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# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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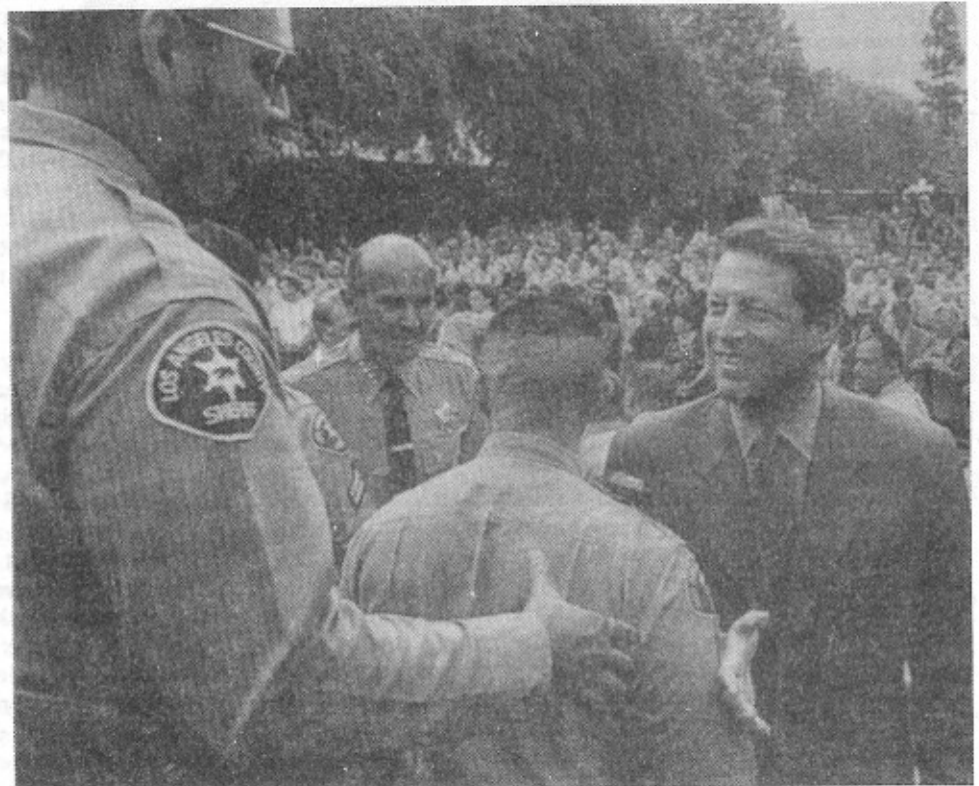
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## Bush/Gore: Is There a Lesser Evil?

by Bob Wolfe

This year's ruling-class charade known as the presidential election has been a crashing bore. With months of campaigning left, polls show that voters are even more turned off than usual. Bourgeois journalists attribute this to the personalities of the leading candidates, Tweedle-dull and Tweedle-dumb, two preppie sons of established political families who give the term "mediocrity" awesome new dimensions. Moreover, aside from temporary tactical moves, both candidates have tried to hug the political center, so the issues that divide them are relatively few.

But the lackluster character of the campaign is in reality attributable to far deeper economic and class conditions rather than personal liabilities. This article will address these factors in recent history as well as the present. We also point to two additional factors that must be taken into account. First, there are signs that the slowly accelerating pace of working-class struggle could reach the point where it affects ruling-class strategies and thereby the election.



Al Gore and friends, Los Angeles police brass. Democrats and Republicans unite with cops to attack working-class and oppressed people.

### "IT'S THE ECONOMY, STUPID!"

Second, while the campaign offers great material for comedians, it is no laughing matter for the working class. Workers at home and abroad face even more devastating attacks from whichever of these contenders wins the imperial presidency and thereby takes leadership of the world's dominant bourgeois state.

Bill Clinton in his first campaign trumpeted the theme, "It's the economy, stupid." Bush and Gore know that the character of this year's election has been determined by the level of prosperity in the U.S. Calculations about which layers of the population share in that prosperity are crucial to their

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# LRP/COFI Report

## STRUGGLES AGAINST STATE TERROR

The LRP has prioritized the fight against police terror and the racist criminal "justice" system in areas where we have active supporters, including New York, Washington, Chicago and now Minneapolis. Events we have attended have shown the potential for a fighting movement. But misleadership has either held back that potential by limiting protests, as in New York (see p. 40), or has simply refused to carry out any protests at all, despite persistent acts of racist police terror, as in both the Chicago and the D.C. area. Our bulletin for mass working-class action against police terror was favorably received at events in Washington, New York and Chicago, including conferences and rallies for Mumia Abu-Jamal. (Write for this bulletin or check our website.)

On June 22, Black inmate Shaka Sankofa (formerly Gary Graham) was executed in Texas. The process was televised in excruciating detail. Shaka, who had transformed himself into a conscious fighter against racism and repression, resisted his executioners to the last instant. The LRP has joined in a number of demonstrations to stop "this state-sanctioned murder," as Shaka put it. We must heed his words and take forward the struggle to abolish the racist death penalty.

The LRP has also been steadfast in attending and building for protests against the U.S. attacks on the people of Vieques, Puerto Rico (see p. 20). We believe that workers in the U.S. must consistently oppose "our own" country's imperialist attacks on Puerto Rico.

Forging the broadest solidarity on Vieques is not served by the sectarian behavior of the Vieques Support Campaign toward others in the struggle. The Campaign called an emergency public rally against the U.S. Navy in Vieques on June 22. But they expelled supporters of the International Group (IG) from this protest, for raising chants like "Mobilize the Working Class to Stop the Bombing in Vieques!" The LRP joined the IG's chants and came to their defense. The Campaign hacks behaved in a completely unjustified and threatening manner. It is no way to build a movement.

As well as attending the D.C. protests against the IMF/World Bank in April, the LRP is planning an active revolutionary intervention at both the Republican and Democratic Convention protests this summer.

We are also organizing new study groups and forums in New York, Chicago and Washington. Please get in touch with us to get involved with our discussions and activities.

## WASHINGTON LRP

In Washington we participated critically in planning meetings for the protests against the IMF and World Bank. We stressed that a successful protest, like that in Seattle against the WTO, would require mass mobilization by the unions. This in turn would require a political fight against the pro-capitalist and pro-Democratic Party union bureaucracy, which did not want masses of workers in D.C.

Despite our political opposition to the dominant perspective of the planners, LRPers from D.C., Chicago and New York intervened intensively in the "A16" protests to try to win radicalizing youth to a revolutionary program. As we report in our article on page 10, the main rally on April 16 was a flop. Another key event was the march against police repression on April 15, led by the Workers World Party (WWP). As it became clear that the march was being led into a police trap, LRPers attempted to warn other militants to avoid unnecessary arrest. Unfortunately as a consequence of the cops' thirst for repression and WWP's tactical foolishness, several hundred people (including bystanders) were arrested for no good purpose.

## NEW YORK LRP

At City College, we were heavily active around the trial of the police killers of Amadou Diallo. We held our own forum, and then when the verdict exonerating the cops came down, we organized a successful teach-in on February 29, inviting as many groups and individuals as we could. (We note that the campus ISO rejected any cooperation out of hand.)

One speaker at the teach-in proposed a rally against police recruitment on campus. The LRP took the lead in building for this event. On March 2, about fifty students and staff members gathered to march to the NYPD recruiting table. The college administration had warned the cops in advance to take the day off, given the Diallo verdict and the subsequent murder of Malcolm Ferguson. But police recruitment on CUNY campuses is ongoing. Further action is needed, since the city aims to recruit more cops of color to touch up their image.

In the hospital union, the June Delegate Assembly of 1199 was solely and obscenely dedicated to pushing through a dues increase. LRPers focused on a different matter: we

*continued on page 29*

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# ISO vs. SWP: Who's More Opportunist?

by Matthew Richardson

Early this year a fierce faction fight erupted within the International Socialist Tendency (IST), between its U.S. affiliate, the International Socialist Organization (ISO), and the IST's dominant center, the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The SWP leadership accused the ISO of adopting a sectarian and abstentionist attitude on the Seattle street battles last fall, as well as on last year's imperialist war against Serbia. The ISO in turn accused the British of making false charges, bureaucratically intervening in the U.S. group behind the backs of the leaders, and hiding the collapse or disappearance of groups in other countries.

Both leaderships kept these arguments hidden from their members for months. Then, shortly before his death in April, the IST's leader and theoretical guru, Tony Cliff, co-signed letters denouncing the leadership of the ISO. This opened the floodgates. The British sent documents directly to the ISO's membership attacking the American leaders. The Americans responded in kind. One group claiming to be an opposition inside the ISO posted the documents on the internet and promised to wage a factional struggle of its own.

Cliff's denunciation of the ISO leadership is hardly without precedent in the IST. Condemnations by the SWP of individuals and groups in the tendency are common and are almost always followed swiftly by expulsions. The British SWP rules over the IST on a totally undemocratic basis. There is no leading international committee; the SWP deals separately with each national section without informing the others of political issues in dispute, splits, etc. Its excuse is that the IST is not a genuine International, a self-fulfilling argument which in its essentials the U.S. leadership accepts.

But a number of factors set this fight apart. First, the SWP leaders have not formed a strong alternative leadership inside the ISO with which to replace the current leaders. Indeed their bureaucratic attacks seem to have united the U.S. leaders against the British. Second, Cliff's death has robbed the British SWP of the authority that enabled them to dictate to the national sections. As we will see, such bureaucratic rule is essential to holding the IST together through its many opportunist twists and turns.

Third, the fight broke out at a time when the SWP is taking a sharp turn to the right — to parliamentarism, a form of reformism it has historically denounced. It is also a time of deepening opportunism for the ISO, both in the campaign against the death penalty and in the upcoming U.S. presidential election, in which it is considering supporting the pro-capitalist and nationalist campaign of Ralph Nader. Finally, this fight follows a number of splits of groups or whole sections from the IST in affiliates as widespread as Australia, South Africa, Germany, Greece, Belgium and Canada.

## NOT WITH A BANG BUT A WHIMPER

The IST is a notoriously opportunist tendency. Like all those whom Lenin and Trotsky labelled centrists because

they vacillate between revolutionary rhetoric and reformist practice, the IST habitually sacrifices its purported revolutionary views whenever it sees an opportunity to cozy up to reformist union and political leaders. Its priority is to sweep up new recruits through militant cheerleading of reform struggles. The IST rejects the revolutionary approach of combining proposals for the immediate workers' struggles with political challenges to the reformist leaders designed to expose their reluctance to lead the struggles to victory.

The faction fight seems to have ended as quickly and



*Angry Serbs hurl bricks at U.S. troops in NATO operation. IST opposed NATO but endorsed other imperialist 'peacekeepers.'*

arbitrarily as it started. In the face of such sharp differences, any genuine revolutionary would want to argue them to a clear conclusion. The ISO leaders defended themselves against the SWP's charges but aimed to avoid a fight; they never addressed what was behind the SWP's attacks. In one of the internet documents, they whimpered:

**We do not believe that there are principled differences between the ISO and the SWP. Nor are some of the issues raised ... matters that require complete political agreement between revolutionaries, especially between revolutionaries in different countries. ... We do not want a faction fight and have sought to avoid one.**

That is: we don't criticize your perspectives and activities, so why don't you return the favor? That way we can stay together, doing whatever we want in our respective countries.

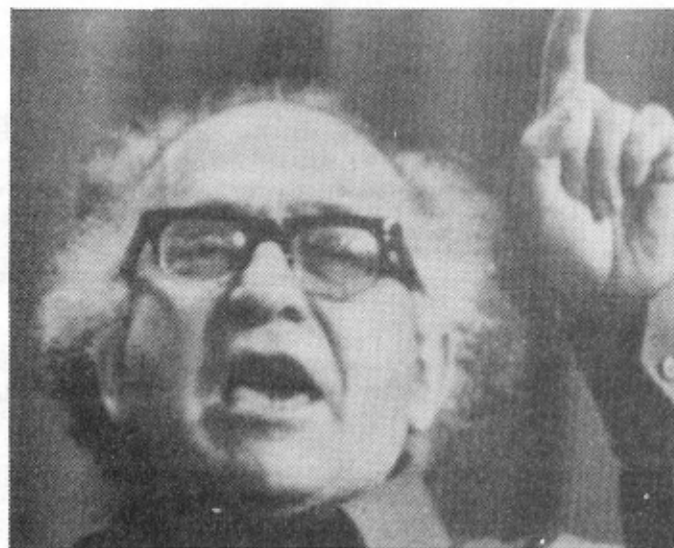
Little more than two months later, with the SWP leaders intransigent, there are hints that the ISO leaders are preparing to split from the IST. They have reportedly broken all forms of regular cooperation with the SWP, from sending literature to participating in their annual conference. They have dodged a faction fight because they wanted to avoid the political debate that a fight would have meant. In the end, a split may be the only way for them to avoid a debate.

Of course, the SWP leaders were not interested in a political struggle either. Their criticisms of the ISO were aimed not at politically persuading the ISO leaders but simply at

hammering them into line as obedient yes-men and -women.

Nor have the reported opposition groups inside the ISO followed through on their promises. At the ISO's Summer School in Chicago June 8-11, where numerous sessions provided an opportunity to reach the group's national membership, no ISO or ex-ISO opposition raised its voice. The only challenge to the ISO's opportunism came from the League for the Revolutionary Party. And our supporters were answered by the ISO leadership not with politics but with attempted slander, threats and finally a physical attack.

The fact that the faction fight seems to have ended with no clear resolution makes a discussion of the issues all the more important. Over the years, the ISO's concentration on upper-



*The late Tony Cliff, founder of International Socialist tendency. Cliffism rested on bureaucratic leadership and political opportunism.*

class college campuses has supplied it with many basically liberal members with no real interest in revolutionary Marxism or political debate. But it has also attracted some people genuinely searching for revolutionary socialism, some of whom we met at the Summer School. We hope that these comrades will find ways to learn and stand up for revolutionary politics; the purpose of this article is to assist in that struggle.

#### **THE SWP TAILS LEFT-LABOURISM ...**

A hallmark of Cliffism is sudden and arbitrary changes of perspectives that are enforced on the members by a bureaucratic regime. Such a turn is the background for the recent falling out.

For years the SWP had declared that the class struggle was in a "downturn," during which revolutionaries could play only a minimal role in the working class. Rather it worked mostly in middle-class protest campaigns. Thus it played a negligible role in the great British miners' strike of 1984-5, while it put its efforts into building fronts like the Anti-Nazi League.

But in the mid-1990's, the SWP announced a turn toward the working class and mass recruitment. This turn was driven not by any massive upsurge in workers' struggles in Britain (the workers' movement there remains on the defensive), but by the collapse of the Labour Party left typified by figures like miners' leader Arthur Scargill and the "Trotskyist"

groups that were inside the Labour Party — the traditional trap for radicalizing workers. The SWP hoped that as disenchantment with the right-wing "New Labour" government of Tony Blair grew, it would fill the vacuum. Its method has been simply to pose as the militant alternative to Blair.

For genuine Marxists the crisis of left-Labourism offered a great opportunity to expose reformism and win workers to revolutionary communism. But for the Cliffites it meant adapting to Labourism and presenting the SWP as the home for reformists who are being driven out of Labour. As one SWP leader told the party's 1996 conference:

**There are tens of thousands of workers questioning their allegiances to the Labour Party. Tony Blair is depriving them of their natural political home. This presents a historic opportunity for socialists in Britain, we have a chance of growing considerably.**

Most recently, this perspective has led the SWP to make a sharp turn to parliamentarism. The SWP has throughout its history refused to run electoral campaigns against the Labour Party, preferring to encourage workers to vote for Labour because it's "their" party. In this way, they avoided an open struggle against the Labour Party leadership and its henchmen in the union bureaucracy and instead have recruited by appearing as the "best militants."

In 1996, Blair had inflicted a massive defeat on the Labour left, removing the party's constitutional clause committing it to nationalized property and a redistribution of wealth. Scargill responded by splitting from Labour and initiating the ill-fated Socialist Labour Party (SLP) to challenge Labour in elections (See "Death Agony of the Labour Left" in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 52.) Scargill's bureaucracy, which the SWP had no interest in challenging, was able to suppress the far left, and he still enjoyed support among a layer of industrial workers the SWP had remained aloof from.

The SWP reacted in familiar fashion, opposing the SLP with rhetoric that condemned socialist participation in elections as inevitably leading to reformism, and instead pinned its hopes on a revival of extra-parliamentary struggle after the election of a Blair government:

**In words it is possible to talk about combining serious intervention in the elections with struggle outside the [House of] Commons. In practice the two pull in opposite directions. The search for votes pushes a party towards a softening of its message, towards a search for accommodation with the union leaders in order to secure backing and finance. The alternative is to center on struggle and to recognize that in any situation short of an insurrection revolutionary socialists will appeal to only a minority of the class. (*Socialist Worker*, Nov. 25, 1995.)**

The upsurge of struggle expected by the SWP did not materialize, but a new move toward a left electoral alternative to Labour did. The popular left reformist Ken Livingstone, deprived of Labour's nomination for mayor of London by the Party's right-wing leaders, ran an independent campaign. Livingstone enjoyed popular support among workers, but, unlike Scargill, he did not control even the semblance of an organizational structure that could prevent the SWP from recruiting among his base. So the SWP responded in typically opportunist fashion, dropping its anti-electoralist rhetoric and jumping on the Livingstone bandwagon. It campaigned for Livingstone virtually uncritically (despite his anti-working class bloc with the bourgeois Greens and a bitter attack on

his socialist cheerleaders), and led an electoral bloc, the London Socialist Alliance, which ran a purely reformist campaign for local offices.

Although the LSA did rather poorly in the vote, the SWP (and other centrists) hailed the result. Now the SWP seems to be pushing for the LSA to become a permanent electoral front or even a new party. The SWP's policy confirms the prediction we made in our PR 52 article: faced with the collapse of Labour reformism, the centrist left would seek not to organize a revolutionary burial team but rather to revive left reformism in the form of a new reformist party.

To cover this right turn, the SWP developed a perspective that the world has entered a period like the 1930's — in "slow motion." But this is absurd: our times are not like the 1930's, with massive class struggles between forces of revolution and counterrevolution. The current period is only transitional to such a time; in the imperialist countries it is characterized mostly by defensive working-class struggles. The underlying contradictions of the world economy are producing crises throughout the "third world" and the weaker imperialist countries, and the biggest imperialist powers' uneven prosperity is only temporary. A new worldwide "Great Depression" and profound mass upheavals lies ahead but is not yet here.

#### ... WHILE THE ISO TAILS MIDDLE-CLASS PROTESTS

The ISO has tried to *combine* the SWP's opportunist turn to workers' struggles and mass recruitment (see our polemic, "ISO's Right Turn to Labor," in PR 51) with its focus on various middle-class campaigns, like anti-sweatshop campaigns on college campuses and the liberal campaign against the death penalty.

When the Americans refused to blindly follow the latest directive from London, they were attacked by the British leaders for not throwing enough forces into the Seattle protests last fall and in general for not adapting enough to an allegedly new mass anti-capitalist consciousness. No doubt the Seattle protests were an important expression of a confused, populist militancy — primarily among layers of students and the middle class. But the SWP hailed them as evidence of an "anti-capitalist mood" internationally that represents a "profound shift in working-class consciousness." (*Socialist Review*, January 2000.) The ISO defended its approach, claiming on the one hand that it did the best it could in Seattle, while on the other arguing that the British mistake a "reformist mood" for a revolutionary one.

Opportunism is inevitably nationalist, because it means capitulating to reformist forces which always take forms specific to each country. What set the leaderships of the SWP

and ISO against one another is their different national opportunist interests. The British grossly exaggerate the radicalization that led to Seattle, but it is not simply a misjudgment; it is a necessary rationale for their domestic right turn. After all, Cliffite leaders in both Britain and the U.S. have often justified "throwing open the doors of the party" by referring to supposedly similar turns made by Lenin in 1905 and 1917. In the absence of actual revolutions like those in Russia, they invented the "strong anti-capitalist mood" and "major political turning-point" of Seattle.

In the U.S., however, the limitations of Seattle are too clear for even the ISO to base a new perspective on. Moreover, a radicalization in the U.S. cannot be expected to go in the same direction as that which the SWP expects in Britain. Without a Labour Party or a left-reformist layer of union bureaucrats to adapt to, the ISO can only maintain its focus on middle-class campaign movements.

#### DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, SAME OPPORTUNISM

The differences over perspectives belie the fact that both leaderships share the same opportunist approach. Even on Seattle — while the ISO now says that the anti-globalization protests are evidence only of a new reformist rather than a revolutionary mood, last fall it hailed Seattle just as uncritically as their comrades in Britain, writing that "the main trend ... in Seattle was firmly anti-capitalist."

Of course, the ISO follows the same method of watering down criticisms of reformist misleaders and posing as the "best builders" of reform movements as the SWP. For example, in its current focus of activity, the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, the ISO moved to the right at the first chance of uniting with liberal politicians. When demands for the abolition of the death penalty coincided with scandals that exposed outrageous frame-ups and wrongful convictions of death row inmates, some Democratic and Republican politicians began to talk of the need for a moratorium on all executions. This move was designed to head off a potentially mass movement to abolish the death penalty and to institute reforms that would strengthen it against future challenges. The ISO responded by downplaying their slogan for abolition of the death penalty and uncritically hailing the idea of a moratorium. While a moratorium would be a temporary victory, by not warning of its dangers the ISO continues to help the bourgeois politicians divert the struggle. (See "Death Penalty Moratorium Debate" in PR 59.)

More generally, signs of what the ISO's future capitulations will look like are already appearing. In the May 12 issue of its newspaper, *Socialist Worker*, the ISO came out very mildly against Ralph Nader's presidential candidacy. Its criti-

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cism focused on his style and some of his non-progressive positions, rather than on the crucial question of the middle-class character of his campaign and party. (See our article on Nader on page 27.) The ISO also claimed he wasn't linked to any movement: "A real left-wing alternative would be a welcome change in U.S. politics. But it's not clear that Nader is really interested in that."

No, it is perfectly clear that Nader is running a leftish bourgeois campaign and seeking middle-class votes and activism; the ISO is not concerned about that but only about the amount of middle-class support he attracts. What he's not doing is building a *working-class* alternative.

In our Bulletin for the ISO's Summer School, we foresaw that the ISO might opportunistically have to change its line:

The ISO ... has to worry that this campaign is aimed at its own target audience of students, middle-class activists and union members. How hostile it remains toward Nader will be determined by how big a middle-class and labor-bureaucratic groundswell develops. ... Given the character of the ISO's recruitment, it is quite possible that a substantial portion of its transient membership will vote for Nader.

Thus it is not surprising that less than a month after its initial statement against Nader, the line *has* opportunistically changed. The June 9 *Socialist Worker* editorial discussed Nader's campaign without much criticism, now noticing that he did have the makings of a movement behind him:

Nader's track record is mixed. In 1996, he was the Green Party presidential candidate, but he barely ran a campaign — and in the end told voters to support Clinton if Bob Dole had a chance to win. But if Nader remains serious about this run — as he has so far — his campaign could become a focal point for all the newly radicalized people who took to the streets in Seattle and Washington DC.

That would mean that real issues important to ordinary people — like corporate greed and the destruction of the environment — would be on the table in Election 2000. And that would be a welcome change from the usual election-year doubletalk.

And at the Summer School, any number of ISO members, including leaders, argued for "critical" support. Clearly the ISO is considering encouraging a vote for Nader. And judging by the editorial just cited, along with the entire history of Cliffism's attitude towards reformists, it will be barely critical.

This is not simply a tactical mistake. It is a violation of a basic principle of Marxism — uncompromising struggle for the organizational and political independence of the working class. Lenin and Trotsky, for example, explained that critical electoral support could be considered for bourgeois-led workers' parties like British Labour, with the purpose of exposing their leaders. But for Marxists to endorse outright

bourgeois parties would mean supporting the class enemy.

If the Cliffites offer political support to Nader, it will not be the first time they've crossed the class line. Recent years have seen them vote for the bourgeois ANC in South Africa (after splitting over the question), as well as regularly encourage a vote for the liberal capitalist PASOK party in Greece. Today at latest report the IST section in Zimbabwe is supporting the bourgeois-democratic, pro-IMF Movement for Democratic Change in the upcoming election.

#### THE KOSOVO WAR ISSUE

Another issue between the SWP and ISO leaderships was the imperialist war against Serbia, although their differences



London Socialist Alliance defended 'old Labour' reformism.

were hard to see in public. Both groups campaigned against NATO's bombing, but neither went beyond "Stop this War!" rhetoric to stand for the defense of Serbia against imperialist attack and thus for the military defeat of the NATO forces, as was the duty of revolutionary internationalists. Likewise, neither the SWP nor the ISO gave anything but paper support for the right of self-determination for Kosovo, despite the SWP's claim that the ISO went overboard on this question. But the most important issue regarding the SWP-ISO squabble over the war was only hinted at, in the documents' references to the role of the U.N.

Since the U.N. is just as imperialist an organization as NATO, it was necessary for revolutionaries to combat those opponents of NATO's war who saw the U.N. as an acceptable alternative for bringing peace to the Balkans. The SWP complained that the ISO made too big a point of this, since the U.N. played little role in the war. But in fact the ISO was no less opportunist than the SWP. During the war the ISO mostly criticized NATO and the U.N. as incompetent peacekeepers, not imperialist warmakers.

The U.N. indeed was bypassed to a degree at this stage

of the Balkan war, but other imperialist outfits were on the scene. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for example, policed Kosovo for the imperialist powers before NATO's bombing got under way. During the bombing, Pierre Bourdieu, a prominent French left intellectual, circulated a petition among his fellow academics condemning NATO but calling for finding "elements of a multi-national police force (embracing notably Serbs and Albanians) in the ranks of the OSCE to enforce a transitional agreement." This letter was signed by Alex Callinicos, a leading member of the SWP, the IST's International Tendency Organizer — and the co-signer of Cliff's letters denouncing the ISO for, among other things, being "sidetracked by questions such as ... the United Nations."

For a socialist to advocate any kind of imperialist intervention means crossing the class line. Callinicos did it, the SWP agreed to it, and the ISO leadership covered it up. None of them was sidetracked from trying to unite with every pro-imperialist pacifist they could find by the task of standing firm against imperialism. They are all contemptible traitors to the "international socialism" they preach.

### CLIFFISM VS. REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM

One question that is raised in every political struggle inside the IST is democracy, or rather the lack of it, inside the international tendency as well as its national sections. What any would-be revolutionary in the ISO must realize is that the bureaucratic regimes of all Cliffite groups, and the SWP's colonial rule internationally, are necessary expressions of their basic politics. Even after Cliff's death it is impossible to have what many dissident ISTers have searched for in the past, a "Cliffism without Cliff" — that is, a tendency not run bureaucratically.

The increasingly frequent shifts that mark the IST groups' tailing of petty-bourgeois reformists demand heavy restrictions on democratic decision-making. You can't arbitrarily change your line on parliamentarism or Nader overnight and allow serious debates with members who still believe the line in yesterday's newspaper. Similarly, the policy of recruiting members on the basis of abysmally low levels of political understanding, plus the emphasis on activism at the expense of cadre education, inevitably opens IST groups to rampant political confusion and instability; this can only be compensated for by a bureaucratic regime.

A break from the worst bureaucratic and politically opportunistic features of Cliffism demands a break from the core theoretical and programmatic positions that define it. Those in the IST who want to take up this struggle will have to compare the IST's politics to the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. They will also have to reject the sectarian self-censorship promoted by the IST leaders, who advise their members to sneer at other leftists and ignore what they say. ISO members should consult the views of all groups and make up their minds for themselves. To this end, we conclude with a brief review of the characteristic IST positions that sharply conflict with a revolutionary Marxist understanding of the world.

#### 1. Cliff's Bankrupt Theory of Stalinism

Cliff and the IST are best known for their theory of Stalinism as "bureaucratic state capitalism." While the theory's anti-Stalinism allows the Cliffites to claim it as a serious Marxist analysis confirmed by the demise of the Stalinist states, in fact the opposite is true.

Our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, presents our understanding of Stalinism as a deformed statified capitalism resting on the usurped gains of the 1917 revolution, most importantly nationalized property, that made the Stalinist system an especially crisis-ridden form of capitalism. We analyze Cliff's theory (as well as various "deformed workers' state" and "bureaucratic collectivism" theories) and explain why Cliff's was useless for foreseeing the demise of the Stalinist system. Cliff predicted that Stalinism would triumph over traditional capitalism, since bureaucratic state capitalism



*Ken Livingstone won election, attacked his left cheerleaders.*

was "the highest stage which capitalism can ever reach." It followed that "From a state-owned and planned economy there can be no retracing of steps to an anarchic, private-ownership economy." Reality said otherwise.

When Stalinism collapsed in East Europe and the USSR, the IST refused to defend the surviving working-class gains and applauded the "death of Communism." Privatization, they said, was not a defeat for the workers but a "step sideways" in which the workers had little interest. Cliff's theory of state capitalism thus proved bankrupt both as a tool for predicting the course of events and as a guide to action.

#### 2. Rejection of the Leninist Struggle Against Reformism

The entire history of Leninism and Trotskyism is one of a relentless struggle against reformist misleaders of the working class. One of the formative struggles that shaped Bolshevism was that against "economism" — the view that workers should be approached essentially with slogans and arguments for immediate struggles and not bothered with criticisms of reformist leaders or with political slogans that they are judged not ready to immediately accept. One such view prominent among socialists is that the working class can become revolutionary "spontaneously" — on the basis of its day-to-day struggles alone, without the educational assistance of the organization of the most class-conscious workers, the vanguard revolutionary party.

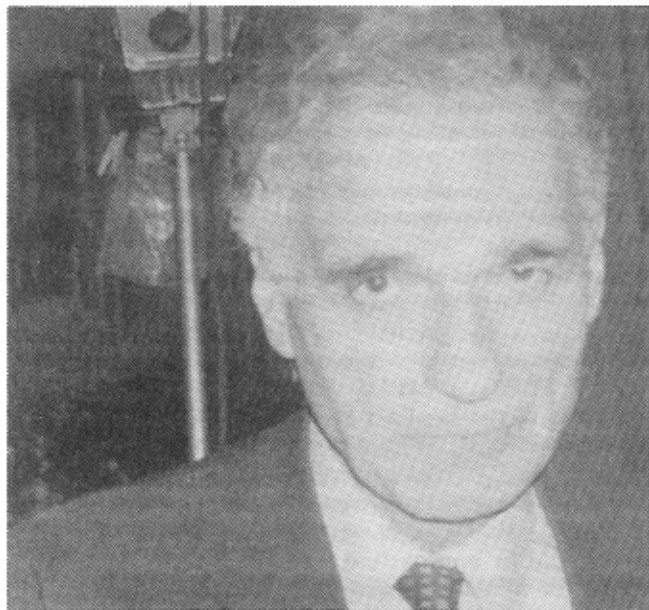
Lenin argued that the economist strategy amounted to refusing to challenge the reformist leaders and thereby helping them control the workers. For both Lenin and Trotsky, the working class could only come to revolutionary class consciousness if it could combine its own experiences of

the struggle with the revolutionary party's relentless efforts to expose the misleaders and the limited possibilities of reforming capitalism.

Cliffism explicitly rejects such an approach. As we have seen, its method is to try to be "the best builders" of reform struggles while refraining from any serious criticisms of the reformist leaders that could make bureaucratic cooperation more difficult. Since the working class can become "spontaneously revolutionary" through mass struggle, there is no need to launch an open struggle for a revolutionary program against the reformists, nor to raise any demands or arguments that seem to be "ahead" of most militant workers' current levels of understanding. This approach, of course, encourages reformist at the expense of revolutionary consciousness. And given the propensity for reformist leaders to betray struggles, it is not at all the best way to build the workers' movement but rather a sure way to lead it to defeat.

Genuine Marxists see a fundamental difference between workers' desires to fight for reforms and *reformism* — the ideology that opposes revolution with a program for the reform of capitalism. But the Cliffites (like most centrist groups) really believe that workers must go through a stage of reformist consciousness before they can embrace revolutionary views. To speed this process up, they encourage support for reformists in the hope that will encourage militancy among workers.

Thus, as the crisis of reformism deepens, the Cliffites are increasingly led to prop up and even replace the weakening reformist misleaders. Thus in Britain, just as the Labour left enters its death agony, the Cliffites rush to support a purely



*ISO considering support for U.S. bourgeois nationalist Ralph Nader. Class line is invisible to middle-class left.*

reformist — in fact, popular-frontist — electoral campaign in the image of "old Labour." Similarly in the U.S., as the crisis of Democratic Party liberalism deepens, the ISO is drawn to support the man who is trying to revive it, Ralph Nader. The Cliffites think they will build up reformist leaders today only to outsmart them tomorrow by recruiting their supporters. But all they really do is help revive reformism and build it into a force capable of leading more struggles to defeat.

### 3. Rejection of the Leninist Vanguard Party

Lenin's conception of the vanguard revolutionary party is based on the need for the most class-conscious workers to organize themselves as an alternative leadership of their class in open and uncompromising struggle against the reformist leaders. Cliffism rejects this approach in favor of posing as a better leadership for reformist struggles; the revolutionary party is seen as a "network of militants," not conscious revolutionaries. This leads directly to watering down the purportedly revolutionary program to allow socialists to unite with "militants" and to recruit members on the basis of minimal political agreement. The only guarantee of the supposed revolutionary character of the organization thus becomes an all-knowing leadership ready to bureaucratically enforce each new twist and turn.

### 4. Rejection of the Theory of Imperialism

Despite the evident bleeding dry of the "third world" through miserable wages and onerous debts, the Cliffites deny that the workers and peasants of Asia, Africa and Latin America are superexploited. They regard the poor countries that contain the great majority of the world's population as inessential for international capitalism and basically extraneous to it. Originally the Cliffites denied Lenin's theory that imperialism characterized the "highest stage of capitalism"; later they resumed using the term but without its content.

This attitude gives the IST a justification for not opposing imperialist wars when doing so would isolate it from its reformist allies. Thus the Cliffites did not defend Korea against the U.N.'s attack in the 1950's, but they did take Vietnam's side in the 1960's when there was a mass anti-war movement in the West. The SWP refused to take sides when Britain and Argentina went to war over the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands in 1982 — but finds it easy to denounce imperialist attacks against Iraq and Serbia when they are led by the U.S.

### 5. Denial of the Existence of a Labor Aristocracy

For genuine Marxists, reformism is not simply a problem of bad ideas; it has a material basis in capitalist society. Marx and Engels analyzed the corruption of the British workers' movement in the late 1800's. Lenin later made this a central element in his theory of imperialism, explaining that the super-profits drawn from the colonies allowed the capitalists to sustain a layer of relatively privileged workers with a stake in capitalism — a labor aristocracy. This layer formed the social foundation of reformism and opposed the revolutionary interests of the most exploited and oppressed workers.

Lenin understood that while subject to oppression and exploitation by capitalism, in the absence of working class leadership the labor aristocracy (and the petty-bourgeois middle strata of society in general), will defend their temporary and partial interests in the capitalist system at the expense of the masses of workers. Because the most oppressed workers have nothing to lose and everything to gain from the overthrow of capitalism, their immediate interests represent the historic interests of the working class as a whole, and it is they who must play the predominant role in leading the rest of their class. To build a party which could be depended on to fight for revolution meant always fighting for the party to sink its roots deeper in the most exploited layers of its class.

The most obvious symptom of the Cliffites' warped



perspective is the social character of their membership and the political views it embraces. While the IST may in theory ignore the existence of the labor aristocracy and the middle class in general, in practice it is linked to them. The fact that the ISO draws so many members from elite college campuses goes a long way toward explaining their snotty, know-it-all attitude. It also determines their comfort with a political perspective that treats workers as children who will be scared by being told hard truths — that socialism is necessary for human survival and that a vanguard workers' party is necessary for socialism. Instead, the IST expects workers to be led unconsciously toward socialism by making them jump through the hoops of only the most immediate and partial demands.

#### 6. Labor Aristocratic Contempt for the Oppressed

In the United States above all, a basic understanding of racial oppression is an absolute necessity for any revolutionary. The racial division of the working class works to turn people of color into a source of superexploitable labor while contributing to material privileges enjoyed by white workers, which encourages their support for capitalism and hostility to united working-class struggle. Thus capitalism divides the working class and uses the competition between both groups to lower all workers' wages and conditions.

But for the Cliffites, racism is little more than a set of bad ideas in white workers' heads. Callinicos wrote: "At most what white workers receive is the imaginary solace of being members of the superior race, which helps to blind them to where their real interests lie." (*Race and Class*, p. 44.)

Only the most privileged and smug "socialists" could not see that workers of color are more exploited and more impoverished than white workers, that white workers enjoy advantages in every aspect of life, from employment, housing, education and freedom from the worst police harassment. White workers will only be broken from the racist or just plain conservative views that many hold by an uncompromising struggle against every form of racist oppression and privilege. Despite the ISO's opposition to racism, their theory will inevitably misguide them when Black and Latino struggles come up directly against the interests of the labor bureaucracy. Their growing support for Ralph Nader, whose disdain for the struggles of the oppressed is palpable, is an indicator.

#### 7. The 'Socialism from Below' Sham

The IST sums up its political view as "socialism from below." This, they think, distinguishes them from all sorts of "socialisms from above" like Stalinism and electoral reformism. Indeed, this democratic, popular and activist formula can indeed seem like a healthy, pro-working class alternative.

But Cliffism's "socialism from below" is really an expression of their lowly estimation of the working class, an elitist conception of their own role. We have seen how the Cliffites betray their supposed commitment to the masses with their contemptible attitude toward the oppressed and their whitewashing of imperialism. And how by refusing to challenge the reformist illusions workers hold, the Cliffites only encourage support for the reformist leaders who help keep the masses enslaved.

Similar formulas were raised in Lenin's day. When ultra-leftists who rejected the need for revolutionary party leadership in the name of socialism coming "from below" — from the masses and not leaders — Lenin dismissed the whole idea

in the harshest terms:

**We hope that the reader will understand why the Russian Bolshevik, who has known this mechanism [the relationship between the revolutionary party and the masses] for twenty-five years . . . cannot help regarding all this talk about "from above" or "from below," about the dictatorship of leaders or the dictatorship of the masses, etc., as ridiculous and childish nonsense, something like discussing whether a man's left leg or right arm is of greater use to him. ("Left-Wing' Communism — An Infantile Disorder.")**

If only to refute the Cliffites' own misleading formulation, it can be said that Lenin understood that revolutionary class consciousness comes from both below and above: from the immediate interests and struggles of those most oppressed masses in the depths of the working class, and from the most class conscious workers organized in an "elite," vanguard revolutionary party; from the lessons taught by the party and from the way they are confirmed by the masses' experience of struggle.

In this struggle, Cliffism actually stands in the middle, between the open reformism of social democrats and genuine revolutionary Marxism. This is only an expression of the petty-bourgeois classes Cliffism really rests on, the intelligentsia and the labor aristocracy they deny exists.●

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# April in Washington: From Battle in Seattle to Fizzle in the Drizzle

"We would have won if they hadn't cheated."

So wrote one anarchist journalist, commenting on the D.C. police actions to harass and intimidate the demonstrators against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund who flocked to Washington in mid-April.

Indeed, the cops did not play by gentlemanly rules, although they were less violent than in Seattle. About a square mile of the U.S. capital city was sealed off, helicopters droned overhead and thousands of riot-gearred cops were posted throughout downtown D.C. The crackdown was designed to prevent a repetition of last fall's "battle in Seattle," where some 50,000 student, labor and environmentalist demonstrators forced the World Trade Organization to cancel its opening day session and contributed to the collapse of the talks.

Washington drew perhaps 15,000 people, and in the course of the week's events, over 1300 — about one-tenth of the participants! — were arrested. The cops violated civil liberties at will and detained hundreds for no legal reason. But that's their job: to maintain capitalist order, law or not. The widespread idea that the cops "cheated" to prevent a "legitimate" expression of public opinion betrays a high level of middle-class naivety about political repression in the United States, above all the daily attacks carried out against people of color.

## HOW TO FIGHT IMPERIALISM

About 10,000 showed up at the main permitted rally on April 16, with another few thousand taking part in the "direct action" attempts to disrupt the bankers' meetings. The next day's events were also supposed to feature a major rally and march, but they fizzled out under the combination of confused planning, rain and repression.

In our judgment the result was not a success, especially when compared to Seattle. As we wrote in our bulletin distributed at several of the week's events:

**[The IMF and World Bank] are the most powerful financial institutions on earth. ... the bloodsuckers who feed off mass misery and ravage the environment must be stopped, their stranglehold on the world economy ended. Seattle was a victory, and we hope Washington will be too; however, these anti-globalization actions are not the answer to the imperialist horrors infesting the world.**

The failure of the Washington protests, however, was not primarily the fault of the cops. The organizations leading the protests pushed agendas that have absolutely no hope of destroying imperialism or even restricting its crimes. For in reality, the strongest blows against IMF/World Bank policies have been mass upheavals by the working class around the world.

In Indonesia mass strikes, street battles and student protests brought down the Suharto dictatorship in 1998, in a struggle that erupted against the regime's enforcement of IMF dictates. General strikes in Korea and Zimbabwe in recent years were likewise aimed at IMF-backed austerity programs. The ouster early this year of the president of Ecuador by an unprecedented mobilization of indigenous peasants was in protest against U.S.-imposed neo-liberal

policies. In April, a powerful general strike shook Bolivia, against an IMF-ordered takeover of a state-owned water company by U.S. and British capitalists. A few weeks later there was a general strike by South African unionists against an austerity program pushed by the imperialist bankers.

Mass action by working people is the only way to end the crimes of imperialist capitalism. It is also the only way to get rid of imperialism and super-exploitation forever — through proletarian socialist revolution.

But even on their own terms, the D.C. leaders failed to deal a serious blow to the IMF & Co. Unlike in Seattle, the "direct action" protesters were kept physically separate from the great majority of demonstrators on April 16. That way their sit-downs and confrontations with the cops took place in comparative isolation, not supported by the voices and bodies of their fellow demonstrators. And many of the "anarchists," religious groups and others who sat down in the streets arranged to be peacefully and cooperatively arrested, as if the cops were collaborators in some publicity stunt.

The big-time labor leaders, who had tried with only partial success in Seattle to keep their troops away from the student and environmental actions, made sure in Washington that there was no contact: they held their rally four days earlier, and with a reactionary program in the service of imperialism. With national elections approaching, the last thing the bureaucrats want is a mass mobilization that could offer an alternative to their strategy of collaborating with the imperialist Democratic Party and the workers' supposed friend, Al Gore.

## "FIX IT OR NIX IT"?

Some of the organizations that sponsored the April events want the IMF and World Bank to reform. They demand that the financiers cancel the enormous debts owed to them, cease imposing their "structural adjustment" programs that deepen poverty and inequality, and compensate the peoples and governments harmed by their policies.

Others say that the evils the IMF promotes are the very reason for its existence and therefore it must be abolished — not repaired so that it can do its work with a better cover. Their goal was to shut down the April IMF/World Bank meetings to awaken the public to their crimes — and ultimately to shut down the institutions themselves.

This is the "fix it or nix it" debate that runs through the "anti-globalization" movement. One position is more militant than the other — but both in the end are reformist, since even the "abolitionists" ignore the true nature of the IMF and World Bank. These institutions are the agents of the imperialist powers, the United States above all, which need them or similar institutions to carry out the inescapable profit-gouging demands of big capital. Forcing concessions from them requires a working-class struggle that recognizes them as part of a deadly class enemy.

The dispute among the protest leaders nevertheless ensured that the April 16 rally was politically pathetic. The anti-capitalist sentiment prominent in Seattle was largely absent, except in the slogans of the far left. The most prominent slogan was "Spank the Bank" — as if the World

Bank were a naughty child to be taught a lesson, not an imperialist predator to be destroyed. In general, the "Fix It or Nix It" debate meant that there were no unifying slogans except the most nebulous, e.g., "More World, Less Bank." The main banner on the podium read "Organize to Demand Justice for All." No wonder pro-imperialist Democratic Party politicians had no trouble addressing what should have been an anti-imperialist rally.

### THE REALITY OF IMPERIALISM

The real problem is not "globalization" — the spread of production across national borders and the diminution of the powers of national governments. The evil is imperialism, the capitalism of our time: the domination of the global economy by a narrow elite of nations ruled by an even narrower class of top capitalists. The IMF/World Bank are their servants.

Imperialism signifies capitalism in its epoch of decay. The neo-liberal policies that are pushed as inevitable consequences of globalization — privatization, "free trade," imperialist takeovers — derive from imperialism's weakness, not strength. Declining profit rates followed the post-World War II boom, and today's prosperity in the U.S. is both grossly unequal and faces a world in which economic crises have run rampant.

Imperialism is not just bankers and bureaucrats sitting in posh offices in world capitals. The real enforcers of their power are the armed forces of the capitalist rulers whose truncheons and guns serve to crush working-class people everywhere. The IMF is the NATO planes that blasted Serbia a year ago, the Indonesian militias that devastated East Timor for a quarter-century, the continuing bombing and genocidal strangulation of the Iraqi population by the U.S. and its U.N. allies — even the "People's Liberation Army" of "Communist" China, as we will see.

Because capitalism enforces its demands with bullets and blood, the only way to stop it is with real, not just symbolic power — the mass struggles of the international working class. Tragically, the mass eruptions from Indonesia to Ecuador fell short of proletarian revolution, the only real solution. The great majority of working people are not yet conscious of the full role of imperialism. They don't yet see how to break the grip of the nationalist leaderships that falsely claim to be anti-imperialist. To confront and defeat the counterrevolutionary armies, a revolutionary army is needed. That means building a general staff today, the nucleus of the workers' revolutionary party worldwide that can win the leadership of the mass upsurges tomorrow.

### "PRACTICAL" PROPOSALS

Of course, in the eyes of the reformist leaders, revolution is a pipedream. What is needed now, we were told, is practical accomplishments. But the anti-globalization proposals themselves prove that it is reformism that is utopian.

Look at some of the "practical" solutions the reformists offered. One sponsor of the April protests in Washington was the "50 Years Is Enough" Network for Global Economic Justice. Their list of demands against the World Bank and IMF amounted to a detailed proposal for self-reform. The financiers were urged to cancel the international debt of over 2 trillion dollars, halt privatization campaigns and use their capital not for profits but for reparations and rebuilding the devastation they have caused. This is indeed a pipedream, asking capitalism not to be capitalist!

In the same crackpot reformist spirit of relying on the

good will of the imperialists, the organization Jubilee 2000/USA declared: "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." Yes, and pigs should fly.

The IMF and World Bank do have policies for canceling the debts of the poorest countries, but these are shams. They amount to "canceling" debts that have already proved to be



*Student activist assaulted in Washington. Confrontations with cops need organized mass workers' defense.*

unpayable while maintaining exorbitant terms on the remainder. They are schemes to fool the working masses into collaborating in their own subjugation.

Some of the reformist organizations more clearly reflect needs of sectors of the business world. Global Exchange, for example, describes itself as "part of the Fair Trade Federation, an association of producers, wholesalers, and retailers, that is launching a major consumer education campaign in the U.S." This outfit relies on deals with capitalist retailers to safeguard the rights of super-exploited workers abroad — not on the struggles of the workers themselves.

Bourgeois morality is not far from bourgeois law and order. Global Exchange's leader in Seattle, Medea Benjamin, was roundly censured for her "peacekeeping" (a term properly analogous to what imperialist troops do around the world): she defended Niketown against anarchist protesters aiming to break a few windows, even suggesting that the cops should have arrested insufficiently peaceful protesters!

A few days before the April 16 rally, Global Exchange issued a statement entitled "Starbucks Gives In" announcing that it had signed a deal to stop picketing Starbucks coffee shops. In return for which Starbucks undertook to offer its customers, by the end of the year, "Fair Trade" coffee in

addition to its customary corporate brews. Some victory. Now you can go into your local Starbucks, unpicketed, and order a spanking new half-and-half — half super-exploited, half regular exploited. Enjoy.

Despite the “peacekeepers,” many demonstrators hoped to physically shut down the IMF and World Bank meetings. Aside from the fact that the ruling class and their cops were unlikely to be caught unprepared a second time, even preventing a meeting or two is in itself no answer. What was missing is a clear perspective about how to deal a lasting defeat to the institutions of capital.

The most radical of the official and semi-official plans came from the “Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc,” formed around several groupings styling themselves anarchist and “anti-authoritarian.” The bloc opposed the reformists’ nationalism and protectionism. But in its initial statement (March 7) it counterposed only the “individual’s right to act autonomously however they see fit,” including “aggressive self-defense or property destruction.” An updated version spoke of autonomous “groups” rather than individuals, but the significance is the same.

This attempt to defy authority ignored the reality that the massive action necessary, including self-defense against police attacks, needs organization and leadership, not autonomy. We have no interest in defending capitalist order, but it is fruitless to focus on blocking traffic or facing down cops for one or two days in downtown D.C. while Nike et al are destroying lives every day, everywhere. With tens of thousands expected in Washington, revolutionaries should have been challenging and exposing the reactionary plans of the reformists, not concentrating on actions that kept them apart from the mass of protesters.

The bloc’s call for April 16 concluded this way:

**We envision an active and creative contingent of revolutionaries marching under black, red & black, and green & black flags, anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian banners, and a hail of revolutionary drumbeats. We are mobilizing marching bands, radical cheerleaders, and planning a whole assortment of highly organized creative mayhem!**

Really, comrades: cheerleaders, drummers and bands are a sideshow. Mischief is no substitute for a strategy that helps mobilize masses to overthrow their oppressors. It is the mass detachments of the working class that must be built.

Evidently some in the Anti-Capitalist Bloc leaned in this direction, for their updated statement (April 11) asserted: “Instead of a call for ‘fair trade’ or ‘reform’ of the global economy, we call for the international working class and oppressed communities to organize for revolutionary change of the global economy.” However, the “final” bloc statement (April 14) watered this down considerably, calling for revolutionary change from “workers and communities” only.

#### **LABOR LEADERS SIDE WITH IMPERIALISM**

The official leaders of the working class, the AFL-CIO labor bureaucrats, nominally supported the protests but did little to build them. Even their own rally on April 12 was attended mainly by bureaucrats and older workers. This was part of a lobbying effort to urge Congress not to approve China’s membership in the WTO. In this the bureaucrats claim to be speaking for the interests of both Chinese and U.S. workers because of China’s “unfair labor practices,” and they are supported by Global Exchange, the Sierra Club and Ralph Nader’s Public Citizen group.

In reality the anti-China campaign relies on protectionist

and nationalist, not internationalist, motives. Pat Buchanan, addressing a separate Teamster rally, pulled out his usual chauvinist rhetoric: “If I was in the White House and the Communist Chinese came to my office, I’d tell them, stop threatening my country, stop persecuting the Christians, or you will have sold your last pair of chopsticks.”

The AFL-CIO tops led by John Sweeney wouldn’t invite a known racist like Buchanan to their rally, since they need to present a leftist face to win intellectual and student support for union organizing. But they produced their own



*Deluded protester makes peace offering to cops.*

tingoism, mainly through the speech of Steelworkers’ president George Becker. He attacked the Congressional bill normalizing trade relations with China as a betrayal: “It goes against everything we stand for as a nation.” because China is “a rogue nation” and “a godless society” that persecutes Christianity. Getting more bellicose, he went on: “This is the same Communist China I’ve lived with all my life.” He recalled that thousands of Americans had died fighting China in the Korean war, and observed that the U.S. military has China surrounded. As for the U.S., “We’re the greatest nation on earth, a beacon of liberty.”

Blaming foreigners for capitalism’s evils is a sure way to divide the working class and lead it to defeat. With their Buchanan-like rhetoric, the union bureaucrats, along with the China-bashing liberals, are opening the door to reactionary demagoguery, racist hysteria — and future imperialist wars.

It is also blatantly hypocritical. U.S. unions are quick to condemn miserable labor conditions abroad — in selected countries. But organizing begins at home: why not wage an all-out fight for the needs of hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the U.S. who work in sweatshops at sub-minimum wages under hazardous conditions and abusive bosses? There are also hundreds of thousands of prison inmates compelled to work for pennies an hour producing a growing variety of goods and services. Ignored by the AFL-CIO leaders, tens of thousands of workfare participants nationally work under slave-labor conditions for welfare checks well below the minimum wage.

The labor tops give no more real support to the Chinese workers than they do to the most oppressed workers at home. Chinese workers don’t need anti-China rhetoric from American workers; they need concrete opposition to imperialism and its alliance with China’s exploitative ruling class.

One group in Washington, the Campaign for Labor

Rights, gave the protectionist campaign a radical cover by claiming that "China's entry into the WTO would weaken the hand of workers around the world (including workers in China) and strengthen the hand of corporations." And indeed it might. But accommodating to the campaign of a wing of U.S. capitalists and their labor collaborators to demonize China really means aiding an imperialist effort to impose even tougher trade conditions. That weakens China's workers far more.

#### WORKERS RESIST IMF/STALINIST PRIVATIZATION

We in the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) are under no illusion that China's Stalinist regime is in any way "socialist"; genuine socialism means that state power has been taken by the working class. China's economic system is statified capitalism; its rulers enforce a particularly vicious super-exploitation — for their own benefit and for that of the imperialists, many of them American, who invest in China.

No wonder Chinese workers have protested in massive numbers against Beijing's expanding privatization of state-owned companies, which wipes out housing and other benefits linked to state jobs. Just this February, 20,000 miners who were fired from their jobs in China's industrial northeast blocked roads, smashed windows, burned cars and fought with armed police for days — a protest that ended only when the People's Liberation Army was brought in.

According to the London Financial Times (April 3):

**Instances of industrial unrest have been increasing in recent years as the government of Zhu Rongji, China's hard-driving premier, attempts to accelerate the restructuring of inefficient state-owned enterprises. All across the northeast of the country there are regular reports of demonstrations by retired workers, unable to draw their pensions, and the jobless, protesting at the lack of welfare.**

In brief, just what the IMF ordered. As Polish workers facing a Stalinist regime did in the 1980's, Chinese workers are defending their gains embodied in nationalized property against the anti-worker state trying to impose even harsher bourgeois rule. It is the Chinese workers who are the allies of// workers everywhere — not the U.S. politicians and capitalists whom the AFL-CIO is pressing to punish China. The U.S.-chauvinist program spearheaded by the "Sweeney-Greenie" alliance aids the criminal bourgeois campaign to racially divide the international working-class struggle.

#### THE REAL WORKING-CLASS ALTERNATIVE

Imperialism is in deep crisis and the world economy is being torn apart. For a moment, U.S. capitalism has benefited, maintaining a fragile prosperity mostly for its topmost layers. The uneven boom has kept the middle class and labor aristocracy from being wiped out and has provided a basis for reformist illusions. It also allows the anarchist mirage of middle-class individualist solutions to entrance youth who want to fight the system.

There are obvious clues to the class outlook of the protest leaders. Even though domestic oppression is not the IMF's direct province, IMF policies abroad are a central reason why millions of workers in Africa, Latin America, Asia and East Europe flee their immiserated homelands to seek work in the West. It is revealing but not surprising that the slogans of protest leaders against the evils of "globalization" did not include demands to defend the rights and free movement of immigrant workers.

The character of the April actions was also illustrated by

their class and racial composition — in a city with a vast population of Black and immigrant workers. Millions of exploited and oppressed workers in the U.S. are furious at miserable wages and jobs, racism, national chauvinism and police brutality. Yet they do not see protests like these as part of their struggle.

Why should they follow labor leaders who have favored endless givebacks to the bosses and undermined militant struggles and strikes? Why should they look to middle-class do-gooders who patronize them as victims, not fighters, and ignore their concerns? Why listen to leaders who embrace the Democratic Party as an answer, when fewer and fewer workers vote in each election, seeing nothing to choose between the capitalist parties? Patronizing "outreach" efforts to workers of color bore little fruit, and revealed the class gulf between protest organizers and those they were "reaching out" to. In the coming working-class struggles against U.S. capitalism, workers of color, because of their super-oppressed and exploited position in society, will be in the leadership, rather than passive outsiders subject to "outreach" efforts.

As an organization of workers in the United States, the LRP believes that the tens of thousands of young student and worker activists who have joined movements against global exploitation want to fight for a genuinely better world. Genuine revolutionaries have to see the world from the point of view of the international working class. Workers in many countries have been on the march, in massive general strikes and anti-government actions. Shutting down the production of profits is what makes imperialism tremble. The U.S. will not be immune to the spreading upsurges of the exploited and oppressed. American workers too will learn to use their power in the factories and streets to bring the bosses to their knees. ●

#### KOVI-Dokumente IV (Mai 2000)

- Über revolutionäre Isolation und die Wiederbelebung des authentischen Marxismus in den USA (Sy Landy)
- Argentinien: Arbeiterrechte im Visier der neuen Regierung (Interview mit der 'Partido Obrero Revolucionario', POR)
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- Stalinistische Expansion, die Vierte Internationale und die Arbeiterklasse (Sy Landy)
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# U.S. Intervention Threatens Colombia

by A. Holberg

As we go to press, the Clinton Administration and Congress are adopting a \$1 billion-plus aid package to Colombia, already the third-largest recipient of U.S. military funds. The bulk of the money will go to the military. Once again, Colombia could become the stage for a major military action by U.S. imperialism.

Washington claims that this aid is directed primarily against Colombia's rampant drug production and trafficking. (Colombia has been for many years the foremost producer and exporter of cocaine and also much heroin to the U.S.) But in reality the war against drugs is a transparent pretext for fighting the two main groups in Colombia's 40-year-long guerrilla war: the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), which inflicted several major defeats on the government's armed forces in 1999, and the smaller Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). The FARC was founded by the Communist Party of Colombia; the ELN traces its inspiration to the Cuban Revolution.

Negotiations between the government of Conservative Party president Andrés Pastrana with the FARC have been dragging along for about a year. In April the government finally gave in to the demand of the ELN and granted it, like the FARC, an extensive zone demilitarized of governmental forces. These zones were agreed to against substantial opposition from right-wing forces, including much of the military high command, in order to start talks for a cease-fire and peace with the guerrillas.

Behind the U.S. campaign against the guerrillas lies a more fundamental aim, openly acknowledged by Bill Clinton himself. On May 2, the president warned in apocalyptic terms of the possible consequences of the collapse of the Colombian regime: "Make no mistake about it. If the oldest democracy in South America can be torn down, so can others." The real issue emerged when Clinton told assembled corporate executives that defeat of the guerrillas was essential for the realization of a Free Trade Area of the Americas that would stretch from Alaska to Argentina by 2005:

**We have to win in Colombia. We have to win the fight for the free trade area in the Americas. We have to prove that freedom and free markets go hand in hand.**

That is, the U.S.'s overriding concern in the Colombian civil war is to prevent any interference with its efforts to intensify imperialism's exploitation of Latin America. In June 1999, at a meeting of the Organization of American States, the U.S. proposed creating a multinational force to guarantee the "security" of the Western Hemisphere. The Pentagon already has hundreds of military "advisers" in Colombia, despite official denials.

## THE LIE OF 'NARCO-TERRORISM'

The U.S., of course, has a long history of military intervention in Latin America, most recently in 1989, when it invaded Panama, and throughout the 1980's, when it supported the *contras* against the Nicaraguan revolution and sent advisers to back death squads in El Salvador. The theft

of Panama from Colombia in 1903 was its first imperialist assault south of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Both guerrilla groups are labeled "narco-guerrillas" by the U.S., but the drug trade is far more an imperialist-run operation. The main drug profiteers are a sector of the Colombian ruling class close to the military. Consumer demand in the United States ensures that there will be a constant supply, if not from Colombia then from another country; the partial success in eradicating coca plantations in Peru, for instance, led production to shift to Colombia. Years



*U.S.-trained Colombian army is tied to right-wing forces.*

of anti-drug operations by both the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the local governments have not reversed this trend. It also must not be forgotten that processing cocaine and heroin needs chemicals imported from the imperialist countries, which thus get their share of the profits out of drug trafficking.

Further, the main ports for the export of Colombian drugs are controlled by the paramilitary forces, which are run by sections of the international corporations, along with the national bourgeoisie and its armed forces. By arming the Colombian government and its armed forces under the pretext of fighting drugs, the U.S. is setting the fox to guard the chickens. And it knows it, since both the CIA and the DEA have long experience in dealing fraternally with international drug traffickers. In August 1999 the news broke that the wife of the U.S. Army colonel in charge of anti-drug operations in Colombia had shipped hundreds of thousands of dollars of cocaine through diplomatic mail.

While it is true that much of the coca crop is grown in regions controlled by the guerrillas and that the guerrillas tax the drug traffickers, both the FARC and the ELN claim they want to get rid of this business. However, in order to do so there must be an alternative for the great number of poor peasants, since the open market forced on Colombia by imperialism has undermined the prices for ordinary crops.

## CIVIL WAR AND ACCOMMODATION WITH CAPITAL

Whatever the U.S. administration really believes about

the "communist insurgency," an analysis of the FARC and the ELN shows that these organizations do not fundamentally endanger capitalist interests in Colombia.

The FARC was formed in the 1960's on the initiative of the Colombian Communist Party (PC). The Stalinist PC, ever since the popular front days of the 1930's, had always been a staunch ally of the bourgeois populist Liberal Party. It attracted many peasants during the period of "La Violencia," from 1948 to 1953, when the Conservatives and Liberals fought a bloody civil war in which over 200,000 were killed. The PC had taken over large parts of the guerrilla army of the Liberals, which betrayed its peasant supporters by forming a National Front government with the Conservatives.

The FARC remains a major force defending peasants against eviction by Colombian landowners and multinational corporations. However, as followers of the Stalinist two-stages theory, the PC talked about socialism as its final goal but fought for nothing but "true bourgeois democracy," linked to the Soviet Union rather than the U.S. Thus the PC and later the FARC looked for an alliance with the "democratic" wing of the bourgeoisie against the right-wing oligarchs, in order to integrate into the legal parliamentary game.

The bourgeoisie had lured the FARC and other guerrilla organizations into legality under Conservative president Betancourt in 1984. They declared a cease-fire, and the FARC founded a legal party, the Unión Patriótica (UP). But the ruling class soon showed its true colors. Thousands of UP cadres were killed by death squads on the payroll of the cattle barons, the multinational corporations, drug traffickers, the army and police. After the UP's elected representatives were also assassinated, the FARC broke the truce in 1987.

There is no doubt that the origin of the ongoing guerrilla war is the unwillingness and incapability of the ruling class to put on a less bloody face. Strikes by workers are regularly met by state violence. Colombia is the country with the largest number of murders, after Mexico. Human rights organizations have noted that about 80 percent of all the murders and human rights violations are the work of the paramilitaries and the state's repressive forces backing them — the victims being mostly unarmed peasants or union activists.

#### PROGRAMS OF THE GUERRILLAS

The pro-liberal bourgeois position of the FARC has always been clear. But the ELN in the past rejected talks with the government because of the experience of bourgeois treachery, particularly the case of the UP. Yet it too has sought to use the influence of the arch-conservative German Conference of (Catholic) Bishops to meet with "leading representatives of public life in Colombia," among them many capitalists, in order to call for a "national convention."

The programs of both the FARC and the ELN call for a mixed economy, which means capitalism with a large state sector. That shows that their openings toward the liberal bourgeoisie are not tactical initiatives to play on the partially contradictory interests of different enemy forces. The recent announcement by the FARC that there is a "democratic sector" in the armed forces, which according to spokesman Raul Reyes was "opposed to the paramilitary movement, because this sector loves the army" (*El Tiempo*, Bogotá, March 20), was another political sign, as was the tour in February of a FARC delegation through various European countries to learn how bourgeois democracy functions.

The FARC, like the UP, calls for "dialogue as a possible tool for realizing peace with social justice and the

introduction of a series of political, economic, social and structural measures that eliminate the deep social inequalities expressed by the crisis that affects the nation." The ELN, which in the past defended the Chinese and Vietnamese strategy of "prolonged peoples war" and demanded a fundamental structural transformation, now says that it doesn't matter whether this transformation would be brought about by overthrowing capitalism or not. Thus both the FARC and the ELN have made plain that their armed struggle is not waged to topple the bourgeoisie, but rather as a reform effort to force the bourgeoisie to allow them to sit at the table.

Until the 1970's the FARC and especially the ELN were not strong movements. But the repression of legal political activities in the cities and towns gave them a boost. The two guerrilla fronts now control about half of Colombia — albeit the most thinly inhabited parts of the countryside. Nevertheless, guerrillas have operated near or even inside the cities too, and they have political influence among the trade unions and other social forces there. But in the past they often tried to distance themselves from the militant labor movement, for example by not supporting strikes or raising the unions' demands in their talks with the government.

#### ECONOMY AND IMPERIALISM

The question remains why the U.S. is so eager to fight the guerrillas. The counterinsurgency strategy at this point seems to be to put pressure on the guerrillas by both keeping them engaged in endless peace talks and at the same time upgrading and professionalizing the Colombian army and supporting the government. Meanwhile Pastrana boosts his standing by advertising his willingness to talk peace.

Although recently the government has claimed a small economic recovery, the overall economic situation has worsened. Last year saw the deepest recession since the 1930's. This is hardly a basis for giving handouts to the workers and the peasants, hundreds of thousands of whom are forced to live as displaced people within Colombia itself. So there is no reason to believe that the negotiations aim at fulfilling any of the basic demands of the guerrillas, let alone the needs of the working class and peasantry. Because of this, and because the Colombian guerrillas are based on a peasant movement, simply integrating them into the system is not likely to happen soon. (Unlike the Colombians, many other Latin American guerrillas have given up, been marginalized like the Peruvian MRTA and PCP (SL) or have collapsed.)

However, Colombia is a much too important country for U.S. imperialism to just stand by. Colombia is the most pop-

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by Sy Landy

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ulous South American country after Brazil. Its borders are near the Panama Canal, and it controls an important part of the Trans-American Highway. It produces oil in large quantities; its oil fields are exploited mainly by foreign companies like BP Amoco and Occidental Petroleum. There are also resources of coal, gold, platinum, silver, bauxite, manganese, radioactive cobalt, tin, chrome, copper and nickel.

Profits are extraordinary and will tend to become even greater, as the Pastrana government has been lowering the state's take - production sharing, royalties and taxes - in the oil sector from 84 percent to about 70 percent last year. Besides this, Colombia takes a loss on part of its own oil production. In 1990 the country produced about 400,000 barrels a day, of which 200,000 were needed for internal consumption. Because the state-owned Ecopetrol refined only 80,000 barrels, Colombia had to buy 120,000 from the multinationals. But while the oil had been sold for \$1 a barrel, the repurchase price was \$17! This is supposedly a reason why the oil pipelines are regularly sabotaged by ELN units: the ELN argues that under these conditions, oil production is a negative gain for Colombia. The same is true for the Cerrejón coal mine, one of the world's largest strip-mining sites.

### INCORPORATING THE GUERRILLAS?

There is real potential in the Colombian class struggle — and therefore serious cause for concern for imperialism and its lackeys like Pastrana. September 1999 saw a massive two-day general strike, with the main Colombian trade union federation, the CUT, bringing its 1.5 million members out accompanied by non-union workers. During the general strike, the countryside was racked by massive protests against the murder of peasants and rural proletarians and the lack of alternatives to coca cultivation.

In the Southwest, peasants blockaded a stretch of the Pan-American Highway for two weeks, demanding more government aid for the region. The immediate results of the peasant protests were government offers of compromise, accompanied by heightened death squad attacks. The U'wa indigenous people have also fought courageously against the theft, occupation and despoliation of their lands by corpora-

tions like Occidental Petroleum. Clearly, the masses are willing to fight; the central question is leadership.

While the military strength of the guerrillas is basically unbroken, and while the trade union and peasant movements can still fight hard, they have not been strong enough to halt the government's privatization, deregulation and political attacks against them. More importantly in the long run, neither the guerrillas nor the militant but class-collaborationist trade unions are able to offer an alternative to the present crisis, which flows from worldwide capitalist dynamics.

Against this background must be seen the recent announcement by the FARC that it would now be willing to agree to a truce parallel with the ongoing peace negotiations, something it had constantly rejected in the past. Moreover, on April 30 the FARC founded a new political front, the Bolivarist Movement for a New Colombia. According to the FARC's European representative, Juan Antonio Rojas, "all relevant forces" of the country - "Liberals, Conservatives, Socialists, Communists, sympathizing people and non-party members ought to work together in order to jointly deal with the problem of poverty, criminality and violence in our country." (*Junge Welt*, Berlin, April 28.)

While the FARC is not prepared to let the new movement work in the open, in order to avoid the fate of the UP, the foundation of this new national front is a further step to the right to get together with a section of the ruling bourgeoisie. The Spanish daily *El País* cites reports that President Pastrana's projected referendum to cleanse the Congress of corruption and oust representatives linked to drug trafficking is aimed to deal the Liberal Party a death blow. The theory is that Pastrana has been so compliant with the FARC because he would like to make them the second national party in place of the Liberals. The new Bolivarist Movement would be part of that scheme. For his part, in June Pastrana declared a six-month extension of the FARC's demilitarized zone and granted formal negotiating status to the ELN.

Colombia would not be the first Latin American country in which erstwhile guerrilla leaders become part of the ruling "democratic" system. Guerrillism cannot fulfill the fundamental hopes of its peasant supporters, let alone of the working class. What is missing above all is a revolutionary party which breaks with the bourgeois "anti-imperialism" of the Stalinist leadership of the guerrillas and the unions. Such a party will be based in the working class, since only the workers' anti-capitalist struggle can point the peasant masses to a solution not based on collaborating with bourgeois governments. Only the proletarian socialist revolution can fulfill the social demands of the ranks of the guerrilla movements.

Such a party would give military support to the FARC and ELN as long as they are fighting the government and death squads. It would oppose a negotiated sellout and fight for the arming of the masses of workers and peasants. Such a step, necessary today for simple self-defense against the murderous paramilitaries, could pave the way for workers' and peasants' militias tomorrow.

The revolutionary proletarian party would fight against the Stalinist misleaders of the FARC and ELN for leadership of the armed struggle against the government and its U.S. imperialist sponsors. The workers and peasants of Colombia have shown abundantly their willingness to fight. Revolutionary leadership would work to ensure that their heroic struggle would lead not to a sellout deal and more state-sponsored slaughter but to international socialist revolution. ●

**U.S. Imperialism Out of Colombia!**

## REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Vol.7, No.3

### The Hidden Pearl of the Caribbean Trotskyism in Cuba

This issue contains articles by Gary Tennant documenting the origins of Cuban Trotskyism, its role in the revolution of the 1930's, World War II and the 1959 Revolution, and its troubled existence under the Castro regime. Tennant shows its strong support in the working class in the 1930's, and analyzes the constant contradiction between its commitment to Permanent Revolution and its adaptation to bourgeois nationalist currents.

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# Ukraine: Left Parties Aid Authoritarian Regime

*This article was written for Proletarian Revolution by the Revolutionary Workers Organization (RWO: Revolutsiyna Robitnycha Organizatsiya) of Ukraine.*

The social and economic system in Ukraine is in crisis, as shown by the total corruption of the bureaucratic bourgeois state apparatus which is carrying out consistent attacks on the democratic rights of workers. The regime conducts its policy in accordance with the demands of institutions that represent the interests of world imperialism: the IMF, World Bank, USAID, etc.

The main demands in a memorandum of economic policy which was signed February 3 in Kiev by the ministers of the Ukrainian Cabinet and the IMF are as follows: 100 percent payment of the cost of housing and transportation by all residents; elimination of state subsidies to needy families; elimination of discounts to pensioners and others for services and essential commodities; immediate privatization of strategic enterprises; and reform of the agro-industrial complex by legalizing privatization of land and collective and state farms.

## ECONOMIC MISERY

Needy families spend 90-100 percent of their budget on food. Even at the beginning of the "economic reforms" in 1991, most Ukrainian families did not get enough to eat. According to a Ukrainian nutrition research institute, the level of food consumption has decreased to 73.8 percent of the norm. While the fall in Ukraine's gross domestic product (GDP) has levelled off (from 12 and 10 percent declines in 1995-96 to 2 percent declines in 1997-98), this has only been achieved by illegal and barbarous means: simply not paying workers for the goods and services they produce!

The estimated total amount of unpaid wages, pensions and stipends at the beginning of 2000 was over 2.5 billion dollars, more than half Ukraine's annual budget. Such methods of curbing the fall of the GDP have restricted the population's purchasing power and level of consumption to a minimum — in fact, to the level of bare survival.

We can see more clearly just how low workers' living standards in Ukraine have fallen by comparing their situation to that of the workers in Russia, where the collapse in living standards over the past decade is widely known. Wages in Ukraine are on the average only half of even the level of wages in Russia. The World Bank's *World Development Indicators 2000* lists Russia's per capita gross national product (GNP) at \$2,260; Ukraine's is only \$980.

The ministers of the Ukrainian Cabinet, in accordance with their agreements with the IMF and the World Bank, continue to work for the closing of mines. Data from the end of 1999 shows work has ceased at 49 mines and 2 open-pit mines; 12 are closed down for good. Over 40,000 Ukrainian miners went on strike May 11 to demand payment of hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid wages and to protest the government's anti-worker policies in the mining industry. Workers in the ethnic-Russian eastern regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, as well as in the ethnic-Ukrainian northwest region of Volyn, took the lead in this struggle. This is the first time that both the official union PRUP and the smaller independent union NPG have gone on strike together.

Official statistics (which undoubtedly lie; the real situation is worse) show that from 1990 to 1999, Ukraine's GDP declined 57.1 percent, the volume of industrial production

was cut in half, capital investments in the economy fell 85.3 percent, and paid services provided to the population fell 76.6 percent. All of the average data listed here is misleading because the statistics average the consumption of the richest 3 percent of Ukrainians with that of the workers, pensioners, students and the unemployed, who receive miserable crumbs from the state at the minimal level of survival.

## CRISIS IN THE STATE BUDGET

The catastrophic situation in the area of industry explains in many respects the crisis in the state budget, and as a consequence the systemic social crisis in society.

The crisis in the state budget can be seen in the decline in the state's revenue over the last 5 years to a minimum level: 27.4 percent of the GDP, down from 35.6 percent of GDP in 1994. The following revenue sources all decreased: profit tax, from 11.9 percent of GDP to 5.6 percent; Value Added Tax, from 10.8 percent of GDP to 7.0 percent; tax for the Chernobyl fund, from 2.0 percent of GDP to 1.4 percent. And now the tax for the Chernobyl fund was cancelled in accordance with the IMF's demand, which means there will be an enormous number of deaths of people at an able-bodied age who were victims of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

The reduction in revenue leads to the reduction of expenditures in the budget. Over the last 5 years, state spending on the economy decreased from 45.0 percent of the GDP to 29.4 percent. Privatization of enterprises reduced the number of workplaces. In the last year alone, one-half to three-quarters of all workplaces were closed in many industries: ferrous metallurgy, mechanical engineering and metal-working, chemical and petrochemical industry, food, grain, meat and dairy processing, and sugar production.

## LEFT PARTIES

There are four relatively large parliamentary "left" parties in Ukraine: the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU), the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU) and the Peasant Party. All of these parties are capitalist parties; they are supported by unions and many workers but were not independent creations of the working class itself. They have simply incorporated a following from large sections of the working class and prevented them from going in an independent direction. Their leaders are trying to bring back the system where they were the privileged caste whose positions were based on the role of custodian of the centrally administered state-owned economy. Of course the politics of these Stalinist and reformist parties are not attractive. Some of their members, receiving new privileges, fight only for keeping and spreading these privileges, not for the working class.

Almost every time that the parliament discusses important points, the Stalinist CPU resignedly submits to the president and the government. For example, they called for voting for the right-wing pro-IMF Leonid Kuchma for president in July 1994; they voted for approving the bourgeois constitution on June 26, 1996; and they capitulated to the bourgeoisie during the parliament split in February of this year, when a right-wing parliamentary coup took all leading positions away from the left parties, including the speaker, deputy speaker and 11 committee heads.

Thus on critical points the Stalinists and reformists are

actually on the side of the authoritarian bourgeois power, which led to the present situation where this power, without any considerable resistance from the "opposition," may attack general democratic rights for its own interests. Thus they forced the IMF-dictated "reform" attacks through the parliament.

The CPU has support from a section of the state and party nomenklatura and East-Ukrainian industrial capital. This party is an outpost of Russian imperialism. The CPU concentrates populist rhetoric on the idea of integration with Lukashenko and Putin, the presidents of Belarus and Russia.

The SPU and its leader Alexander Moroz long ago rejected socialist rhetoric in party program documents. His slogans are for a "multilevel market economy" and a "powerful social defense." So it's difficult to connect Moroz with the left movement as a whole. Moroz does not oppose the Western direction of Ukraine's development and its integration into the European Union. He does not support making Russian a state language but proposes making it an "official language" instead. This scheme fits his struggle for the West-Ukrainian electorate.

The Peasant Party, whose leader Alexander Tkachenko is the former speaker of the Ukrainian parliament, is a party of a section of agro-industrial capital. Tkachenko supports a market economy but opposes co-operation with the IMF and stands for a "Ukrainian way" of development. He is called a "Red oligarch" in Ukraine because of his position against privatization of the land and breaking up collective farms.

The PSPU and its leader Natallya Vitrenko concentrated all their zeal on exposing the IMF's policy in Ukraine. Vitrenko has created an authoritarian-bureaucratic system inside the PSPU: any member who criticizes the leadership is expelled from the party without discussion or the right to appeal (five first secretaries of the Kiev City Committee have been expelled within the last two years); the Central Committee includes only people who receive their wages directly from Vitrenko, which makes them dependent on her; and the CC has the right to liquidate any regional organization that tries to begin a discussion.

Vitrenko supports the idea of attracting investments in the Ukrainian economy from "good" capitalists with "honest" aims of developing industry, as opposed to the present "bad" capitalists — the imperialists. Vitrenko has close links with, and is partly financed by, the Schiller Institute, which is led by the ultra-right American politician Lyndon LaRouche and is closely connected with the Vatican, the European Bank and other bourgeois institutions opposed to the IMF. Vitrenko also lobbies a section of Russian and Ukrainian national capitalists, in particular flax producers.

The recent defeats demonstrated to a lot of rank-and-file members of these parties the incorrectness of their strategy and the inability of their leaderships to develop the revolutionary program the working class needs.

#### **BOYCOTT THE REFERENDUM?**

On April 16, Ukraine's corrupt regime held a cynical farce called a "referendum by popular initiative." The source of this initiative was no secret to anyone: an obedient and manageable parliament is necessary for the bourgeois regime. It will allow the criminal-mafia clans to successfully finish the process of privatization of land and large-scale enterprises, which is destroying the Ukrainian economy.

Even the reaction of the European Union's Commission on the referendum was sharply negative. As a result of this

pressure, Ukraine's Constitutional Court ruled that two of the referendum questions were unconstitutional: the president's right to dismiss parliament if a referendum votes no confidence in it; and the right to adopt a new constitution by means of a referendum. It ruled four questions constitutional: increasing the president's authority to dismiss parliament, eliminating parliamentary immunity from prosecution, decreasing the number of deputies from 450 to 300 and replacing the one-chamber parliament with two chambers.

We, the Revolutionary Workers Organization, appealed to the Ukrainian working class to answer NO on all the referendum questions — the only possible answer of the Ukrainian working class to the cynical challenge of the anti-popular regime. While all four reformist "left" parties irresponsibly proposed that the working class boycott the referendum, the RWO appealed for active and organized resistance. By calling for a boycott, the reformists were abandoning the workers to face the situation alone.

Some pseudo-revolutionary groups supported the reformists' abstentionist call for a boycott, including Workers Resistance, which is part of the Labor Militant tendency (CWI), and the Young Revolutionary Marxists. One group, Workers Power, which is part of the LRCI tendency, supported the boycott until four days before the referendum, when they changed their position to call for a NO vote.

The RWO organized distribution of our leaflets in the large-scale Kiev enterprises Arsenal, Leninskaya Kuznya, Radar and Ukrplastic on April 12-15. Distribution of leaflets was also conducted in the leading Kiev universities: Kiev State University, Kiev State Polytechnical University, Kiev Agro-industrial Academy, and Kiev Civil Aviation Engineering University. The RWO also organized two pickets where we explained our positions and distributed our leaflets.

An unprecedented level of falsification and administrative pressure led to the victory of the presidential side. But even taking these facts into account, it is impossible to deny that this defeat was the fault of the reformists for disorienting the workers and students. Even according to the official data, about 30 percent of the voters didn't take part in the referendum. The official data reported that 80-90 percent of those who did vote, voted YES on each question.

Thus it is clear that Ukraine has taken a very large step toward bourgeois authoritarian dictatorship. It is the logical continuation of the right-wing parliamentary coup in February. But the struggle isn't finished. On the contrary, it's only the beginning of a long road. The results of the referendum signify a deep crisis for the reformist parties, which became clear in the small number of participants (about 3500) in the May Day demonstration in Kiev, in comparison with the previous year. In these conditions the RWO has to increase its influence among the workers and students and begin to form a real Leninist internationalist vanguard party. ●

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# Puerto Rico: For Mass Action Against U.S. Imperialism



*Peace and justice can come only through revolutionary struggle.*

by Joseph Andrews

On May 4, the U.S. started dislodging non-violent activists from year-old encampments set up on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques to protest the U.S. military presence. Since then there has been a cat-and-mouse game between protesters and the federal authorities; protestors enter the bombing range, the authorities arrest them.

Civil disobedience has been the predominant strategy of the movement. This has made it difficult for the U.S. to re-initiate military maneuvers. But as we will show, it has not dealt a decisive blow to the U.S.'s re-starting its deadly target practice on the island. We will examine the events and politics behind this struggle in order to argue for a mass working-class strategy and the building of a revolutionary party leadership as the alternative for taking the anti-imperialist struggle forward.

## NATIONAL UNITY: A MYTH

In April of last year, a civilian security guard, David Sanes, was accidentally killed by a bomb dropped by a Navy airplane in the course of training. This sparked a popular movement demanding that the routine use of Vieques for military practice be permanently terminated. The groundswell against the U.S. presence was so broad that the slogan "Ni un tiro más!" (Not one more shot!) was championed by the entire political spectrum in Puerto Rico. Most of the nationalist (as well as socialist-identified) left in Puerto Rico went along with the idea that a solid cross-class opposition to the military had been achieved.

Our last article (in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 60; dated January 16) predicted that the proclaimed national unity against the military in Vieques would inevitably crack. Sure enough, on January 31, Clinton and his henchman Pedro Rosselló, the incumbent governor of Puerto Rico from the

pro-statehood Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP: New Progressive Party), arrived at a "compromise." It meant that U.S. imperialism would continue to pull the strings and Rosselló would continue to dance. A presidential directive declared that the bombing would start up again in May. Rosselló supported this even though it differed little from the Pentagon's previous offers which he had claimed to oppose — and at times with fairly militant rhetoric.

The PNP's main bourgeois political competitor, the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD: Popular Democratic Party), supports the current commonwealth (i.e. colonial) status of Puerto Rico. During the peak of the pro-Vieques movement it played along with the popular sentiment. But when Rosselló caved in it trailed not far behind.

## DEFEND THE ENCAMPMENTS AND ALL ACTIVISTS!

After Sanes' death in 1999, protestors had set up encampments in the area of Vieques restricted for military use, in order to prevent further bombing. The best known personage in this civil disobedience was Ruben Berrios, head of the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP: Puerto Rican Independence Party). The PIP is the third bourgeois party in Puerto Rican politics, much smaller than the PNP and PPD; it generally wins a tiny amount of votes. It nominally favors independence for Puerto Rico, as opposed to either the current status or statehood.

The encampments remained in place from April 1999 until May of this year, when over 200 protestors were dislodged and arrested. While the U.S. of course always had the military capacity to dislodge a small number of protestors for "unlawful trespassing" onto "its" property, it feared to do so until recently. Clinton & Co. knew that the encampments were a symbol of the mass sentiment against the military that permeates Puerto Rico. For this reason, although

we disagree with passive civil disobedience as a strategy, we believe that defense of the encampments was a vital task.

The PNP, however, never supported the encampments, even when it was pretending to oppose the military presence. The PNP understood too well that the encampments would eventually have to be squashed. The PPD equivocated over the question but, true to its bourgeois character, came out *against* continuing the encampments after Clinton and Rosselló struck their deal. Sila Calderón, the mayor of San Juan and also the PPD's gubernatorial candidate in the upcoming elections, is the most important figure in the PPD. She said that after Rosselló agreed to collaborating in the removal of the demonstrators, there would be a potentially violent situation; "it would be highly irresponsible on the part of whatever leader to make a call for civil disobedience."

### THE PRO-VIEQUES CAMPAIGN

What was what needed was a defense of the civil disobedience activists through a tremendous escalation of protest activity on Vieques itself, plus a call for mass militant action throughout Puerto Rico. Given the uproar over the accidental death of one man, would the U.S. risk dropping any bombs if masses of people descended on Vieques and refused to budge? Would the imperialists and their agents feel free to arrest or injure masses of protesters, who are backed up with the support of the trade unions and other mass organizations in Puerto Rico and elsewhere? This is the kind of power that has yet to be tapped into.

It is a question of the balance of forces. There have been months to prepare a powerful response. But a few hundred non-violent protesters on Vieques, however heroic and resourceful, are were not enough. The working class and oppressed have to fight fire with fire. In our leaflets and magazine, we have argued for mass workers' demonstrations and a general strike.

Unfortunately, nothing like this approach has been posed by the leaders of the pro-Vieques campaign. The struggle should already have been taken up by the mass organizations of Puerto Rico's workers, the unions. The working class, even under misleadership, had already proved its capacity in militant strikes and even general strikes, as recently as the 1998 strike against privatization. (See *PR 58*.) Under revolutionary leadership, the unions would mobilize the workers in a determined struggle. But the union leaders today stand for collaboration with the system and avoidance of confrontation.

There was a march of 100,000 through the streets of San Juan on February 21, one of the largest demonstrations in Puerto Rican history. But it was kept silent and passive. Given the pro-capitalist nature of the union bureaucracy and with bourgeois political figures in the PNP and PPD discredited, the leadership was handed to the clergy — which had played a critical role in the defeat of the 1998 general strike by their insistence on ending the strike on terms highly unfavorable for the working class. Instead of a militant and spirited display of mass opposition to imperialism, the clerical leaders imposed a message of passivity.

As a result of the successful restraint of the working

class, Clinton, Reno and Rosselló seem about to succeed with their attack.

The absence of the organized working class helped reinforce the false impression that nothing more than symbolic protest against the military is possible. The only exception so far was a four-hour work stoppage by the electric utility workers union, UTIER, on May 8. Rosselló was so terrified of the prospect of strike sentiment spreading that he ordered the National Guard to occupy several public installations.

### NATIONALIST DEAD-ENDS

In the course of these events the nationalist leadership of the protests has shown its bankruptcy. Once the die was cast on January 31, the PIP maintained its focus on civil disobedience. After the activists were basically dislodged from the encampments on May 4, there was only one big rally, along with a number of smaller ones. A few thousand united in a protest called by the PIP and other groups in front of the Federal Building in San Juan on May 5. In that protest, demonstrators rightfully denounced Calderón as a traitor for crossing their picket line to attend a celebration at the building with Rosselló!

At the ceremony she was a master of equivocation. "It



U.S. military had been thwarted for 351 days.

is necessary to open our ears, our minds and our hearts to the demands that are being made to us against what [the demonstrators] perceive is an injustice. Some can disagree with those demands. But there is room, I propose, to make a better accommodation through cooperation than what was imposed by force yesterday," referring to the May 4 arrests.

But on May 7 Berrios stated that "our struggle is against the Navy, the U.S. government and the bombing of Vieques. I'm not going to waste one minute of my time attacking Calderón ... or Governor Rosselló." As if the fight against the Navy could be separated from the fight against the Puerto Rican parties that were caving in! The ranks of demonstrators had it right, not Berrios.

The PIP is an openly pro-capitalist party. Its reformist views go a long way toward explaining the compromising character of its "independence" proposals and its insistence that U.S. attacks on Puerto Rico are a matter of mistaken policy rather than imperialist necessity.

Since his first arrest, Berrios was among those who re-entered the bombing range and were re-arrested. Some may serve heavy jail time, as Berrios has done in the past. We

defend all the activists against any charges. At the same time, Berrios' actions have to be analyzed for their political intent. By engaging in individual or small-group civil disobedience, Berrios has sought to keep the masses passive. At no point did he or the PIP call an all-out mass mobilization.

Just as the PIP capitulated to the overtly colonial parties, some of the more radical nationalists have capitulated to the PIP. The Congreso Nacional Hostosiano (CNH) is a nationalist group ostensibly to the left of the PIP. Ismael Guadalupe of the CNH has been a leading spokesman for the Comité pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques (CPRDV: Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques), which played a leading role in the encampments. Guadalupe is currently facing federal charges based on his participation in a number of civil disobedience acts over Vieques. (In 1979 he was sentenced to six months in jail for trespassing on military lands in Vieques and spent six months in jail, and he was also a target of an FBI campaign.) Individual bravery is no substitute for the necessary mass mobilizations. While the PIP refuses to call for them, the CNH fails to criticize the PIP or fight for such a policy itself.

More recently, the CPRDV endorsed a fast in front of the White House to pressure for a meeting with Clinton. This is another act that reflects weakness and victimization rather than the power that could be tapped into. Many Latino and other workers in the U.S. could be drawn into solidarity action with the Vieques struggle.

The CNH's apparently diplomatic peace with the PIP is also shown by its shifts on electoral policy. Juan Mari Bras, formerly head of the now-defunct Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) is another leading figure in the CNH. Mari Bras called for all *independentistas* to vote for the PIP. Worse, he argued that since the PNP candidate was certain to lose to Calderón, the perceived "lesser evil," voting for Berrios and the PIP wouldn't damage her chances.

### SOCIALISTS UNCRITICAL OF PIP

The most prominent far-left grouping in Puerto Rico is the Frente Socialista (FS: Socialist Front). This front groups together individual members as well as three main organizations: the Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Puertorriqueños (PRTP: Puerto Rican Workers Revolutionary Party), in political solidarity with the guerrillaist Macheteros; the Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores (MST: Socialist Workers Movement), an "independent socialist" formation with sizeable youth and student support; and the Taller de Formación Política (TFP: Political Education Workshop), associated with the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat. The MST and TFP collaborate on a monthly newspaper, *Bandera Roja*, which serves as an organ for the FS as a whole. Although each component group reserves the right to issue its own propaganda, they have agreed on a common program, and we have seen no distinct identifying statements on the Vieques struggle from the groups.

Since the arrests, the FS has taken the initiative in organizing demonstrations in front of Fort Buchanan, a major military base in San Juan, and student protests, walk-outs and strikes at University of Puerto Rico campuses in Ponce, Mayaguez, Bayamón, and Hato Rey. In the past year, it sought to heighten anti-imperialist sentiment by organizing rallies against U.S. military installations and recruitment facilities throughout the country.

For several months, FS militants have been under attack by the Puerto Rican government and moderate forces within

the Vieques movement for their unapologetic defense of Puerto Ricans' right to defend themselves against the imperialists. Luis Angel Torres of the MST wrote: "Faced with the history of violence and illegal actions by the Navy and the repressive character of the police, it would be absurd to pretend that we who are struggling against this powerful military monster should rely solely on peaceful actions and repudiate our legitimate right to self-defense and to combat the violence of the oppressor with the violence of the oppressed."

Most importantly, since the arrests the FS has come out for a nationwide general strike. We of course support the call



San Juan, February 2000. Historic march to defend Vieques was kept passive by clerical leadership.

for a general strike and are glad that the FS has begun openly working for it. A general strike is a powerful weapon in the working class's arsenal, far stronger than isolated acts of small-group civil disobedience.

But building for a general strike requires that the ranks of workers' organizations place demands on their leaders and prepare to ultimately replace any leadership that serves as an obstacle. In this case we hope it is not a matter of "too little, too late." The February 21 march in San Juan was an opportunity to propagandize for a general strike and attract a layer of workers capable of providing leadership in this fight. Yet most groups abided in full with the clerical imposition of

complete silence and the banning of all literature distributions. According to our reporter in San Juan that day, this included the FS; only the LRP was distributing literature calling for a general strike. As a much larger organization with an established presence in Puerto Rico, the FS could have done far more.

A concern is that *Bandera Roja* and various FS spokespeople have been politically uncritical of the PIP. In fact, the FS continues to endorse the civil disobedience strategy uncritically.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASS INDEPENDENCE

There is further evidence that the FS is not dedicated to independent working-class action. The FS appears to have come out for a vote for the PIP, right after Juan Mari Bras did so. According to our reporter, both Jorge Farinacci and Luis Angel Torres, of the PRTP and MST respectively, have spoken in favor of this strategy. If any wing of the FS does not hold this position, we have seen no public statement.

Nationalists like the CNH and even the PIP dabble in socialist rhetoric when it suits them. But the FS claims to be a *Marxist* revolutionary organization, from which advanced workers should expect a clear line of political opposition to bourgeois parties, including bourgeois nationalist parties. Of course, parties like the PIP may be temporary allies in specific moments of struggle. But that is a different matter from political support.

Bourgeois nationalists in colonies like Puerto Rico and other oppressed countries can often take an anti-imperialist line. But as the PIP shows, bourgeois nationalism represents an anti-working class program of austerity as well as capitulation to imperialism. In large part, the PIP's political record on both these matters has alienated both the most steadfast radical petty-bourgeois independentistas as well as the working class at large. The FS proclaims the need for proletarian political independence in words, writing that "the interests of the bosses and the workers, the exploiters and the exploited, are irreconcilable." These words are correct, but if the FS votes for the bourgeois PIP, it says that the classes in fact are not irreconcilable.

The FS does not warn the working class that nationalism is an enemy, despite the heroic struggle of many nationalists. For example, an article in the June issue of *Bandera Roja* says that "Socialists, though having important differences with the political ideas of the nationalists, must recognize the importance of nationalism in the struggle for independence."

There is a difference between the struggle for reforms, in which revolutionaries take part alongside our fellow workers, and the *ideology* of reformism, through which bourgeois agents in the workers' movement seek to hide the necessary revolutionary tasks from workers. Likewise there is a difference between the necessary anti-imperialist struggle for national liberation and the pro-capitalist ideology of nationalism. For Marxists, the struggle requires building working-class vanguard parties and an International, not multi-class parties that subordinate working-class interests.

The South African ANC is an outstanding example today of a nationalist party that incorporated much of the working class in order to betray it to national capitalism and imperial-



ism. And it serves as a model for the PIP. (See *PR* 60.)

The task of revolutionary communists is to warn against bourgeois nationalist ideology and leadership, which will inevitably betray the struggle by seeking to keep within the bounds acceptable to the capitalist system.

The workers of Puerto Rico have proven quite capable of dealing strong blows to U.S. imperialism. Their strongest weapon in this struggle is their own advanced consciousness, which must be organized into a revolutionary party capable of fighting for leadership in all struggles. Revolutionary workers in the U.S. and throughout the world must join them in this struggle, and fight for the building of an international working-class revolutionary party, the re-created Fourth International.

**Stop the Arrests of Vieques Activists! Drop All Charges!  
U.S. Military Out of Vieques and All of Puerto Rico!  
For Mass Workers' Action and a General Strike!  
Re-Crete the Fourth International, World Party of  
Socialist Revolution!**

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## Bush/Gore

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*continued from page 1*

poll-driven rhetoric. The candidates know that for all the media hype about eternal affluence, sections of the bourgeoisie, along with those in the middle strata and the working class who have gained a little piece of the action, suspect that the foundation of their present comfort is shaky. And they are right.

What is being passed off as a record period of prosperity is only a temporary equilibrium, a slowdown in the underlying cancerous growth of economic crisis that undermined the first Bush's administration and helped Clinton win in 1992. This jittery equilibrium and the fear associated with it are the main forces making Bush and Gore adhere to the safe center and avoid anything that might endanger stability.

The Democrats boast that the economy is in great shape and that the "record prosperity" of the '90's was Clinton's doing. Gore promotes himself as the continuator of Clinton's policies and accuses Bush II of attempting to return to the failed policies of the Bush I administration.

This year's Bush agrees with the prosperity claims, but he gives credit to the Republican Congress. In an amusing reversal of customary U.S. political bullshit, he criticizes the Democratic Administration for keeping the prosperity from low-wage workers and the poor. "In this campaign I have shared my goal of continuing our economic success and expanding its blessings to reach all those who live in the shadow of prosperity." Blah, blah.

Meanwhile, Gore addresses business audiences and emphasizes his allegiance to economic policies normally associated with the Republicans. He sings the praises of the conservative Federal Reserve chairman: "You will find no greater supporter than I am of Alan Greenspan." This is meant to reassure Wall Street that Gore will continue to follow the Fed's prescription — adjusting monetary policy to maintain effective (not official) unemployment at 8-10 percent of the potential workforce — to keep the economy from "overheating," i.e., to keep wages under a tight rein.

The current jittery stock market reflects the deep unease within the bourgeoisie. As this magazine has observed, stock prices are incredibly inflated and have little relation to real production of goods and services. (See "The Specter of Economic Collapse" in *PR* 58.) Some day the piper will have to be paid, but the capitalists hope against hope that the due date can keep being put off.

### WHAT KEEPS THE U.S. ON TOP

Contrary to the hype, the record of the '90's does not match the economic performance of the 1960's, the end of the post-war boom period. Today the reassertion of the mortal crisis of the capitalist system is devastating whole continents. Imperialism has relentlessly deepened its super-exploitation. Slavery, child labor, disease and wars born out of the bitter struggle to survive are sweeping the world and penetrating even the more advanced sectors. So far the U.S. economy has been stable, but at the expense of the rest of the world. In effect, the U.S. has shifted the burden of the global crisis onto the back of its imperialist rivals and the so-called third-world nations.

With Bush I and Clinton in the White House, the U.S. bourgeoisie increasingly relied on the threat and actuality of

military might, in addition to "dollar diplomacy" — aggressive trade policies coupled to the austerity campaigns of the IMF and World Bank. Imperialist arm-twisting is always backed by force, as evidenced by the continued bloodletting in Iraq and last year's terror bombing of Serbia.

The success of U.S. imperialism is due not simply to its military might and economic pre-eminence, but also to fact that working-class demands in the U.S. have been kept rigorously in check. This factor has given a massive impulse to profitability here and sustained huge investments abroad. Continental West European capitalists have not been so fortunate, and their economies are listless as a consequence.

In contrast to the growing instability sweeping Asia, Africa, Latin America and the recessionary conditions wracking Europe and Japan, the class polarization of the 1980's and early 1990's in the U.S. has slowed down. The trade unions have steadily become tamer. The labor bureaucracy, loyal to capitalism and its the need for greater profitability, have used workers' fears to undermine their struggles.

Workers facing unemployment, along with sections of the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie facing the prospect of proletarianization, are relieved that expected economic shocks have failed to materialize. Worried by the decline in their wages since the 1970's yet unable to envision a revolutionary alternative, workers have for years lowered their expectations. The current stability appears as a reprieve from decades of worsening conditions. Further, the integrated character of the global imperialist economy has given rise to accelerated competition among workers of different nationalities and races, a rivalry stoked by the system to force wages everywhere down.

### FROM POLARIZATION LEFT AND RIGHT ...

This process hardly makes workers love the politicians and the bosses who run the economy. But for the moment it scares them from any radical-appearing alternative. The cautious don't-rock-the-boat Bush/Gore campaign rests on the economic equilibrium on the objective level and the paralysis of the working class on the subjective level. The polarizing pressures from the petty bourgeoisie and the upper layers of workers that enabled Reagan in the 1980's to jump to the right have not yet been felt strongly. Nor have there been the mass struggles of workers and the oppressed that in the long-gone past forced Democrats to posture to the left.

The late 1960's and early 1970's were the heyday of the Black ghetto upheavals and massive wildcat strikes in industry. While the U.S. still had considerable fat in its economy, the post-war boom was coming to an end. Both upsurges transcended their reformist leaders but did not generate alternative leaderships with a lasting impact. Malcolm X was the only national leader who really represented the outlook of the Black masses by his steadfast criticism of the system and its toadies, and *he* was murdered.

The rest of the Black leaders could not overcome their own middle-class position, much less the limits imposed on them by their largely white allies, the labor bureaucrats and the Democratic politicians. The bureaucrats were able to restrain and localize strikes; above all they succeeded in channeling the class rage of the poorer workers back into the bourgeoisie's Democratic Party and the electoral road to nowhere.

In response to the Black and labor upheavals, the Democrats tacked to the left under Lyndon Johnson's "Great



Society." This program, which continued under the Republican Nixon, was designed to incorporate the workers' economic struggles safely within what capitalism could afford, develop a stronger Black middle class and give Black workers enough to make many believe they had a future in capitalist America. The assimilation of the Black leadership and the renewed ties of the labor aristocracy to the Democrats served as a circuit breaker on any leftward radical polarization in the Black, Latino and white working class. The New Left radicalization within the middle classes, which reached its high point in the struggle against the Vietnam War, was also contained within the Democratic Party and finally dissipated.

When the economic decline became clear and no major left leaders broke from the Democrats, mass anger turned to frustration and led to a sharp right turn. Job and social fears generated by the Black revolt, plus the betrayals of the union leaders, sparked a trend away from the Democrats, first toward George Wallace and then to Nixon. Ronald Reagan was a conservative, but the swing of much of the white Catholic suburban blue-collar labor aristocracy into his camp was a radical act for these traditional Democrats. The trend finally crested with the victories of the "Republican Revolution" under Pat Robertson, Newt Gingrich and Pat Buchanan.

#### ... TO THE RISE OF THE CENTER

Throughout these shifts to the left and right, the *mainstream* big bourgeoisie never lost control of the state apparatus. This class is small; in elections it rests on the support of large sections of the petty bourgeoisie, the professional and bureaucratic middle class and politically backward workers. To keep control, it gives sops to these strata.

Normally the centers of the big bourgeoisie support moderate Republicans, the so-called Eastern Establishment. The Democrats are an equally bourgeois party but are less favored by capitalists; their voting base in the unions and the oppressed sectors of the working class does not inspire confidence in the hearts of the bosses. Although the Establishment grimaces at the more primitive aspects of the current right wing and its social program — opposition to abortion, naked racism, touches of isolationism — they certainly welcomed its dismantling of the costly "welfare state."

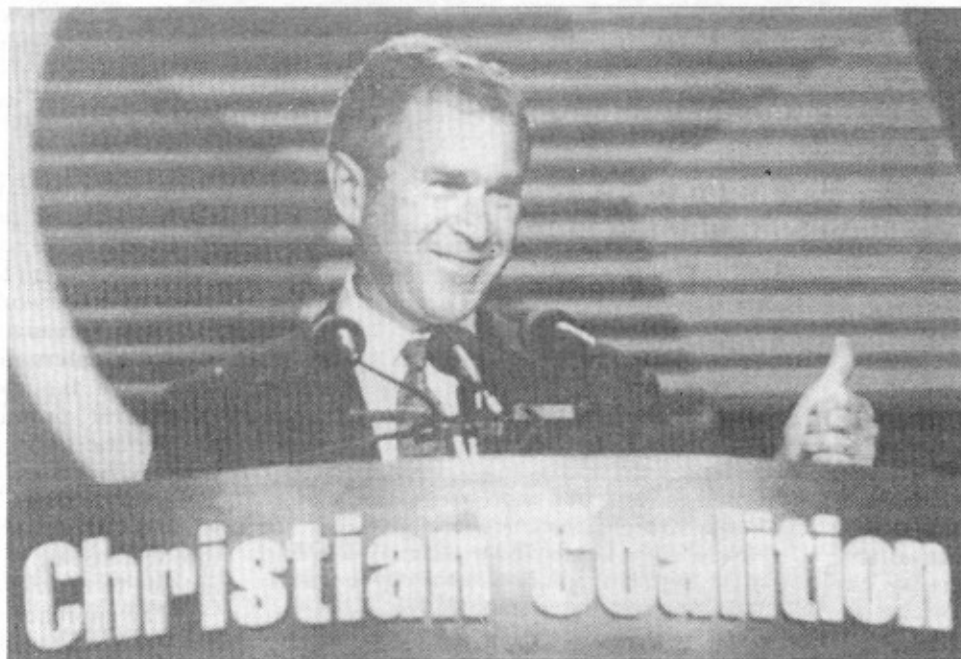
But sometimes the Democrats are needed. Most recently, when the pent-up anger over the Rodney King beating in 1992 set a match to Los Angeles, Clinton proved to the bourgeoisie that his incorporative populist politics was more useful than the confrontational tack taken by Bush the Elder. The economic stabilization and Clinton's ability to chain in the working class and oppressed people of color won him continued bourgeois support, even though his peccadilloes further undermined mass belief in the sacredness of the government. Now, with the leaders of the workers and the oppressed safely in Clinton's tow, Slick Willie has been able to prevent a renewal of anger on the left from taking a massive form. For this the bourgeoisie is thankful.

The retreat of the radical polarizations, first the left and then the right, is what enabled the mainstream bourgeoisie to enjoy the present interlude of cautious center politics.

#### CLINTON: THE GREATER EVIL

The bosses' gratitude is transient. Given Clinton's effectiveness in taming the left, the big bourgeoisie is leaning toward the more dyed-in-the-wool moderate conservatism of Bush the Younger. But should Gore win they won't be unhappy, since he embraces the anti-working class policies of Clinton. And if times turn worse soon, he will be in a better position to rein in any leftist opposition that develops.

Clinton has proved himself to be a loyal tool of the



*Candidate Bush showed 'Christian values' by executing death-row inmate Shaka Sankofa. Working class must end capitalism's racist death penalty.*

bosses in both foreign and domestic policy. He has maintained imperialism's armed threat against the U.S.'s rivals and former pawns who get out of line. He showed his mettle by bucking the unions and the majority of the Democratic pols by aligning with the Republicans and pushing through NAFTA and now the bill facilitating trade with China.

The Clinton/Gore record also shows that it is generally easier for Democrats than Republicans to attack the masses. Ronald Reagan and Bush I launched the assault on the oppressed, but Clinton carried it further than they could. Clinton signed the "welfare reform" act that has driven hundreds of thousands of people off the welfare roles and set up slave-labor "workfare" programs. Clinton also triggered the health care "reform" that promoted managed care in the interest of HMO's and insurance companies, and has resulted in a 25 percent increase in the number of people without insurance. Because of Clinton's "anti-terrorism" and crime legislation, civil rights have been weakened and repressive tools like the racist death penalty have been strengthened.

Gore is happily taking credit for Clinton's "achievements," namely his crimes against the working class in the U.S. and internationally. Not only does Gore fully support the murderous embargo and air attacks on Iraq; he boasts that he was one of the few Democrats in the Senate to

support Bush I and the Republicans in launching the Gulf War. Gore was of course a cheerleader for the imperialist war against Serbia and policies that aided the criminal slaughter in East Timor.

Because all these attacks have been carried out by a Democratic president, the opposition has been far more muted than it would be otherwise. Some on the left, notably the Communist Party and the Democratic Socialists, inevitably call for voting Democratic to keep out the "greater evil" Republicans. But Clinton has proved far more harmful to the working class, especially its oppressed sectors. Because the union bureaucrats and Black leaders hesitate to attack Democratic administrations, the Democrats get away with a



*Candidate Gore is no 'lesser evil' for victims of imperialism abroad or repression at home.*

lot more reaction than do the nominally more reactionary Republicans. In reality, Clinton has been not the lesser but the greater evil. (See "The Bankruptcy of 'Progressive' Politics" in PR 53.)

#### **WORKING-CLASS MISLEADERSHIP**

In the current election, the AFL-CIO leadership has thrown in its lot with Gore. While some unions like the Teamsters and the Auto Workers have squawked, despite their nods toward Buchanan and Ralph Nader they too will more than likely end up in Gore's camp. There are no Black or Latino leaders today with commanding stature, but those with some national influence like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton will also urge their followers to elect Gore. While Gore does not have the populist appeal of Clinton, he too in practice will be no lesser evil.

The working class in any case should never support bourgeois politicians, who are all agents of their class enemy. Both Democrats and the Republicans stand for attacking the working class: slashing social services in the interests of capitalist profits, racist "law and order" that produces

systematic police brutality, and imperialist war. To support either of these parties is to cut our own throats.

John Sweeney of the AFL-CIO, for example, has done nothing to show he is capable of fighting to reverse the decline in workers' standard of living that goes back to the 1970's. Even his balleyhooed organizing efforts amount to running hard just to stand still. As long as the unions are tied to the Democratic Party, they will hold back mass struggles and argue that the answer is in the voting booth.

Instead of relying on the Democrats, what's needed is mass action to fight for the needs of all workers. Our power as workers is not at the polling booths, choosing between two capitalist evils, but in our numbers and social role. Workers produce society's wealth; without our labor, everything from government to industry would stop dead.

Industrial action can only begin the struggle to better the condition of the working class; it will take a confrontation with the capitalists' state power to stop the retreat. But most workers do not see this. And given the reactionary character of the labor bureaucracy, many are led to believe that the answer to their problems is to use America's imperialist power to win the competition with workers abroad instead of uniting with them to confront the capitalist rulers. Lowering wages of other workers inevitably means lowering all wages, but the bureaucracy pushes social-patriotic chauvinism instead of internationalism and interracialism.

Hence the spectacle of organized labor clinging to reactionary protectionism and offering a platform to Democratic Party officials at the AFL-CIO's rally against trade with China during the anti-IMF protests in April. Sweeney criticized "the Clinton-DeLay team" (Tom DeLay is a leading Republican Congressman) for getting the bill through, hoping to fool voters into thinking that Gore had nothing to do with it.

The approach of the trade union leaders was chauvinist, but it came in response to a very mixed consciousness stirring within the working class. A deep discontent over wages, working conditions and an ominous future lies beneath the big push by Sweeney & Co. This crack in the political surface is just the beginning; soon it will turn into a class chasm as the pressure to restore capitalism's rate of profit intensifies.

The pro-capitalist, pro-Democratic labor leadership is a prisoner of its own politics. Unable to oppose the Democrats, it can only offer feeble resistance to the "prosperity" onslaught against the working class. It pathetically echoes bourgeois economic propaganda and prays for the best, even as the prosperity wavers. We can expect that at the first signs of economic decline, the bureaucrats will grovel off to Washington and support austerity measures and other attacks while preaching the need for "sacrifice" to save the system.

#### **CRACKS IN THE CENTER**

The huge and growing number of potential voters who won't vote, along with the burgeoning anger over growing police brutality and other forms of racial oppression in city after city, demonstrate the fears, hardships and angers of large numbers of working class and oppressed people who have been left out of the current equilibrium.

The fight over the China trade bill, the Seattle and Washington protests and the Nader and Buchanan candidacies all show the fragmentation going on at the edges of the political scene. The relative strength of the Nader campaign reflects motion away from the center, mostly within the liberal intelligentsia. However, while it in no way changes the

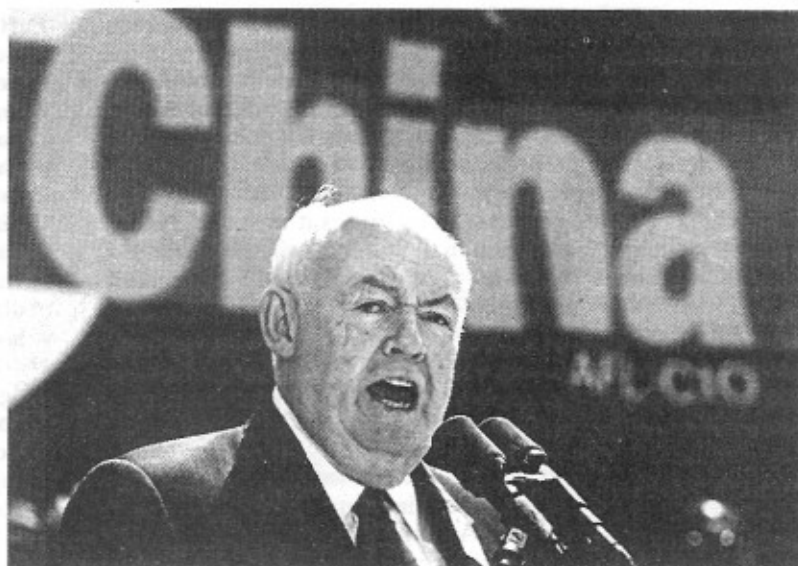
bourgeois reform nature of Nader's Green Party campaign, the UAW's attempt to play him off against Gore once again shows how the underlying class tensions are heating up. (On Nader, see the following article.)

Similarly, the fact that the Teamsters sponsored a speech in Washington by Buchanan, a racist and arch-reactionary patriotic chauvinist, shows cracks in the other direction. The conservative labor aristocracy can still polarize to the right in the future with even greater strength, especially if it again combines with the more narrow-minded petty bourgeoisie. The conflicting pressures on Gore's candidacy will become more manifest as the campaign progresses.

The slowly growing pressure from the right was demonstrated during the Republican primaries, when Bush had to embrace the socially conservative outlook of the Southern petty bourgeoisie, obviously more than he and the mainstream bourgeoisie really wanted to. Even though subsequently, in the hypocritical fashion of all bourgeois politics, he pulled back toward the center, Bush has to be careful not to infuriate a restive base at the right edge of the now somewhat-less-than-stable center.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Every communist revolutionary worthy of the name has the duty of warning fellow workers of the mounting attacks yet to come. The attention drawn to political issues by the campaign affords us an opportunity to do so. Unfortunately, we are too small to run candidates, but we will issue as much propaganda as we can pointing out that elections are no answer for the needs of our class. Only mass action and the re-creation of a mass working class revolutionary vanguard party can answer those needs, because only the overthrow of



*AFL-CIO's Sweeney leads workers into Democratic Party trap.*

capitalism can avoid the misery this system has in store.

Around the world, the working class is responding to the capitalist attacks with massive struggles. In Indonesia, an explosion of workers and students toppled the Suharto dictatorship after more than 30 years of brutal rule. In Latin America we see general strikes of workers and peasants against reactionary imperialist rule. But eruptions are not enough. Both at home and abroad, to defeat the counter-revolutionary forces and oust the reformist leaderships that betray any struggle that challenges capitalist power, a conscious and organized revolutionary force is needed: the international workers' revolutionary party that can fight for and win the leadership of the inevitable upsurges that will shake even the U.S. tomorrow. ●

## Ralph Nader's Corporate Campaign

Ralph Nader's Green Party campaign for president is suddenly attracting a great deal of public interest — as well as opportunist enthusiasm on the U.S. left. The recent statement by UAW president Stephen Yokich that the union will explore "alternatives" to the two major political parties, including a possible endorsement of Nader, has evoked dreams of a "Blue-Green" alliance of labor and middle-class environmentalists. Likewise Teamsters president James Hoffa Jr. has boosted Nader, demanding that he and Pat Buchanan be included in the nationally televised presidential debates.

While no one really expects the UAW or the Teamsters to back Nader, Yokich's statement points to dissatisfaction within the labor bureaucracy to the AFL-CIO leadership's all-out backing of Al Gore. Nader's positions on the World Trade Organization and the China trade bill align him with the protectionist sentiment dominating organized labor's opposition to Clinton and Gore on these issues. Similarly, when Nader opposed the NAFTA trade deal, he did so not because it was an imperialist attack on Mexican workers but because it supposedly undermined U.S. sovereignty by subjecting it to international courts!

In contrast to his feeble 1996 run, this time Nader is running a serious and well-financed campaign that hopes to

get 5 percent of the national vote, enough to enable the Green Party to qualify for federal matching funds. With polls suggesting Nader can pull nearly 10 percent in California, Nader represents a real threat to Gore. Nader can also hurt Gore in key Midwestern states like the UAW stronghold, Michigan, where protectionist sentiment runs high.

The attention paid to Nader by disgruntled union leaders does not represent any sudden conversion by these bureaucrats to the principle of working-class independence from the bourgeoisie. It is simply a device for them to put pressure on the Democratic Party, whose electoral success in many places depends on labor support. The big-time labor leaders remain firmly in the capitalist camp.

#### FOR CAPITALISM AND IMPERIALISM

For the working class as a whole Nader represents no alternative to the bourgeois Democrats. A genuine working-class campaign would be based either on the mass organizations and struggles of workers, or on a socialist program that stands for working-class interests. Nader, however, reaches beyond his usual bourgeois and middle-class audience only to the labor aristocracy, and that on a chauvinist and reactionary basis. He makes no appeal, and offers no

support, to the struggles of the oppressed sectors of workers: against police brutality and the death penalty, against racial discrimination, for immigrant rights. Nader's candidacy announcement on his website says literally nothing about current issues of racial oppression, although it does salute the 19th-century struggle against slavery.

While the Green Party platform does list affirmative action and opposition to racism as causes it supports, Nader disowned the party platform in 1996. That year he dismissed gay and women's issues as "gonadal politics." His record shows him equally uninterested in the "melanin politics" of fighting racism concretely.

Nader's statement's only mention of race, in fact, is that he "would like the American people to hear from" three individuals on race relations, one of whom is Yolanda Moses. Moses resigned a year ago as president of City College in New York, a largely Latino and Black working-class school. She was widely hated for gutting important programs (nursing, Black studies, and Latin American and Caribbean studies among others) at the behest of the reactionary trustees appointed by Governor Pataki and Mayor Giuliani, and for breaking years of precedent by inviting city cops onto the campus to arrest student protesters. Student and staff activists would *not* like to hear from her again.

Nader refuses to take any position on critical issues of "foreign policy," i.e., imperialism, like the U.S.'s criminal wars against Iraq and Serbia. The Green Party, however, calls for "International, Multilateral Peacekeeping to Stop Aggression and Genocide" — in other words, U.S. militarism disguised in United Nations or other international imperialist garb. It was just such language that Clinton used to justify NATO's bombing of Serbia and Kosovo last year.

The U.S. Green Party is an echo of the German Greens, a once-radical middle-class party that gave up its oppositional stance in order to join the Social-Democratic government. Joschka Fischer, a Green leader, became Foreign Minister and oversaw Germany's role in the assault on Serbia.

What Nader does stand for is "democracy," by which he means regulation of out-of-control corporations by the capitalist government. Even trade unions are praised not just for advancing workers' conditions but also for being one of the "countervailing forces that have saved American corporate capitalism from itself." If you too want to save corporate capitalism, by all means vote Nader.

#### REFORMISTS IN NADER'S CAMP

There is growing support for the Green campaign in the ranks of the so-called U.S. Labor Party, including by its founder, Tony Mazzocchi. This pathetic outfit continues to suck up to the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and represents little more than mild-left pressure to bring back the old liberal-left coalition of New Deal Democrats. With large numbers of the Labor Party rank and file already involved in the Greens (many are dual members), leading figures have promoted a "Labor for Nader" drive. Since its inception, the "Labor Party" has refused to run or endorse any actual candidates, a ploy that enables a handful of union bureaucrats to control it while endorsing Democrats up and down the line. The Labor Party types' support for Nader is another sign that his campaign is being used to put pressure on Gore to pay more heed to the bureaucracy's needs.

Another group jumping on the Nader bandwagon is the "socialist" organization, Solidarity. In a statement endorsing both Nader and David McReynolds of the moribund Socialist

Party, Solidarity makes it clear that in the absence of a working-class party, pretty much any leftist third party will do:

**Solidarity looks for all openings to break the two-party logjam and move in the direction of genuinely independent politics . . . We feel that Ralph Nader's campaign on the Green Party ticket represents the potential for a big step forward toward a new politics, independent of the capitalist class whose interests reign supreme in this country. Nader is not and makes no claim to be a socialist; but the Greens' vision of an ecological and democratic world ultimately entails an assault on the institutions of capitalism and the forging of a working-class alternative.**

Solidarity uses pseudo-radical third party rhetoric to fudge the fact that Nader and the Greens do not represent a working-class alternative but instead a slightly left version of bourgeois populism. Rather than a step in the direction of independent working-class politics (Solidarity refers instead simply to "independent politics"), the Greens are another trap that will kill off such a development.

#### NADER VS. BUCHANAN?

In promoting Nader, Solidarity is forced to play down Nader's protectionism.

**Another question facing this campaign is the danger of a nationalist-protectionist response to "globalization," rather than one based on international solidarity. If this campaign is to offer a clear alternative to Bush-Gore and Buchanan, it must not echo the America-First, "American Jobs for American Workers" rhetoric of Buchanan or much of the AFL-CIO leadership.**

But pious phrases cannot rationalize away the linkage between the protectionist campaigns of Nader and Buchanan. Indeed, Nader's willingness to block with Buchanan and the right on issues like NAFTA and the WTO has led some members of the Ross Perot-created Reform Party to look favorably towards him. Roger Milliken, the reactionary South Carolina textile boss who supports Buchanan, has also funded Nader's *Public Citizen*, and it is no accident that the Teamsters' Hoffa Jr. is flirting with both of them.

In a revealing statement by John Talbott, Reform Party spokesperson in New Hampshire, the link between the left and right populist candidates is drawn out.

**If you close your eyes, it is difficult to hear much of a difference between Ralph Nader on the left and Pat Buchanan on the right when they talk about corruption in government, the excesses of corporate welfare, the devastating effect of free international trade on the American worker and a desire to clean big money and special interests out of Washington. . . . The time is now for a new political party that is neither right nor left, neither conservative nor liberal, but created and built to represent the hard-working average American in reforming our government.**

The emphasis on getting rid of left and right labels is code for substituting multi-class formations for the independent class struggle of the proletariat. Populist anti-corporate rhetoric replaces a working-class anti-capitalist program.

In addition to Solidarity, elements in the Committees of Correspondence, leaders of the International Socialist Organization and independent leftists have made supportive noises toward Nader. To even consider supporting a candidate who distances himself from struggles against racism and imperialism shows disdain for the real concerns of the bulk of the working class, in the U.S. and around the world. ●

## LRP/COFI

*continued from page 2*

distributed the leaflet, "1199/SEIU: Stand Up Against Police Brutality!" in an attempt to push for an 1199 mobilization for the June 26 rally against police brutality in New York. The hacks didn't allow anything but the dues increase to even come up. Not only is the union reneging on its previous rhetoric to fight police brutality; the day before it was reported in the news that 300 layoffs are imminent at three 1199 union hospitals, and the union was planning protests. But these protests weren't even announced to the 700 delegates. (Write in for leaflets we produced for 1199 and the Transport Workers Union in the recent period.)

### CHICAGO LRP

Chicago comrades led our intervention at the ISO Summer School, where an ISO thug physically attacked an LRP supporter. This is hardly the first time the ISO has opted to police the left.

The June 10 incident began when we were threatened with expulsion, based on our habitual "crimes" of making effective interventions and engaging in political discussions with others. Later the charge of selling socialist literature without an ISO-approved license was added on. The physical attack occurred when LRPers continued to distribute and discuss on the street outside the conference hotel. (See our protest statement by visiting our website or by writing to us.)

In the past period the Chicago LRP held semi-public meetings on Lessons of the Spanish Revolution and the Democratic Party Swindle. In March we attended a speech by the General Secretary of the CUT, the main federation of Colombian labor unions. This event was hosted by the Chicago Columbia Committee in conjunction with a number of unions and socialist organizations, including Solidarity and News & Letters. Despite the heavy "socialist" presence, nobody but the LRP challenged the speaker's notion of transforming Colombian society within the framework of capitalism. Our comrade criticized the Stalinist notion — held in common by the union leadership and the main guerrilla

groups in the country — that the struggle is at a purely democratic stage. (See our article on p. 15.)

Our initial work in the Chicago Teachers Union has planted a pole of discussion for teachers who want to fight the inaction of President Thomas Reese in the face of escalating attacks on both students and workers. (Write in for leaflets and further information.)

### INTERNATIONAL

The KOVI-BRD in Germany has published the 4th edition of *KOVI-Dokumente*. It includes translations of LRP articles, an interview with a Trotskyist from Argentina on events in that country, an article on Austria and Haider, two articles



*LRP joins rally against police brutality.*

on the German left, plus a review and flyers by KOVI.

LRP comrades have visited South Africa and Europe for discussions with political groups and organizations, including the Ukrainian RWO (see p. 18).

### LRP BREAKS DISCUSSIONS WITH WIVL

The LRP has terminated its political discussions with the Workers International Vanguard League of South Africa (WIVL). This decision was made following the WIVL's unwillingness over a period of years to conduct the political discussions it had agreed to, and its refusal to respond to repeated requests for an explanation.

This decision had to be made now because of the sharp political degeneration of the WIVL. From an organization that was founded on the basis of key revolutionary principles and continued to move toward the development of a full revolutionary Marxist perspective (see *PR 54*), the WIVL has degenerated into a profoundly corrupt, centrist organization. Politically, this degeneration has taken the form of combining abstract propaganda for socialism with increasingly reformist trade union work and activism designed to reinforce the privileged position of its leading members in the union and party bureaucracy. The degeneration reached a shocking low when the sexual abuse of a woman comrade by the group's General Secretary was covered up by a majority of its leaders.

A minority of members had been opposing the political degeneration of the WIVL for some time. But the differences

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exploded when their condemnation of the incident of sexual abuse and its cover-up was responded to with bureaucratic persecution. The WIVL's founding leader, Leon Caesar, was the only member of the WIVL leadership to condemn the abuse and its cover-up, and he was promptly expelled.

Caesar and a small number of other WIVL members launched a factional struggle, producing documents on the question of sexual abuse, the bureaucratic degeneration of the organization and a detailed critique of its political direction. The comrades focused their efforts toward the WIVL's congress, where the organization's members would have the opportunity to debate and vote on the issues. The WIVL had refused for over a year to convene the constitutionally mandated yearly congress, postponing it repeatedly.

In late April, the WIVL congress was postponed for the sixth time, with no explanation or proposal for a new date. This led the comrades fighting inside the WIVL to conclude that it was no longer possible or productive to continue their struggle inside the WIVL. They split from the WIVL and held their own congress to which all WIVL members were invited. Not surprisingly, the cowardly WIVL leaders refused to attend and defend themselves. At that congress, the comrades who split from the WIVL formed a new organization, the Committee for Revolutionary Marxism (CRM), which aims at laying the theoretical and programmatic basis for the creation of a new genuine revolutionary socialist group in South Africa. As part of this process, the CRM

committed itself to conducting the political discussions with the LRP that the WIVL had refused.

An LRP representative attended the CRM's founding congress as an observer and participated in extensive political discussions with CRM members both before and after. The CRM shared with the LRP all the documents of their struggle inside the WIVL. The LRP is optimistic that freed from the degenerate WIVL, the comrades of the CRM will be able to achieve their aims of laying the foundation for an authentic Trotskyist party in South Africa.

Our representative also met with the recently formed Socialist League (SL). The SL was formed by comrades who split from the African People's Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA) after a factional struggle. The SL has certainly made a break from APDUSA's eclectic program which for many years combined elements of Trotskyist rhetoric with an essentially stagist, bourgeois democratic perspective. Discussions with SL comrades revealed a serious level of agreement on questions of revolutionary program. The LRP hopes to also have a productive discussion of political questions with the SL.

A full analysis of the WIVL's degeneration, the political struggles inside it, and the LRP's attempts at pursuing political discussions with it will be made available on our website. Documents of the struggle inside the WIVL, as well as of the LRP's attempts at political discussions with the WIVL, are available from the LRP on request.●

## **Free Mumia Abu Jamal! Defend Mumia's Supporters!**

The struggle to free Mumia Abu Jamal is in its final stretch. To the capitalist state this Black political prisoner, a well-known fighter against racism, police brutality and other injustices, is a key enemy.

Incarcerated for 18 years following his false conviction for the murder of police officer Daniel Faulkner, Mumia has retained his steadfast and vocal opposition to the system in general and the racist anti-worker police in particular. His exposure of the Philadelphia police as a radical journalist in the late 70's and early 80's was the main reason he was targeted for frame-up. In his 17 years on death row Mumia has continued to speak out on police atrocities from Amadou Diallo to Tyisha Miller and on many other issues of injustice and imperialism.

East Coast, West Coast or Midwest, not a week goes by when cops are not murdering another innocent person of color. There has probably never been as much opposition to, and awareness of, police terror in the oppressed communities as there is today. If Mumia is executed, it will mean a tremendous setback for any movement against police brutality, and a shot in the arm for racism and repression.

The most successful defense can only be built through placing demands on the misleadership of major organizations — the unions, civil rights and other Black and Latino organizations — that claim to oppose police brutality, the death penalty and other racist attacks. Such popular leaders must mobilize their full resources and get their members out on the streets for Mumia. (See *PR 59* for a full discussion.)

### **STAND WITH MUMIA!**

The fact that this strategy has not been followed means that by and large, even the most successful events are the result of the efforts of a few left groups. Such efforts are

necessary but hardly sufficient for bringing out the masses, especially the oppressed workers and youth who are angered over the increasing racist attacks.

In response to a request by Mumia's legal team, Federal District Court Judge Yohn granted permission for the defense to file a supplementary brief on the issues raised by two recent Supreme Court decisions on the Effective Death Penalty Act. For technical reasons, the first hearing in Mumia's habeas petition before Judge Yohn will be not be set until after June 23.

On that critical day (called Day X) at 9 in the morning, Mumia will be in the Federal District court in Philadelphia. We ask all our readers and friends to respond to the call to be in Philadelphia at that time. (For further info, contact the LRP or the International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal at 215-476-8812. Also visit the website at <[www.mumia.org](http://www.mumia.org)> for updates.

### **MUMIA ACTIVISTS UNDER SIEGE**

Eight activists, including Clark Kissinger of Refuse & Resist and the Revolutionary Communist Party, Mitchel Cohen of Red Balloon and the Green Party and Frances Goldin, Mumia's literary agent, have been sentenced to a fine and one year supervised probation as a result of civil disobedience activity at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia last July 4. The LRP has joined in signing a protest letter which points out that the infraction for which they were convicted is a petty offense, equivalent to a traffic ticket. The one-year probation is completely out of line in such cases and can only be interpreted as a governmental effort to restrict organizers for Mumia and pry into their private associations and finances. We urge all our readers and friends to sign onto this protest letter. It can be seen at <[www.j4mumia.org](http://www.j4mumia.org)>.●

## Police Brutality

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and killed by the police the following week in a revenge execution, NYPD style.

Some pundits in the bourgeois media had predicted a riot in response to the Diallo verdict. Yet as angry as people were, very few believed that a riot could gain much. This, along with the imposing police presence, kept the immediate response in the Bronx fairly low. Nevertheless people clearly did want to respond and were looking for a way forward.

### AL SHARPTON'S ROLE

In Albany on the night of the verdict, small crowds gathered to listen to Reverend Al Sharpton. Sharpton is a former Democratic Party mayoral candidate in New York, but his reputation is built centrally on the fight against the police. Sharpton has called so many demonstrations against police brutality over the years, in the wake of the Diallo murder in particular, that he had been constantly baited by Republican Mayor Giuliani and other racists as a despised symbol of Black protest.

Since Sharpton has been the single most important leadership figure in the fight against police brutality in New York for a long time, we must examine and criticize his role very sharply. But it should also be emphasized that Sharpton has stepped into a leadership vacuum on this issue because the major mass organizations — unions, the NAACP, the churches, the Nation of Islam — and other politicians have not done much to mobilize against police brutality.

Following the verdict, Sharpton did not try to raise the level of protest to a new high point. "This is not the end, this is only the beginning," he promised. But he was planning a struggle to "pursue this in the federal courts," not mobilize masses against the system. Since the chance of a federal retrial was microscopic, this was pure diversion. (See our pamphlet *Stop Police Terror!* for an analysis of the federal intervention strategy.) In a situation where the system had so clearly failed to deliver, trying to re-stoke hopes in federal salvation was the best Sharpton could come up with. (Sharpton also pushed an economic boycott strategy; see p. 38.)

On Saturday February 26, a mass protest march on Fifth Avenue was initiated by the organization People's Justice 2000. This is a fairly new coalition which has a program of reform demands and has the nominal endorsement of about 20 groups. These include left groups like the Student Liberation Action Movement, the National People's Campaign (i.e., the Workers World Party) and the October 22 Coalition (i.e., the Revolutionary Communist Party), along with more establishment outfits like Ron Daniels' Center for Constitutional Rights and the American Legal Aid Association. Its main spokesman is Richie Perez, a long time activist with the National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights

(NCPRR). It even has the token membership of Sharpton's National Action Network, although Sharpton and Perez rarely share a platform or panel.

We note that Richie Perez, representing the NCPRR, accepted an award last fall from the Latino Officers Association (LOA), along with Congressman Jose Serrano. The NCPRR urged activists to attend the award ceremony, stating "The struggle LOA is waging inside — and the repression they are experiencing — is part of *our* struggle and benefits the broad movement for justice."

The LOA, however, as an organization of cops, plays an extremely damaging role in the movement against police brutality. Last fall the LOA and some Democratic Party politicians sponsored a rally against the Klan; along with the cops, the LOA urged the crowd to obey the cops and not confront the Klan physically. As a "solution" to police brutality, the LOA's line is to champion the recruitment of youth of color to the police and more minority hiring. But the first task of the movement is to understand that cops are cops, regardless of color. This doesn't mean that we don't defend cops who are victimized for their race or nationality, or because of an attempt to blow the whistle about particular cop atrocities. But it is dangerous to think that cops of color as a group are *fundamentally* different. Thus many young Black and Latino males, who are the biggest police targets, are also the first to insist that the fundamental problem is "blue" — i.e. cops of color can be as dangerous as white cops in given situations.

### DEAD-END PROTESTS

In any event, at the Saturday protest, approximately 4000 people showed up, mainly young whites, for a march that was spirited but absolutely aimless. At various points a good number sat down in the street and got arrested. This is a favored tactic of People's Justice. But it has been repeated so often that its impact is virtually nil. Worse, no one from People's Justice 2000 addressed the protesters about the way forward for the struggle beyond this one day's activity.

The next day, Rev. Sharpton led a rally at the United Nations which had the same passive character as the prayer vigils that he had been leading throughout the trial. This crowd of about 2000 was about two-thirds Black, and Democratic politicians and preachers were the featured speakers. The worst was Mark Green, a liberal Democrat who is a likely candidate to succeed Giuliani. Green advocated healing between the police and the Black community, and got booed. Then he said that the vast majority of cops would lay down their lives for ours, and got booed loudly and continually.

After the rally, with no official leadership in sight, about 500 people congregated to continue marching. They had to confront not only the cops but also lawyers for the NYCLU and Sharpton, who mounted a paddy wagon with bullhorns, urging the crowd to disperse, saying stuff like "we had a great demonstration, now let's go home." Loud shouts arose against these representatives as well as the police. LRPers actively fought this effort and helped the crowd push ahead. The police backed down and lifted the blockade and the march continued all the way to City Hall. Chants of "Rudy's Gotta Go!" filled the air, and at a number of points when LRPers chanted "Shut the City Down!" we gained a good amount of support.

During both weekend demonstrations, the LRP bulletin *No Justice, No Peace; Shut the City Down!* was enthusiastically

### **Fight Police Terror!**

**No Support to Capitalism's  
Racist Anti-Worker Police!**

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grabbed by thousands of people. Sales of our *Stop Police Terror!* pamphlets were also high. Nevertheless, we were under no delusion: most people chanting "Shut the City Down" were not thinking of the working-class general strike action that we have been advocating. They were far more familiar with actions where people block traffic and clog the streets. That is the best they have experienced in recent years.

#### DEMANDS ON LEADERSHIP

Throughout the struggle around the Diallo verdict, as in previous cases, it was clear that the masses were looking mainly to Sharpton to show the way forward. Yet his strategies of limited action and boycotts went nowhere. Their purpose is to give people an outlet to vent their rage rather than to exert the power that can win significant concessions, never mind fundamental changes.

For this reason, our bulletin not only exposed the connection between police brutality, the Democrats and the capitalist system; as usual we also argued for mass action:

**We must demand that every figure and organization that says they oppose racism, that every figure who says they stand for the rights of working people, mobilize all their followers for a massive march on City Hall to protest police brutality. This would include the unions, the churches, and groups from the NAACP to the Nation of Islam.**

**A huge rally of tens of thousands is needed, a rally of masses of people ready to defend ourselves against the continual threats coming from Giuliani, Police Commissioner Safir, and their cop thugs. We need a mass fighting mobilization at City Hall to show that rather than waste more time begging for justice from the courts, we're ready and able to fight for justice ourselves when we are united in great numbers. ... Such a mass demonstration could set the scene for building a general strike movement in New York, which could actually shut the city down and demonstrate working-class power.**

Workers and youth have the absolute right to demand that those who claim to speak for them mount an effective defense against police terror. In the U.S., the working class and oppressed have suffered decades of misleadership. One result is that many do not even know what to expect from leadership because they have not seen genuine mass action in a long time, if at all.

The 1992 Los Angeles riot was followed by the election of a Democratic president. This was an attempt by the ruling class to smooth over the raging racial conflict, which, in turn, is profoundly connected to a fundamental class conflict. And the shift to the Democrats in this instance worked. Labor and civil rights leaderships have led virtually nothing while Clinton has been in office. No wonder Minister Louis Farrakhan's call for a Million Man March in 1995 got such a palpable response. People were thrilled to assert Black pride in great numbers, even though there was no political or action program advanced to defend Black rights. (See *PR 50* for our analysis.)

With the Diallo case the situation was this: everyone knew that the trial had been moved to Albany exactly to avoid a mass fightback after the verdict. *Had Sharpton spelled that out, and urged a million people to surround City Hall in the case of a not-guilty verdict, it would have happened.* But his intention was to shut the movement down, not build it. That is why his reaction to the Diallo verdict was notably un-militant, especially in comparison to his rhetoric and activity

after Diallo's murder the year before.

Why? One factor was that the situation was even more volatile underneath, and Sharpton was in no mood to play with fire. Sharpton was also playing a key role in the upcoming elections, especially on the local level where he was championing Hillary Clinton against Giuliani in the senatorial race. While rhetorically making some critical remarks, his real mission was to deliver the Black vote to Hillary Clinton and prove his value to the Democratic Party.

A symbol of how far Sharpton has moved into the mainstream of bourgeois politics is that he was given the



*Cops round up Latino 'suspects' in New York. Cop murders and daily harassment have both escalated.*

opportunity to ask the opening question to Al Gore and Bill Bradley in their widely aired live Democratic primary debate at the Apollo Theater in Harlem just days before the Diallo verdict. His question also reflected his acceptance of bourgeois concerns: "What concrete steps would you make if you were elected president to deal with police brutality and racial profiling without increasing crime? How would you keep crime down, but at the same time confront the problem of police brutality and racial profiling?"

Translation: I do not challenge the law and order rhetoric of the Democratic Party (which is a cover for the tremendous increase in everyday racist police brutality as well as savage beatings and outright murders). I will not expose the fact that fighting "crime" is not the purpose of the NYPD; repression of the masses is. And certainly I will not point out that racial profiling, police brutality and other social attacks on people of color have all increased under the Clinton administration.

Had Sharpton exposed the Democratic Party in any serious way, he could not play his role as broker for the Black masses. The question was a perfect example of someone trying to both voice the concerns of the oppressed and show the bourgeois establishment that he was one of them. It only gave Gore and Bradley the opening to talk some crap about how much they do for Black people.

#### DORISMOND AND THE HAITIAN UPSURGE

For all Sharpton's efforts, conditions in New York could not get quiet for long — above all because of the police murder of Patrick Dorismond, an unarmed Haitian worker,



on March 16. The murder came as a result of the same "retake the streets" mentality that had led to the murder of Amadou Diallo. Dorismond was resisting entrapment by a buy-and-bust operation, part of Operation Condor, an "anti-drug" initiative. The undercover cops approached Dorismond, asking to buy some pot. He was offended by the insinuation, and this challenge to the NYPD authority ended up in a supposedly accidental shooting.

Springing to the NYPD's defense as always, Mayor Giuliani released Dorismond's sealed juvenile record, which revealed a minor drug offense when he was 13 years old — this was supposed to justify murder! Naturally, this move further inflamed not only the Haitian community but virtually everyone in New York. As Giuliani plummeted in the polls, even other Republicans said he had gone too far.

Despite the widespread antipathy to the NYPD and Giuliani, it was left to the Haitian community virtually alone to provide a militant direction. On both Friday night March 24 and Saturday March 25, thousands upon thousands of Haitians poured into the streets to memorialize Dorismond in conjunction with his wake and funeral. On Saturday in particular demonstrators focused their wrath on Giuliani with the chant "Rache Manyrk" (meaning "uproot" him).

Al Sharpton was in the leading contingent of the procession departing from the funeral home to the church on Saturday. But he was nowhere around when the dramatic confrontation between the police and demonstrators ensued. At the onset of the procession, marchers were allowed to walk in the street without much police interference. But when the march reached the corner of Flatbush and Church Avenues, the streets were closed off by heavy steel barricades and hundreds of cops. It was then that a fight broke out.

It may have been only a small number who burned an American flag, a picture captured in all the New York dailies. But it reflected the larger disgust of the crowd. Haitians who had sacrificed life and limb to flee the brutality of their homeland did not come to New York to meet the oppression they were trying to escape. And Haitians have a special hatred for Giuliani, who enforced U.S. restrictions on Haitians as one of the top honchos in Reagan's Justice Department. They also have reason to despise the NYPD brass, who have been sent to Haiti to provide police "training." So on March 25 the Haitian community said "Enough!" One man carried a placard that read: "Giuliani, if you kill one more child of ours, I will kill your son Andrew."

The truth was that many felt ready for a fight to the death with Mayor Giuliani. Dozens of police were injured by community participants — while of course the police randomly and violently arrested dozens of demonstrators and bystanders. But the dominant message was that a rebellion by the Haitian community against the cops was in the making. The showdown was a shot in the arm for the entire movement; it posed the possibility of inspiring the greater level of fighting action so desperately needed.

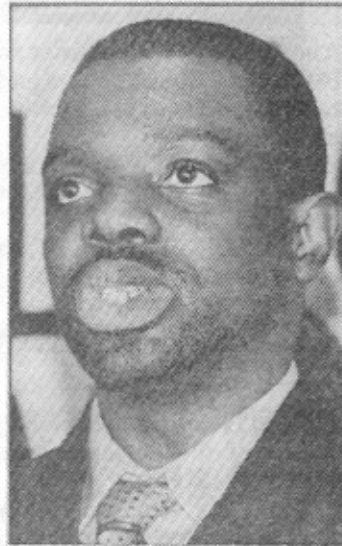
#### 'MASS MOBILIZATION TO OUST GIULIANI'

The actions of the demonstrators resulted in something very concrete. A newly formed Haitian Coalition for Justice (HCJ) came out with an inspirational declaration published in *Haiti Progrès* (April 12) under the title "A Call to End Police Brutality: Stop Giulianism in its Tracks!" This coalition represents a spectrum of political views. Its most prominent spokesman is Ray LaForest, an open leftist who holds a union post in DC 1707. The HCJ document read in part:

The residents of this city must come together and with one voice demand that Giuliani resign. Should he refuse, all activity in this city must cease until he is ousted from office. . . . We call on the communities of color in New York City, on all the communities of worship, on the labor movement, on the youth who are the prime target of Giuliani's genocidal plan, on civil society and on all concerned people in general, to stop this madman from engulfing the city into a race war. Giuliani must go right now!

With this, the Haitian Coalition called for a "Mass Mobilization to Oust Giuliani" on April 20. Its flyers cited the mass march that Haitians had carried out across the Brooklyn Bridge on April 20, 1990 and stated, "On the tenth anniversary of that historic march, the Haitian community is again planning to shake the Brooklyn Bridge, but this time to demand the ouster of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani."

The LRP put out a bulletin which focused on the call for the April 20 march and linked it to the need for a general



*Haitian immigrant  
Abner Louima  
survived brutal cop  
torture.*

strike of workers in New York. We wrote:

The masses of people who want to fight racist police brutality have the potential to rock the system through more powerful means than just demonstrations. As workers, we are the force that makes this city run and put profits into the pockets of the ruling class. We can use this power to hit the ruling class where it hurts. A *general strike* in New York would stop profit-making and bring Wall Street to its knees. "Shut the City Down" has become a slogan of various forces. But this is the way we can actually do it! The youth can take part with student strikes in alliance with the workers' strikes. This is the earth-shaking response that we need to fight for. In our view, a truly massive march on City Hall on April 20 will also be an opportunity to build toward greater action such as the general strike.

A truly massive march on April 20 could begin to make its power a reality for many people. In fact, for a march to truly shake the Brooklyn Bridge, it would have to draw people from their jobs, and that in itself would have been a big step toward raising the question of strike action.

#### RIVERA'S BETRAYAL

To assist in this effort, on April 12, an LRP supporter raised a motion at a Delegate Assembly of hundreds of mem-



*Demonstrators express outrage at New York cops and Mayor Giuliani.*

bers of the merged 1199/SEIU hospital workers' division, a union with a large majority of Black and Latino workers and a good number of Haitian workers in particular. Her motion, carried unanimously, said in part:

**Whereas the Central Labor Council of New York has now come on record on the need to do something about the brutal murder of workers by the police,**

**Whereas 1199-SEIU members assisting the funeral of Patrick Dorismond faced physical violence at the hands of the racist, anti-working class police,**

**Whereas the Haitian community has called for support in the struggle against police brutality,**

**Be it resolved that:**

1) 1199-SEIU calls on the Central Labor Council and all workers to come out in support of the demonstration called by the Haitian Coalition for Justice ...

3) 1199-SEIU will initiate a call for a mass emergency conference of all workers and members of oppressed communities facing police terror to plan mass action to fight against police brutality.

In speaking, the LRP highlighted the claim of Dennis Rivera, the union's president, to be a ferocious opponent of Giuliani. But despite the motion's unanimous adoption, Rivera betrayed it.

Rev. Sharpton announced a week of small scale civil disobedience actions at different locations, the week of the Haitian Coalition demonstration. The Coalition endorsed these activities. But the net effect of Sharpton's plan was to weaken the possibility of pulling off a truly mass march on April 20. The HCJ, with extremely limited resources, did not succeed in getting the message out loud and clear that *its* march was intended to be different from the myriad other events over the same issue.

Although Sharpton didn't explicitly counterpose to the mass march planned for April 20, the *Amsterdam News* and most other media only publicized what Sharpton was doing. And behind closed doors, Rivera & Co. decided to endorse Sharpton's week of action *instead* of the April 20th union mobilization his delegates had voted for.

#### **THE APRIL 20 MARCH**

The turnout on April 20 showed that the HCJ could not pull off a mass mobilization by itself. A few hundred people

showed up at the initial gathering place in Brooklyn. Eventually the march grew to a few thousand but never more than that, so the passage over the Brooklyn Bridge lacked any sense of mass drama and purpose. And even more than numbers, nothing about the character of the demonstration marked it off from all the demonstrations that had preceded it in the past few years.

Most of the many speakers from the podium at the final rally point, City Hall, had nothing new to propose. Several, particularly Abner Louima and the relatives of Patrick Dorismond, emphasized that "violence" was not a solution and was not welcome. They also ended up arguing that "it's only a few bad apples," in effect an apology for the NYPD. Youth in the crowd seemed particularly displeased at this tired line. Many speakers called on the audience to "get out and vote," meaning against Giuliani and therefore for Hillary Clinton. Some pushed the Easter boycott, the idea Sharpton and others pushing spouting about not buying new Easter clothes to protest police brutality. Others simply preached to the choir about what a terrible thing police brutality was. All in all, the demonstration had nothing of the character of what the Haitian community had started in Flatbush three weeks before.

By the time the LRP speaker got the mike, the crowd was down to about 500. Our speaker connected the Giuliani-led NYPD campaign against minorities to his attacks on the transit workers last December. The reason behind the extraordinary crackdown on the transit workers was the ruling class' fear of their ability to shut the city down and stop profit-making. (See PR 60 for details of that near-strike movement.) Given that the transit union, like other powerful unions in New York, had large numbers of workers of color, why wasn't this power being tapped into now? Would not transit and many other city workers be particularly interested in fighting police brutality? Our speaker concluded by calling for mass action to force Giuliani out of office, based on the power of the working class. He argued for placing demands on Sharpton and union leaders to mobilize the class. All this was enthusiastically received. But the absence of a mass turnout for the day meant that the power of the working class remained an abstract idea to many, not something revolutionaries could visibly point to.

The HCJ truly wanted to build a mass march powerful

enough to force Giuliani out. It had made a great step forward with its slogan, "Mass Mobilization to Oust Giuliani." Unfortunately, despite putting this slogan on its flyers for the march, the Coalition did not carry it through at the march itself. Their lead banner said only "Stop Police Brutality," and no speaker before the LRP talked at all about a strategy of ousting Giuliani through non-electoral means.

The LRP has attended follow-up meetings called by the HCJ to discuss the events, determine a strategy to defend those arrested and examine the possibility of further action. At this point the HCJ is attempting to unite with other forces for a demonstration on June 26 which we will evaluate in our next issue. While seeing the need to branch out to forces beyond the Haitian community, the HCJ activists are not yet won over to a strategy substantially different from those of other coalitions against police brutality.

The LRP is of course eager to collaborate with all forces on actions against police terror, regardless of other political differences. We will continue to argue that it is necessary to place demands on the mass organizations and the popular leaders; the small forces of the left cannot create a mass mobilization on their own. Yet none of the larger groups on the left, including the Workers World Party (WWP) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP, the force behind both the Oct. 22 Coalition and Refuse & Resist), seem to tolerate this approach. It contrasts sharply with the habitual cheer-leading of every demonstration, however aimless — and the uncritical tailing of the existing leaders, however treacherous.

#### OUST GIULIANI?

A few readers have inquired about our support for the notion of ousting Giuliani, a tactic describe above. Our bulletin for the April 20 march explained our approach this way:

**Rev. Sharpton and Dennis Rivera are anti-Giuliani, but they haven't called for serious mass action to force Giuliani out of office. They fear that through sustained militant struggle the masses would realize their own power and figure out that they don't have to rely on either capitalist party. So rather than build mass actions which could force Giuliani out, they tell us to wait passively and vote for Democrats.**

In fact, many of the leaders that show up at demonstrations against police brutality do so because after they let us vent our anger they can preach to us about the virtues of voting for Democratic candidates! Police brutality and other racist and anti-worker attacks are happening all across the country, under Democratic Mayors as well as Republicans. Our hatred for Giuliani must not be used by Democratic Party hacks to build illusions that the Democrats are really better. We must use these struggles to build a new leadership for the working class, a revolutionary working class party that can stand as a real alternative to both the Republicans and Democrats. Not a single vote for the Democrats or Republicans, the two parties of racism, imperialism and anti-worker attacks! (This and other bulletins are posted on our website and are available in print upon request.)

When masses in struggle demand the prosecution of a particular killer cop or the ouster of a hated official, there is absolutely no reason why revolutionaries should not join in this struggle. Our point in doing so, however, is clearly different from the narrow focus of reformists who want to use the struggle of the masses to simply replace one capitalist figure with another. While such a shift may be the result of

any given struggle, it is not our purpose.

Rather our aim is two-fold. First, to show that when masses of workers exercise their class power, they can indeed win victories. Second, to demonstrate that reformist leaders are afraid to fight all the way for even limited demands, because of their underlying support for the system. We fight in action, as Trotsky always taught, to separate the base from the top. Revolutionaries must convince our brothers and sisters in the working class to use our class power to form our own party and fight for our own system, rather than trying to rely on any wing of the anti-worker capitalist ruling class.

On the other hand, demands like "Oust Giuliani" are dangerous in the absence of a mass movement. Since that is the scenario right now, the term can only be interpreted as a call for reliance on some other bourgeois politician.

This has not been the approach of other Giuliani opponents in the campaigns against police brutality. A notably bad example has been the Coalition to Stop Giuliani. It intervened in the recent struggle to argue that people should focus on *stopping* Giuliani from gaining the Senate seat against Hillary rather than taking action to *dump* him out of the Mayor's seat through mass action.

#### THE NEW GIULIANI?

As we were drafting this article, Giuliani withdrew from the Senate race, following the announcement of his prostate cancer and his pending separation from his wife after the revelation of his extra-marital affairs. In a Town Hall meeting and subsequent TV interviews, Giuliani has been trying to humanize his image, claiming that his cancer had inspired self-reflection. In fact it was the criticisms by his fellow Republicans that forced the shift. He allowed that "maybe" he should have visited the Dorismond family after the "tragedy." Ironically, his new language of "communication," "sympathy", and "compassion" narrows the stylistic distance between him and Hillary Clinton, who always advocates "healing" as opposed to "divisiveness" — stand by your cops. Their political differences had always been minimal.

The anger and disgust against racist police terror has never been greater than in the past year. Yet we will all be stuck with the likes of Giuliani and the Clintons until the outrage begins to be matched by action that is massive, united and powerful.

The time is overripe for this to happen. Communities of color, which the system divides one against another, are all top targets for police terror. But there has not been the unity that is definitely needed to fight this battle. And then there is the other well kept secret: the aim of the police is not only to terrorize people of color, but to keep the entire working class down. Today many whites also oppose police attacks but have been mis-taught that police brutality is someone else's battle. This consciousness too can change if a revolutionary force was leading the way.

Growing opposition to police brutality has the potential to unify the working class. The problem today is that Democratic Party politicians and liberal reformers have been pulling the strings of this movement for far too long. Their aim is to keep its scope narrowly focused on major promises but only minor reforms. They are the absolute barrier to the unity of the masses in struggle. For this reason we urge militants to break out of the reformist trap, to reject being misled any longer and to become part of the new revolutionary leadership the working class needs. ●

# Bureaucrats Cuddle Up to Cops

by Dave Franklin

New York has seen a flurry of meetings between leaders of city labor unions and heads of cop organizations like the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA) that are commonly but falsely also called "unions." The idea is to smooth over the growing conflicts between cops and workers by presenting a facade of common interests and conditions.

Given the restiveness of workers generally and the anger, particularly among those of color, against the wave of police brutality, this would seem to be a hard task. Hard or easy, these efforts certainly compromise the baby steps unions have taken recently to protest the cops' actions.

## FEAR AND SKEPTICISM

The New York City Central Labor Council (CLC) kicked things off by forming a special committee in March, in order (in the words of United Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten) "to diminish the fear and skepticism that working families have toward police policy." (*The Chief*, April 21.) To this end they held a discussion on April 12 with police "union" leaders, following an earlier confidential meeting. Meanwhile, Corrections Officer head Norman Seabrook sponsored a similar but rival effort; at his meeting, also on April 12, at which a handful of bureaucrats wrote unsigned suggestions for improvements.

OK, some of the union hacks reportedly gave the cops an earful about the fears workers have of cops. In Weingarten's words, it was "a very frank and sometimes emotional discussion." But these same bureaucrats ended up expressing stirring feelings for the cops. Given their mind-set, nothing short of having police batons rammed up their own asses, or seeing their own children gunned down in cold blood, would have prevented them from putting a good face on matters.

Said Weingarten: "We came out of this with an understanding that there is much more that unifies us than divides us, worker-to-worker." She compared the quota system of arrests to conditions teachers face: "It is somewhat analogous to the merit pay that the Mayor tried to push through for teachers, demanding that kids get a specific score on a test, just to get the numbers no matter what the problems are."

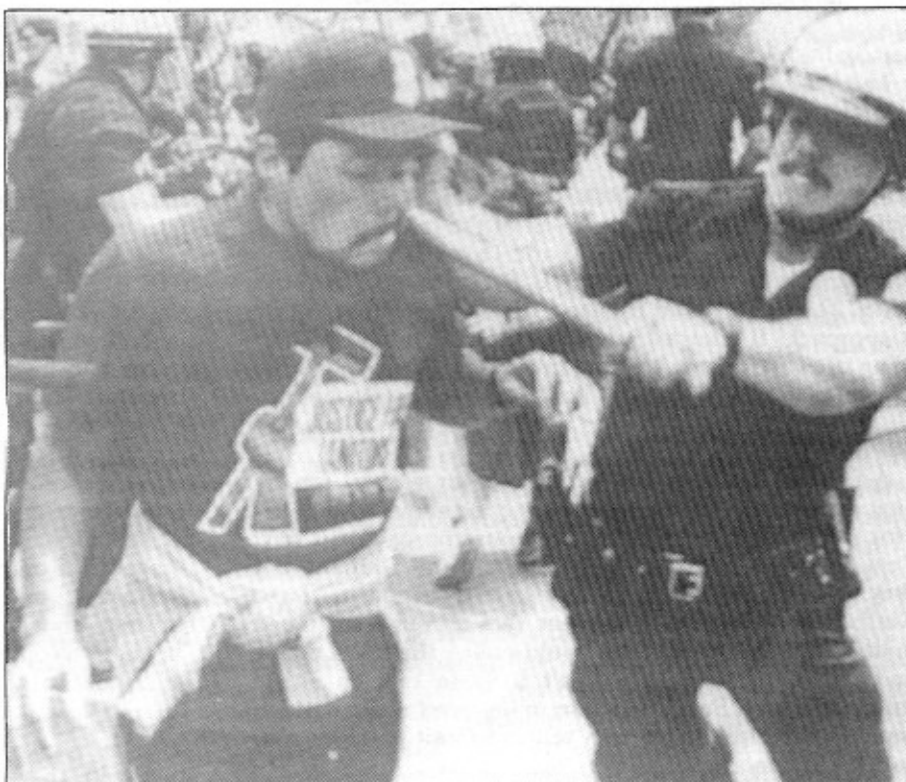
Arthur Cheliotis, head of CWA Local 1180, even compared the cops' quota hassles to factory speed-ups: "The boss doesn't care about the quality of the product or who gets hurt, he just wants more widgets. It's the same with the Police Department on arrests, and the cops get caught in the middle." Cheliotis went on to announce that he is inviting PBA representatives to his membership meetings and to proclaim, "my hat's off to the PBA leadership."

Cheliotis's role has particular significance. He is much admired by a number of leftist groups and is head of the so-called Labor Party in New York State. His participation

demonstrates that not only the most conservative union officials suck up to the cops. Even "progressive" bureaucrats cannot be relied on to lead any fundamental defense of the whole working class. They too, even those whose members are poorly paid, push the labor-aristocratic idea that union workers, like cops, help keep society stable.

## WHY COPS ARE NOT PART OF THE WORKING CLASS

The cops-are-workers routine is a very old but dangerous notion. Part of the danger lies in the fact that there are features of police work that make it seem like real jobs.



Los Angeles cops beat up striker during April janitors' walkout.

Many cops are from working class backgrounds. They have to take orders, they have set schedules and assignments, they "get their hands dirty." They even bargain with bosses and have contract fights just like organized workers. But these similarities hide the very real class differences.

One thing to note is that cops get better pay and benefits than most workers. This is related to their ability to extract concessions from the bosses based on their special social role. And this is decisive in determining their class nature. Real workers produce goods and services that are owned and controlled by the capitalist class, which as a collective makes profits by compensating the workers far less than the value of their work.

The role of cops, on the other hand, is to enforce the rule of the capitalists over society and therefore their ability to make and control profits. This is true in the general sense of "keeping order" — and also in specific and brutal ways of maintaining it, like cracking strikers' heads on a picket line or shooting unarmed black men.

The notion that cops are just ordinary blue-collar types is a social myth selectively employed by capitalism. The

capitalists themselves know what the cops' role is, particularly when there is mass action and protest. And whatever an individual cop thinks at any given moment, cops themselves know that they are special; they generally wear that arrogant attitude like their badges as they lord it over us.

Workers' attitude towards cops' on-the-job hassles has to be seen in this context. We have never intensively investi-



*Union hacks Butler (Local 420), Rivera (1199) and Saunders (DC 37) link arms with Rev. Sharpton while holding back struggles against attacks.*

gated the matter, but we have no doubt that there are some cops (by no means all) who tire of collecting their quota. We are sure that there are any number of cops who would gladly collect their paycheck simply by hanging out at Dunkin Donuts or Krispy Kreme, or pulling their guns at bars in drunken rages. They are simply part of the considerable amount of dead wood in the bloated police bureaucracy. But such slovenliness can go just so far, because the ruling class will insist that the cops carry out the enforcer role they are paid for. Whatever particular techniques they use, the cops' oppressive role over working people is not going to change.

In saying this, we do want to make clear that it makes a difference to the working class *how* the cops' role is carried out, how they get along with their capitalist bosses and even in certain ways how they get along with each other. For example, we have supported Black and Latino cops' right of defense against racist attacks from white cops, as part of a general defense of oppressed people in this racist society. Workers would take advantage of any breakdown in bourgeois order as a result of a falling-out between enforcer and master. And we can join, even initiate, actions that seek to defeat particular methods of policing, like the quota system.

But any such actions or support must be taken with the clear message conveyed that the role of cops can never be changed in this society, that they are enemies and that no section of them can be trusted to be anything else. They should be kicked out of the labor movement. Real unions have no business being in bargaining coalitions, demonstrations, or feel-good talk sessions with the cops.

True, if this is done the cops will have their feelings hurt, and their antagonisms to working-class struggle will be

reinforced. But that comes with the territory. Anything that raises the matter of working-class power and independence will invite the hostility of cops and all bourgeois authorities. It's best that we do these things without having the enemy in our strategy sessions with us. Justifiable hostility to and mistrust of the cops is just the opposite of what the bureaucrats are up to with their peace overtures.

The danger of the bureaucrats' approach overlaps the notion of a "healing" between cops and the communities they specifically oppress. This could only occur if the masses would calmly allow their own oppression and accept the cops' role in carrying it out. That's not going to happen, nor should it. The class, Black and Latino struggles are closely meshed.

### THE BUREAUCRATS' ROLE

There is an underlying political logic that connects the labor leaders' affection for the cops with their denunciations of the same. The bureaucrats have become more aware in recent years that in order to protect their own jobs from both the capitalist attacks and their working members' anger, they have to make some efforts to counter the attacks — by increasing organizing drives or joining police brutality protests. But they do this in order to keep any fightback within the safe boundaries of supporting capitalist rule. They therefore want to keep any mass actions limited, and as legal and peaceful as possible. Cooperation with the cops as far as possible is an important ingredient in this effort. It is no accident that after correctly condemning the Dorismond atrocity as "an affront to the working class of our city," CLC president Brian McLaughlin announced the need for "swift and corrective action throughout our city if the tinder box atmosphere we are witnessing is to be countered."

For the cops, all this is cheap public relations. They can try to use it to extract more concessions from the capitalists for their services. And when they go after the workers, they can hope to more easily do this under the rubric that they're "just doing their job" like the rest of us.

The cop-bureaucrat chat-ups serve as another reminder of the necessity of building a mass working-class defense against the capitalist state and its agents. We will need more demonstrations, strike actions (including general strikes), defense guards and all weapons at our disposal. Most critically, we need to build a revolutionary party. About the last thing we need is a love-in with any of our enemies. Cheliotes' hat may be off to the thugs in blue. Not ours. ●

### Letters Welcome

We invite readers of *Proletarian Revolution* to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write us at: P.O. Box 3573, New York, NY 10008, USA.

# Boycott Strategy Is a Diversion

by Jeff Covington

There is a widespread understanding that the fightback against the powers-that-be and their police enforcers has to take on a broader dimension, that we have to "hit them where it hurts." That is why many people seized on the familiar refrain, "No Justice, No Peace!" and added "No Prof-

The difference between Montgomery then and New York today is enormous. This was a small Black community of 17,000 people who nevertheless constituted 75 percent of the bus ridership. The community was relatively cohesive; organized by a network of strong churches with a religious and trade union leadership everybody knew well. Crucially,



Rev. Al Sharpton with Diallo family at rally. Sharpton's calls for federal intervention and consumer boycotts are diversions from mass struggle.

its!", as well as adopting the slogan "Shut the City Down!"

But the leaders who stood at the head of the movement, Rev. Al Sharpton and his allies in the Amadou Diallo Coalition, took that desire to send a powerful message to Giuliani and directed it into various boycott proposals instead of mass action. Revolutionaries say this is the wrong path to take, and this article will explain why.

## NEW YORK TODAY VS. MONTGOMERY THEN

One proposal pushed by Sharpton was an Easter-season boycott of major retailers in New York owned by white Giuliani supporters: Disney, Modell's, Old Navy, Jimmy Jazz, Blockbuster Video, Harlem USA and HMV's. A consumer boycott, however, is very difficult to maintain successfully: people who its organizers would wish to participate in it are isolated from each other and don't see their collective strength in struggle.

Still, there are occasions when boycotts can be effective, but those circumstances are far from common today. For example, boycotts can be useful as an auxiliary tactic of a large working-class movement first mobilized through industrial action, usually where a party or union leadership has the confidence of an angry and militant following.

Another situation where the tactic has proven very effective was the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-6. The Black community of Montgomery, Alabama responded to the arrest of Rosa Parks for the "crime" of not surrendering her seat to a white man on a municipal bus. They were able to successfully cripple the bus system and win a significant victory through the boycott tactic.

the target was very defined, the Montgomery bus system, and there was no doubt that the impact of a Black boycott would be devastating.

Add to that two other factors: a rising and explosive Black upheaval was germinating across the vastly changing South, and there was tremendous nationwide support for an end to segregation. Compare that to the extremely diverse and far larger Black community in today's New York, the lack of a cohesive, fighting leadership with an organized following, and the lack of a well-defined economic target toward which boycotters could focus their attack.

In contrast, a strike — especially a mass strike or a general strike of all workers in a city — hits companies in the pocketbook and keeps strikers together and feeling their mass strength. A mass strike culminating in a march and demonstration at City Hall and Wall Street would be a defiant, in-your-face challenge to Giuliani and the bankers and tycoons he serves and protects, just the opposite of a stay-at-home boycott.

We had a taste of this last December, when Giuliani reacted hysterically to the threat of a transit strike shutting the city down by getting obscenely punitive injunctions against the strike approved by compliant judges. (See our detailed account in *PR 60*.) There is no question that a major strike puts fear in the heart of the ruling class. This tells us something about how to send an effective economic message.

At a meeting of the Diallo Coalition on May 9, attorney Alton Maddox Jr. stated that the boycott was a great success and handed out copies of a May 4 *Wall Street Journal* article as "proof." In fact, it was anything but. The article is about

poor sales figures for clothing retailers in April. The trend was national, not affecting New York any more than other areas. It also affected *all* stores, not just those that were boycotted. Thus the article offers no evidence that the boycott had any economic effect at all.

Moreover, the whole point of taking an economic action was to force the establishment to back down from its racist attacks and win the murder victims Diallo, Ferguson and Dorismond some justice. Mass anger succeeded in forcing the police to modify some of their tactics and was a factor in Giuliani's decision to back out of the Senate race. But he is still in office, with his pro-cop policies intact; not one cop has been brought to justice yet for any of the three murders. This is the real proof of the failure of the boycott strategy.

#### **INDEPENDENT BLACK CAPITAL?**

In an article in the *Daily Challenge* newspaper, Maddox wrote, "This is a boycott aimed ultimately at economic and political independence [for the Black community]." He elaborated further on this theme:

**Black folk spend \$500 million dollars over the Easter period. If we don't spend that money, and invest it instead in our community, we could build over ten Carver Banks, we could build our own television and radio stations — so we would not have to complain about how we are represented in the media.**

The Carver Bank has indeed become a prime symbol of the potential for Black economic independence, the kind of institution Blacks should do business with. The radical Black nationalist December 12th Movement called on all Blacks to take their money out of white-owned banks and put it in the Black-owned Carver Bank. They raised this call in speeches at the April 20 march and repeated it at a Haitian Coalition for Justice meeting later.

But just how economically independent is the Carver Bank from the really big players in the white-dominated economic system? We can learn a lot by looking at a major dispute that has been going on the last two years between Carver Bank and a smaller Black-owned bank in Boston, the Boston Bank of Commerce (BBOC). The owners of BBOC, Teri Williams and Kevin Cohee, made two proposals last year to merge their bank with Carver; Carver's board of directors rejected both proposals. Then Williams and Cohee campaigned to get elected to Carver's board at the share-

holders' meeting this February, charging among other things that "Carver has a history of not lending to community residents. Over \$100 million of its loans since 1997 were purchased from Chase Manhattan Bank instead of being generated for community residents."

With many shareholders supporting the BBOC dissident candidates (who own 7 percent of Carver's stock), Carver maneuvered to stop them by issuing large blocks of special shares known as preferred voting stock to the giant financial company Morgan Stanley (white-owned) and Provender Opportunities Fund (Black-owned) on January 11, the last day that owning shares allows one to vote at the shareholders' meeting. This preferred stock amounted to 8 percent of the entire stock in Carver, and it entitled Morgan Stanley and Provender to a special 94-cent dividend rate while the common stock available to individuals in the community only earned a 5-cent dividend rate!

Former mayor David Dinkins was brought in as one of two people to run against Williams and Cohee for seats on Carver's board. Carver's candidates won the election by the narrow margin of about 888,000 "share-votes" to 856,000 for the dissidents. The deal with Morgan Stanley and Provender was definitely the deciding factor in the election. BBOC sued, and the case went against Carver on all counts. This is hardly a model for Black economic independence!

But let us have no illusions in the Boston Bank of Commerce's independence from the dominant institutions of the racist capitalist system either. One white-owned financial giant making big profits off of BBOC and its depositors is Visa. One of the initiatives that Williams and Cohee tout the most is the "UNITY Visa card": 1 percent of every purchase goes to support various Black organizations. Of course, the profits Visa makes by charging high interest rates on credit-card debts that the cardholders can't afford to pay off are vastly greater than these donations. Thus BBOC supports itself by acting as a conduit through which Visa exploits Black cardholders. And they're the "good" Black-owned bank compared to Carver!

The lesson is that this is how the capitalist system works. Black have just as much right to form businesses as whites: but the nationalist goal of "economic independence" under capitalism is an illusion. The boycott strategy will only leave the white masters of the economy laughing all the way to the Carver Bank — which they finance. ●

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## New York: Battle Against Police Brutality Needs Revolutionary Leadership

by Evelyn Kaye

The LRP is known for stressing the need for the working class to build its own revolutionary party. In New York, each time people rise up against a new atrocity, we have been there as part of the struggle, building the activities and trying to put forward the best possible strategy for taking them further. But too many times we have seen militant campaigns reach dead ends, after demonstrations that go nowhere.

Much of the left cynically blames the failures of the movement on the lack of commitment of the participants — or on the “apathy” of the far greater numbers who don’t turn out. But through our own participation we have learned how false this is. Significant sections of the working class in New York — especially the youth — have been very open to the idea of mass struggle against the hated police. A concrete analysis of why the movement has been so beset by defeats will point to one conclusion: the working class and oppressed desperately need a new leadership, a revolutionary party.

### THE DIALLO VERDICT

Last winter in New York presented the struggle against police brutality with a brutal verdict. The complete exoneration of the four white cops who gunned down Amadou Diallo on February 25 came shortly after the anniversary of this young man’s funeral. (See PR 59 and 60 for the full background on the Diallo murder and the shift of his trial out of New York City.)

The trial in Albany had been marked by the conspicuous absence of any effective prosecution strategy to back the murder charge against the cops. It was common knowledge that the NYPD’s Street Crimes Unit was doing the same type of racial profiling that finally prompted the official federal castigation of New Jersey’s state troopers (although of course there was no real punishment). Diallo’s murder was nothing less than a deadly case of racial profiling.

But in Albany, the prosecution team of Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson purposely kept this matter completely out of the courtroom. Illusions that having a Black D.A. in command would help in the matter of punishing a racist attack were smashed. (Johnson had won some respect for his personal opposition to the death penalty and had also made promises to deliver justice to the Black community in this case.)

Why this betrayal? There had been an insurmountable barrier to a meaningful prosecution. To put the cops on trial for what they had actually done would have meant exposing that cops had a license to target people of color as a matter of policy. That in turn meant indicting not just the cops but the system behind it. And this clearly couldn’t happen.

Likewise, illusions that a jury with four Black members would alter the outcome were also blown away. In 1992 an



*Funeral march for Patrick Dorismond, another victim of police murder. Haitians knocked down barricades and fought cops. No passive civil disobedience here.*

all-white jury in Simi Valley, California had exonerated the cops who beat Rodney King; that led to an explosive riot that was echoed in cities across the country. But this time, after the verdict was announced, Arlene Taylor, the Black forewoman on the case, said that no discussion of race ever came up in the jury room! The jury of four Blacks and eight whites followed the rules of the criminal injustice system and thus rendered a verdict that was in itself a new atrocity.

Once the verdict was announced, New York’s reformist leaders went into high gear to restrain the fury of masses of people, which was undeniably in the air. A major police presence had been set up in the Soundview section of the Bronx where Diallo lived, days before the verdict was announced. Many were arrested that night at small spontaneous demonstrations. Among them was Malcolm Ferguson — and this young man was shot in the back of the head

*continued on page 30*