" leaders. ANC promises to nationalize the big companies and redistribute wealth were replaced by privatization and austerity. (See our pamphlet, *South Africa and Proletarian Revolution*.)

To retain mass support during the negotiations, the ANC promised huge reforms. In consultation with the SACP and COSATU, the ANC adopted its "Reconstruction and Development Program" (RDP). The RDP promised that in its first term, an ANC government would build a million new homes, bring electricity to 2.5 million households, provide ten years of free schooling for all and create 2 million new jobs.

While these policies promised to improve the conditions of the masses, they were grossly inadequate. Official statistics acknowledge that 65 percent of Africans and "coloureds" live in poverty. 8 million workers and poor are homeless; over 10 million are unemployed. 3 out of 5 Africans live in rural areas where 80 percent have no access to electricity, and 90 percent do not have working sewage.

The RDP was doomed to betray even its own limited aims because it left the massive wealth of the country in the hands of the capitalists. Moreover, the ANC committed itself to implement the RDP on capitalist terms. So the homeless and landless would have to take out bank loans to receive the new homes or participate in land redistribution. While elec-

tricity and water would be brought to the townships, access would be gained only upon payment — by poor and unemployed workers.

Predictably, fewer than 10 percent of the promised houses have been built. Most are smaller than the despised "matchbox" houses built by the apartheid government. The flush toilets promised to the townships were replaced by pit latrines. The ANC government announced that it would only provide for the first six years of education. Instead of job creation, unemployment has grown. Instead of closing, the "apartheid wage gap" has widened: today 40 percent of South Africans earn less than 4 percent of the national income, while the wealthiest 10 percent take over half. And the ANC government has continued apartheid's policy of using the police and army to drive thousands of homeless squatters off vacant land and to break rent and utility boycotts by working-class communities.

## FROM THE RDP TO 'GEAR'

The ANC's failure to deliver on its RDP promises was only the beginning. South African capitalism is gripped by the same profit crisis that is wreaking havoc in the rest of the world. Dependent on foreign loans and technology, South African capitalism is a weak link in the imperialist chain. Shrinking profits are forcing the capitalists to intensify their



*As betrayals mount, more and more South African workers question COSATU Alliance with ANC-SACP.*

exploitation of the masses, and the ANC is doing its best to help the bosses achieve their aim.

By 1996, which the ANC had labeled the "Year of RDP Delivery," the government's RDP Office was closed. Then in June, the ANC unilaterally announced a new economic program to replace the RDP, the terms of which were declared "non-negotiable": GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution). Spending on job creation, housing, education, health care and other social services would be strictly curtailed. Improvements in these areas would be tied to increased profit-making by the capitalists. GEAR planned to improve capitalist profits by:



- encouraging wage restraint;
- reducing corporate taxes;
- accelerating the privatization of state assets;
- guaranteeing the investments of foreign capitalists by eliminating currency exchange controls, allowing them to withdraw their investments from the country instantly;
- eliminating rights granted under the Labor Relations Act that cover certain categories of unskilled workers and those employed by small businesses, in line with the capitalists' call for a two-tier labor market separating a thin layer of better-paid and unionized workers from the masses of superexploited non-unionized workers;
- creating a "free trade area" in Southern Africa which would tighten South African imperialism's superexploitative grip on the whole region and extend such conditions within South Africa in the form of non-union, low-wage "Export Processing Zones."



*Transport workers march against ANC Employment Standards bill, 1997.*

#### 'A RECOURSE TO POLICY GOALS OF APARTHEID'

GEAR was an immediate disaster for the masses. While it promised to create 150,000 new jobs by 1997, in fact 126,000 were lost. The budgets for education and health care were cut. The gap between rich and poor widened further.

The National Institute for Economic Policy (NIEP), which has been associated with the ANC-led Alliance, declared that GEAR "represents a recourse to the policy goals and instruments of the past apartheid regime." There are obviously great differences between apartheid and ANC rule. Apartheid defended capitalism by means of naked state violence against the masses, and used monstrous racism to win popular support among whites for its continued rule. Whereas the ANC's rule rests fundamentally on using the masses' leaders to restrain them, and only uses armed force as a secondary resort.

At the same time, apartheid and ANC rule have common ends that run as deep as the NIEP's comment suggests: under apartheid, the unemployed masses were labeled "surplus population" to be confined to the bantustans where they would not present such a threat of uniting with the employed workers in struggle. Today, the ANC too treats the unemployed masses as an economic "surplus" but is content to leave them to rot in the townships, prey to ever increasing levels of criminal violence and drugs, and rapidly spreading diseases (for example in some areas over 30 percent of the population is estimated to be HIV+) while the government is actually closing hospitals. The ANC's economic policies are nothing short of mass murder.

But ANC rule has not been bad for everybody in the old liberation movement. Many of the ANC's leaders and functionaries have become overnight millionaires. Under the banner of "Black Economic Empowerment," numerous ANC members have become executives in South African corpora-

tions. For example, Cyril Ramaphosa, a leading ANC figure and former mineworkers' leader, heads an investment company in partnership with the mining giant Anglo-American, and receives a monthly salary of R50,000 (nearly \$10,000) in addition to his R33 million in company shares. Members of parliament and local government are handsomely paid, enjoy perks like new luxury cars and notoriously divert government funds into their own pockets.

No opportunity is spared to extend this "gravy train" to the (mostly SACP) pro-ANC bureaucrats who control the workers' unions. Union leaders' salaries and perks grow as they shield themselves from criticism, repress the democratic rights of members and attempt to transform the unions into extensions of capitalist management. This is nowhere clearer than the unions' establishment of investment companies, whereby workers' dues are used to invest in capitalist companies. The clothing and textile workers' union SACTWU has already lost R50 million in a failed venture with Pepsi. The catering and allied workers union SACCAWU has investments in the same supermarket chains that exploit its members. And in spite of being mandated by its worker members to oppose privatization, COSATU is buying interests in privatized industries!

The ANC leaders' pursuit of personal wealth while attacking the masses has taken some particularly obscene forms. For example, the ANC has been stirring up anti-immigrant chauvinism, blaming unemployment on migrant workers from Mozambique, Angola, Namibia and elsewhere. This has led to murderous mob attacks on immigrants. Meanwhile, as part of its investment strategy, the ANC Women's League has bought former mine hostels and converted them into a prison for illegal immigrants. The government pays the Women's League for each day they detain an immigrant! (*Against the Current*, Sept.-Oct. 1998.)

#### MARXISM CAN EXPLAIN THE ANC'S BETRAYALS

Genuine communists always warned that if the anti-apartheid struggle stopped short of overthrowing capitalism, the masses would be made to pay. As we wrote of the ANC's

program 17 years before the ANC came to power:

Such a policy cannot even lead to a real bourgeois-democratic solution; worse, it would limit the gains of the masses to what decaying capitalism in South Africa can allow and would thus disarm and demoralize the black masses. (*Socialist Voice* No. 4, Summer 1977.)

We were able to make this prediction because we analyzed the struggle with the tools of authentic Marxism and concentrated on the class difference between the ANC and SACP on the one hand, and the masses on the other.

Apartheid provided capital with super-exploitable labor by brutally repressing the African, "coloured" and Indian masses. But in doing so, it repressed not only the workers and poor but also the small layer of business people and professionals of those groups. It was from among the latter, whose dreams of profit-making were crushed by apartheid, that the ANC was originally formed.

Too weak to overthrow apartheid themselves, the ANC realized it would have to mobilize the masses. So the ANC's *Freedom Charter* promised them major economic reforms. But the ANC leaders knew they faced the problem that, once mobilized, the masses would threaten capitalism itself. In the SACP, the ANC leaders found a solution to that threat.

When Stalinism fastened its grip on the communist parties of the world, in the imperialist countries it turned them away from socialist revolution toward the goal of forming coalition governments with bourgeois parties; in the "third world" they turned to various types of nationalist statified capitalism. The Stalinist SACP was crucial to the ANC leaders' strategy: its socialist image enabled it to mobilize the masses in ways the ANC leaders could not. And the training and funding received by the SACP from the USSR sustained it as a sizable bureaucratic and repressive apparatus capable of keeping the masses in check.

To justify restraining the masses from going too far, the SACP developed a two-stage "theory" of revolution typical of Stalinists everywhere. In the first stage the working class would follow the ANC in making a democratic revolution. Only after that could workers consider fighting for socialism.

But the SACP was never really going to fight for a second, socialist revolution. While it paid lip service to a socialist future, even a leading SACP figure admits that the party's programmatic statements during the anti-apartheid struggle often went no further than a "nationalist and welfare state capitalist outlook." (*The ANC and the Liberation Struggle*.) Indeed, the author of this statement, Dale McKinley, the editor of the SACP's newspaper *Umsebenzi*, admits that the SACP "continually sought to limit the scope of mass militancy", "submerging independent working-class organization and interests" to the ANC's pro-capitalist interests, and thus created "the conditions in which socialism was viewed as inappropriate and/or an obstacle to the immediate liberation struggle."

In spite of this, the working class did launch independent struggles in the factories and townships. In particular, it built a powerful independent union movement. But the SACP succeeded in taking control of these unions, attacking the most radical workers with bureaucratic expulsions and even violence. It was able to win support among the less politically advanced with its promises of a struggle for socialism once democracy was secured.

#### 'NEW SOUTH AFRICA': SAME OLD CAPITALISM

By the mid-1980's, the potential for workers' revolution

was real. The South African ruling class and international capital knew that apartheid was fanning the flames of revolution. The capitalists' only hope was to end apartheid and concede a limited degree of political power to the ANC, along with some important democratic gains like the right to vote, in return for which they would use the ANC and SACP to prevent the masses from struggling against capitalism. By conceding some important democratic rights in order to derail the masses' revolutionary struggle, the capitalists achieved what could be described as a "democratic counter-revolution."

The ANC has been unable to even temporarily improve the living conditions of the masses, as other bourgeois nationalist parties have in the past. This is because the latter won power in the period following the Second World War, when world capitalism was booming. But the ANC came to power at a time of deepening economic crisis. Capitalism cannot afford such concessions and is forcing the ANC to immediately and massively attack the working class.

Also, most of the post-war nationalist regimes were aided or led by strong Stalinist parties with large bureaucratic and military apparatuses that could eliminate the working class as a threat to capitalism. Thus in China and Eastern Europe, the Communist Parties, in alliance with traditional bourgeois forces, violently smashed independent working-class organizations before daring to embark on their programs of nationalization. But the collapse of Stalinism in the USSR has politically discredited the SACP and ended its material support, leaving it a comparatively paper-thin bureaucracy with which to control the working class.

#### SACP'S POST-APARTHEID DILEMMA

With its socialist rhetoric hiding its counterrevolutionary role, the SACP is the only force able to restrain militant workers from challenging capitalism. Thus it is the key to the continued rule of capital in South Africa.

The SACP's "two-stage theory" once encouraged workers to defer their struggle for socialism until after "democracy" had triumphed. But now workers who looked to it for leadership ask whether it isn't time to struggle for socialism.

Foreseeing an increase in workers' expectations, as soon as the apartheid government's intention to negotiate a transfer of power had become clear, the SACP reversed its commitment to a second, socialist, stage of revolution aiming to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead, it suggested that the struggle for socialism could be won peacefully. Since then, it has argued that the "socialist stage" actually means no more than the spreading of democracy from parliament to the economy. So it now turns out that there is no second stage after all, just a vague commitment to improve the first, bourgeois-democratic, stage.

But the SACP's programmatic revisions only previewed its retreat from fighting to improve workers' conditions under capitalism. Since the creation of COSATU, workers have identified socialism as their goal in motion after motion and have proposed steps toward it: nationalization of the big companies, jobs for all and a living wage. But the SACP leaders of the unions have systematically reversed these positions. COSATU's "September Commission" report made a particular effort to distance itself from socialism. Its 1992 "Economic Policy Document," which laid the basis for the RDP, has been replaced by a "Social Equity Document" which abandons the demand for nationalization. COSATU's historic demand for a living wage has been ditched in favor of a

“basic living wage,” meaning only enough to survive.

Worse still, SACP leaders are responsible for the development and implementation of many of the ANC's austerity policies. It was the late Communist Party leader Joe Slovo who as housing minister enforced capitalist conditions on the government's housing program and was responsible for the police and army attacking squatters and rent boycotters. Now, acting as members of the government, SACP members like transport minister Mac Maharaj, trade and industry minister Alec Erwin, safety and security minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi and public works minister Jeff Radebe all enthusiastically advocate GEAR.

### SACP ACCEPTS GEAR

The SACP's initial response to GEAR was very forgiving. Its first statement's strongest complaint was not over GEAR's anti-working class attacks, but the fact that the SACP and COSATU were not consulted about it. Nonetheless, the SACP promised to approach GEAR “cautiously but constructively” and even praised it for “its consistent endeavor to integrate different elements of policy” and “its clear framework within which monetary and interest rate policy must work.” (*Umsebenzi*; July 1997; *South African Labour Bulletin*, August 1997.)

Given its program and resolutions, COSATU should have immediately called a general strike against GEAR, but its leaders avoided a real struggle. However, GEAR was so obviously anti-working-class that they had no choice but to express “serious reservations” and to whine that “if you try to get the lowest paid people to pay for growth, there will be problems.” (*Sunday Times*, June 23, 1996.)

As workers' anger grew, SACP leaders worked hard to cover up for the ANC. In his speech to the congress of the metal workers' union NUMSA, SACP General Secretary Blade Nzimande lied, saying that GEAR was not an attack on the RDP dictated by imperialist banks. He told workers not to “question the *bona fides* of our comrades in government.” Instead, he encouraged them to work with GEAR, “subjecting this framework and its detail to the macro-economic assumptions of the RDP.” (*African Communist*, Third Quarter, 1996.) A year later, following an ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance summit, the SACP announced that Alliance leaders were still working out “to what extent GEAR is effectively aligned with our broader RDP process”! (*Umsebenzi*, Sept. 1997.)

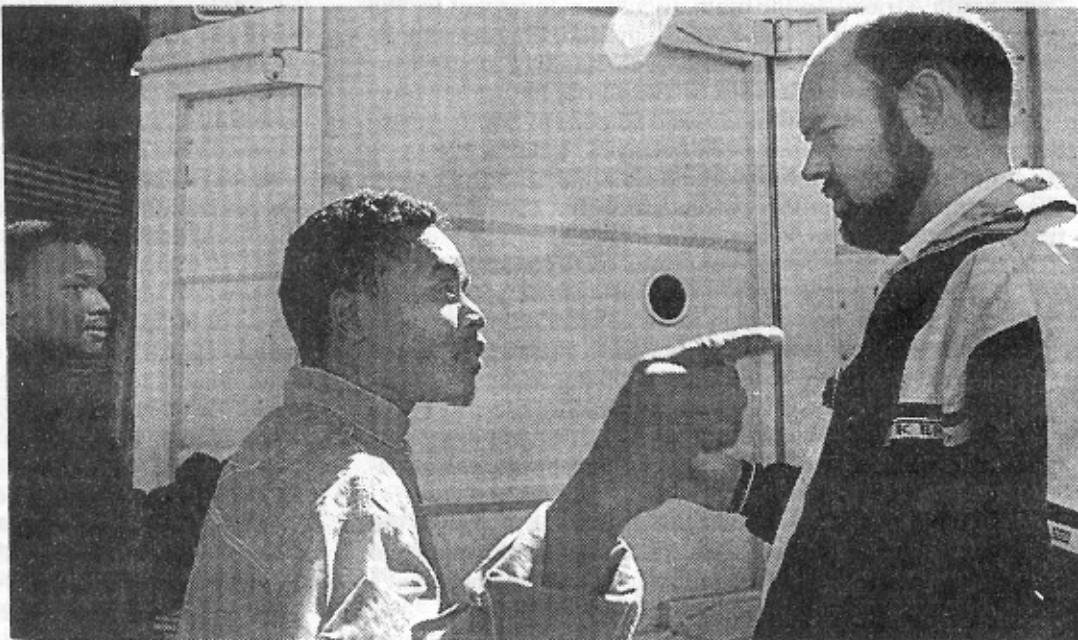
### THE ANC-SACP WAR OF WORDS

Working-class anger at the ANC's betrayals has been mounting since the negotiations that brought the ANC to power in 1994. This has forced the SACP to occasionally criticize ANC policies. To justify its continued alliance, the SACP has argued that the ANC is being pressured by big

business and that it is all the more important for workers to support the ANC and “fight for its life and soul” to be “working-class biased.”

Moreover, the SACP has viciously attacked workers who have argued for a break from the ANC. When NUMSA voted to urge COSATU to end the alliance with the ANC and consider building an independent workers' party, SACP hatchet man Jeremy Cronin attacked the workers' decision as consistent with a plot by pro-apartheid forces. And as we reported in our last issue, the SACP union bureaucrats have launched a wave of expulsions and splits in the union movement targeting radical workers.

But growing popular opposition to government policies also forced SACP leaders to push for a stronger presence inside the ANC and to mouth stronger criticisms from outside. These moves were intended to save the ANC from the working class. But the ANC leaders responded with



Immigrant worker argues with cop. ANC is stepping up attacks on immigrants.

provocative counterattacks.

In the lead-up to the ANC's 1997 congress, Peter Mokaba, a close ally of ANC Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, launched a stunning attack on the SACP, proposing the expulsion of all SACP members from the ANC who were not prepared to renounce SACP membership. Justifying this reactionary attack, Mokaba pointed to the SACP's hypocrisy: “is it fair to the ANC that certain members of the ANC who sit in ANC meetings and take decisions there must be able to convene under another name and criticize decisions they took as the ANC?” (*Mail & Guardian*, Oct. 1, 1997.) While Mokaba's proposal was not adopted, it signaled the ANC leadership's commitment to force the SACP into total submission.

At this congress, the SACP advanced a bloc of more radical ANC members for election to ANC leadership positions with some success. The ANC leadership quickly counterattacked, forming a task team to investigate a “communist plot” and punish those involved. Indicative of the SACP leadership's pathetic willingness to capitulate to the ANC, the task team was headed by an SACP member, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, and endorsed by Jeremy Cronin! (*Mail & Guardian*, March 20, 1998.) So much for the SACP's commitment to fight for the “life and soul of the ANC.”

## ANC LEADERS ASSAIL SACP CONGRESS

After this 1997 confrontation, the SACP's 1998 congress was clearly going to be a serious test of the SACP's backbone. Opposition to the ANC's policies had continued to grow, while the SACP was still committed to supporting the ANC in the coming election. Moreover, a left wing critical of the leaders' capitulations was beginning to form inside the SACP, and it threatened to gain strength unless the party took a stronger stand. So SACP leaders, Cronin most prominently, made further criticisms of the ANC, implying that support for the ANC may be questioned at the SACP congress. Once again the ANC leaders reacted harshly, with Nelson Mandela attempting to remove Cronin from the ANC's National Executive Committee.

The SACP is fast running out of room to maneuver between its socialist rhetoric and the capitalist reality of the "new South Africa." In the main discussion document for the congress, written by Cronin and Nzimande, they repeatedly argue for remaining within the first stage of democratic struggle under the leadership of the ANC, and predictably "reject the idea that 'nothing has changed' in South Africa, or that 'the revolution has been betrayed.'" But at the same time, the pressure of mass working-class anger at the lack of change forced the authors to recognize that the situation is reaching an explosive point:

**The SACP is also deeply conscious of the massive crises that still afflict our society — the crisis of mass unemployment, of poverty, and of high levels of criminal violence, in particular. All of these problems have their roots in the objective legacy with which we are having to deal. Resolution of these problems is also hampered by the still active presence . . . of class and other social forces that are determined to defend their own ill-begotten powers and privileges from the past.**

But just when it seems that the document placed all the blame for the masses' intolerable conditions on old apartheid forces, the authors were forced to go further. The document's next statement contains a shocking admission:

**The most serious strategic threat to the NDR [National Democratic Revolution] is the attempt by capital to stabilize a new, "deracialized" capitalist ruling bloc, under the mantle of the ANC itself.**

Central to this strategic project is the attempt to re-define the NDR as a struggle:

- To "modernize" the South African economy, to make it "more competitive" on the "global stage";
- To "normalize" South Africa's political dispensation; and
- To stabilize and surpass the present crisis within a new capitalist order in our country.

... The new bloc will seek to present its interests as those of a broader range of middle strata, especially the rapidly forming new black middle strata ... "Modernizing", "normalizing", "globalizing", "black economic empowerment" and plain self-enrichment will be among the major themes around which this bloc will attempt to consolidate itself. Socialism, more substantial transformation, and the Freedom Charter are viewed as "baggage from the past". ... This is the logic of the "first tier" of the proposed "two-tiered labor market" ... This is also one implication of the insistence on whole-scale privatization. (SACP 10th Congress Central Committee Draft Program Discussion Document, *A Socialist Approach to the Consolidation and Deepening of NDR.*)

But as we have shown, this is precisely the agenda of the ANC and even of prominent SACP leaders! Thus on the one hand the document often implies that the South African working class's main enemy is the old pro-apartheid forces. But on the other hand, the document's inescapable conclusion is that the ANC-led bourgeoisie is the main enemy!

By even partially targeting the ANC, the SACP runs the risk of encouraging a struggle that it cannot control. This danger is better understood by the ANC leaders, who responded with an unprecedented attack

As always, the ANC's top leaders were invited to address the 1998 SACP congress. This time, President Mandela used his speech to deliver a furious rebuke to his hosts. Defending his government's austerity program GEAR, Mandela warned that either the SACP would uncritically accept ANC policies, or the Alliance would end altogether:

**GEAR ... is the fundamental policy of the ANC. ... We will not change it because of your pressure. If you feel you cannot get your way then you go out and shout like opposition parties. Prepare to face the full implications of that line. ... If COSATU and the SACP leave the internal structures [of the Alliance] and go public, and not only attack what we consider a fundamental policy of the organization, but ridicule it, you must be prepared to take full responsibility for your actions. That type of behavior makes me even more determined not to listen to you.**

SACP delegates were stunned by the attack. Rumors spread that Mandela was senile, his comments "crazy" and unmandated. But the next day, Deputy President Mbeki laid those rumors to rest by attacking the SACP with even more force. Labeling certain SACP leaders "charlatans" and "confidence tricksters" who indulged in "fake revolutionary posturing," Mbeki accused them of spreading lies about ANC policies "so that positions can then be taken to demonstrate how much the Communist Party represents the genuinely progressive agenda while the ANC is bent on betraying the cause of the revolution."

Ironically, Mbeki made the same basic accusation against the SACP's leaders that they had used against the NUMSA workers' decision to break from the ANC, accusing them of using "the hostile messages of the right and thus join[ing] forces with the defenders of reaction to sustain an offensive against our movement."

The SACP's response to these tirades was predictable: it capitulated to the ANC wherever possible. Cronin, who was given the task of formally responding to the speeches, offered Mandela and Mbeki a groveling "genuine, dialectical" vote of thanks for their speeches. Saying that a strong SACP would lead to a strong ANC, Cronin argued that the SACP's criticisms were raised in a comradely spirit, and that while it would continue to support the ANC, the SACP did not want to be "lapdogs." But the SACP leaders soon proved how housebroken they are. In the congress debate over GEAR, they opposed motions that rejected GEAR and went so far as to note, in their resolution on continuing the ANC-SACP alliance, the "commitment of the ANC to working-class leadership, deepening national democracy at all levels of our society, and anti-imperialism."

## AFTER SACP CONGRESS: ANC COURTS INKATHA

The ANC leaders followed their attack on the SACP congress by openly courting Mangosuthu Buthelezi's ultra-reactionary Inkatha Freedom Party. Buthelezi's political career began as the apartheid-appointed ruler of the Kwa-

Zulu homeland. Inkatha supported a reformed end to apartheid, but its real hostility was to the working class. Backed by apartheid, the CIA and others, Inkatha waged a war of mass murder against anti-apartheid activists, unionists and socialists right through the negotiations and since (see *PR* 42.)

Desperate to avoid majority rule, the ANC approved of the rigging of the 1994 elections to ensure Inkatha's victory in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Inkatha has become increasingly important to ANC leaders as a pro-capitalist counterweight to working-class pressure funneled through the SACP and COSATU. The ANC immediately named Buthelezi to the government as Home Affairs Minister, and in Mandela's absence this "Butcher of KwaZulu-Natal" has even served as President!

Shortly after his attack on the SACP congress, Deputy President Mbeki addressed Inkatha's congress. Far from condemning Inkatha, Mbeki lauded it and referred to Buthelezi as his leader and political superior. It was soon reported that Mbeki and Buthelezi had "sealed a behind-the-scenes agreement that will keep or develop the IFP's role in governing [South Africa] after next year's election . . . [and] maintain . . . IFP control in KwaZulu-Natal". (*South Scan*, Vol. 13, No. 15.) An additional aspect of the deal seems to be a promise from the ANC of amnesty for the thousands of political assassinations for which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recently found Buthelezi responsible. (*M&G*, Nov. 6, 1998.) The ANC's reactionary alliance against the working class could not be clearer. Yet the SACP has raised not a word of protest.

#### **JOBS SUMMIT: SACP SELLS OUT AGAIN**

A key to the SACP and COSATU's justification for their retreat from fighting GEAR was the ANC's promise to hold a summit with them and representatives of big business over job creation. This, the SACP and COSATU leaders said, would provide an opportunity to "contest the content of GEAR" and establish policies to realize the aims of the RDP. COSATU's leaders even promised that they would not participate in the summit without the government agreeing to a moratorium on public and private sector retrenchments.

However, within days of the congress, ANC Department of Labour director general Siphosiso Pityana provocatively announced that far from agreeing to a moratorium on retrenchments, the government would retrench nearly 50,000 public sector workers! The SACP and COSATU's answer was again to cave in. Far from boycotting the summit, they agreed that GEAR would not be discussed, that its sessions would be held in secret and that they would not criticize any of the other participants!

An insult to the masses, the Jobs Summit was nothing more than a public relations exercise. In return for the flimsiest concessions, the ANC got the enthusiastic support of the SACP and COSATU leaders. New documents by the ANC softened its rhetorical stance on privatization and austerity, while promising to consult Alliance members in formulating future policies. But the documents don't reverse any of the ANC's established policies. The government agreed to meager unemployment benefits well below the living wage. A housing construction scheme that would build 150,000 houses by the end of 2001 (while the actual housing shortage is at least 4 million) and other public works programs were announced. But these programs were nothing new — they had already been provided for in previous budgets.

The SACP and COSATU leaders' intention at the Jobs

Summit was not to fight for the masses' demands. Rather, they aimed to beg the ANC for statements of rhetorical concern for the masses that they could use to justify their continued support of the ANC. As one SACP leader who avoided being named summed up: "The parties have realized that it no longer matters whose position is what on GEAR — what is important is that we move together as a unit in the transformation program." (*M&G*, Oct. 30, 1998.)

#### **THE INVASION OF LESOTHO**

If any readers think that the SACP could not possibly crawl any lower, they would be wrong. Another opportunity came when the ANC government launched an armed invasion of the neighboring country of Lesotho in September.

Lesotho's economy is dominated by South Africa. It serves as a source of superexploited labor for South Africa's mines; it also is a site for important South African investments like the Katse hydro-electric dam. When rigged elections in May paralyzed the state and rioting threatened capitalist property, the South African army invaded, backed by forces from neighboring Botswana.

Ordered by acting-President Buthelezi (with the absent Mandela's support), and led by a general responsible for the apartheid army's invasion of Southern African states in the 1980s, the South African invasion was clearly an act of imperialist aggression to prop up Lesotho's state power and asserting South African imperialist interests. While the invasion was widely condemned by socialists and many democratically-minded liberals in South Africa, the SACP shamelessly apologized for it in the name of "stability." Indeed, in pontificating on the best form of state power that could follow the South Africa troop presence, and opposing any further "politicization" of Lesotho's King, the SACP lauded the King's "symbolic" and "nation-building role" while noting its own preference for proportional representation in parliament in a constitutional monarchy! (*SACP Secretariat Statement*, Sept. 30, 1998.) Apparently the SACP has found a monarchical stage for some revolutions!

#### **HOW COULD THE ANC AND BOSSES GET THIS FAR?**

Driven by the logic of capitalism's crisis, the SACP's betrayals follow the pattern of serial killers: they repeat their crimes in ever more outrageous ways. It is shocking to consider how far the ANC and SACP have been able to go in selling out the masses in the short time since the end of apartheid. Only a few years ago, the South African ruling class was shaken and retreating in the face of the masses' powerful struggles. The unions brought the country to a halt with general strikes. Townships were made "ungovernable" by revolutionary struggles. Great numbers of workers embraced socialism as their aim. No other country in the world, we argued, was so ripe for socialist revolution.

Many readers will ask how the workers could allow the ANC and the bosses to get this far. Were we overly

### **Letters Welcome**

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optimistic about the revolutionary potential of the South African workers' struggles?

Certainly many socialist workers who mistakenly looked to the ANC and SACP for leadership have been left disoriented by these parties' betrayals. The ANC's austerity policies have blunted the militancy of some workers. They have had a demoralizing effect on the semi-employed and unemployed masses in particular. And the ANC/SACP bureaucracy's use of censorship, splits and expulsions of militants and socialists in the unions and townships have sidelined many of the most radical workers.

But while socialism has lost favor among cynical intellectuals and the union bureaucracy, it retains its appeal among the masses. Broad numbers of workers remain militant and are looking for a way forward. The denunciations of GEAR and demands for struggle are only the latest examples of workers' desire to break from the ANC Alliance and go on to the road of mass struggle. But so far the workers have failed to find their way out of this trap. The main reason for this is that they have not found an alternative leadership that could lead the way. In all our writings on South Africa we have emphasized the urgent need for revolutionary workers to build a vanguard party to answer this crisis of working-class leadership.

However, we have been optimistic that workers' militancy could at least achieve a break from the ANC/SACP Alliance by the mass organizations. Our expectation was partly based on the past strength of far left groups and their apparent ability to lead the struggle that far. This perspective has proved false. Experience has shown that genuine revolutionary leadership is essential for taking forward even the working class's immediate mass struggles.

The far left in South Africa has for the most part collapsed; illusions in the ANC have demoralized the left more than the workers. An example is the Comrades for a Workers Government group, which combined revolutionary-sounding positions with political support to the ANC. The CWG was instrumental in advancing the call for a workers party within COSATU. Yet in the face of attacks from the SACP, the CWG completely caved-in to the union bureaucracy in the hope of maintaining its own bureaucratic positions. Most recently for example, during the struggle inside the chemical workers' union (reported on in PR 47), the CWG argued that workers should bow to the demands of the bureaucrats' anti-democratic attacks rather than risk a split of the union. The CWG has similarly capitulated in its area of strongest support, the metalworkers union, NUMSA. No wonder little more remains of the CWG today than its name.

Even the one socialist group that has taken revolutionary positions in the struggle and commanded strong support among sections of the working class, the Workers Interna-

tional Vanguard League (WIVL), has failed to seize the opportunities presented. While it has continued to offer effective leadership to workers' immediate struggles, the WIVL has not done what is necessary to recruit, organize and educate the most politically advanced workers into the beginnings of a revolutionary party.

For example, over the course of several years, the WIVL has failed to establish an even semi-regular publication of any sort. And the comrades' own programmatic and theoretical work, let alone discussions with us and other groups around



*Metal workers fight against ANC privatization policy.*

the world, have slowed to a crawl after promising signs a few years ago. Nevertheless, the revolutionary positions that they have taken, plus the fine young revolutionary-minded workers that they have attracted, are reasons for us to support them in the upcoming elections.

#### **BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!**

The development of a more solid alternative leadership to the ANC/SACP would have lent confidence to the masses' desire to break from the Alliance and launch an independent struggle. The failure to do so as of yet is the most important reason why the working class has not broken free from the ANC/SACP. However, the next years still hold tremendous potential to build a revolutionary party capable of leading the masses in a struggle for socialism.

While it is moderating its openly capitalist rhetoric in the lead-up to the elections, the ANC is planning another historic attack on the working class early in its next term. It will try to aggressively implement the austerity policies of GEAR, including more budget cuts and attacks on the Labor Relations Act. It plans on enforcing payment or mass evictions on rent and utility boycotters and those who owe bank loans for housing or land redistribution. Explosive mass struggles are guaranteed in response to these attacks.

There will therefore be no time for a slow-and-steady development of the revolutionary party. It will be built as part of massive upheavals of the working class in the coming years, or it will not be built at all. Revolutionary workers do

not have time to waste before laying the basis for a vanguard revolutionary party. Below we outline our key ideas to help take this struggle forward.

### 1. Revolutionary Program Is Key

The first step in building the revolutionary party is the establishment of a clear revolutionary program. Its starting point must be the understanding that while some limited, temporary reforms can still be won in the struggle, decaying capitalism cannot provide for any lasting improvement in the masses' conditions of life. Indeed it will not even be able to sustain the level of misery to which the masses are accustomed. The only solution to this overall crisis is a socialist revolution that smashes the capitalist state and builds a workers' state that seizes the economy from the capitalists and redirects production from private profit to human need.

South African workers are well aware of their country's domination by the world economy. Socialism can only be built on the basis of the liberation of the entire world economy from capitalist rule. A South African workers' state's priority would be to encourage socialist revolutions around the world. For this, not only must South African revolutionaries build a vanguard party in their own country, but they must play a leading role in building an international revolutionary party, a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International.

Revolutionaries' approach to the ongoing struggles must be framed by a commitment to fight for the organizational and political independence of the working class from the ANC. Revolutionaries must commit themselves to expose the reformist misleaders of the working class at every turn.

### 2. Organize the Vanguard Workers

Revolutionary-minded workers can be found in almost every city and town in South Africa, but they remain isolated, lacking direction and support. This situation can be compared to that which faced Lenin in Russia at the turn of the century. While Russian revolutionary workers were more politically focused, largely adhering to the social democrats (as Marxists were then known), the problem remained of organizing them into a disciplined party capable of withstanding attacks and able to raise its members to the level of political understanding required to lead the masses.

In this situation, Lenin wrote his classic work *What Is To Be Done*, which concentrated on the indispensable need for revolutionary party leadership. In particular, Lenin argued for the establishment of a national revolutionary newspaper as key to creating a highly organized revolutionary party. The newspaper would coordinate the work of these scattered groups and individuals, give them the necessary central political direction, and show them they are not alone but part of a great revolutionary army. Precisely such organization is needed in South Africa today.

### 3. Program of Action

The first stages of building a revolutionary party must emphasize training the politically advanced workers in Marxist theory, strategy and tactics. Such a perspective does not imply that these workers should not take part in their fellow workers' struggles. Indeed revolutionary theory cannot be developed outside of experience in the class struggle. Moreover, the revolutionary program will only gain popularity among the workers as they feel emboldened by successful struggles and test the advantages of the revolutionary program in the course of mass action.

For this purpose, revolutionaries must develop a program of action to guide the vanguard workers' leadership of mass struggles. Only workers in South Africa can judge exactly how to formulate the tactics and slogans of a revolutionary action program, but its basic points are already clear.

#### *For a General Strike Against the Capitalist Attacks!*

The many partial struggles by different groups of workers demand various tactics. But revolutionaries must address how the working class can best respond to overall attacks like GEAR. Because such attacks affect the entire working class, the only appropriate response is the mobilization of the entire class against them. Revolutionaries must advocate a *general strike against the capitalist attacks*. The general strike has the advantage of enabling the unions to take the lead in mobilizing and organizing the masses of workers and poor who remain outside the unions, while adding the strength of the unionized workers to the latter's demands.

It is important that revolutionaries understand that the general strike must not be used to allow the workers to "let off steam" — as the current union leaders do. Nor can it be allowed to be turned into a passive "stayaway" in which workers go back to their individual homes. The general strike must aim to shut down the entire economy, with workers mounting mass picket lines and occupations at their workplaces until their demands are won.

#### *Down With GEAR! Make the Bosses Pay for Reconstruction and Development!*

Revolutionaries must present a comprehensive economic program to answer the masses' needs. These needs cannot be satisfied by capitalism, but the masses will test every possibility of reforming capitalism before they embrace the conclusion that they must overthrow the system. To aid the masses in learning this lesson, revolutionaries must present a system of policies which take as their starting point a clear statement of the masses' demands, and are directed against the capitalists' state and economic power.

Revolutionaries in South Africa could consider taking advantage of the expectations raised by the RDP by gathering these major policies under the slogan *Make the Bosses Pay for Reconstruction and Development!*

To free the country's wealth from the burden of repaying extortionate interest to the banks, revolutionaries must advocate a struggle to *Repudiate the Apartheid and World Bank Debt!*

The struggle against privatization should be encouraged to become an offensive struggle to *Nationalize the Banks and Big Businesses Without Compensation!* Behind the RDP's

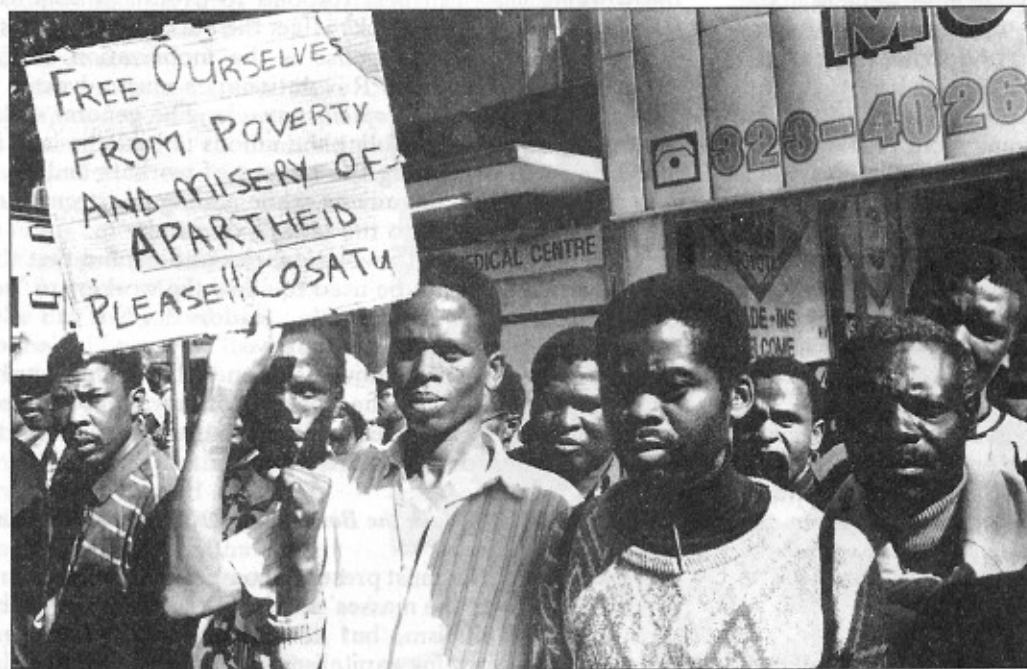
## South Africa and Proletarian Revolution

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failure to improve the conditions of the masses is the fact that the great wealth of the economy remains in the hands of private profiteers. If all major industry were in the hands of the state, the government would have no excuse not to meet the masses' basic needs.

Revolutionaries would explain that nationalized property in the hands of a capitalist state will still be used to exploit the working class. But under these conditions, the struggle for the government to meet the masses' needs could lead



Workers still need to struggle against oppression and exploitation.

directly to workers drawing revolutionary conclusions.

To put the government to the test, revolutionaries would raise the demand for a massive public works program to provide *Quality Housing, Health Care and Education for All!* Such a public works scheme would create millions of jobs and make great strides toward achieving another key demand: *Jobs For All and a Living Wage!* All available work should be divided among all workers through a *Sliding Scale of Hours*, and wages can be defended by an *Escalating Scale of Wages* that raises wages with the cost of goods.

The revolutionary program must also pay special attention to the most oppressed, those ignored by the union leaders. Importantly, apartheid's legacy of racism is far from over. All people of color suffer oppression, and Africans suffer disproportionately. For example, while apartheid's Group Areas Act has been scrapped, the masses remain segregated because they cannot afford to move into new areas. Revolutionaries cannot content themselves with the SACP and COSATU leaders' passive rhetoric in favor of "non-racism" but must demand a militant *anti-racism* struggle for equality, including the integration of communities and access to public services. These demands are particularly crucial because the revolution will find its strongest support among the most oppressed and exploited, the vast majority of whom remain outside the unions.

Every opportunity must be taken to address the oppression of women. The revolutionary party must champion *women's liberation*, and raise demands that meet the immediate needs of women for child-care and healthcare in particular.

The plight of rural workers and the landless must also be addressed. The *Nationalization of the Big Agricultural Enterprises Without Compensation* must be fought for. And the grievances of those dispossessed of their land by apartheid must be satisfied.

#### **COSATU: Break from the ANC/SACP!**

Because of COSATU's history of struggle and its power to shut down the economy, masses of workers still look to COSATU for leadership in their struggles. But four years of ANC government prove that COSATU cannot mobilize the masses against the capitalists' attacks until it has broken its alliance with the ANC/SACP. All South African workers are aware of the long-standing demand for COSATU to break the Alliance. Revolutionaries must take the lead in organizing discussions of this question, and raise motions for breaking the Alliance at every level of every union.

#### **Out with the Bureaucrats, Elect Militant Socialist Leaders!**

But the leaders of all the COSATU unions are ANC/SACP hacks committed to maintaining the Alliance and compromising with the capitalists. Their bureaucratic attacks against militants will

only increase. The struggle to break the Alliance is inseparable from a struggle against this bureaucracy. Like the scum atop stagnant water, the ANC/SACP union bureaucracy is a poisonous growth that must be thrown out. Revolutionary party caucuses must be built in all the unions prepared to lead the way.

Militant socialist workers will face the task of throwing out the ANC/SACP bureaucrats before even a majority of them can be won to the full revolutionary program. But a new revolutionary leadership can take form in the course of this struggle. So revolutionaries should encourage workers to replace the ANC/SACP leaders with militant socialists. The mass of workers will then be able to test these new leaders, from among whom many will be able to be won to building the revolutionary party.

In addition to ending the Alliance, much of the transitional programmatic basis for such a new leadership can be found in motions workers have already voted for in COSATU. In particular, the 1991 *Workers Charter Report* concluded that "Capitalism [is] responsible for poverty [and] unemployment." It also asserted COSATU's need to strive for worker ownership and control "in a socialist economy or state," with policies like nationalization, jobs for all and a living wage.

A return to these radical policies would be a great step forward, but is not in itself sufficient. Even the best COSATU resolutions never spelled out what socialism is and how it is to be achieved. Thus SACP leaders could water it down in a reformist, capitulatory way. Revolutionaries have



to make clear that socialism can only be achieved through a workers' revolution that smashes the capitalist state and establishes a workers' state.

This new militant socialist leadership for the unions must be based on a program of demands backed up by a commitment to struggle. It must be prepared to use all forms of militant struggle against the bosses and government, including the *general strike* against any major attack against the working class. And it must look for every opportunity to address the concerns of the most oppressed workers.

Importantly, the struggle for a new leadership of the unions must be linked to the working class's need for a party to lead the class struggle. Just as the task of replacing the current leaders of the unions will not wait for revolutionary party groups to form in every union, militant socialist workers will be ready to support the formation of a new party before they are all grouped around the complete revolutionary program. So revolutionaries should popularize the idea of forming a *workers' party*, and be prepared to join with these workers in building it to prove to the workers on the basis of their own experience that the party they need to lead the class struggle to victory is a vanguard revolutionary party.

#### **For Workers' Councils and Armed Self-Defense Guards!**

A general strike may begin defensively. But by mobilizing the entire working class and displaying its awesome power, a general strike can become an offensive struggle that raises far-reaching demands like the above, and lead to the creation of new mass organizations of the working class. Revolutionaries must take the lead now in explaining the importance of building such new mass organizations. *Strike committees* can be initiated to ensure the greatest degree of democratic control of the struggle. And as the tasks of the strike movement grow, they can become the beginnings of *workers' councils* of elected delegates which can take responsibility for adopting policies on broad questions. Such grass-roots organizations, led by the working class, must also be built in the townships and rural areas — from the rebuilding of the civics, to the street, yard and area committees that first developed during the anti-apartheid struggle. The immediate importance of these new organizations is that they will embrace the most oppressed and exploited workers, most of whom today remain outside the unions.

As a general strike lasts, workers can use these mass organizations to adopt measures regarding food deliveries, transportation, communications and the like. This would signal the beginning of a "dual power" situation where potential structures of a future workers' state vie for power with the capitalists' state.

#### **REVOLUTIONARY PARTY LEADERSHIP THE KEY**

By challenging the capitalists' rule, a general strike poses most sharply the need for the working class to arm itself in defense against counterrevolutionary attack. Indeed organized and armed self-defense is needed now in connection with every important struggle and in many areas simply to hold political meetings. It would be a pacifist crime for revolutionaries not to explain this and argue now for the formation of *workers' armed self-defense guards*. These disciplined units can evolve into a workers' militia, becoming the basis for a future seizure of power.

## LRP Fund Appeal



*Proletarian Revolution* wishes to thank those who contributed generously since our last issue. In the Winter and Spring of 1999 we have several goals that will require financial support from readers and friends of the LRP. We are planning a political trip to Europe as well as domestic travel, and we are now working to establish a web site for COFI.

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While together these policies lay the basis for a transition to socialism, this program of action in and of itself does not transcend capitalism. It can only serve as a tool for raising the revolutionary consciousness of the masses if revolutionaries take every opportunity to explain to workers that the only way to realize the program's demands fully and permanently is through socialist revolution. In this way workers can build the revolutionary party they need to lead the struggle for power. ●

# Letter: On the Asian Crisis

I read with great interest the exchange between Cdes. Daum and Goldner in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 56, over the challenge to the Marxist conception of the imperialist epoch that the rapid advance of capitalism in Asia has appeared to pose. Cde. Goldner's questions and comments about that theory were a thoughtful reaction to the vast changes that have occurred in the past several decades in a region where a great portion of the human race lives. So was Daum's defense of Lenin's and Trotsky's perspective, as understood and applied by the LRP.

I agree with the thrust of Cde. Daum's response, above all his defense of the Marxist notion that no qualitative growth of capital has occurred in this its epoch of decay. He does a concise job of explaining how growth is episodic and occurs in one area at the expense of others; the basis for capital's Asian expansion; and the fundamental limitations of that expansion. In the process, he exposes the utter inability of fake Trotskyists like the Spartacist League to understand the nature of the expansion or the class nature of so-called "worker's states" like China, whose ability to place vast sources of superexploitable labor at the disposal of capital are central to the so-called "Asian miracle."

The Asian crisis, just starting to unfold when Goldner submitted his letter, only worsens. Virtually all the national economies in the region have been humbled and are in various states of taking commands from and selling off pieces to the West, above all to the U.S. Even while Japanese capital has been a chief imperialist scavenger, it faces a massive financial crisis and recession. We could not predict the particulars of this crisis but we knew it was only a matter of time before the balloon of the "Asian miracle" would burst.

## CHINA FEELS THE CRUNCH

The Chinese situation, a focus for Cde. Goldner's remarks, is a particular confirmation of our stress on the boom's limitations. As the original author of the article on China in *PR* 55 to which Goldner refers, I was more than aware of the great transformations taking place there; its most salient aspects were included in that article and cited by Daum in his reply. But this modernization has far from turned China into a world-class power; in many ways it has not only brought into greater relief the vast backwardness remaining but actually re-enforced it.

Although China has so far avoided the worst effects of the Asian crisis, it is starting to feel the crunch. The foreign investments so crucial to its boom have plummeted, and now Chinese capital is facing growing competition from other Asian nations desperate to lure cheap investments and export their way out of trouble. (The Stalinist regime's response has been to give even more investment leeway to foreign capital interests). Growth rates have fallen below levels that bourgeois economists consider necessary to absorb continuing migration to the cities. At the same time, an attempt to privatize vast sections of state industry and further slash the mass benefits of the "iron rice bowl" is in the works. One result of all this has been a real rate of unemployment and underemployment estimated at almost one-third of the working population!

However, I feel that while correctly emphasizing the fundamental crisis of capitalism, Daum has understated the

extent to which selected portions of Asia — specifically the original four "tigers": Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore — have advanced their position within world capitalism. By relying on economic upgrading rather than size or geopolitical power, they have become active participants in and defenders of the spoils of the imperialist system. While Daum's denial of this is an error of misassessment, it also reflects problems in his analytical method. A substantive explanation is in order.

## FOCUS ON SOUTH KOREA

As far as I can tell, my differences with Daum do not appear to be over statistical matter as such. In discussing the tigers, Daum acknowledges the impressive economic advances that have been made and cites a number of important indicators. But he interprets such data in a somewhat different light, and at points reaches sharply different conclusions. For example, the per capita income in South Korea is roughly \$10,000. This is more than simply higher than the world average: while somewhat less than half that of the wealthiest imperialist nations, it is roughly 30 to 50 times greater than some of the poorest Asian and African countries. I see such huge proportional differences as evidence of a more fundamental distinction between South Korea and the hard core cases of the imperialized "third world" than does Daum.

He focused on South Korea and its obvious troubles. In his view, Korean capital's reliance on outside financing (primarily from Japan) is an Achilles heel that proves an ultimate barrier to any imperialist aspirations. The debts notwithstanding, it is clear to all that over a period of several decades and under enormously favorable circumstances South Korean capital has been able to move up the capitalist ladder. But I feel that a certain turning point was achieved in the late 1980's, when Korean capital was able to augment the immediate repression of workers' upsurge with what was essentially a buy-off: continued wage increases and bourgeois-democratic political reform. These were made possible by an upgrade of domestic capital investment with a substantial farming out of its labor intensive industry to areas of super-cheap labor, principally China. Such processes were key ingredients in procuring a niche in the world imperialist system. A similar pattern of moving up the technological-industrial ladder while staking out investments in other, oppressed areas to one extent or another characterized the other tigers.

Let's not forget them, since Daum pretty much does. He "leaves aside" Singapore and Hong Kong since they "had been trading centers with relatively high per capita incomes long before the NIC's took off." That they were, but that serves as a platform for their modern status, and not a denial of it. It was in their capacity as trading centers that they were able to erect a network of privileged relationships through the region. This is most striking with Hong Kong. Over the past several years it has farmed out most of its industry and become the clearing house and financial center for trade and investment in southern China and its enormous supply of super-cheap labor, in the process siphoning off gross amounts of surplus value.

Now as we know, Hong Kong has become politically

united with China; but rather than abolishing the relationships that have been built up with southern China, it has meant a greater internalization of them. In a country fractured along regional lines, much of southern China's economy exists in a virtual colonial relationship to Hong Kong.

Daum does not deal at all with Taiwan, and it is here that his case is on really shaky ground. Taiwan's economy is

deep crisis and its tremendous debt is a fundamental problem that only deepens. The problems are across the board: its foreign investments have been cut sharply, both in imperialized areas and in advanced capitals where such investments are vital to securing high technology transfer. Unemployment is rising, wages and living standards are falling. Industry and banking are now opening up to foreign investment as a

July 1998: Two Korean labor federations hold joint protest against IMF-imposed austerity.



more on the scale of South Korea's, but its level of dependence on outside financing (and the resulting debt load) is nowhere near as severe. Its industry has proven to be more stable and nimble (in large part because the Taiwan regime has not afforded it the same degree of protection and because the ruling class was more selective in the heavy and high tech industry it chose to invest). It has over \$80 billion in reserves and dominates internationally in certain portions of high tech.

### CRISIS NOT ALTERING TIGERS' ROLE

The deepening Asian crisis may appear to confirm Daum's assessment: as country after country in the area is getting bashed, it seems any notion by even the tigers of having escaped their imperialized lot were mere illusions, now being cruelly shattered. But even as the crisis has begun reverberating throughout capitalism, it should be noted that what has occurred in Asia has not been a blanket destruction but a highly uneven process, owing in part to the differing economic levels of the various capitals.

Hong Kong and Singapore have been hit hard. But the banking and debt situations there have been far better than with other victims, and the overall crisis has not been near as severe. (Hong Kong's economy contracted about 2 percent in the first quarter of the year — a sharp drop-off from the glory days of the "miracle" but hardly a singular example of economic collapse.) Taiwan has been marked by its resistance to crisis, and its relative position has actually been strengthened; it is attempting to use that to secure a more accepted political status.

Hardest hit of the tigers has been South Korea. It is in

means to stem the crisis. Korean capital may yet surrender its fundamental gains of the past decades and be largely carved up among imperialist wolves like Japan and the U.S. But with all that are several cautionary notes:

1) While statistical evidence is not available as to how drastically the crisis has cut into income, industrial production, literacy, life expectancy, etc., it should be clear that Korea remains proportionally far closer to even the most prosperous imperialist powers than it does to the bulk of the third world. (One important figure: current unemployment has been estimated at 6.7 percent, a terrible blow to a working class grown accustomed to the elementary right of a job, but hardly a basket case by the standards of world capitalism.)

2) In certain areas (e.g. growth of foreign reserves, trade surplus, successful selling of government bonds), there has been improvement in its position.

3) Its foreign investments have by no means dried up and in certain ways may be enhanced by the conditions of crisis. To this end, South Korea is poised to be the major beneficiary of North Korea's opening to foreign investment — a move being made out of sheer desperation. Its activity in China in areas like petrochemicals has increased. That the ultimate source of financing for many of these initiatives may come from elsewhere should not obscure the initiative, stake and control that South Korean capital has over these matters. Such investments of course are a most obvious and time-honored imperialist method.

4) The political response of South Korean capital to the crisis has not been typical of a "third world" regime. Elections were conducted in the midst of the financial col-

lapse, with Kim Dae Jung coming to office on the basis of a reputation as a radical and defender of workers. Once in office, he has utilized these ties and reputation to more easily carry out policies slashing living and working standards and opening up the economy more directly to imperialist investment. In other words, he is an enemy and betrayer of the working class. But this political strategy is indicative of how a liberal democratic regime, built on the aristocratic privileges of imperialism, conducts its attack in the face of crisis. Compare this to the handling of the crisis by the ruling class in Indonesia — and the results in the streets — and one can see why the bourgeoisie will if possible favor a “democratic” handling of crises.

None of this is attempting to say in the least that South Korea is heading out of crisis. The bad loans and failures will mount, workers are responding with mass strikes, and the political screws will tighten. But it is joined by a growing list of casualties, as this is a crisis that is now spreading throughout the world.

So I'm not only trying to set present limits to the damage but to indicate that suffering from the crisis *per se* does not separate the oppressed nations from the oppressors. The crisis has not yet had the impact, in quality or quantity, of fundamentally altering the role the tigers have in the world economy. And it is these roles, as I will argue, that are decisive in determining the questions of imperialist status.

#### A QUESTION OF METHOD

Daum's assessments are tied to a notion that “third world” countries are incapable of obtaining imperialist status in this epoch: “For all their growth in industrial production and living standards, they remain barred from the imperialist brotherhood.” To explain this assertion, he resorts to a method of demarcation based on criteria: “I believe there would be a qualitative change if ‘imperialized’ nations could rise on the basis of their own capital out of that category. But that has not happened, despite the NICs' remarkable quantitative changes.” I believe this method to be flawed historically, presents problems on its own term and skews Daum's understanding of present circumstances.

The immediate historical dilemma that arises from the spirit if not the letter of this assertion is how to make sense of pre-revolutionary Czarist imperialism. As Daum correctly notes, it was the Soviet workers' state that allowed Russia to become a world-class power. But as he also notes, “Russia before the revolution was an imperialist power with an industrial base,” albeit a second-tiered one. Only this industrial base, oyerwhelmingly constructed when capitalism was entering into its imperialist epoch, was primarily owned by West-

ern European capital! (South Korean capital for now at least operates and can claim formal ownership of virtually all its industry.) Russia did not become imperialist “on the basis of its own capital,” and in other ways was far less advanced than the other major colonial-imperialist powers; but it was nonetheless considered such by Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Actually, Daum's criteria is a bit fuzzy. For at another point he stresses “the qualitative limits to the advance of third-world countries; they were not allowed to reach the stage of economic independence.” While there is a huge overlap between the concepts of independence and “rising on the basis of their own capital,” they are not identical. To see the distinction, one can examine the post-war history of Asia's only imperialist power.

While Japan was a pre-World War II imperialist power capable of challenging the U.S. in the Pacific, it was shattered in defeat. To be sure, it still had an imperialist imprint — a certain infrastructure, a skilled workforce, technical capacity. And it maintained ownership over the capital that had not been destroyed. But the U.S. called the shots. The American authorities not only wrote a new constitution and performed a massive overhaul in areas like education; they also dictated massive changes in the economy's structure. For example, factories were stripped of their equipment for war reparations; corporate managers were purged; companies under wartime contracts were allowed to plummet into bankruptcy; the Zaibatsu conglomerates were re-arranged and in part broken up; land reform was instituted. Some of these policies would eventually prove highly stimulating to development; but in the early post-war years, Japan was a dislocated and recession-wracked society that showed no indication of getting back on its feet. (In these circumstances a restive working class faced a weakened bourgeoisie and the American overseers had to head off a massive general strike in the late 1940's.) This is critical to note, since the hindsight of prosperity can create the impression that the Japanese military defeat was a mere interlude to the inevitable re-assertion of its imperialist claim.

The shooting war in Korea and the general cold war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union provided the impetus for revival. The U.S. was convinced of the need to prop up Japan as a bastion of Western capital in the region. Aid, the purchasing of Japanese goods for the war, and the granting of protective status for Japanese industry were essential for establishing Japan's post-war take-off that it would parlay into its rise to world-class power.

Japan was a downtrodden, dependent East Asian country using its geopolitical location to extract various advantages from Western imperialism and using them to achieve an eco-

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conomic transformation. This may sound familiar to Daum, since it is the very pattern of South Korea's boom which he outlined in his reply to Goldner. There is no question that Japan used an imperialist legacy that South Korea did not have, and did not have to resort to the outside financing that Korean capital would come to depend on. But "economic independence" was the result rather than cause of Japan's initial resurgence, though it obviously became a feature of the later imperialist juggernaut.

### EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES

Daum allows for one breakthrough to the imperialist brotherhood, and that is Israel, courtesy of massive imperialist aid. For Daum, "the West's role in the creation of this imperialist outpost, however, has been so obvious that no one thinks of it as a challenge to the theory of the epoch." It's not, but it does pose a problem to Daum's interpretation. In one sense it is consistent with Daum's notion: "third world" nations cannot rely on their own capital to break through, and Israel did not do that. Nonetheless, his broader point was that independence and internal capital were essential criteria; and Israel distinguishes itself from other candidates by having had even less of these elements. What sort of rule would have one of its best examples be the exception? The fact that Daum trumpets the Israeli case rather than hides it does not remove the contradiction.

There is no question that "independence" and "rising on the basis of one's capital" are big, big factors in determining where a country's position is in the world capitalist system, and in any given circumstance can be decisive. But once such considerations become dividing lines themselves, problems arise. Basically this is a checklist definition of imperialism, in this case over the entry requirements than the features of membership. It leads to the old problem of fitting reality to the model rather than the other way around. Daum's model, the separation of imperialist and imperialized by criteria, is something akin to a sheer wall; none can scale it, none can even be on it. The only hope is for the imperialists to reach over and grab someone (Israel). The world simply doesn't operate this way.

Daum correctly polemicized against such methods in arguing that the Stalinist Soviet Union was an imperialist country in his book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*. He argued that Lenin's "five points" definition of imperialist economics could not be mechanically applied in determining imperialist status. If that were so, he pointed out, then the Bolsheviks themselves "violated" these points (in particular, the export of capital) in declaring Russia imperialist. In the same way, Daum reasoned that the Soviet Union was imperialist despite its own variance with Lenin's points. Daum stressed that the decisive way to judge whether a nation is imperialist or not is to examine its role in maintaining imperialist hegemony.

Another way to bring out this point is to make it comparable to the concept of class. Marxists view classes as roles, fundamentally defined in relationships to the means of production. Various statistics like income, status, etc. are rough indicators but not decisive elements in determination of class. There are constantly being thrown up strata which can have elements of both exploiter and exploited. There are individual examples of social mobility, individual workers making it into bourgeois circles. But none of this ferment negates the existence of classes themselves or the notion that in this epoch they become in general more stratified.

Judging the position of nations in the capitalist system means examining the relationships of nations to each other and to the capitalist system as a whole. This is not always easy. World capitalism is a vast and tangled web. There are the obvious cases of imperialist power (the U.S., Japan, Germany, France, etc.) There are the obvious cases of oppressed nations (e.g. Honduras, Mali, Cambodia). There will be some like Czarist Russia where there are mixed aspects, and revolutionists will have to make determinations based on an overall assessment. Isolated, individual capitals may achieve imperialist ability without contradicting the sharp stratification along imperialist lines, much less the reality of imperialism itself.

I do believe that the four tigers are such cases, despite lacking some of the characteristics of the more obvious imperialist capitals (geopolitical power, imperialist history, etc.) But whether they are "over the line" or not, or will all remain so in the wake of the crisis (in particular, whether South Korea's imperialism on the installment plan will be repossessed), would not negate the concept itself of "third world" nations achieving such a position in a highly limited fashion.

Moreover, imperialist privilege has a relative as well as absolute dimension. This has increased substantially in the latter part of this century as world imperialism has elaborated a network for carrying out its functions. This network has been most dramatic in Asia, and though the "miracle" is over, it will not simply be wiped out by the crisis. National capitals not generally identified as imperialist are capable of playing an oppressor role, not simply as direct agents of the imperialist powers but with a certain measure of independent interests. (Our tendency touched on this in discussing the concept of "sub-imperialisms" over twenty years ago, but has not sufficiently dealt with the matter since).

### MOBILITY INTO IMPERIALIST ROLE

Determining who is in the "imperialist brotherhood" has definite practical and theoretical importance. But there may be a variety of political struggles in which imperialism is an issue but where the "brotherhood" is not a participant, at least in traditional ways. For example, the Asian Pacific is a hotbed for rivalries in spite (and in part, because) of the end of the Cold War. There may be shooting wars in which the U.S. or another established imperialist power does not directly intervene or have direct interests, but in which imperialist interests are nevertheless served. (Such a course of events is not pre-ordained; the increasingly restless working classes of the region may present a revolutionary alternative. But whether or not a proletarian upsurge must go through such detours, there is a crying need for a revolutionary leadership that understands the issues and relation of forces.)

How will the nature of these conflicts be determined and what sort of political positions should revolutionists advance? South Korea is of course still openly tied to U.S. political, economic and military interests. But isn't it clear that the relations between the two Koreas are dramatically different than they were at the time of the Korean War: that South Korean capital functions as more than simply a lackey of U.S. imperialism? It was not Cde. Daum's intention to address those questions in his reply, but I believe the flawed and wooden aspect of his analysis will present problems in such matters.

Recognizing a limited mobility of countries into the im-

perialist brotherhood, or more accurately the world imperialist network, is easily reconciled with the Marxist notion of imperialism and the epoch. Consider the following:

1) This mobility is very limited. It has occurred in only a portion of the world, and concerns only a fraction of that portion. None of the newly privileged capitals could be vaguely considered world powers. And their position, particularly in the wake of the mounting Asian crisis, is precarious.

2) The rise and maintenance of these privileged positions was and is based on recognized methods of imperialist oppression, including a grinding superexploitation of working masses in both domestic and foreign economies.

3) Developments in these limited areas have come at the expense of other regions and working masses. The East Asian

boom, now in reverse gear, came while huge sections of industry in the West were moving or evaporating and while whole regions like sub-Saharan Africa were collapsing. This is entirely in line with the view of the then revolutionary Third International which Daum quoted in his reply and is worth repeating here.

The fundamental theory of imperialism outlined by the great revolutionists of the past remains valid. But while defending that understanding, we must rigorously examine the ever-changing ways in which those fundamentals are asserted. In so doing we help to fashion the revolutionary leadership that is so essential to making imperialist domination, class exploitation and social crises a relic of the human race.●

Dave Franklin

## State Repression of Socialists in South Korea

Last fall, the League for the Revolutionary Party joined with the International Socialist Organization and many other groups and individuals to place the following petition in the *New York Review of Books*. It appeared as a full-page ad in the December 3 issue.

**"I think any country would keep these kind of people in jail."** With these words, South Korean president Kim Dae Jung pledged himself to continue the policy of previous military regimes of imprisoning socialists solely for their political beliefs. As a leading dissident under these regimes, Kim courageously fought for democratic rights. But today he is using the same repressive laws instituted by the military to crush opposition to austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

On May 7, hundreds of police swooped down on three different locations in Seoul and Incheon City to arrest members of the International Socialists of South Korea (ISSK). On May 12, President Kim issued an order for the arrest of 410 student activists. And, after a two-day strike in late May, Kim's government filed criminal charges against 143 members of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

The South Korean economy is facing its worst crisis in more than forty years. Unemployment has more than doubled since President Kim was elected in December 1997, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on May 7, adding: "Homeless shelters are popping up all over Seoul." Yet Kim's priority is to reassure Western corporations. "Korea will become one of the best countries in the world for international investors to freely and safely do business," he told a joint session of the U.S. Congress on June 10.

Kim denies to his own people the freedom he promises foreign investors. To date, 26 supporters of the ISSK have been arrested following raids conducted with the assistance of police infiltrators. When challenged about the plight of jailed socialists during an address he gave at Stanford University on June 12, Kim Dae Jung said: "So far they have not given us any indication that they are ready or willing to change their beliefs. I think any country would keep these kind of people in jail."

By his words and actions, President Kim has made it clear that South Korea will remain a country where its citizens can be imprisoned solely for their opinions. He claims that "democracy and a market economy go together." But he is willing to sacrifice the democratic rights of socialists

and trade unionists if these seem to conflict with what the market demands. The case of the International Socialists is therefore a test of the new administration's treatment of the labor movement. We demand the withdrawal of all charges against those accused and their unconditional release, and call on the South Korean government to cease its repression of trade unionists and socialist activists.

The arrested members of the ISSK were charged with violating Korea's National Security Law. Several are charged with little more than possessing "rebellious literature." Others are accused of organizing meetings, selling the ISSK's paper at demonstrations and picket lines, and speaking publicly against the government's austerity measures. On July 27, at least seven of those charged received sentences of 4 to 5 years. Trials of the others are pending.

The witchhunt continues. On November 25, the "counter-communism unit" of the National Police Agency arrested the owners of two socialist book publishers, including one affiliated with the ISSK, on the charge of production and distribution of "enemy-benefiting publications."

These violations of fundamental rights expose the South Korean government's claims to have restored democracy after decades of military and conservative rule. Leftists in the U.S. have voiced expectations that Kim Dae Jung would defend democratic and working-class rights and compared him with leaders of other countries who had suffered oppression, like Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia. Hopes that any of these bourgeois figures can represent the interests of the working masses are illusions, especially at a time when the international economic crisis dictates increasingly harsher methods to enforce capitalist austerity.●

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# In and Out of the German ISO

by A. Holberg

Last year I left the Internationale Sozialistische Organisation (ISO), one of the three groups in Germany politically linked to the International Socialist Tendency (IST) led by Tony Cliff and the British Socialist Workers Party.

My first political affiliation was with the German Communist Party (DKP). I joined it in the early 1970's because I was never very much interested in the cultural-revolutionary aspect of the left-wing student movement, and therefore looked for "the real thing" — a party that claimed to be part of a worldwide movement of millions of workers. At the time, I had hardly heard about Trotskyism nor met a living Trotskyist. In contrast to other countries like France, Trotskyism was in fact never a big thing in Germany.

After a while, I found that I kept making criticisms from the left of the practice of the DKP. I thought that all members were agreed on basic Leninist principles and that the party was only making mistakes. But little by little I became more estranged from what I regarded as anti-working-class positions. So I finally left the party and concentrated on writing for various papers which were close to the party but also more independent. That gave me more freedom to voice my own more left-wing views.

Since I was particularly interested in "third-world" movements, after leaving the party I got into contact with people who worked on the same subject. Like many others, I mistook radical movements like the Palestinian PFLP, the Filipino PCP/NDF/NPA and later the Kurdish PKK for proletarian revolutionary organizations.

## FROM STALINISM TO CLIFFISM

I had never been much attracted to the reality of the "socialist countries," but at the time of their demise I realized that I could no longer afford to ignore them; I had to get interested in what had happened there. The collapse of "socialism" forced me to re-explore the centrality of the proletariat. I had to understand the nature of the Stalinist system as an enemy of the workers, to the extent that East German workers were driven to unify with West German capitalism.

By chance I got hold of Cliff's book on Russia and some writings by Trotsky. That way I learned that some of the ideas I had defended for many years (and which I had for some time thought were positions of the DKP as well) were in fact Trotskyist; I also found some other ideas new to me that could hardly be challenged. As a result, in the early 1990's I joined the existing Cliffite organization, the Sozialistische Arbeitergruppe (SAG: Socialist Workers Group).

But the SAG turned increasingly away from building a Marxist cadre in favor of working at a lower political level. It focused on the youth movement, which at that time was particularly engaged in the fight against fascist groups. The anti-fascist work was important, but the SAG tried to blend into it on a more or less exclusively "anti-fascist" basis, without bringing up revolutionary politics. They tried to get rich quick organizationally by jumping on a bandwagon which was already slowing down.

As a result, three comrades, myself included, decided to leave the SAG in 1992 and form the Initiative Sozialistischer Internationalisten (ISI: Initiative of Socialist Internationalists), thinking that we were the true representatives of

Cliffism.

The ISI saw itself as a propaganda group mainly engaged in ideological struggle. However, whenever an opportunity arose, we also, of course, took part in demonstrations. We based ourself on a critique of the SAG, pointing out that they typically made erratic movements from left to right; thus they were unable to hold on to the people they had won from one move as soon as they moved in a different direction, for unexplained reasons. We still regarded the SAG as a fraternal group with which we hoped to reunite as soon as possible — i.e., when they gave up their wrong "tactics." I believed that Cliffism was genuinely Leninist and that only their practice, not their theory, was bad. We had left the SAG because we wanted to build a theoretically clear organization, the nucleus of the revolutionary party. We thought that the IST writings supported our view.

The crisis of the SAG had started with the collapse of the Stalinist states. The SAG, like other anti-Stalinist leftists, thought that now they would really grow. They did not notice, and still do not, that the collapse of Stalinism has affected the whole "socialist" left inside and outside of the labor movement. While most leftists now have fewer illusions in Stalinism, this does not lead them toward becoming Leninist/Trotskyists but cynics. They think that it is the really the working class that has failed, not the social-democratic, Stalinist and centrist leaderships. In sum, all the SAG's fishing grounds dried up.

## FOUNDING THE ISO

In 1994, when the ISI had grown to about 10 members, a second, bigger, group of comrades left the SAG. They could not accept the decision to liquidate the SAG and make its members enter the Jusos (Young Socialists, the youth group of the Social-Democratic Party, the SPD). This was at a time when the SPD was moving ever more to the right, and the Jusos were far from a point of attraction for revolutionary-minded young people. (At about the same time, the members of the German Militant Tendency, after many years of deep entrism, finally decided to leave the SPD.) The SAG's decision was bureaucratically implemented: many members found out that the SAG had been dumped only when they returned from their summer holidays. From what I could tell, the British SWP had decided that the SAG experience had failed and probably thought that any new left upturn would have to go through the social-democratic parties.

The ISI and these comrades joined together and founded the ISO, still regarding ourselves as the true practitioners of Cliffism. The entrism faction supported by the SWP became the "Linksruck" (Left Turn) group within the Jusos.

Since the new comrades had not supported our criticism of the SAG in 1992, I thought it necessary to point out after the founding conference that the ISO would not have any future unless we made every effort to build a truly Leninist organization and thereby demarcate ourselves from the rest of the left in theory and practice — still believing that this was in line with the true meaning of Cliffism. Since we in the ISI had a theoretical magazine and had been very active in publishing pamphlets, we thought we would be able to lead the bigger group ideologically. After a while, however, it became obvious that there had been no definite break

between the right opportunist practice of the SAG (and as far as I was able to detect from reading *Socialist Worker*, the SWP) and that of the ISO.

This meant in particular the practice of accommodation to the trade union bureaucracy and the permanent electoral block with the social democrats so dear to the IST everywhere. Furthermore, their way of recruiting and educating new comrades was absolutely minimal — like that of the reformist parties (including the Stalinists), except that the Cliffites are permanently active. As always with the Cliffites, they have a theory which at first sight sounds very left and a practice which is not. For example, in their theoretical writings you find all the basic Marxist stuff about the trade union bureaucracy — while they reject Lenin's theory of the labor aristocracy, on which the bureaucracy rests! So in practice they adapted to the same layers as the bureaucrats.

#### OUT OF THE ISO — AND BACK IN

Becoming more and more estranged from the organization, I finally left in June 1995. My criticism at that time concerned the way the program was implemented, and I did not yet see the theoretical basis for their right opportunist practice. After a year in the ISO, the other former ISI comrades broke away again, but on the basis of the same Cliffism. The former ISI, now called the Internationale Sozialisten (IS), was the harder-working and more disciplined organization, but it retained more of the traditional right opportunist positions. The ISO was larger and seemed to be more open to new ideas — but that was because they were softer on almost everything. As a result, there are now three Cliffite organizations in Germany: the original SAG, now Linksruck,

the ISO, and the IS.

After leaving the ISO, I happened to meet an LRP comrade in London and bought a copy of *Proletarian Revolution*. I thus found out that the LRP had similar historical links with the IST and seemed to have made a more consistent critique. I therefore wrote to New York, and we engaged in an intense discussion on Cliffism and many other questions. I began to see that the practical "errors" of the Cliffites were expressions of an overall middle-class outlook, and that a counterposed approach to understanding and acting in the world was necessary.

Since I had left partly as a result of a clash with the quasi-religious Cliffite outlook of those comrades who founded the IS, the ISO made a great effort to recruit me again. After many discussions with one of their leading comrades I thought that they were distancing themselves more and more from the IST. With the agreement of the LRP, I decided to become a member again, to help deepen the rift between the ISO and Cliffism, and to find comrades who could eventually be recruited to the Trotskyist positions of COFI.

When I entered in June 1997, I told them that I supported their "What We Stand For" statement but not the Cliffite interpretation of it, and that I believed that the LRP/COFI theory was correct — for example on the analysis of the Stalinist states as statified capitalist. I would add now that it is also terribly weak as a statement of internationalism, calling for solidarity with workers in other countries but omitting the need for the world revolutionary party.

Signs of their relative left turn were the fact that the ISO openly rejected the so-called "Coalition for Work" between the government, the capitalists and the trade unions, while Linksruck had at first taken an unclear position on it. As for the IS, while criticizing this blatant class collaboration in their paper, in their actual work (as at a big national trade union rally in Bonn) they focused on defending the trade union bureaucracy from an alleged attack by the government — while there was nothing but collaboration in reality. Also, in 1997 the ISO decided not to call for a vote for the SPD in the upcoming national elections, while both Linksruck and the IS, maintained the traditional Cliffite line, although they criticized the anti-working class policies of the SPD. However, the ISO did not say "Don't vote for the SPD"; instead they called for a vote against the conservative-liberal government then in office, thus leaving it open what other anti-working-class party workers should vote for.

#### THE ISO'S CENTRISM

After a year of membership, I had to face the fact that the centrist character of the ISO had not changed, even though it was the farthest-left IST group in Germany. For all its left talk, it still could not carry out a revolutionary line. One example: an ISO leader had written an article on the Congo in June 1997 which gave political support to the bourgeois regime of Kabila. Kabila's seizure of power was called a "democratic revolution" which Marxists had to support; this article also warned of the "danger" that leading cadres of the rebels would develop a new "bureaucratic upper stratum." (For the COFI analysis, see PR 55.)

I wrote a letter to the editor, pointing out that non-working-class revolutions cannot carry out even the democratic program under imperialism, and that the absorption of the rebels into the ruling class was unavoidable — therefore proletarian revolution was the only way. The ISO leaders

## REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Vol. 7, No. 1

### A Paradise for Capitalism? Class and Leadership in 20th-Century Belgium

Looking at the appalling conditions endured by the Belgian working class, Karl Marx called Belgium a paradise for capitalism. Nevertheless, class struggle in this small country has often been at a much higher level than many of its bigger European neighbors.

This issue continues the studies by *Revolutionary History* into those episodes in history in which Trotskyism and Trotskyists have been able to play a significant part. It contains a number of letters by Trotsky on Belgian issues never published in English before. There is also a major account of the Belgian General strike of 1961 and the positions taken at the time by the various tendencies. At this time Ernest Mandel was leading an "entrist" faction in the Belgian Socialist Party, and material is presented to make an assessment of the entry tactic.

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then officially endorsed my position. But this did not mean they had understood anything. A year later they ran an article on Indonesia praising the People's Democratic Party (PRD) for denouncing the dictator Suharto as "a tool of capitalism" and for supporting the independence of East Timor — but saying nothing about the PRD's popular-front strategy of tying the workers and peasants to the anti-Suharto bourgeoisie. Theoretical questions like permanent revolution, even though they have enormous practical implications, obviously do not really matter to the ISO leadership.

Furthermore, the ISO accepts the standard Cliffite view that polemicizing openly against other left-wing organizations amounts to sectarianism. So it has never published any article about either the Linksruck group or the IS to explain why there are three Cliffite groups in one country. I wrote a harsh critique of Linksruck's populist slogan, "Tax the Millionaires," at the request of the ISO, but it was not published —



Lenin banner at Moscow protest. Cliffite organizations fail to fight for Leninist theory and practice.

without any explanation. With such an attitude the ISO cannot educate its own members to face any serious ideological challenge.

The ISO tends to be opportunistic towards anti-Leninist sentiments on the left. For example, Rosa Luxemburg is widely claimed by left liberals to be a champion of workers' democracy against authoritarian Leninism, even though this is hardly the real difference between them. (See "Lenin, Luxemburg and the Party" in the Australian *Workers Revolution* No. 21.) The ISO leadership published an article about Luxemburg which did not include one single word about the disputes between her and Lenin on crucial questions like the right of national self-determination, the Bolshevik agrarian policy or the theory of imperialism.

Another example of this opportunism is an article by one ISO leader called "What is a socialist revolution?" which did not even mention the vanguard party. In both of these cases, since I had been a regular writer for the ISO papers, I wrote long letters to the editor explaining what was wrong. But they never gave any answer, which shows that the leadership did not see the need to convince even the organization's membership.

One sign that seemed hopeful at first was the leadership's declaration at the November 1997 convention that it intended to undertake contacts with organizations other than those in the Cliffite IST — an idea which I of course welcomed, since that would open up the possibility of discussions

with and about COFI. But the leadership was particularly interested in contacting the New Socialist Group, a rightward split from the Canadian ISO. I wrote a lengthy critique of the NSG to counter the ISO leadership's enthusiasm. Again my critique remained unpublished — indeed there was no *Internal Bulletin* at all in the seven months since the convention. I had to conclude that the opening to non-IST groups was no break with Cliffism but rather an indication of further ideological softness and an opening to the right.

#### WHITHER THE ISO?

Cliffism in its "left" form relies on the centrist notion of spontaneism, a theory that regards the revolutionary party as merely of organizational significance, not as an organ of struggle for the political leadership of the working class. The ISO orients to militants at their present level of consciousness without fighting to change it. It concentrates on "action" in order to downplay cadre education — a practice which is especially deadly now, when the most crucial task is to train cadres politically for the time when there will be an upsurge in the class struggle. The ISO has abandoned its more theoretical review *Internationaler Sozialismus* (even though as a theoretical magazine it was not really serious), while it continues to publish a paper that reads most of the time like a sort of left-wing high school paper.

The lack of an *Internal Bulletin* was symptomatic of the ISO's disease. It meant that there was no way for members to initiate or take part in internal discussions, and that the ISO therefore could not be genuinely democratic centralist, since one of the conditions for party democracy is political discussion and debate among all comrades. The lack of internal discussion shows that the ISO's revolutionary claims are window-dressing, since a Marxist organization requires counterposition and criticism of ideas to remain politically alive. I was particularly concerned by the absence of the *Internal Bulletin*, since, because of my geographical isolation from other ISO comrades, this was the means I intended to use to introduce new ideas and critiques of the Cliffite theories.

History has proved that an organization which is not built on a clear theoretical understanding will be of no use in a revolutionary situation, no matter what its size — indeed, it will turn out to be a stumbling block for the advance of the working class. It was clear that I could do revolutionary work only under the banner of COFI, the international tendency led by the LRP.

The overall situation in Germany is still rather quiet. The left, while in the midst of an internal crisis, is not yet confronted with major social unrest and thus with the necessity to make clear choices. The first choice the ISO has to make might come if the Linksruck group — probably with a lot more members but even less cadre training than the ISO — turns to the left after leaving the SPD. Since the ISO has not broken ideologically from Cliffite centrism, it will then have no political reason not to reunify. But when mass political struggles break out, the International Socialist Tendency is unlikely to remain unified. When members don't have a solid political understanding, they will be driven in different directions by the upsurge of struggle.

Today a number of revolutionary-minded comrades have been attracted to the IST because it is one of the largest left

tendencies, emphasizes industrial militancy and expresses anti-parliamentary sentiments despite its long-term electoral support for social-democratic parties. It is necessary to

establish a genuine revolutionary proletarian current internationally, one of whose tasks is to combat the Cliffites and their radical-sounding compromises with reformism.●

## Anti-Fascist Demonstration in Bonn

On October 24, there was a militant demonstration in Bonn, Germany, against over a thousand fascists who were protesting against an exhibition about the crimes of the Nazi army, the Wehrmacht, during World War II.

In contrast to the various centrist groups, including the SVA (Militant Tendency) and two Cliffite groups, Linksruck and the Internationale Sozialisten, COFI was the only organization to intervene politically. Our leaflet, translated below, argued against the "anti-German" line in the call for the demonstration by the local Antifa (the "autonomist" anti-fascist group). The centrists took part in the demonstration without presenting any slogan or politics beyond the Antifa's militancy.

Many students from ages 12 to 16 participated, largely mobilized and led by the Antifa. The cops were out in force, and managed, with the help of clubs and tear gas, to prevent any contact with the fascists, and to force the counter-demonstrators into a corral (after they had broken through several police chains), where they were held for five hours. Over a dozen anti-fascists were injured. The cops tried to break up the march by forcing all minors to leave the pen and go home, but most stayed.

Thus the Nazis carried out their demagoguery, unhindered but largely isolated from the public. They have the local Social-Democratic government to thank for this. Nevertheless, the event taught the youth some valuable lessons in the role of the state and the SPD.

The demonstration and the clashes with the police led a leading governmental representative of the Green Party to talk about outlawing the party, the NPD, which had organized the Nazi rally. This of course is not what the class-conscious section of the anti-fascists called for, since we in no way trust the bourgeois state, its courts or its cops to defend the working class from its enemies.

### Defend the Wehrmacht Exhibit Against Fascist Demagoguery!

Today in Bonn the fascists want to demonstrate against the traveling exhibition, "War of Annihilation — Crimes of the Wehrmacht, 1941-44." They are doing this under the demagogic pretext of defending the "honor" of German soldiers in World War II. It is so important to militantly confront the fascists wherever they appear that our struggle must not shrink from opposing nationalist feelings widespread among the German people.

The exhibit has been accused of presenting all German soldiers as criminals. This accusation, naturally, has come most angrily from soldiers (and their families), the majority of whom were dragged into the war as draftees. The fascists link themselves with this response in order to pursue very different political aims. We must make clear that the exhibit makes no such accusation; indeed it says the opposite. Most soldiers were clearly not directly or knowledgeably involved

in crimes — although the number directly involved in crimes, willingly or unwillingly, was great.

The Wehrmacht as an organization did not just wage an imperialist war in the interests of German capital for the redivision of the world against other imperialist states; it was inseparably bound up with the fascist war strategy of the Reich (which thankfully lasted only 12 years rather than 1000.) As *Die Zeit* of March 7, 1997 documented, the Reichswehr [the German army] had already worked out plans for the next World War by 1925. The Nazis had only to put these plans into motion.

What were specifically fascist were the racist plans of the Nazis, who sought the enslavement and elimination of the Slavic peoples and particularly of the large Jewish populations of Eastern Europe. On the Eastern front, the Wehrmacht from the beginning helped to fulfill these fascist policies, which exceeded even the usual crimes of decaying capitalism. In this way the Wehrmacht cooperated with specifically fascist organizations like the Gestapo and the SS.

Today's fascists are very familiar with the exhibit. They know the difference between claiming that all soldiers were criminals and showing that the Wehrmacht's leadership made it an instrument of criminal policies. They are attacking this exhibit because, as consistent nationalists in an imperialist country, they want to defend and revive the policies of a war of annihilation against "Slavic-Jewish-Bolshevik subhumans." The "honor" of German soldiers is no more important to these people than it was to the Wehrmacht officers who let hundreds of thousands of them perish.

Unfortunately, part of the German left has unwittingly made matters easier for the Nazi demagogues. For example, when the Bonn "Antifa" group's leaflet refers to the Wehrmacht as an undifferentiated "mass of murderous war criminals," they overlook the fact that the Wehrmacht was not a volunteer army, and that, as in all modern armies, most soldiers never directly took part in armed operations.

Therefore, the Communist Organization for the Fourth International calls for the defense of the Wehrmacht exhibit against all demagogic attacks. Such a defense can only be politically effective if we avoid creating further sympathy for the fascist demagogues through unjust insults against rank-and-file soldiers.●

#### COFI Pamphlet in German

Inhalt: Die Politische Resolution der "Kommunistischen Organisation für die Vierte Internationale" (KOFI/COFI); Die ungelösten Widersprüche des Tony Cliff; Was hat man "Was tun?" angetan?; Zwanzig Jahre LRP.

Kontaktadresse: LRP, c/o Buchladen "Le Sabot",  
Breitestr. 76, 53111 Bonn, BRD

## LRP/COFI

*continued from page 2*

In speaking from the podium, the LRP representative commented on Democratic Party politicians and pro-Democratic labor and "community" leaders.

As always, their aim politically is to steer the mass anger back into dead-end electoralism, back into the Democratic Party which put a 100,000 new cops on the street. It's great if such leaders want to defend Mumia, as long as they mobilize forces, as long as they give of their resources. It's criminal that the power of organized labor has not been unleashed in this or any other significant anti-racist struggle.

### NEW YORK

In the aftermath of the Million Youth March in Harlem last summer, the LRP joined protests against the police attack on the march and subsequent arrests, as well as a militant march against police brutality on Oct. 22.

The struggle to defend the City University against severe cutbacks by city and state governments continues. A forum on this issue at City College in October featured the Rev. Al Sharpton, who denounced the "Pataki-D'Amato-Giuliani axis" — i.e., the Republican Party — without once mentioning the role of his own Democratic Party.

An LRPer speaking from the floor noted that open admissions had been won in the 1960's as part of the climate of mass struggles and urban rebellions, and that mass struggle rather than electoralism would be needed to defend it. He pointed out that the Democratic candidate for governor, Peter Vallone, had supported Giuliani and the cops' actions in Harlem the day of the Million Youth March; and had already promised that the state budget would be cut further no matter who became governor. No wonder Sharpton forget to mention his endorsement of Vallone at this meeting!

Also at City College, the LRP co-sponsored a film showing on the Mumia case with the ISO and the Student Liberation Action Movement. After the film, the question of the origin of racism and whether it could be abolished led to a lively discussion and general agreement that the subject deserved its own meeting. To follow this up, we challenged the ISO to a debate on the issue. They refused, but then scheduled their own forum on the subject.

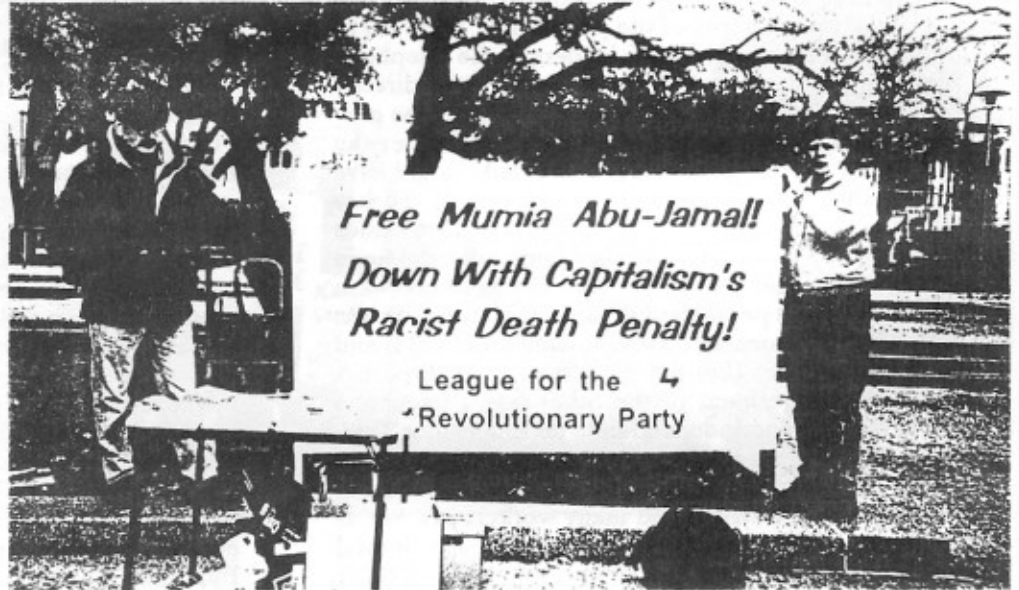
At that meeting, entitled "Who Benefits From Racism?", the ISO presented its standard denial that there is any material basis for racism within the white working class, and that there exists any labor aristocracy as described by Lenin, arguing that white workers do not benefit from racism. LRPer answered that while racism undermines all workers, it offers real, though partial and mostly temporary benefits to white workers. This means that interracial working-class unity

can only be achieved by a conscious struggle against the inequalities dictated by racism, a struggle to raise and equalize all wages. It was clear that our points rang true with the unaffiliated students present.

### NEW YORK LABOR

LRP supporters have worked to get motions passed in both 1199 and TWU Local 100 to build the mobilizations for Mumia Abu-Jamal, and we have begun a collaboration with other unionists in the Workers to Free Mumia Committee under the auspices of the New York Free Mumia Coalition. (Contact us for information on this committee.)

There has been a continuing discussion in 1199 of the



*LRP table at Philadelphia rally for Mumia Abu-Jamal.*

recent hospital contract, which we had opposed. (See PR 57.) Confirming our view, several delegates at NYU Hospital produced a leaflet in late September entitled, "Your Contract Is a Lie." They had come to see that union president Dennis Rivera's promise that the contract would provide a common expiration date for members at all covered hospitals, facilitating an all-out strike in the future, was a fraud. At a workplace meeting, an LRP supporter and union delegate noted other lies in the contract — phony job security and early retirement — that served to cover for real job slashing.

At a meeting the ISO sponsored in August, ISO representatives defended their position of supporting the contract vigorously. The LRP intervened to point out Rivera's betrayals, the obvious givebacks in the contract and the ISO's refusal to tell the truth about it. (See our coverage of the contract and the ISO's view in our last issue.) Despite the delegates' change of heart confirming that we were right, the ISO has still not reversed its pro-contract position.

As we write, a fight is gearing up against the introduction of underpaid workfare (WEP) workers into the New York City transit system. Union and WEP workers must fight together to defeat this escalation of union-busting slave labor and open the road for a serious fight for real jobs at union wages. We are building for the picket organized by New Directions, the in-house opposition in TWU Local 100 (see PR 57), and we will continue to press union leaders for action on this question. ●

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## Puerto Rico

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Progresista (PNP — New Progressive Party, pro-statehood) and the Legislature closed the deal to sell la Telefónica to GTE, at fire-sale prices. The sale will now go through several months of review by the Federal Communications Commission and other government agencies before it becomes final.

This outcome was not foreordained: the workers had a clear goal, the will and determination to fight, and the support of the vast majority of the population. What led to the defeat was misleadership: the leaders of the telephone and other unions vacillated, dragged their feet or directly sabotaged the struggle. They succeeded in limiting the general strike to two days, making it a big protest rather than the mighty weapon that an indefinite general strike could have been. Juan José Hernández, president of one of the key unions, the Unión Independiente de Empleados Telefónicos (UIET — Independent Union of Telephone Employees) had said all along that the workers were powerless to prevent privatization; the best he could do was establish good relations with Gov. Rosselló and GTE and try to cut union losses (but not his own salary and perks).

Annie Cruz, president of the other major telephone union, the Hermandad Independiente de Empleados Telefónicos (HIETel — Independent Brotherhood of Telephone Workers) had a more militant posture. She became the spokesperson for the strike, and many workers saw her as embodying the fight against privatization. But she showed hesitant leadership in the actual organization of pickets or other mass activities. Rather, she bounced between the militancy of the masses and the defeatism of the more conservative union bureaucrats led by Hernández. She seemed overwhelmed by the fight; as it went on she became progressively immobilized. She finally quit as spokesperson at a crucial point in the telephone strike, ten days before it ended. This conduct was not a personality question but rather posed underneath the restrictions of her reformist views imposed on the struggle.

In the situation of mass upheaval that obtained in Puerto Rico this summer, a revolutionary party, even a small one, could have made great gains and pushed the struggle significantly beyond its actual bounds. Hundreds of thousands of workers in struggle were throwing off old prejudices and restraints and experiencing their power to make all society run — or not. It is for this reason that we are so eager to begin a discussion in the pages of *Proletarian Revolution* about the lessons of the strike and its interrelationship with the fight against imperialism that is critical for this oppressed nation.

In December, Puerto Ricans voted in Rosselló's referendum on the island's status. This vote was legally powerless to decide whether the U.S. government would actually turn from the veiled colonialism of the current "commonwealth" status to the even firmer imperialist tie of statehood. Nevertheless the results were notable. Before the strike movement, Rosselló's plan for statehood was considered almost certain to win the referendum. It was defeated in favor of a "none of the above" choice, clearly as a result of the unpopularity Rosselló had earned by using state violence to wage a war against the working class

during the strike.

Our leaflet attempts to explain why the working class in Puerto Rico has never favored the "independence" option, as posed by the bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalists. We defend the right of self-determination in Puerto Rico and advocated a boycott of the various pro-imperialist options put forward during the phony referendum — including "none of the above," which was an endorsement of the bourgeois Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and its "authentic" commonwealth position. But real independence will not be won until the working class realizes its own power, builds its own party, and leads the way to a socialist revolution.

### Victory to the Struggle in Puerto Rico!

The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) joins in commemorating one hundred years of colonial history of Puerto Rico. This is a history of proud struggle against imperialist oppression and superexploitation.

And as we march today, a new history is being made. Struggle on the island has moved forward dramatically. The recent resurgence of working-class struggle in Puerto Rico has changed the political landscape immeasurably. The working class is re-establishing its capacity to take the leadership of the political struggle. The most conscious workers are pushing for an indefinite general strike against privatization. The pro-capitalist politicians and union leaders are trying their best to hold the struggle back by promoting referendums, electoralist solutions, etc.

As Marxists, we believe that in the U.S., the heartland of imperialism, revolutionary and militant workers must do everything possible to support the struggles in Puerto Rico. But while this strike movement is crucial for erecting a defense of jobs, living standards, and services, the struggle can't end there. Socialist revolution is the only way to end the imperialist stranglehold on Puerto Rico and to secure jobs for all at a living wage, decent health care and education, and everything else that all human beings deserve. The vehicle for this revolution must be a revolutionary party of the working class in Puerto Rico, a section of a re-created world party of socialist revolution. We are striving to build such an international party.

### REJECT STATEHOOD AND COMMONWEALTH

Revolutionary workers oppose all capitalist solutions for Puerto Rico. The defense of the Puerto Rican people's right to self-determination must mean that we completely reject calls for statehood. We equally reject commonwealth status — whether "territorial" or the even bigger farce of "free association." The claim that such status options mean self-determination for Puerto Rico is a lie.

Neither statehood nor commonwealth signify the rejection of imperialist annexation that all genuine anti-imperialists have called for. An endorsement of either statehood or commonwealth would strengthen U.S. imperialism in general — not only against Puerto Ricans.

### NO INDEPENDENCE UNDER CAPITALISM

In saying all this, we must also note the demonstrable fraud of what passes for the "independence" option. This option, as supported by the Puerto Rican Independence Party and others, provides for the maintenance of U.S. military installations in Puerto Rico, a very long timetable before independence is implemented, and other pro-

imperialist measures.

Thus if a plebiscite goes forward we will join others in supporting a boycott. From our viewpoint, the boycott tactic is necessary because of the fact that neither a revolutionary option nor even a genuine independence option can be brought to the people because of the way the plebiscite is set up.

As well, even in the best case, a nationalist program for an independent capitalist Puerto Rico would also leave the great majority of Puerto Ricans exploited and oppressed.

An independent capitalist Puerto Rico could not create a strong economy to compete in the world market no matter how much it exploits "its" workers. There are many other countries that can outcompete Puerto Rico by paying their workers even less. And without instituting revolutionary measures such as debt cancellations and expropriation of the banks and corporations, an "independent" bourgeois Puerto Rico would sink further into debt — and therefore be impelled in the direction of cutbacks and privatizations that have characterized both the PPD and PNP regimes.

Such austerity measures have increasingly characterized the bourgeois nationalist regimes that came to power as "anti-imperialist" — and even "socialist" — regimes. The inability to establish a strategy for economic progress — and in most cases even survival — on a capitalist basis leads the nationalist regimes back into the arms of imperialism — not only economically but politically. It is also no secret that the Puerto Rican masses have not identified heavily with nationalist political parties — from mainstream to far left — in recent decades. Workers in Puerto Rico have seen nationalist revolutions in other countries go downhill. In fact no nation can go it alone. The masses want independence but do not accept the nationalist programs because they want their living standard to rise and their futures to be secure. They have every right to this!

#### INTERNATIONALIST STRATEGY

That is why we not only call for revolution in Puerto Rico but also argue for a strategy of spreading revolution in order to create a federation of Caribbean and Central American workers' states. Puerto Rico alone will not be able to defend itself against imperialist attack and will not be able to overthrow imperialism on a world-wide basis. But that is what is necessary to build socialism and a good and secure life for the masses in a liberated society.

Because our revolutionary strategy is internationalist rather than nationalist, we also argue that the Puerto Rican revolution must intend to spark revolutionary struggle in the heart of U.S. imperialism. Since Puerto Rican workers are also part of the U.S. working class they can play a great role in moving the U.S. class struggle in a revolutionary direction.

As internationalists, we recognize our revolutionary

duty to defend the right to self-determination of the Puerto Rican people. We stand ready to join with others in the fight. We recognize the right of Puerto Rico to secede if the masses so choose. It means that we are for the defense of all Puerto Rican freedom fighters and for the release of all political prisoners. Here, in the imperialist center, we must also consistently fight against all forms of imperialist chauvinism by consistently demanding the right of self-determination and fighting against every act of oppression by the oppressor nation. In so doing we are not only aiding



the cause of Puerto Rican liberation but are helping to build greater international working-class unity — which can only be based on trust and free choice.

But defense of self-determination also requires a fight for a revolutionary party and strategy within the working-class and anti-imperialist movements. It requires an internationalist strategy that will provide an independent Puerto Rico with the only way to survive and flower.

It is no accident that the main slogan of the fighting strike movement is "Puerto Rico No Se Vende." Workers understand that the local political figures trying to sell the phone company into private hands are also the enemy, even though they are Puerto Rican by nationality. They will soon see that all wings of the Puerto Rican ruling class are tied to the imperialist system.

The solidarity already expressed by GTE workers in the Dominican Republic with their class brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico is an inspiring example for us all. As the world capitalist crisis deepens, the inevitable growth of cutbacks in welfare and other attacks against workers in Puerto Rico, throughout the Caribbean and Central America and in the U.S. — especially among Blacks and Latinos — will make it more obvious that workers must unite internationally to defeat imperialism.

**Down with U.S. Imperialism!**

**Free All Political Prisoners!**

**Forward to the Indefinite General Strike in Puerto Rico!**

**Smash the Privatization Drive!**

**Smash Racism! Down With U.S. National Chauvinism!**

**Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!**

**Re-create the Fourth International,**

**World Party of Socialist Revolution!**

# Mumia Abu-Jamal

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of the working class can be effectively drawn to Mumia's defense. Further, in pointing to the need to mobilize the working class behind the fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal, we do not mean an exclusive orientation to the unions, although the unions are very important. Our class is far more than the small unionized fraction of the workforce: it includes the employed, unemployed and youth.

## POLICE BRUTALITY AND THE MUMIA CASE

In 1995, Mumia's stay of execution was won as a result of an international campaign, plus the threat of unrest at home. With the memory of the Los Angeles uprising still fresh, in 1995 another riot against police brutality took place in St. Petersburg, Florida, along with other protests.

Black working-class youth are not currently drawn to the Mumia campaign in large numbers. This points to a glaring absence in the current campaign: the lack of a driving focus on the fight against police brutality. Over the past few years, time and again Black and Latino workers and working-class youth have poured into the streets in outrage against racist atrocities. But each time, local politicians and pro-capitalist community activists step to the fore and recommend a new review board or some other dead-end. Revolutionaries would pose Mumia's defense as a way for everyone who opposes police brutality to come together across the country in a mass protest — a step that is long overdue. This would in fact be a way to bring a section of the working class into the struggle

## Mumia: CBC Betrayed Assata Shakur

Mumia Abu-Jamal eloquently dissected the treacherous conduct of the Congressional Black Caucus in the case of the Black former political prisoner Assata Shakur. Like Mumia, she too was falsely convicted of murder. As he stated in his article "Selling Out Assata" (*Workers Vanguard*, Oct. 23):

On Sept. 14, 1998, the House of Representatives passed a resolution ... calling on the Cuban government to return former Black Political Prisoner, Assata Shakur. What makes this resolution remarkable (other than its obvious political hypocrisy) is the action (or lack of action) taken by Black politicians in the House.

There is something sickening about Black Congresspersons swarming to the defense of President Clinton, who has built his political career on the skillful manipulation and timely betrayal of Black interests ...

The CBC recently made much about their role of "fairness cops" in the congressional process leading up to impeachment for Clinton. As a wealthy, Yale-trained, former law professor with millions at his disposal (not to mention the power of the presidency), he hardly seems to need their help. Instead, a Black, courageous woman who must face the monstrous might of the Empire, has not a single defender in Congress. Like their hero, Clinton, they seem to have mastered the politics of betrayal.

which is currently not being addressed.

Some forces defending Mumia have already made the case a national focal point for those who oppose the death penalty. Certainly the death penalty is an issue of racism, and it is critical that it be fought. But posing the case as a death penalty issue alone tends to appeal mainly to liberals and others with illusions in legal reforms, rather than to working-class youth who have little reason to believe in the system.

## THE MASSES' MISLEADERS

The trade unions, which enroll millions of workers, including many Blacks and Latinos, are potentially powerful weapons of struggle. They are the only mass organizations of the working class; and when they are mobilized, they have an influence far wider than their actual membership. But the pro-capitalist bureaucrats' sell-out deals with the bosses have demoralized many workers. Their betrayal of the most oppressed workers, in and outside the unions, is notorious. They have refused to fight police brutality, instead accepting the anti-worker cops into union federations with open arms. Given all this, the idea that unions should support the campaign to free Mumia and other struggles for justice seems ridiculous to many. Nevertheless, the fight must be made.

Mainstream Black leaders have also done little to stop the attacks. Black Democratic Party politicians in particular have supported Bill Clinton at the same time that he has advanced his "tough on crime" policies and killed welfare — policies aimed above all at poorer Blacks and Latinos.

Even those leadership figures who have signed on to the campaign to defend Mumia have predictably done far less than they could. Jesse Jackson has tirelessly toured the country touting his Wall Street Project and the defense of Clinton — but not of Mumia. New York hospital workers have passed motions in defense of Mumia, but 1199's President Dennis Rivera has so far done little for the Mumia campaign — while he mobilized full union resources to campaign for Democratic politicians. While the campaign to defend Mumia must unite the broadest possible forces in action, popular leaders should not be spared criticism for their failures to do enough. Indeed it is often only when they are really challenged that they mobilize at all.

Revolutionary Marxists know the difference between the official leaders and the masses they mislead. So we continue to fight inside the unions, with some success, to pass motions committing them to support Mumia's defense — and to hold the leaders to these commitments. (See p. 2.)

## THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

Pro-capitalist and reformist politicians refuse to mobilize the masses around Mumia and police brutality because such struggles can threaten the system and their privileged place in it. The fight for justice and equality must go on even when it runs up against the needs of the profit system, the barrier that makes the liberals and reformists divert every movement they lead into the Democratic Party.

Revolutionaries believe that the situation for the working class and oppressed will get worse if capitalism is allowed to continue. As the economic crisis deepens, the tools of racism and repression, now used against Mumia, will intensify with the scourges of unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

The League for the Revolutionary Party knows that only the working class can make the revolution and that a working-class revolutionary party must be built. In uniting with others to do everything possible to free Mumia, we also

work hard to raise these basic revolutionary ideas and to convince others that a new leadership for our class must replace the current lot of pro-capitalist misleaders.

### MARXISM AND PSEUDO-MARXISM

Marxism sees the working class as the central vehicle for revolution, for smashing the capitalist state and replacing it with a workers' state. It opposes class collaboration, which inevitably means subordinating the workers' interests to those of one or another wing of capitalism. It counterposes to nationalism a program of internationalism.

As revolutionary Marxists, therefore, we disagree with the views of even the most revolutionary wing of Black nationalism, including the Black Panthers in the past and Mumia himself, in that they fail to recognize the essential class line in American society and the world at large.

We have to point out that there are other socialists in this campaign who hold back their supposedly Marxist views. Two such groups are Socialist Action (SA) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which share a commitment not to raise socialist ideas in the movement because that may scare away Democratic Party politicians and other liberals. They also reject criticizing the failure of mass leaders to mobilize in defense of Mumia, and try to prevent others from making such criticisms.

At Socialist Action's forum on Mumia in Chicago on December 4, their speaker, National Secretary Jeff Mackler, didn't raise the question of socialist revolution or anything else that would explain why he was a leader of a nominally socialist organization. This self-censorship matched his belief that socialist politics shouldn't be raised out front. He lauded the historic unity of the left behind Mumia, claiming the only reason that "unity" was achieved was that speakers agreed in advance not to criticize each other or their organizations. In other words, liberals can openly raise their pro-capitalist views in the campaign, but socialists cannot.

We find it sadly ironic that Mumia is proud to call himself a revolutionary and was targeted by the cops for speaking out against the system — and that left groups like SA would want to play any role in suppressing revolutionaries of any stripe. But this is a long-standing difference between the LRP and the pseudo-revolutionaries. The campaign must include all anti-racists, but socialists cannot be put in the closet. Of course, if leaders of "socialist" organizations don't believe that the need to build a revolutionary party and fight for a revolutionary socialist program is urgent enough to bring up during their work in actual struggles, then why should anyone else?

The ISO acts in a similar way, opportunistically censoring themselves by not mentioning their purported commitment to socialist revolution, and covering for misleaders. A sharp example took place at the National Conference on Wrongful Convictions and the Death Penalty in Chicago in December, which featured over 30 ex-prisoners released from death row. The speech by Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr. was so reactionary that the ISO was forced to briefly mention it. *Socialist Worker* (Jan. 1) said:

**Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. was the keynote speaker at the biggest plenary session of the weekend — where he promptly posed as "tough on crime" for the television cameras. This was an insult to the wrongly convicted. Nevertheless, the conference had a national impact — and will give death penalty opponents new opportunities to make their case.**

No mention of the need for socialists to have challenged Jackson in the meeting itself! The ISO has joined with SA in preventing our supporters and others from speaking at rallies, because we cannot be trusted to let such reactionary or pro-capitalist speeches go without comment. Their objection to giving any platform to others on their left also made them prevent a Partisan Defense Committee representative from speaking at a Chicago rally November 7 — to announce another rally for Mumia!

League for the Revolutionary Party supporters will be doubling our efforts in workplaces, unions and college campuses to build the campaign to free Mumia. We believe that this article contributes to the political discussion that must go on over both immediate and deeper issues. To that end, we invite comments from our readers.

Over time the working class will fit itself to take the lead in all struggles against exploitation and oppression. Only when capitalism is overthrown will both racism and exploitation be ended. The revolutionary workers' state will put to death the imperialist system which has imprisoned fighters for the working class and oppressed throughout its miserable history throughout the world.

***Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free All Political Prisoners!  
Down With Capitalism's Racist Death Penalty!***

### Support from South African Workers

*The following is excerpted from a statement issued by the Workers International Vanguard League in November.*

To Mumia Abu-Jamal, his friends, family and supporters:

News of the setback in the legal process was received by us on this past Monday from our friends in New York and a friend in Sweden. Despite the short notice we immediately informed as many as possible of the organizations who have been involved in the campaign so far. . . . Among other organizations, the trade union federation of almost 2 million members, COSATU, has endorsed support for this campaign. . . .

The fact that an innocent man can be kept in jail for 17 years and now faces execution shows us that the U.S. state machinery is an instrument of violence against all those who stand up for justice, who fight against the continuing exploitation of workers in particular and oppression in general. . . . The united working class has been the motor of change in South Africa, before and since 1994. Today workers are seeing how the painful experience of guerrilla struggle has ended in maintaining the slave capitalist relations in our country — there are over 9 million unemployed today while the ex-guerrilla leaders now are directors of companies on the stock exchange.

Let us organize the community in general but centrally, the working class, as the driving force of history. Although U.S. imperialism controls our country along with other imperialists, let us reach out across the oceans as the united working class, fighting against every inch of injustice. The very day-to-day struggle against the capitalists and their system to all the corners of the globe emphasizes the stark reality of the life and death battle that is in front of our eyes and yet at the same time, all over the world.

## Mass Action Can Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther, life-long militant activist and well-known journalist, faces execution, framed for the killing of a Philadelphia cop in 1981. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court recently rejected his appeal for a new trial despite massive evidence of his innocence.

Mumia's case is an extreme example of the oppression suffered by people of color in the U.S.: racist police brutality, legal injustice and media lies. It is even more important because the ruling class has targeted Mumia for his courageous exposure of this oppression. The struggle to free him should be a rallying call to all who want to do away with racism and the repression of fighters against this system.

When Mumia was last threatened with imminent execution in 1995, an international campaign saved his life. Now a campaign is again underway. A major focal point will be a day of protest in Philadelphia and San Francisco on April 24. The LRP is energetically building for this event and appeals to all our readers to join us in this effort.

The facts that prove Mumia's innocence "beyond all reasonable doubt" are widely available. We refer our readers to PR 49; we will send our articles and leaflets on this case free of charge upon request. We also encourage readers to check the website [www.mumia.org](http://www.mumia.org), which has links to useful articles, campaign news and the contact numbers of coalitions to defend Mumia in various cities.

Mass action is urgently needed to stop the state's murder of Mumia Abu-Jamal. This article will discuss some of the key issues facing the campaign to free Mumia and the specific role revolutionaries can play.

### RACE AND CLASS

Marxist revolutionaries see the frame-up of Mumia and other political prisoners as part of capitalism's assault on the



The broadest, most powerful campaign to free Mumia is needed. How to achieve this must be discussed.

workers and oppressed. The ruling class cuts wages, slashes welfare and other social services, and replaces full-time with part-time jobs in its attempts to boost profits. The capitalists and their politicians target people of color most viciously, and in particular try to criminalize Blacks, Latinos and immigrants. This divide-and-conquer strategy is meant to set white workers against people of color to prevent a united fightback by the entire working class. The revolutionary alternative to the ruler's reactionary scheme is a united struggle of the working class against racism and exploitation.

At this moment, thanks to the Democratic Party and a craven trade union bureaucracy that controls the only powerful working class institutions in this country, the overall level of class struggle in the U.S. is very low. Nevertheless, layers

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## U.S. Hands off Puerto Rico!

The leaflet reprinted below was addressed to a demonstration in New York for Puerto Rican independence in July of last year. It appeared during the month-long telephone workers' strike in Puerto Rico but before the general strike of July 7 and 8.

The strike movement was a watershed in the modern history of Puerto Rico. It arose to stop the Puerto Rican government's planned privatization of the Puerto Rico Telephone Company (PRTC, "la Telefónica") and gained the support and participation of the majority of the working class of Puerto Rico. At various times the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport near San Juan, the center of San Juan, most large towns, many factories and every major shopping mall on the island were shut down. Hundreds of thousands of workers and student supporters battled riot cops to a

standstill.

This struggle of the working class against the capitalists and their government was also a struggle of an oppressed nation against the imperialist oppressor, the United States. Although the majority of Puerto Rican workers do not currently favor independence, their battle cry during the strike was, "Puerto Rico No Se Vende!" — "Puerto Rico's Not for Sale!" — and the Puerto Rican flag became the battle flag of the struggle.

The massive and inspiring class battle of the Puerto Rican working class failed to achieve its immediate and critical objective. The telephone workers returned to work in late July with an agreement for conditional amnesty, and reactionary Governor Pedro Rosselló of the Partido Nuevo

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