

SOCIALIST VOICE

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Reconstruct
the Fourth International!

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'Left' Betrays Salvador Revolution

"No more Vietnams," cries the Reagan Administration, meaning that no longer will the U.S. government permit a small country like El Salvador to loosen the grip of imperialism. "No more Vietnams," wail the liberal Democrats, indicating that sections of the ruling class still fear the consequences of sending U.S. soldiers into a foreign adventure when the American people have not been fooled into believing it is in their interest. The international "left" echoes the same cry — meaning in reality that a negotiated settlement with the U.S. puppet masters is preferable to an outright victory of the revolution. And thousands of anti-war militants, who believe

publicly derided the military capacity of the Salvadorean army, implying that only U.S. troops can really do their job. And even more ominously, the entire "left" spectrum — ranging from the Russian, Cuban and Nicaraguan governments to the Salvadorean rebel leaders to the miserable U.S. "Marxist" groups — have already capitulated to the American imperialists.

Is it really true that the Salvadorean revolution is being betrayed by its leaders and professed allies — despite all the charges by the State Department about Communist arms being funnelled to the rebels, despite all the solidarity



that "No more Vietnams" means that the U.S. has no right to intervene in El Salvador at all, are instead being hoodwinked by their liberal-left misleaders into support of this betrayal.

Reagan, under the fraudulent but customary justification that the Salvadorean revolution is imported by foreign Communists rather than generated by capitalist oppression, has stepped up arms deliveries and sent Green Berets to aid the butcher junta-government. Ominously, the Pentagon has

statements from Cuba, Nicaragua and the West German-led Socialist ("Yellow") International, despite all the demonstrations across the country demanding "U.S. Out"? Yes, it is absolutely true, as we shall prove here. The charge must be taken seriously by everyone who genuinely wishes to end the torture, exploitation and oppression in El Salvador and by extension throughout the world.

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inside:

Stop Atlanta Murders!

Miners Defy Capitalism

Poland: Solidarity Forever?

Marxist Response to Reaganism

Editorial: May 3 Maneuvers

The May 3 demonstration in Washington will attract thousands of people coming to voice their protest against the drive toward war and destitution launched by the White House. They will represent many different shades of political opinion and many different interpretations of the demonstration's central slogan, "U.S. Hands off El Salvador!" Nevertheless, all accept that the U.S. should not be supporting the present reactionary regime in El Salvador, and a united front by these disparate forces can be a step toward ending the criminal policy of the Reagan administration.

But the united demonstration almost didn't happen. For weeks, a multitude of left groups have been rushing about trying to build the march and tripping all over each other — not because of the element of confusion natural to any mass event but because the pseudo-socialists were doing their best to stab each other in the back. Until a few weeks ago there were two demonstrations planned for Washington less than a week apart! Not over different issues, not addressing El Salvador from fundamentally different viewpoints; the crucial difference was which organizing bloc would gain hegemony over the march. A sectarian disaster was in the making.

The rival blocs were led by the Workers World Party and the Socialist Workers Party. Each lined up an endorsement list featuring labor union bureaucrats, church officials and Democratic Party politicians, seeking to give their own march the greatest liberal coloration. Accusations of confrontationism, excessive moderation, racism and sabotage were hurled, and there might even have been some genuine distinctions between their proposed levels of militancy. But there was never any dispute over the reformist programs attached to the two actions. Pure organizational sectarianism was at work in the service of political opportunism.

In the end the WWP outmaneuvered the SWP and May 3 triumphed over May 9, for all the difference it made. All the leftists agreed with the program adopted for May 3 by the

People's Anti-War Mobilization, a long list of traditional utopian formulas dearly beloved by leftist bourgeois liberals. It includes "Money for Jobs, Human Needs, Not for the Pentagon," "Stop the U.S. War Build-up," "Stop Racist Violence, End Racism and Repression," "End Sexism," "Stop the Draft." All these goals are totally impossible to achieve under capitalism. Tragically, they also express real popular needs which will be thwarted if the struggle for them accepts a system which cannot permit them. (We demonstrate these points in our "Marxist Response to Reaganism" in this issue.)

Moreover, the endorsers, not to speak of the thousands of marchers, differ widely on what to do about the listed evils within capitalism. Some, for example, imagine that bolstering the police power of the capitalist state will help end racist violence, while others know that such a strategy will only mean more oppression. Some anti-draft marchers are perfectly satisfied with the present mercenary army of imperialism; others think all bourgeois armies can be wished away; while Marxists know that imperialist armies can be abolished only by socialist revolution.

The inevitable result of such nebulous slogans is to channel the protest into liberal Democratic politics. No specific action against racism is mentioned, but everybody can always vote for

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Corrections

Two lines were inadvertently misprinted in our last issue.

On page 2, in the editorial "The Hostage Hustle," the third sentence in the fifth paragraph should read: "Recovered funds will pay for increased weaponry for use not only in the war against Iraq but also against the Iranian workers and minorities."

On page 8, in the boxed report of a trade union motion, the last sentence of the motion should read: "This demonstration should take place within one month from today."

Key Articles in Back Issues

- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party (on the origins of the LRP).
- No. 2: Capitalism in the Soviet Union (including a polemic against Ernest Mandel's degenerated workers' state theory).
- No. 3: The Class Nature of the Communist Parties.
- No. 4: The "Marxism" of the Petty Bourgeoisie — the Spartacist League and the Theory of State Capitalism.
- No. 5: U.S. Labor and the Left; A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism.
- No. 6: The Labor Party in the United States; Is Nationalized Property Proletarian?
- No. 7: The Black Struggle — Which Road Today?
- No. 8: Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program — "Workers' Government vs. Workers' State."
- No. 9: Marxism and the Draft; Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism.
- No. 10: Polish Workers Shake the World; Full Text of the Gdansk Accords.
- No. 11: Iran: Revolution, War and Counterrevolution.
- No. 12: No Shortcuts to Stop Klan; For Socialist Revolution in El Salvador; Church and State vs. Polish Workers.

"NO DRAFT" IS NO ANSWER!

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U.S. OUT OF EL COMMITTEE IN PEOPLE OF EL



March 21 CISPES Salvador support rally supported Salvadorean masses like a hangman's rope. At night, Carlos Paredes, recent junta collaborator, was a keynote speaker.

Salvador

continued from page 1

Start with Russia. During the 26th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February, Kremlin spokesman Leonid Zamyatin told reporters bluntly that "The Soviet Union does not provide El Salvador with arms. It never has. It never will." President Brezhnev, in his well-publicized addresses to the Congress, did not mention El Salvador and the U.S. role there even once. Reagan and his underlings are continually, if manipulatively, warning the world about the Russian threat to Poland. But the Russians silently concede the U.S. imperialists' right to dominate Central America. Reagan and Brezhnev agree that El Salvador is in the North American "backyard." Even if the Soviet denial of aid to El Salvador was not entirely true, the aid has at best been scanty. For the USSR values its need for imperialist "detente" higher than any concern for a distant anti-U.S. insurgency.

As for Cuba and Nicaragua, El Salvador's neighbors ruled by governments established by popular guerrilla movements, the evidence is mounting that their aid, limited all along, was sharply cut back after the U.S. State Department issued its "White Paper" on February 23. The reliable *Latin America Weekly Report* (February 27) noted that the document "provided little concrete evidence of arms flows into El Salvador." It explained:

"The documents, allegedly captured from the Salvadorean Communist Party and one of the guerrilla groups, the Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), between last November and January, actually show the guerrillas' disappointment with the lack of aid from Nicaragua, and their constant supply and equipment problems. The documents mention commitments of 800 tons of arms from the socialist countries, but only point to the delivery, through Cuba and Nicaragua, of 200 tons." (Emphasis added.)

Along the same lines, a February 12 article by the *New York Times* reporter in Managua, Alan Riding, quoted a "senior

Nicaraguan official" as saying "Washington's message has been heard loud and clear. There is recognition of the very high political cost to Nicaragua of involvement in El Salvador." And on March 9, the same reporter wrote that "United States officials say they have been privately assured that the Nicaraguan government will try to prevent armaments from passing through here to El Salvador. In public, Managua has offered to promote a political rather than military solution to the Salvadorean conflict."

FDR, SANDINISTAS AID BOURGEOISIE

Clearly, the Nicaraguan government has capitulated to Washington's pressure — whether before or after the February State Department attack is immaterial. This has been its policy all along: it has attempted to preserve the bourgeois position in its own country and to this end has suppressed workers' struggles whenever it could. So its denial of anything more than verbal support to the Salvadorean revolution comes as no surprise. But the U.S. is not satisfied. Reagan proceeded to cut off all aid to the Sandinista regime in March, including vital food supplies. The Administration also tacitly supports the training of Somozanist forces in Florida who are planning an invasion of Nicaragua. Inevitably, the fruits of capitulation have been meager indeed.

While the Sandinistas would prefer to see a left-leaning regime in El Salvador, they are petty-bourgeois nationalists whose survival depends fundamentally not on the spread of revolution but on their ability to strike independent deals with imperialism. Ironically, the rebel leadership in El Salvador has no cause for its professed "disappointment," since they too are nothing but nationalists whose goal is now openly admitted to be striking a deal of their own with imperialism, the so-called "political solution."

The Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) is a bloc between the working-class political-military organizations like the ERP and a handful of liberal, Social Democratic and Christian Democratic figures led by Guillermo Ungo. These politicians, deemed the "progressive bourgeoisie" by the left, split from the junta early to join the FDR. Ungo, the current head of the FDR, ran for vice-president on the same ticket as the junta's current president, Jose Napoleon Duarte, in 1972, and has been openly seeking a negotiated settlement with the U.S. — both under Carter during the FDR's so-called "final offensive" in January, and now under Reagan.

The FDR's "political solution" can only mean a coalition government with elements of the present junta, as distinct from its previous program for a coalition between the masses' organizations and the "progressive bourgeoisie." The January 23 *Latin America Weekly Report* referred to a secret meeting in Tegucigalpa, Honduras between representatives of the FDR and the U.S. State Department to discuss a ceasefire plan that included "reorganization of the Salvadorean government to bring in FDR representatives." The report was subsequently denied by U.S. officials, but the FDR had leaked it without making any criticism of the joint government proposal.



Arnaldo Ramos, a Salvadorean FDR representative, here to sell idea of an FDR-U.S.-junta deal.

We pointed out in *Socialist Voice* No. 12 that the formation of the FDR was designed to guarantee that the Salvadorean revolution would preserve capitalism after the overthrow of the junta. This guarantee was signaled by the published program of the FDR, by the unmistakably pro-bourgeois figures who were its leading spokesmen and by the guerrilla strategy of the insurgents that keeps the working class, a potent force in present-day El Salvador, from playing the leading revolutionary role. The quotations above show that the FDR strategy has turned further to the right.

The FDR is following a well-travelled road. All class-collaborationist workers' organizations seek to deal with the liberal bourgeoisie and imperialism, out of not love but what they see as necessity. To regenerate the Salvadorean economy and to prevent a U.S.-inspired invasion, the FDR knows it has to forestall an outflow of capital and capitalists. It hopes to appeal to a "progressive" section of the bourgeoisie which will understand that the only hope for profits in El Salvador is economic reform.

THE GHOST OF ALLENDE

This was the line of the Mensheviks in the Russian revolution and of the Stalinists in the defeated 1925-27 Chinese revolution. It has always led to betrayal, and — when carried out — to the massacre of the proletariat. For capitalists, even nice ones, want profits, do not want their property endangered, do not want strikes (especially general strikes), do not want workers in the streets demonstrating, do not want workers with arms. Any capitalist, satanic or charitable, would infinitely prefer to invest in Florida swampland condominiums where profits are high and protected. Capital which cannot so easily leave El Salvador (like landed property) craves the restoration of order. The only possible appeal of the FDR to these elements is its control over the workers and its ability to curb them through reforms and other sops.

However, given the world economic crisis and the decline of profit rates, the liberal bourgeoisie and American imperialism are less able to pursue such a policy than they were in the heyday of prosperity. The bourgeoisie, all sections of it, can only rely on the military and police forces to repress the workers. Even Duarte's reforms are no help. That is why the left only succeeded in drawing a few bourgeois politicians to its side, but not any "progressive bourgeoisie" itself. Now it must move further to the right to keep them. But it will never separate the bourgeoisie from its only lifeline, the military. Any attempted deal for a bloc with the bourgeoisie, and not simply its powerless shadows like Ungo or Duarte, must come to terms with the army. In the unlikely event that this policy succeeds, as it once did in Chile, the generals will murder the liberals and the workers they betrayed shortly after.

The Nicaraguan Sandinistas have gone so far in their attempt to propitiate their bourgeoisie and the U.S. that they proclaim their policy of extreme "benevolence" to the slaughterers who manned Somoza's old National Guard. Even so, the only sacrifice the bourgeoisie will accept is the strangulation of the workers' institutions and movements. When and if the Ungo's and the Borge's succeed in breaking the spirit of the workers, then they too become dispensable. Only because the workers are *not* yet broken do their misleaders avoid the fate of Allende.

No wonder the overthrow of the junta has been removed from the FDR's agenda. Previously the workers' strikes and the guerrilla battles had served to buttress the diplomatic efforts of Ungo and others to win support for the FDR's proposed

"revolutionary democratic government." Now the mass struggles are being used to win a share in governmental power with the bloody junta itself, responsible for the slaughter of over 10,000 Salvadorean workers and peasants in the year-and-a-half it has held power. Such a government would be completely untenable. Ungo and other FDR figures were ministers in the first junta government after October 1979 and were forced to resign within a few months because they were powerless to halt the carnage. While all popular front governments lead to disaster for the working class, the FDR now advocates, in effect, a return to October 1979, the military junta with a left cover.

The FDR, of course, denies that it intends to share power with the military junta. "We cannot talk to the fascists in the armed forces, but we're willing to give the Christian Democrats the benefit of the doubt if they could show they had any power of their own." So spoke Ungo's colleague Salvador Samayoa, a former junta minister now with the FDR, quoted in Mexico City by reporter Riding (*Times*, February 24). It is either a fantasy or a lie. These Christian Democrats are no political innocents — they know all too well they have no power without the officers. They have been the front-men for the "fascists" for months, giving a civilian cover to what would otherwise be naked military rule. For their part, they would like to talk to the bourgeois politicians on the FDR's side, without the "Marxists" in the political-military organizations that are subject to direct pressure from their working-class base. So-called moderates on both sides are hoping for a Duarte-Ungo solution with a subdued role for the generals. This is also the preference of Robert White, Jimmy Carter's ambassador to El Salvador, who has been campaigning throughout the U.S. against Reagan's refusal to negotiate with the moderate oppositionists.

FDR WANTS COALITION WITH JUNTA

In our previous article, we argued that the capitalist government envisioned by the FDR would be no solution at all:

"The truth is that no bourgeois government, not even a revolutionary nationalist one, can carry out the kind of reforms promised by the FDR. No nation can go it alone in the epoch of imperialism, especially a small country that has been raped by the imperialists and lacks the resources to provide for its people's needs. If the revolt brewing throughout Central America is short-circuited and results only in the establishment of left-leaning pro-capitalist regimes, a new deal between the indigenous bourgeoisie and imperialism will inevitably be struck. The capitalists and their government will be forced to clamp down hard on the workers. The Sandinista regime in Nicaragua is the model: it is no accident that it is engaged in breaking strikes, preserving capitalist property and re-establishing strong dependent economic ties to the U.S. If the FDR is able to take power in El Salvador, the present slaughter will end but the cycle of imperialist domination, repression and brutal exploitation will shortly begin anew."

That was before the FDR's new coalition government strategy became apparent. Now it hopes to set up a semi-democratic regime (the Duarte-Ungo solution) without wiping out the junta's army. But the FDR cannot seriously hope to force the junta to surrender short of defeating it. The guerrillas' January offensive, which they claimed to have launched to present the incoming Reagan Administration

with a *fait accompli*, failed to defeat the junta or even to establish the guerrillas firmly in important towns. Our prognosis of a return to repression under a revolutionary bourgeois regime will be all the more immediate under a regime that relies on collaboration with the butchers.

ARM SALVADOREAN WORKERS!

The January offensive itself indicts the guerrillas' policy. On January 10, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), the military arm of the FDR, issued its "General Order No. 1" which said in part: "The hour of revolution has arrived — the hour of liberation has arrived! ... Forward, heroic Salvadoran people. To total combat until the final victory, to the decisive military battles, to popular insurrection. Prepare for the general strike until victory." (*Intercontinental Press*, January 19)

But after the offensive failed, the FMLN changed its tune. The hour of liberation was no longer called the "final offensive" but only a "general offensive," designed to train its combatants and prepare for a subsequent offensive in May. In fact, the origin of the term "final offensive" itself was buried under a cloud of smoke, although any reader of General Order No. 1 would be entitled to assume the FMLN either meant what it said or was bluffing. There have been unverified reports that the FDR is internally divided over negotiating. However, now that the FDR-FMLN insists that it wasn't really trying to win, revolutionaries have cause to believe it. If the FDR was not fighting to seize state power, it was fighting to lay the basis for diplomatic negotiations. Its insurrectional call to the masses was then a deliberate fraud intended to stimulate working-class action that the leaders knew would fall short of victory. The urban workers who heeded the call were thereby left defenseless against the regime's retaliation.

This is a serious charge, which the FDR's own statements back up. We had pointed out this danger in our previous article criticizing the guerrilla strategy: "At best such a strategy leaves the working class on the sidelines waiting for the heroic guerrillas. ... In El Salvador today it has done worse, leaving the workers exposed to the tender mercies of the military butchers." According to the February 27 *Latin America Weekly Report*, the guerrillas say that "their chief error ... lay in their failure to provide the strikers in the cities with military support, which allowed the security forces a free hand to suppress the protest." The "military support" now promised by the guerrillas is still not what is necessary — arming the workers themselves. The FDR's continued refusal to do this is a conscious policy of betrayal, not an "error." The self-criticism is hollow.

In Nicaragua it was not the guerrilla army which defeated the Somozaists but the armed workers in the cities. This was acknowledged by FSLN Commandante Humberto Ortega, interviewed in the Cuban publication *Bohemia* (reprinted in *Intercontinental Press*, February 18, 1980: "We had thought the masses would support the guerrillas in taking power. But that's not how it happened. Instead the guerrillas ended up supporting the mass insurrection that overthrew the Somoza dictatorship ..." The armed proletariat made impossible any deal with the pro-Somoza bourgeoisie and army. But in the absence of a proletarian leadership, the Sandinistas took power and quickly confiscated the masses' arms. The British *Economist* magazine (September 29, 1979) summarized: "The brunt of the carnage in September 1978, and again this summer was borne by ill-armed working-class militias from the shantytowns, not by the hit-and-run guerrillas. ...

working-class irregulars with guns ... are being disarmed or speedily incorporated into the Sandinista army." This is the lesson learned from Nicaragua by the Salvadorean FDR, which has no intention of letting the workers arm and organize themselves militarily.

Socialist Voice has been the only publication to criticize the anti-working class character at the core of the FDR's strategy. A few left papers objected to its pro-capitalist program and the participation in it of bourgeois politicians, but no one else warned that the guerrilla strategy itself was against the workers' interests. In other more prosperous times, as we wrote, it could have led to nothing better than "a state capitalist regime ruling for and over the masses, no matter what the guerrillas' beneficent intentions." Now they can't go even that far. The pseudo-Trotskyists failed to make such a criticism because, like the Stalinist- and reformist-trained Salvadorean left leaders, they believe that socialism will come in the wake of a revolution made by non-proletarian forces and therefore they tail the FDR.

There is no excuse for this failure to perceive reality on the part of supposed Marxists dedicated to the working class. The evidence was in well before January for those with eyes to see. Even before the guerrillas united with the "progressive capitalists" last spring, they were not fighting for a proletarian revolution, even though some groups used the words. Instead, they limited the struggle to militant trade-unionism for the workers, on the one hand, and called for "prolonged people's war" in the countryside, on the other.

Since January 1979, the Salvadorean working class has risen in mass strikes, plant seizures and general strikes. Before the guerrillas set up the FDR with opposition capitalists, they led the mass strikes to some partial victories and many stalemates. After the founding of the FDR, the new leadership of radical guerrillas and dissident politicians called two general strikes of a few days each last summer. This gave the military plenty of time to round up and massacre the most revolutionary workers and to occupy seaports, airports, waterworks, electric power installations and other major industries. Especially after the failure of the August 13-15 general strike, the working class was exhausted, demoralized and under the constant supervision of the armed forces. After more than a year of being treated by their leadership as a big stick to be brandished or set aside at whim, given the FDR's policy of keeping them disarmed, is it any wonder that the Salvadorean workers distrusted the general strike call of January 10?

The masses want unity but this must be class unity. The FDR can achieve unity with the capitalists only at the expense of unity and the very survival of the working class.

JUDASES AT HOME AND ABROAD

Now that the offensive is over, the best evidence shows that the masses will support the rebels, even if passively. But the shadow representatives of the non-existent "progressive bourgeoisie" have begun stabbing the FDR in the back. FDR admirers have made much of the political role of the Catholic church in El Salvador; many priests support the FDR, including former Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was killed by rightists for his efforts a year ago. His successor, Bishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, originally continued Romero's policy but has now rescinded support for the guerrillas; he maintains an officially neutral stance but admires the pseudo-reforms of the Duarte government and blames the left for most of the killings.

When it looked like the FDR would be the instrument for preserving capitalism, the church stood with it; now that its

prospects have dimmed and Duarte has made cosmetic changes, Rivera y Damas has switched. It is only to be hoped that the loss of such fair-weather friends will clarify their class nature to the revolutionary Salvadorean proletariat. The lower rungs of the church hierarchy still remain with the FDR but will desert the masses should they launch a struggle against class collaboration. Individual priests and nuns may remain with the workers, but the bulk will follow Judas as always.

In the U.S., the left has embarked upon a defeatist, class collaborationist course that fully matches that of the petty-bourgeois nationalists in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Cuba. The major solidarity organization here is CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. CISPES public rallies and demonstrations have been dominated by bourgeois spokesmen, mainly liberal Democratic Party politicians and Catholic clergy, who offer no program but begging the Administration to talk to the FDR moderates (and perhaps prayer). At a conference called in solidarity with El Salvador in New York on March 21, two incidents made graphically clear the thoroughly pro-capitalist character of CISPES (and the vacillating, centrist character of the myriad of left groupings — Social Democrats, Maoists, Stalinists, pseudo-Trotskyists, etc. — who gave the conference their uncritical approval).

The honored guest at this conference was one Carlos Federico Paredes, a former Vice-Minister of Economic Planning under the Salvadorean junta, who resigned his post not in early 1980 along with Ungo, Samayoa and their colleagues in the FDR — but on January 25, 1981, after the year-long slaughter in El Salvador. This gentleman, who shares responsibility for the mass butchery of the Salvadorean people along with his military masters, was featured (not even debated with) at a CISPES press conference, given a workshop to address and was named one of the “keynote speakers” at the post-conference rally. He claimed to speak not for the FDR but for a “broad sector” of Salvadoreans — professionals and small businessmen. He resigned, he said, not because he opposed what the junta had tried to do but because under Reagan its “reforms” would no longer be carried out. “There is no guarantee for the Salvadoran people that the reforms will be maintained” — this slimy endorsement of the junta’s policies was printed in a CISPES press release distributed at the conference!

It was an outrage that such a figure be displayed at a conference supposedly in solidarity with the *people* of El Salvador, not their oppressors. Yet only the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) protested Paredes’ role. Subsequently, Paredes was quoted without criticism in the pages of several left publications, including *Workers World*, the *Militant* and *Workers Vanguard*. (Other left papers like the *Guardian* saw fit not to mention the presence of this criminal at all.)

Secondly, the conference goon squad (bolstered by Socialist Workers Party heavies) evicted from the conference members of the Spartacist League and the LRP because we “disagreed with the purposes of the conference” — that is, called for the military defeat of the junta. The LRP, as our headline in *Socialist Voice* stated, stands for the victory of the masses in El Salvador through socialist revolution, while the Spartacists in contrast urged the victory of the “left-wing insurgents,” that is, the FDR. Our slogan was for proletarian victory, but even the Spartacists’ call for an FDR victory was banned by the supposedly pro-FDR CISPES. CISPES and its backers thereby proved beyond doubt that what they stand for is not solidarity with the struggle of the Salvadorean workers and peasants, but

the FDR’s defeatist policy of a negotiated settlement with imperialism. This is not the solidarity which the thousands of activists in the movement believe they are fighting for, but rather its betrayal.

The hypocrisy of this criminal position was best exemplified by the CISPES slogan, “No U.S. Intervention.” In fact, the conference’s tacit position for negotiations with the U.S. was a blatant call for U.S. intervention. The slogan, in the mouths of such a leadership, is a total fraud.

SPARTACISTS RETREAT FROM PICKET LINE

After the LRP and the Spartacist League were expelled from the conference, the SL asked us to join it in a protest picket to call for a boycott of the rally. We agreed, not simply because of the expulsion (the SL’s reason) but because of the conference’s politics. Paredes’ starring role plus our expulsion on political grounds proved that it stood not just for the usual combination of solidarity and sellout but for building a platform to uphold a policy of betrayal.

Just before the rally began, however, the SL backed down. The rally claimed to be against imperialism and so should not be boycotted, the SL argued. This is hardly the whole reason. The SL, like ourselves, had seen enough evidence that the “anti-imperialist” line was being used to wheedle a settlement with the U.S.; more likely, the Spartacists were impressed with the size of the conference (over 1500 people attended) and did not want to be left out of the snowballing class-collaborationist bloc of which the conference was a part. Boycotting the conference would have been used by CISPES and the SWP to cover their own goon tactics by claiming that the SL had read itself out of the movement. So the SL retreated, and thereby acted no differently from the rest of the opportunist left.

Interestingly enough, the Spartacist press in its several accounts of the conference and the expulsions never mentioned that the LRP was excluded along with the SL. Had it done so, it would have had to mention the boycott it proposed, a subject the SL now seeks to avoid.

The Spartacist League’s vacillating opportunism towards the rally is linked to its political program. It claims to support only the military victory of the pro-capitalist FDR, not its



An American “adviser” instructing underlings of Salvadorean junta.

political victory; but, at a time when the FDR is fighting not to overthrow the junta but to make a deal for a coalition regime, the "military victory" slogan is in fact a political call for an FDR government independent of the junta. The Spartacists can make such a call because of their pseudo-Trotskyist theory that petty-bourgeois nationalists like Castro, the Sandinistas and now the FDR can create workers' states (albeit deformed).

Furthermore, the SL's central slogan, "Defense of Cuba and the USSR Begins in El Salvador," amounts to a capitulation to imperialism. The U.S. and the USSR are jockeying for a trade-off: Russia will accept U.S. hegemony over Central America and the U.S. will return the favor in Poland. It is obvious that Washington fears the outbreak of revolution throughout the Central American tinderbox and is using the "Russian menace" as an excuse to smash the class struggle. The SL accepts half of the superpower deal: it has continually refused to condemn the threat of a Russian invasion of Poland to crush the Polish workers. As for the other half, its Salvador slogan again subordinates the class struggle to the "defense" of Russia. But Russia is happy to sacrifice El Salvador for its own imperialist needs. Thus "defense of the USSR" plays into the hands of imperialism and is treason to the workers of both Poland and El Salvador.

The Spartacist League, more than the rest of the pseudo-left, nominally opposes class-collaboration. But when push comes to shove it waveringly joins the tailist chorus — critically and nastily, of course, in order to preserve its left pose. Like all the other middle-class left groups, the SL is salivating over the reformist political blocs now being fashioned to seize hegemony over the developing movement against war, racism and capitalist oppression.

LEFTISTS DREAM OF POPULAR FRONT

CISPES is following in the footsteps of the anti-Vietnam War coalitions of a decade ago: it is adopting the political policies of the "dove" wing of the U.S. ruling class and policing the mass movement against proletarian politics. The earlier anti-war movement contributed to the defeat of imperialism in Southeast Asia, but it helped check any movement by the masses of American participants toward socialist conclusions; in fact, it led them into the bourgeois electoral campaigns of "Clean Gene" McCarthy, Robert Kennedy and George McGovern. Today, CISPES is far worse: it acts to *prevent* support for a victory of the Salvadorean masses, while it is likewise marching right into the arms of the capitalist politicians. This path was made clear by ex-Minister Paredes; he quit the Salvadorean government, he says, just when Reagan took office and it became clear that the new U.S. president did not favor a negotiated solution. "Back to the good old days of Jimmy Carter," was Paredes' slogan, in effect. CISPES and the left is adopting this same liberal imperialist line.

The U.S. left today is hoping to create another mass movement like the one it recalls from the days of the Vietnam War. But it has learned the wrong lessons from the past; it remembers only that the liberal politicians made the movement "respectable" and therefore swept the masses in. Liberalism is considerably discredited today, so the bigger left groups have taken it upon themselves to make sure that any new movement stays within the bounds of bourgeois respectability. Every issue will be used for this purpose: Reagan's budget cutbacks, the draft, racism, etc., but El Salvador offers the first big opportunity. Reagan's position on this issue is not popular. Congressional mail and Gallup polls

indicate that only a tiny minority of Americans favor U.S. military intervention. Many youth of military age see the danger of a war that could force them to risk their lives for no good purpose. Mass participation in solidarity rallies over El Salvador has reached the thousands and is rising. If the pseudo-left has its way, it will impose its defeatist pro-bourgeois politics on a genuine developing movement.

Worse, the logic of the left's position is leading not just to a capitulatory reformist program but to a rerun of the popular fronts of the 1930's: alliances of working-class organizations with liberal politicians designed to keep the workers' struggles from threatening capitalist property. Today, the anti-war movement is likely to have a greater working-class composition than in the 1960's, for the material prosperity that created mass illusions in the future of capitalism has dissipated. This may well explain why groups like the SWP, which held out for a "single-issue" approach to movements in the past in order to sidestep the troublesome matter of electoral politics, are now throwing all issues into one pot. They know that unionists, blacks and other working-class people are being propelled into action by the crisis, so they work overtime to give the movement a reformist political program on *all* questions. If this strategy succeeds it will build a new base for the bourgeois liberal politicians whose past strength has now all but collapsed.

A powerful movement to halt U.S. intervention is absolutely necessary, but it is vital that it break out of the class-collaborationist bounds that the middle-class left is trying to impose. A popular front would be a disaster, as is the Salvadorean FDR and its model, Allende's ill-fated Unidad Popular in Chile. It will take a struggle to ensure that the "U.S. Out of El Salvador" movement becomes a genuine united front and not a popular frontist bloc.

We are hardly against politics in the movement, but short of building a proletarian revolutionary movement with communist politics, we are for fighting to prevent bourgeois politics from achieving hegemony. A united front of all political currents in the working class and among its allies can be built only around *actions* against U.S. imperialism. In these, Marxists will work alongside other currents and strive to prove our politics correct in the course of the struggle. This means no bloc in *politics* with CISPES and other anti-working class misleaders.

NO NEGOTIATED DEALS WITH U.S.!

Accordingly, we fight against any compromise with the principle of no U.S. intervention, including a fight against negotiations for a political settlement with the U.S. We also oppose formally democratic slogans like "Let the Salvadorean people decide" and "No outside intervention," which have been raised by CISPES and left union bureaucrats (see the accompanying article). Both of these slogans in fact serve imperialism. The movement must fight to keep U.S. arms and economic aid from the junta, but genuine anti-imperialists have no business demanding that the Salvadorean masses not accept arms from whatever sources they can find. Keeping all arms out of El Salvador or calling for "democratic" referendums *when the Salvadorean butcher-bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth* means keeping the junta in power. We, as proletarian revolutionaries, want to see the Salvadorean people genuinely decide their own fate: therefore we want to see the workers and peasants armed so they can defend and enforce their decisions. It is the only way.

Within united front actions, we will also argue for a program through which the Salvadorean working class can

win state power: Military Defense of the FMLN Fighters, No Political Support to the FDR and its Betrayals, Socialist Revolution in El Salvador, For a Socialist Federation of Central America. Partisans of the Salvadorean revolution who

are fed up with the left's defeatism will find this program the only one for victory. It is the program of the future revolutionary party to be built both in El Salvador and the United States. ■

LRP Fights Labor Aid to Junta

When it comes to solidarity with the struggle of the Salvadorean working class, liberal labor union bureaucrats are no better than a cover for their right-wing counterparts. This was demonstrated at the March 12 Guild Delegate Assembly of District 1199, the voluntary hospital workers' union. Executive Secretary Moe Foner proposed a campaign to raise money among the members for a full-page ad in the *New York Times* which would call for a negotiated settlement of the civil war in El Salvador. Foner motivated this motion by emphasizing his opposition to military intervention by all countries *on either side*.

Foner's pro-imperialist position was attacked only by Evelyn Katz, an LRP supporter in the Assembly. She argued that U.S. workers should align themselves with the working class of El Salvador and must defend the rebels' struggle against the junta; the rebels have the right to obtain arms wherever they can, and aid to them cannot be equated with aid to the regime imposed by imperialism. She offered a counter-motion calling for 1199 to continue its previously stated position of no support to the junta and to publish a condemnation of the AFL-CIO head Lane Kirkland's official pro-junta position. (The adjoining leaflet, which explains our position in detail, had been distributed at the union hall as well as various workplaces in New York. It is slightly edited here.)

The response by 1199 leftists to Katz's intervention was significant. Speaker after speaker rose to praise Foner's motion and condemn Katz's, all the while proclaiming their solidarity with the Salvadorean struggle and the FDR in particular. That Foner's motion opposed military aid to the masses' struggle made no difference, since the entire pseudo-left has followed the Salvadorean FDR in trying to negotiate a deal with U.S. imperialism. What was unique about the union meeting was the closet socialists' miserable refusal to bloc with the LRP in condemning Lane Kirkland's support for the *junta*. This was because they were busy demonstrating their loyalty to the "progressive" labor officials of 1199, while the latter are adapting to the right-wingers like Kirkland who hold power in the AFL-CIO.

Nevertheless, Katz's motion was defeated only after a series of bureaucratic maneuvers, including a ruling that supporters of Katz's motion had to stand up to be counted. Foner's carried overwhelmingly. Both the broad support for the bureaucrats' motion and the substantial support for ours reflect the American workers' disenchantment with Reagan's intervention in Central America.

AFL-CIO LEADERS MUST END CRIMINAL SUPPORT TO SALVADOREAN REACTION

In the past year the various military-civilian juntas governing El Salvador have massacred at least 12,000 people, mostly farm and industrial workers. Particularly since the late sixties, rural and urban workers in El Salvador, fighting for prosperity and equality, have struck and occupied factories and large farms. Leftist guerrillas have battled the army in the countryside.

The Salvadorean bourgeoisie, which gets most of its wealth from coffee growing, refining and exporting, fears it may lose its property. Behind it stands the United States bourgeoisie and its government, which have been sending weapons and money. Under President Carter, however, the U.S. government did not want to support openly extreme-rightist military dictatorships. The United States therefore forced out the government of General Romero in October 1979 and brought in a new military junta with civilian participation. The new junta stepped up the massacres; its civilian members quit. The U.S. then supported several government reshuffles. In the present government, a discredited Christian Democratic politician, Jose Napoleon Duarte, a figurehead president and the military continues to hold the real power.

Merely having a few civilians in the government was not window-dressing enough for the U.S. government. The civilian-military junta in March 1980 was also made to proclaim a "land reform." This land reform, phony from top to bottom, was drawn up by a U.S.-based organization, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD). AIFLD is officially the Latin American wing of the AFL-CIO, but executives of multi-national corporations sit on its board of directors alongside union bureaucrats. It is an open secret that the CIA is the real power behind AIFLD. When genuine labor unions with leftist or nationalist leadership spring up in Latin America, AIFLD sets up its own unions or peasant organizations to tie the workers and peasants to pro-American governments. Sometimes, as in Guyana or Brazil in the sixties, they mount physical attacks on members and leaders of leftist-led unions.

In El Salvador, AIFLD set up a peasant organization, the Salvadorean Communal Union (UCS), in 1971 to try to head off the growing class struggle. AIFLD drew up the "land reform" in 1980. AIFLD advisors from the United States, actually CIA agents although employed by the AFL-CIO, administered it. It mostly affects sharecroppers, not the wage-earning farm workers who are the majority of the population. Further, the best land, particularly coffee plantations, remains in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Finally, the land is "distributed" not by the peasants themselves but by the army, which occupies the farms, shoots hundreds of peasants, and then charges those who are left alive protection money. The "land reform" is basically cover for the continuing massacre of Salvadorean peasants by the government. Strikes are forbidden, union activity is illegal, and soldiers occupy important factories, terrorizing the workers. This is the government that the leadership of our labor unions supports and covers for! This is the government that still claims to be the moderate reform solution between the right-wing death squads and the left-wing guerrillas.

On January 3, 1981, gunmen murdered two AIFLD employees. The Salvadorean government, pro-imperialist to the core, clearly did not desire the murder of such agents of American imperialism. Therefore, when Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, stated on January 9 that the AFL-CIO would continue to support the Salvadorean government,

he was "correct" in recognizing the murder of the AFLD employees as an act in which the government was not complicit — as opposed to the mass slaughter of peasants and workers in which the government is wholly involved.

Kirkland's support for the El Salvadorean government is nothing short of criminal. He places the AFL-CIO on the side of the butchers of the Salvadorean working class; that is, on the side of a government which provides nothing but the thinnest cover for right-wing attacks. Workers in the United States, especially union members, must repudiate this infamy. Union members must at the very least demand that the AFL-CIO sever all ties with AFLD and other CIA and government fronts. The Santa Clara County (California) Central Labor Council passed a resolution last September which called on the AFL-CIO Executive Council to "disassociate itself from the AFLD program in El Salvador," though not from AFLD altogether. Resolutions passed by left-talking union bureaucrats will shy away from confronting the Kirklands and other hacks who openly support imperialism. Because "left" bureaucrats support U.S. capitalism too, they cannot seriously oppose the acts of exploitation which the American bourgeoisie and its government must commit to defend their system.

Bureaucratic resolutions against particular atrocities are supportable but really do little to aid the Salvadorean working class. More to the point is the boycott against shipping military goods to El Salvador declared by the International Longshoremens' and Warehousemens' Union (ILWU) on December 22, 1980. This action will do more for Salvadorean workers than a thousand resolutions. (The ILWU leadership failed, however, to pledge strike action in response to em-

ployer threats to suspend wage guarantees during the boycott.) If all longshore and transportation workers unions refused to handle weapons for the Salvadorean government, it would be a giant step forward for workers in the U.S. as well as in El Salvador.

Salvadorean workers and peasants are struggling heroically against a murderous government, backed by U.S. imperialism. Their own leadership, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), has tied them to "progressive" capitalists in El Salvador who seek negotiations with the Salvadorean and U.S. government. Instead of farm and factory seizures leading to socialist revolution, the FDR wages guerrilla warfare in the remote countryside. The working class is supposed to wait on the guerrillas. To really win, the workers of El Salvador and all of Central America need new leadership, a communist revolutionary party.

While warning workers of the betrayals of misleaderships such as the FDR, we stand firmly on the side of the Salvadorean revolution. If the present government is overthrown, it will be a big blow to United States imperialism. The same bourgeoisie that exploits and oppresses us in the U.S. will be weakened by a defeat in its Central American front lines. After all, every day in this country the government beats or shoots striking workers and ghetto youth — though not yet nearly as massively as in El Salvador. We, like workers in El Salvador and everywhere, need a communist revolutionary party and a socialist revolution. A victory for the Salvadorean workers will inspire workers in other countries and, by materially weakening our common enemy, will bring socialist revolution in the United States closer. ■

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politicians who "stand for" an end to racism. Likewise, what liberal senator is not for "human needs"? Even "full employment" is a perennial Democratic Party lie. The vague and utopian character of these demands, which omit any concrete political answer, leaves everything open to the liberal politicians. The militancy of the slogans is designed to appeal to the radical aspirations of the marchers, but the slogans' emptiness meshes perfectly with the politicians' unwillingness to fight for even minimal demands.

The liberal politicians and labor bureaucrats who grace the protest podiums now will grow in number if the pseudo-socialists show success in foisting their common politics on the protest movements. If they succeed, the struggle will be diverted into the same cemeteries as were the past movements: McCarthy, McGovern, et al. Today's reactionary renewal is the spawn of past reformist "successes."

CONTINGENT ANTI-IMPERIALISTS

The bourgeois liberal program will not be unanimous on May 3. The League for the Revolutionary Party will march in a united action against Reagan's reactionary policies. But we will counterpose genuine socialist politics to the sponsors' reformism. For example, we will oppose their treacherous support for a negotiated deal between the oppositionist FDR, the junta and the U.S. in El Salvador (see the article "Left Betrays Salvador Revolution").

There will also be an "Anti-Imperialist Contingent" sponsored by the Spartacist League. Such contingents have a history. During the 1960's they were organized by leftists who

wanted to move beyond militant liberalism and "name the system" in order to oppose it. But "anti-imperialism" is another one of those phrases that must be given specific political content because, by itself, it can stand for two sharply counterposed class policies. For Lenin and Trotsky imperialism meant capitalism in this epoch of decay. For reformists and liberals, imperialism is only a capitalist policy; thus when Stalinists, Maoists and centrists oppose it they are merely posing an "anti-imperialist stage" necessary before the socialist revolution. "Anti-imperialism" sounds much more radical than the reformist slogans but it too says that fundamental change is possible without destroying capitalism.

The pseudo-Trotskyist Spartacists once seemed to understand this much. After all, Trotsky, whom they revere in quotations in order to deform him in practice, clearly, quotably and categorically rejected "anti-imperialist united fronts" because their capitulatory content had been so obviously proved. Nevertheless, their May 3 Washington contingent is a political bloc aimed at uniting radicals who disagree over the little question of class revolution. Before their decline, the pro-China Maoists always advocated such blocs, while the Spartacists clucked disapprovingly. Now the pro-Russian Spartacist League occupies the Maoists' ground. The difference was never over class but merely over geography.

Ending imperialism, just like ending racism, sexism and bourgeois militarism, requires the ending of capitalism. Many of the marchers against the rape of El Salvador will come to learn this through their devotion to fighting oppression. Reformist maneuverers who choose unity in politics with capitalists over unity in action with the workers will never learn. ■

Poland: Solidarity Forever?

The feverish condition of Poland's class struggle reached a crisis point in late March. A threatened general strike by Solidarity, the independent trade union born out of last summer's mass strikes, was called off at the last minute with a settlement hailed on all sides for its moderation. The Polish economy neared collapse as food supplies almost ran out, leading to a scramble by Russia and the Western powers to supply emergency aid. And the Moscow-led Warsaw Pact undertook extended military exercises in and around Polish territory, heightening the pressure on Polish workers.

There was a general sigh of relief when the crisis seemed to pass. But opposition voices emerged within Solidarity: a few leaders, apparently those linked to the dissident intellectuals' group KOR, were concerned that the union had missed its chance to extract further concessions from the harried government and was weakened by the setback. More militant members denounced the leaders for selling out. They were right, but had the union won its demands the situation would be still not resolved, although better. For even the present oppositionist leaders want "stability," and that is the one outcome that the situation forbids.

Poland is at the point of no return. Either the working class will transcend its trade unionist organization and turn to revolutionary politics, or the rulers (backed up by Moscow and the West) will smash the gains won by decades of working-class struggles. Neither side can temporize much longer; both must win but only one can.

In February, the new government of Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski had demanded a three-month strike moratorium, and Solidarity's leader Lech Walesa had agreed. The truce was broken when union members were beaten by police in the city of Bydgoszcz on March 19. Walesa campaigned to calm down angered workers, asserting that "Jaruzelski can be trusted." Instead of an immediate general strike wanted by the majority of union leaders, Walesa held out for a four-hour nationwide "warning" strike on March 27. This was a tremendous success, proving that Solidarity had the overwhelming backing of Poland's workers and the power to end the government; but it gave Walesa and the government time to work out a vague compromise settlement that broke the workers' momentum.

Meanwhile, the financial situation had reached the breaking point. Poland had already failed to pay installments on the \$23 to \$27 billion debt it owes to Western creditors. Before the March political crisis broke out, U.S. and European bankers were in a "defiant mood," said *Business Week* magazine. "Except under duress, no lenders are prepared to put more money into Poland," one banker was quoted as saying. They hoped that a firm stance would compel the Polish authorities to squeeze more surplus-value out of the Polish workers to pay for new loans to cover the massive debt.

By the end of March the situation had changed completely. After the class struggle revived, undoubtedly accompanied by governmental promises not to accede to any further economic demands by the workers, the banks scurried to reschedule debt payments. The Russians allowed Poland to sell coal earmarked for Eastern Europe to the West for hard currency. France and West Germany offered hundreds of millions in credit and fool stockpiles. The U.S. joined in with a pledge of surplus food and debt postponements.

Throughout the crisis, the Western powers issued expressions of concern for the staying power of the Polish government. West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt explained that "Our interests are at stake, too." A White House statement on March 25 read: "We would emphasize our continued readiness to assist Poland in its present economic and financial troubles for as long as the Polish people and authorities continue to seek through a peaceful process of negotiation a resolution of their current problems." Such moderate murmurings from an Administration that normally fulminates against "Communist tyranny" and "terrorism" reflect the fear of Western capitalists that if one country defaults, even one of its Eastern state capitalist rivals, that can bring down the entire financial structure of the banking system, perilously balanced as it is.

Washington exploited the Russian threat by continually issuing on-again, off-again warnings of military build-ups that



Polish poster of Lenin with a Solidarity button and newspaper. Workers are right to claim Lenin in opposition to Stalinist state. But Lenin in his day was an enemy of misleaders who, like KOR and Walesa, sought to confine struggles to trade unionism rather than build the revolutionary party.

would otherwise not be widely reported in Poland. Russia clearly wants to tighten its hold over its bloc by uniting the rulers against workers' demands. Washington is torn by more contradictory needs, hence its zigzag warnings. It wants to exploit Russia's palpable weakness and humiliation over being unable to sustain Poland. Yet it also wants to trumpet the Russian threat in order to force the Western bloc into line. It enjoyed the Polish workers' rumblings against their masters but fears that the situation will get out of hand. The U.S. wants all the benefits of its renewed cold war without goading its enemy into actual war.

Finally, the last thing the U.S. wants is workers' revolution. Even the cold war administration of Eisenhower and Dulles,

who promised to "roll back" and "liberate" East Europe from the Russians, rushed aid to the Polish government in 1956 to prevent the workers from joining up with their Hungarian brothers in revolt. Reagan's uncharacteristic financial generosity in the case of Poland reveals the fundamental capitalist logic of avoiding working class revolution at all costs.

Others agreed. Walesa, the Polish Catholic church, KOR, the moderate wing of the Polish Communist Party that calls for democratization and "renewal" — all chimed in with pleas and threats to end the struggle. The reformists, Walesa among them, believe that "trustworthy" rulers like Jaruzelski will eliminate corruption and excessive privileges and thereby restabilize the economy so that moderation can flourish. But this is a pipe dream. The crisis is far deeper than the crimes of a handful of bureaucrats who skim off some profits, furnish country palaces and collect women.

Poland has become the weak link in the world system of capitalism because of the historic militancy of its workers and the incapacity of its Russian-imposed ruling class. In 1956 and 1970, the workers wrung economic concessions out of the regime through massive uprisings. Although the political rights won at these times were gradually eaten away by state repression, the Gierk regime of the 1970's tried to satisfy economic pressures by intensive borrowing from the West. This capital generated some new production but, given the anarchy of the state capitalist economy, much more waste. The workers' living standards, therefore, had to be forced down to allow more food exports (see "The Crisis of Stalinism" in *Socialist Voice* No. 10 for details). Such policies triggered the revolts of 1976 and now 1980-81. The current struggle has already worsened the regime's position considerably. The strike cost Poland \$1.5 billion in production and trade, and the wage and benefits package conceded to the strikers will cost another \$3.7 billion.

RUSSIA FEARS POLISH CONTAGION

The situation cannot remain as it is. Russia and the West must insist that steps be taken to pay off the debts; to do this, the government will have to squeeze the workers increasingly harshly (it has already announced that it cannot afford to fulfill the Gdansk agreements). Since the regime was at an economic impasse before the summer, it must roll back not only the recent gains but all past ones. It must crack the workers' defensive capabilities to force productivity increases beyond anything previously seen in Poland. The ruling powers in Warsaw and Moscow have little choice if they wish to continue to rule Poland, and no ruling class has ever surrendered power peacefully. Further moderation and compromise by the workers can only prolong the crisis for a short interval.

If the Polish workers' misleaders continue to temporize and hold back the struggle, the danger of a Russian invasion will become far greater, not less. Workers who organize giant mobilizations and gain little or nothing from them will soon become cynical. Denied arms by an already cynical leadership, they become correctly reluctant to continually challenge state power. If workers are faced with a ruling class literally incapable of conceding more, and if they have no revolutionary alternative, they have no choice but to retreat. There are, unfortunately, already signs that cynicism is setting in. Unless the disease is stopped in time, unless the reformist leadership is overcome in time, the rulers will have a far easier time in re-enslaving the Polish workers.

Moscow holds back from attacking now because of the definite possibility of prolonged Polish resistance, military and

economic, and because the workers' struggle may call forth echoing revolts elsewhere in Russia's Eastern European domains. The Rumanian ruling party hurried to institute trade union reforms "apparently designed to head off labor unrest similar to Poland's" (*Washington Post*, April 7). The Czechoslovak Party Congress, meeting during the height of the March crisis, took a hard line against the Polish workers, reflecting Prague's "concerns that the 'Polish disease' has resonance" there too (*Washington Post*, April 6).

Even East Germany, with the strongest economy in the Russian bloc, has shown signs of governmental fears of the Polish contagion. A visit by Schmidt during one critical period was called off. The appearance of even this calcified Social Democrat might have sparked off demonstrations in a country whose major landmark is the Berlin Wall. No wonder the East German bureaucrats have been more Stalinist than the Russians in the calumnies against the Poles.

There are also signs of echoes in the USSR. After August, an outbreak of strikes was reported in Latvia. And the *New Leader* magazine, a cold war organ whose reports of measures taken against Soviet workers are likely to be exaggerated, may be telling the truth when it claims that blue-collar workers have been appointed for the first time to the leadership bodies of the Communist Parties in five non-Russian border republics — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Latvia and Lithuania — to neutralize Solidarity's appeal.

TRADE UNIONISM NO ANSWER

Russia has further considerations that deter it from invading. It relies on trade, technology and capital from Western countries like Germany, and does not want to trigger a break-up of detente. If it tried to attack Poland and its 37 million people, it would face, in addition to Polish resistance and explosions elsewhere, gigantic costs of occupation (these are already reported to be enormous in Afghanistan, where the resistance is far less than it would be in Poland). So the Russian strategy must be to wear down the Polish working class through threats of invasion and through pressure on the Polish government, which has no other base of support than the Kremlin and its minions. Consequently, the Polish workers have to fight every move to wear them down, to force one-sided concessions, to surrender hard-won gains.

To go forward, the workers will have to learn that trade unionism is not an adequate weapon. As a union, Solidarity is legally bound not to engage in politics, according to the Gdansk accords. But even Walesa has said that Solidarity is "more of a spontaneous social movement than a trade union" (*Washington Post*, March 31). If the workers are to expand their struggle openly into the field of politics, they must do so consciously by transforming Solidarity or erecting new institutions. Politics is necessary because the problems of Poland are political: its monolithic pseudo-socialist state capitalist regime, its subservience to the USSR and the Western imperialist powers, and the complete inability of the ruling party to plan the economy when its primary goal is to exploit, cheat and fool the working class.

Of course, even Walesa, who wishes to turn Solidarity from a movement into an institutionalized union, really knows that the fundamental questions are those of political power. *The choice is not between politics or no politics but whose politics will rule — which class.* That is why Walesa urges support for the liberal bureaucrats while revolutionaries fight for political rule by the proletariat. This means a social revolution to establish a workers' state.

A trade union is a workers' institution structured to fight for

the workers' interests under capitalism "independent of the party and the employers" (that is also in the Gdansk accords). Trade unions succeed when capitalism has enough material wealth to yield sops. When it doesn't, the unions must either be destroyed or incorporated into the ruling apparatus as a device for cooling the workers off. This essentially is the debate now going on in the Polish Communist Party between "hard-liners" and reformists. The "democratizing" of the regime advocated by the latter would simply mean institutionalizing the workers' organizations in order to behead them. The victory of the harder Stalinists would necessitate the immediate crushing of the proletariat. The workers have no interest in the victory of either side. Even if the reformists win out (as is likely in the short run), that would only give both classes a very short interlude in which the chief dangers would be the revitalization of the armed state power and the possible softening of the workers' combativity.

PSEUDO-LEFTISTS LIKE STABILITY

It is absolutely crucial for the Polish working class to go beyond their present stage of trade unionist organization. This means two things: one is the creation of workers' councils ("soviets" in the Russian revolution) in the industrial sectors that compete for state power. *This was already achieved in August* in the Gdansk Inter-Factory Strike Committee, the MKS, with its delegations from hundreds of factories, its unquestioned authority among the workers, and its automatic assumption of responsibility for the whole range of workers' interests. Tragically, the MKS leaders convinced the workers to accept Solidarity as the rightful successor of the MKS. It was not: the heroic revolutionary accomplishment was turned down a reformist path.

The most vital need of the Polish workers is a revolutionary party. The history of the MKS once again proves the Trotskyist contention that soviets are necessary but not sufficient for a revolution. To make them the focal point of revolutionary power, the revolutionary party must displace the reformist and centrist betrayers from the leadership. Initially formed by the most advanced workers who already understand the necessity of revolution, the party's task is to convince the bulk of the working class that genuine Marxism and socialism is their only way out. It will have to work clandestinely as well as openly, utilize and expand existing contacts with workers in the neighboring Stalinist states and in the West, and tirelessly propagate the Marxist analysis and solution to the crises of Poland and the world. Through such a leadership the Polish working class will learn to wield its proper class weapons: workers' councils, the general strike, armed self-defense and insurrection. Every Marxist has the obligation to work to build such a party.

What the Polish workers do not need is the kind of advice that pseudo-socialists throughout the world are offering: stick to your present course, stick with KOR, stick with the Communist Party reformists, even stick with the Church! For example, the reformist paper *In These Times* headlined its report "Reason eases a tense Poland" (April 15). It is no news that reformists believe that reason rules rather than exploitative classes. But the paper outdid itself in congratulating Walesa for promising never to threaten the government, the party, or their alliances — a statement that the Warsaw government also seized on to broadcast throughout Poland.

The further left pseudo-Trotskyist groups have long been split over their ostensible degree of hostility toward Stalinism. The Shachtmanites consider the Eastern bloc countries to be class-ruled societies, while the Pabloites assert that they are

degenerated and deformed workers' states. They might therefore be expected to have fundamentally different interpretations of the Polish events, but reality calls this expectation into question.

The Shachtmanite International Socialists' leader Joel Geier, who supposedly believes that Poland is a society requiring a workers' revolution, returned from a visit to Poland convinced that Solidarity's trade unionism is the only way forward. A revolutionary party is unnecessary, he said, because the existence of state property makes every strike political, and the workers will automatically know that the government must be overthrown. (Curious that the admirable KOR not only fails to draw such a conclusion, automatically or not, but insists precisely on the opposite!) Geier had warned in his public talks that any openly revolutionary action would bring on the Russians and therefore certain defeat.

The Pabloite Socialist Workers Party, which formally stands for a "political revolution" in all the Stalinist states, refuses to call for it in Poland and uncritically admires the masterful moderation of both KOR and Walesa. The great centrist predecessors of both the IS and the SWP, Martov and Kautsky, always called for revolution in mighty tones — up to the point when it was possible — only to abjure it at the crucial moment in 1917, theoretically because of the danger of capitalist counterattack. The Bolsheviks understood that the workers must be told the truth: revolution is the only way to prevent counterrevolution, whereas pacifism and moderation invite it.

STABILITY INVITES COUNTERREVOLUTION

No list of leftist views on Poland would be complete without the contribution of the U.S. Workers Power tendency, which boldly asserts in its theoretical organ *Against the Current* that "...the strikes provide a vital benchmark against which every political current must check its premises." What then are Workers Power's premises? No one knows. It deliberately avoids stating what it believes the nature of Polish Stalinist society to be — progressive, reactionary, workers' state, capitalist state, bureaucratic collectivism, transitional state or what have you. Going against the current with neither paddle nor rudder gets one exactly nowhere, as Workers Power shows. For the conclusions of this theoretical exploration minus theory are as nebulous as the tendency itself. It does take one position, however, the same as everyone else's: KOR is among the "revolutionary forces" in Poland.

The case of Workers Power is instructive. It is an amalgam of pseudo-Trotskyists and others who variously believe in the gamut of possible theories of Stalinism and find this no barrier to reaching the essential reformist conclusion. Workers Power only duplicates internally a whole spectrum of centrist groups. Centrists can disagree on all theoretical questions, but when it comes to revolution all unite — against it. This is not the advice that the Polish workers need.

Nor, of course, do they need the suggestion of the overtly pro-Stalinist leftists that they abandon their gains and bow to Russia — but this they understand well enough already. As with the rulers of the U.S. and the USSR, whom the assorted far left elements tail, there are real differences that separate them. The bourgeoisie is divided by material necessity; the petty bourgeoisie is even more anarchic. But like their masters they agree on one essential question: "stability" is the only goal to be pursued when the chips are down in Poland and everywhere else. In this case it means counterrevolution. That is the crucial lesson for the Polish workers — and workers everywhere — to learn. Quickly. ■

Marxist Response to Reaganism

Ronald Reagan truthfully told the country that "We're in the worst economic mess since the Great Depression." To escape it, he decreed an economic program designed to satisfy the capitalists while it squeezes working-class living standards — especially for the lowest-paid workers, including blacks and other minorities. He also embarked on a foreign policy whose tough rhetoric towards Russia is far outmatched by its actions against the working masses of the neo-colonial countries. And, indeed, he is right: the only way capitalism can be saved is by an all-out attack on the working class.

As harrowing as Reagan's policy is, it inevitably will fail because it falls far short of the devastating defeat of the workers (depression, war and fascism) which is necessary if the capitalist system is to survive its ever-deepening crisis. Tragically but also inevitably, the response to Reagan now being prepared by the liberals, the labor bureaucrats and their "left" adherents, far from stopping such a reactionary solution, is only paving its way.

Reagan delivered his economic one-two punch to the country in February. He announced a list of federal budget cuts designed to slash programs which give some aid to the working class (such as Social Security, unemployment insurance, CETA and other jobs, and medical, housing and mass transit assistance, etc.). He followed with a call for a three-stage tax cut that would hand over billions of dollars to business and wealthy individuals but do little for lower-income taxpayers. This was joined with a long-term program to raise "defense" spending in order to shore up the U.S.'s declining economic and political role in the world and prop up the profits of the giant corporations that dominate the American economy.

THE FAILURE OF LIBERALISM

"Reaganomics" looks good to many people because the only capitalist alternative, liberalism, has collapsed. Since the New Deal of the 1930's, the traditional bourgeois formula for dealing with economic crises and social unrest has been to cede social programs under the pressure of mass struggles. The essence of liberalism lies not in the broad Keynesian schema purportedly designed to promote popular well-being through a caring welfare state, but in the simple fact that a wealthy imperialist class can preserve its rule most easily by buying off mass unrest. Welfare-state liberalism is Caesarism in modern dress, a designer version of bread and circuses to keep the proles from rebelling. All the theoretical folderol about government spending to increase economic demand and stimulate business is simply a gloss that conceals the state's real aid to the capitalists through advancing imperialism, protecting and supplementing profits and redistributing them through war industries.

The social welfare side of liberalism worked in the 1930's in the sense that the mass upheaval of the American workers was contained at the trade union level and prevented from challenging bourgeois rule. But even this success quickly eroded. It was the massive military spending of World War II, not the New Deal, that ended the Great Depression, although Keynesianism seemed to be successful during the 20-year post-war boom period. But the boom was temporary and superficial, resting on the U.S.'s economic hegemony at a time when this country was the repository of surplus-value extracted from all over the world.



As protests against Reaganomics mount, workers will learn reformism is no answer.

The boom could not long delay the reassertion of capitalism's inherent crisis. Through its hegemonic power, the U.S. was able for a time to force other nations to bear the burden of its underlying economic rot: its military budget that drains the economy, the growing obsolescence of its industrial plant. Because of their own increasing problems, however, the Western European nations and Japan have had to challenge American economic might (despite their real fears of an international economic collapse if they press the United States too hard). Concomitantly, workers' struggles and national liberation movements have weakened imperialism in general. Under these conditions, with less surplus-value available to the American capitalists for distribution, the Keynesian budget deficits in the U.S. only led to bouts of inflation.

During the tenure of Jimmy Carter, a bumbling symbol of an ideology in decay, liberalism offered nothing but indecision for the bourgeoisie and austerity for the masses. The most recent government concessions such as affirmative action, school busing and pseudo-integration, given to blacks to forestall further mass ghetto rebellions like those of the late 1960's, proved more of a mockery than a solution to the economic devastation wracking minority communities. As a whole, the "Great Society" programs proved to be no solution to the crisis, and could not alleviate general working-class discontent at unemployment, inflation and worsening living conditions on every front.

REAGAN'S NEW RELIGION

In this context, Reagan won the presidency by promising a radical alternative to Carter's austerity policy. Reagan's interpretation of the "economic mess" is that the crisis is the fault of big government, especially its social programs. The

November rout of leading liberals in Congress has frightened many Democratic politicians into going along; they have accepted the principle of cutting spending, objecting chiefly to the tax cuts for fear of additional budget deficits. While the Democrats are now behaving like vintage Republicans, Reagan and his advisers are touting another nostrum, "supply-side economics," to justify their across-the-board assault on the working class.

The supply-siders argue that cutting government spending will reduce budget deficits and thereby halt inflation, while tax breaks for business will stimulate new productive investment and create jobs. This much is traditional bourgeois thinking. They also insist, however, that cutting tax rates for everyone will so stimulate "initiative" and productivity that higher tax receipts will result and keep the budget in balance. This proposition provides Reagan with the useful propaganda argument that he stands for prosperity, even though large sections of the population will be suffering visibly under his program.

Reagan's program was greeted enthusiastically by all sections of the capitalist ruling class. There are some who object to certain aspects (notably the tax cuts) but they are satisfied overall. Much of the bourgeoisie is not persuaded by Reagan's ideology: the supply-siders' theories have been subject to ridicule, and phrases like "new magic," "theology," "hallucinogenic" and "pop-psychology" punctuate the bourgeois press. What they all like is the clear-cut class nature of the program: aid capital, hit the workers. They know, theory or no theory, that the only hope for capitalism is to lower wages (through either inflation or direct cuts or both) and get the profits for themselves. If the masses are so fed up with liberalism that they swallow the "new religion," all the better. That's what the bosses hire actors for.

While Carter's policies undermined many past gains of the working class they still attempted to regulate corporate investment through the state apparatus. But Carter lost the support of the workers without gaining the confidence of the bourgeoisie — which, after all, is the name of the game under capitalism. Now editorial after editorial, even in the liberal media, concludes: "Let's give Reagan's theories a try; after all, nothing else works." Such logic is hardly the basis for scientific confidence in "Reaganomics," but then bourgeois economic "science" is hardly known for its rigor and success. Marxists, on the other hand, can explain why liberalism failed and can predict with confidence why Reaganism will collapse in its turn. Neither ideology can deal with the cancer at the heart of the capitalist system. Reagan's program, therefore, like Carter's, is necessarily shot through with contradictions. If carried through consistently, it will lead to an astronomical inflation followed by a collapse into depression.

CAPITALISM NEEDS CENTRALIZATION

For example, Reagan's increased military spending, especially in combination with lower taxes, will mean continued federal budget deficits, even if all his cuts in social programs are adopted. Arms spending is a major source of what Marxists call fictitious capital: it is an investment of capital into commodities that generate no further production (unlike, for example, consumption goods, raw materials and machine tools). But despite the unproductive nature of arms spending, the government undertakes to pay interest on the bonds it sells to get money for it (because the expenditures are not covered by taxes) — just as if the weapons were acting productively and generating new profits. So the capitalist bondholders and banks still claim their share of the surplus-

value produced by the working class as a whole. The excess of claims on surplus-value, much of it based on fictitious capital, is the prime source of inflation; the runaway inflation of the 1970's was due to the 40-year build-up of debt and other forms of fictitious capital, starting with the military budgets of World War II. Even in the unlikely event that the federal budget is balanced (or that military spending is reduced), that mountain of inflation-producing claims to surplus-value will not be wiped out.

Nor is there any reason to believe that the tax breaks for business and the wealthy will be turned into new production. The capitalists need the assurance of high profit rates before they invest; the tax breaks help, but much more is needed. The oil corporations, already raking in more than 40 percent of the countries' manufacturing profits, still find productive investment too risky and prefer the paper profits of speculation. The Marxist understanding that capitalism in its epoch of decay is a system forced to accumulate values at the expense of actual production is borne out day by day.

World capitalism is suffering from a falling rate of profit (a tendency foreseen and analyzed by Karl Marx a century ago) which shows up as a shortage of capital available for investment. The rise in fictitious capital adds to this tendency: because of the plethora of capitalist claims to the surplus-value produced, the share of each claimant is small and the rate of profit falls. Capitalism has traditionally overcome this problem through centralization, the amassing of increasing amounts into fewer hands, which allows the dominant capitals to collect sufficient surplus-value for new investment. Thus government intervention has been used since the 1930's to strengthen the dominant corporations at the expense of their foreign and domestic rivals. But to really do the job and put profit rates back up to where the bourgeoisie wants them, more than mere intervention is needed.

MYTH OF DE-STATIFICATION

The capitalist solution must be to smash the workers' living standards and to eliminate the weaker capitalists so that their capital can be taken over. Defeating the workers increases the total amount of surplus-value, and wiping out the weak capitalists centralizes it. Both goals can be accomplished to some degree by a depression, but that alone leaves the working class in a position to resist. Moreover, in the 1930's depression proved far from successful in centralizing capital enough to do the job. Fascism is the bourgeoisie's tool for crushing the workers' institutions and thereby their ability to fight back. It also tightly regulates the monopolists' investment policies and centralizes economic power. But the capitalist economy is international and so centralization must be carried out on an international scale. Thus imperialist war is the necessary extension of centralization-by-force to the world arena. As long as capitalism exists, the depression-fascism-war cycle remains inevitable. The bourgeoisie, whether reactionary, liberal or indifferent, cannot control the underlying laws of motion of this decaying system.

The hopeless goal of recent U.S. administrations has been to achieve the centralizing results of a depression without actually precipitating one and without increasing the *statification* of capital. This is sheer utopianism, for the scale of investment needed today is so enormous that only government can serve as the centralizing agent. For example, a key reason why the Japanese economy outcompetes the American is not its allegedly low wages but the tight interrelationship among the state, the banks and the major corporations. And even there nationalization is inevitable.

Another example: Jimmy Carter tried to base his energy program on the centralization of capital. He proposed a series of taxes to collect a portion of energy profits in government hands so that it could then be fed back to the giant oil companies for investment (see "Oil, Coal and the Energy Program" in *Socialist Voice* No. 6). Reagan claims that he wants to reverse this pathetically weak centralizing policy (even though Carter's program largely failed of adoption by Congress) and "get government out of business." But his claim is not entirely honest: he has done nothing to get the government out of the nuclear power industry, which would collapse without a steady diet of government subsidies. And his originally proposed cutback in federal funding for synthetic fuels has already been restored after complaints by the oil barons.

Reagan would like, ideologically, to reverse the decades-long trend towards government supervision and guarantees for capital investment. If he abstains from government intervention because of his dreams for a nineteenth-century world where today's problems won't exist, he will trigger a far greater crisis than he has now. Britain's Conservative Prime Minister Thatcher is already proving this point. And in the U.S., whose economy still sets the pace for world capitalism, the effect will be worse.

DRIVE TOWARD WORLD WAR

There is one sphere, of course, where all of the bourgeoisie is enthusiastic about the state's increased role: the military. Most of the leading liberals are joining in the cheers for Reagan's stepped-up military program. For even though arms spending is a drain on the economy it can also reap rewards. The U.S.'s economic decline relative to Japan and Germany was caused in part by investing in weapons rather than

revolutionary upheavals. Stability requires leadership by one dominant power, and only the U.S. is large and strong enough to play that role — despite its economic weaknesses.

But the imperialist powers will not be able to unite. As has always been the case, crises exacerbate imperialist rivalries. In El Salvador, the West German government has been supporting the social-democratic politicians linked to the left-wing insurgents, while Reagan denounces them for supposedly receiving "communist" aid. German capitalism is no less imperialist than American but it sees the possibility of a break in U.S. domination of Central American markets through the victory of a friendly but still capitalist "revolutionary" regime.

The drive toward imperialist redivision of the world and increased competition for profits is accelerating as the rate of profit declines. The increasing tension over trade between Japan, Western Europe and the U.S. renews the threat of an international trade war which can bring to a halt the bulk of world trade and usher in a new world war. The efforts of the imperialist leaders to accommodate to each others' national needs are doomed to fail. An imperialist world war can have the effect of dramatically centralizing capital on an international scale; this was a notable outcome of World War II. But it is highly doubtful that war will happen before the system attempts capital centralization on the national scale through depression. And it is equally unlikely that the war will occur before one of the major powers can sufficiently centralize its capital and straitjacket its working class through fascism.

The threat of war between the U.S. and the USSR in the near future is real, but it is considerably overblown by Washington's need to rattle its sabers. The new cold war stance of the U.S. (begun not by Reagan but by Carter in January 1980) is designed to pressure its imperialist allies to

French Popular Front rally in 1930's. Class collaboration paved the way for fascism and war. Fake socialists today call upon workers to follow the same road to the same debacle. Their relative weakness today is a major reason for optimism.



productive capital. While U.S. capitalism will not be able to catch up in terms of productivity, the Administration plans to demand concessions for U.S. exports and restrictions on imports from its allies; a key argument for this is that the American military is defending Western imperialist interests around the world. This will have some effect, because all the imperialists (including the Russians) recognize that economic and political stability is crucial in a world torn by

weaken their "detente" line and integrate themselves further into the American-led bloc. It is also a way to speed arms aid to right-wing forces around the world to repress the growing class struggle. On the economic level, it is part of an attempt by American capital to extend its influence over the investment and trade policies of competing national capitals and to weaken its Russian rival.

The USSR is militarily strong at the moment, but this

condition will not be maintainable for long as costs escalate under the impact of American war preparations. The need for a far more advanced technology is also a major barrier. Russia's economic contradictions are far too great. The proletarian revolution of 1917 was able to nationalize industry and politically centralize decision-making over the accumulation of capital to an extent that no capitalist state ever could. However, the isolation of the Russian revolution through the treachery of reformists and Stalinists prevented the international centralization vital for a successful transition to socialism. The consequent capitalist counterrevolution under Stalin, which culminated in the late 1930's, became heir to a powerfully centralized economy through which it was able to escape the depression of the pre-war years.

With the triumph of capitalism in Russia, the unprecedented rate of industrial expansion achieved under even a degenerating workers' state has declined. Productive investment has been diverted into an enormous accretion of waste, including arms. Centralized "planning" by the ruling bureaucracy has become a mockery that serves only as a fetter on production. The once agriculturally abundant USSR now has to depend on grain imports. Behind the facade of planning the Russian rulers desperately gyrate between attempts to reassert centralized control and reforms that loosen it. The economy has become increasingly anarchic and stagnant. As well, Moscow has lost its tight grip over the national economies of Eastern Europe and China. Russia's impulse to decentralize presents its rulers with a profound contradiction, since its fundamental drive toward centralization of capital cannot in the long run be overcome.

The bourgeoisies of the world can only hope to preserve their rule by giving stronger roles to the bourgeois state. The present surge of Reaganism can be only a temporary phenomenon; along with Thatcherism in Britain (and other echoes, like the victory of Seaga in Jamaica), it is a reaction against the failures of liberalism. It will either turn to tighter state intervention under the disguise of free enterprise or it will be replaced by an openly statist form of bourgeois rule.

IS REAGAN FASCIST?

In this light, the conclusion frequently drawn on the left that Reagan is fascist can be seen to be an absurdity. Fascism means a strong, interventionist capitalist state if it means anything. That is why the capitalists shy away from it until the last minute; not because it enslaves the workers, but because the petty-bourgeois fascist gauleiters have to tighten the state's control over the craven bourgeoisies and rough them up a bit in order to defend capitalist rule. Of course, Reagan's reactionary program encourages the fascist vermin to come out of the muck. And in the not-so-far-off day when Reaganism collapses and joins austerity liberalism in oblivion, the escalating crisis will force the workers and petty bourgeoisie to polarize further. The demise of Reagan as a supposedly tough alternative to the liberals will accelerate the masses' yearning for a really strong alternative.

The beginning steps in this process are already evident. The last election revealed not only that much of the population was searching for what they thought was a radically different alternative, but that the nearly 50 percent of the electorate which abstained was dissatisfied with all the proffered solutions. At the moment, no doubt, the radicalization process has swung to the right. On the far right there has been a rapid growth of a reactionary religious development which acts as a tracer bullet for the future fascist movement. Already racist violence has accelerated. In a few short years the Klan and the

Nazi have been growing on the extreme tip of the reactionary wave. The desperation of this fringe will not remain confined to it.

However, the potential in the opposite extreme direction is also present. Last year the mass riots in Miami, Flint, Chattanooga and elsewhere showed what will come with even greater force out of the black ghettos. Only yesterday, seemingly from out of the blue, the powerful ranks of the United Mineworkers Union declared war on the mineowners and their own moderate leadership. The present circumstances in the U.S. do not dictate a slow rise in the class struggle. The combination of worsening economic circumstances and a powerful proletariat which, because of its cowardly leadership, believes itself to be weak generally produces sudden elemental explosions rather than gradual flows. Such an explosion is brewing, although no one can predict the precise date.

There is no doubt that the chief impact of the Reagan attack on the working class falls on blacks, minorities and youth. In fact, it is designed to turn the white workers against the black, the employed against the unemployed, the better-off against the poorer. But the budget also assaults the better-off; and, since it will accelerate the descent of the economy into inflation and unemployment, it will only increase their problems too.

The many workers who now believe that they will benefit from the assault on the less fortunate will soon face reality. Capitalism will have to make the working class pay for the crisis far more than Reaganism envisages. It has only just begun to squeeze those workers who gained in the past periods of prosperity as well as those in the bottom layers.

For example, Reaganism undermines the unions, which have already been weakened by a cowardly, class-collaborationist leadership. But it does not attempt to crush them; in theory it even grants them less control by the state than did liberalism. But sooner or later the bourgeoisie must attempt to smash the unions, since they are forced at extreme moments to defend the gains of at least the aristocratic layer of workers. Reagan undoubtedly will have to swallow his ideology and move openly against the unions when the class struggle inevitably deepens. While some unions can be destroyed at this stage, it will take genuine fascism to crush the unions, the working class as a whole and the black masses.

It is no accident that fascism presents itself as "national socialism." It knows that it must appeal to the desperate as a bold, radical alternative to capitalism and not as its savior. Its program of extreme regimentation of capital by the state, coupled with the destruction of any autonomy for the working class, must be sold on the basis of an attack that identifies capitalism not as a system but as the machinations of particularly evil capitalists, e.g., the Jews. Likewise it breaks up working-class identity by setting whites against blacks as the source of their troubles.

Capitalism ultimately has no alternative but to turn to fascism, whatever the bourgeoisie's qualms in the name of "civilization." But fascism can no more solve the crisis than any other bourgeois ideology. For capitalism stagnates under extreme state regimentation. The private ownership of the means of production by a tiny minority does not permit real economic planning. The state is forced to pour resources into waste production (like the military) to try keeping sections of workers employed. On a national scale, fascism accelerates the development of the economic crisis. The only alternative then becomes imperialist war and the consequent destruction of human and material resources.

The only genuine alternative to capitalist crisis, fascism,

depression and world war is socialism — begun by the revolutionary seizure of power by the working classes and the expropriation of the capitalists. In the immediate situation, the chief barrier to this prospect is the dominance of reformist and Stalinist misleaders within the working class and the absence of a mass communist revolutionary party as an alternative. But the powerful workers' upsurge in a number of countries is laying the basis for a re-creation of this vanguard. As the crisis continues, Marxist revolutionaries must work to build such parties. They must fight for the truth: socialist revolution is the *only* answer.

Up to now the working class revolts (in Portugal, Iran, Poland, El Salvador ...) have been led by pro-capitalists of one sort or another. These elements, whether nationalist, reformist, Stalinist or centrist, frequently proclaim themselves socialist only in order to label socialist *revolution* impractical and insist that a liberal capitalist stage is the only reality. Therefore the revolutions have been betrayed or set back. If, in response to the revolutionary situations, Marxist proletarian cadres are formed, the efforts and sacrifices of the workers will not be wasted — and the setbacks will be reversed.

Misleadership is not the result of a master plot or a conspiracy. Material prosperity, even modest prosperity, fosters the illusion that class collaboration can produce a liberalized democratic capitalism. The rapid expansion of middle-class layers during the imperialist post-war boom penetrated deeply into the working class. Huge numbers of workers blended into the petty bourgeoisie occupationally, educationally, socially — and this influenced their outlook and aspirations. The renewed outbreak of capitalist crisis created a desire for restoring the old semi-mobile "classless" capitalism, but that no longer is possible. The underlying material logic of the crisis will drive the formerly privileged workers through such passing fancies. Their class position leads them to rediscover their power and organization through struggle. The middle strata disintegrate while yearning to restore their past well-being. Many fall into the proletariat, but their leaders are driven to a program of statifying and reorganizing capitalism.

Sections of the petty bourgeoisie move towards fascism while others turn to leftist solutions. Many of the latter sincerely believe they are socialists and revolutionaries; some indeed do break with their middle class outlook. But until the proletariat itself goes into mass action, the dominant tendency among middle-class "socialists" will be to recognize the power of the workers only to use them as a battering ram for the radical restructuring of capitalism. Their socialistic beliefs lead them to see in the working class their own ideas of capitalist "practicality," the only program that appears realistic from their own class position.

The extremely contradictory consciousness of the working class as it searches for its real interests frequently projects alternately a conservative and a reformist surface. It is these mirrors in which the middle strata see reflected their own ideological images. As the crisis deepens and the workers begin to resolve their fears in favor of deeper needs, these mirrors shatter.

The response to Reagan's program is a central test for the U.S. left. While both Democrats and Republicans are shifting to conservatism in the hope of appealing to the mass of American voters, the people will fool them — for it was not Reagan's conservative moderation that won him working class votes but the false notion that he represented a sharply different radical alternative. The majority of leftist forces as well are shifting rightward towards more moderate solutions which they imagine the workers really believe in. This strategy has already been tried — in the 1930's. Then the left turned



Many workers hoped Reagan would be their answer. They will make far more radical shifts in the future.

toward moderation and capitalist reformism just as the masses were deserting these failed nostrums, and the result was the triumph of fascism for many countries, and world war for all.

They are trying to do it again. As the Democrats abandon liberalism and reformist schemes, leftists leap to resurrect them. As the masses become increasingly aware that pitiful government handouts don't work, the left takes up the shredded banner of the welfare state. It is correct for Marxists to defend every social gain won in the past by workers and the oppressed. But at the same time Marxists must oppose the liberal-reformist *program* which claims that these gains can be guaranteed under capitalism. The leftists advocate a minimum program of more CETA jobs, more welfare benefits, higher taxes on banks and corporations, greater subsidies for this and that. When, for example, as the economic crisis deprives millions of black people of access to a decent life, the left campaigns for affirmative action to aid a few. These minimalist programs are coupled to maximum programs replete with demands which can never be met under capitalism and are therefore utterly utopian. As imperialism's need for armed force is made increasingly clear, the left plumps for "No Draft" — meaning either keep the mercenary army or do away with the Pentagon completely. As imperialist rivalry demands "energy independence" and greater nuclear arsenals, the left adopts "No Nukes." Few workers believe that capitalism, the "real world," can eliminate war, do without an army or wipe out nuclear, occupational and environmental hazards. But the "left" says it can.

The left rejects the old Marxist truth that fundamental

changes like the elimination of war cannot be achieved under capitalism. The left rejects the equally old and equally true Marxist principle that even the minimal reforms cannot be maintained except by a revolutionary mass upheaval. Its inverted middle-class Marxism allows all demands, stretching from the tiniest to the fantastic, to adorn its program — except one. It fights like mad to keep out the “doctrinaire,” “dogmatic” and “ultra-left” assertion that socialist revolution is the only answer. Yet it is the one demand they all claim to believe in, despite their unwillingness to say it to the working class. In reality, when it comes to socialist revolution, they are not only lying to the class but to themselves. “Socialism” is only the left’s false consciousness (or ideology); for the workers it will be material, an expression of reality.

THE FUTURE POPULAR FRONT

Right now, using the Reagan program as its point of attack, the left is reassembling its forces. Demonstrations against the war in El Salvador, the budget cuts, the draft and nuclear energy are in the offing. A wing of the labor bureaucracy around William Winpisinger of the machinists’ union and Douglas Fraser of the auto workers is lending its support. These reformist “socialists” are moved into action because they are learning that their success in weakening the workers’ movement has undermined their own bureaucratic positions. The new movement is being built on a package of liberal reform measures that are acceptable to the liberal bourgeois forces inside the Democratic Party. It is therefore the beginning of a future popular front: a bloc between working class organizations and bourgeois liberals that is strictly limited to the reform of capitalism and attempts to police the working class against class-struggle actions that might endanger the alliance.

The present popular frontist steps are a far cry from the future reality. If things remain at this level there will result a relatively timid alliance of labor and black leaders, liberals and environmentalists behind a McGovern or Kennedy-type of Democratic electoral challenge. But the movement of the future will arise from the deeper changes developing in the working class and among the oppressed.

The future popular front will have to leech off the working class upheaval and, to do so, it will be far more radical than the closet socialism of today; there will be a greater emphasis on the maximalist assertions of the left-most pseudo-revolutionaries. This prospect may not be far off. The potential mass opposition to Reagan’s anti-working class policies, together with the bourgeoisie’s eventual realization that anti-statist measures are fundamentally incompatible with monopoly capitalist rule in the present epoch, mean that a popular front alliance might well mount a serious challenge for power in the near future. In the U.S. this would undoubtedly take place through the Democratic Party aided by more radical third parties, like the Roosevelt coalition of the 1930’s. The real question is whether it will succeed in solving the fundamental problems underlying the crisis. In its initial stages it might well appear to be doing so, for the bourgeoisie (or at least sections of it) will have steeled itself to make concessions to the mass movement in order to deter it from seeking answers outside the capitalist framework. Moreover, after a bout of Reaganism, even a plateau in the level of crisis will seem like a magical success.

The economic program of a popular front will undoubtedly focus on increases in the social component of workers’ wages: the restoration of public housing, health care, transit, etc. To keep wages as a whole under control, it will also include wage-

restraint laws, “co-determination” schemes to dampen the class struggle in the factories, and other plans to ensure state regulation of living standards. Concessions will be granted but they will not go very far. For the capitalist crisis will not have been resolved, the capitalists will quickly see every new concession as a threat to their profits and therefore to their very existence. The looming crisis will be far deeper than that of the 1930’s.

The popular frontists, in order to appear to be solving the basic problems of production and distribution, must call for nationalization of some industries and greater state control over the banks and credit institutions. Statification accompanied by a challenging working class can only terrify the bourgeoisie, which will fight any perceived challenge to the sanctity of property and its domination over the state. All the reassurances of the popular frontists to the contrary, the bourgeoisie will still fear a fighting working class.

The bourgeoisie will soon press the entire apparatus of its class power into high gear: police attacks, fascist violence, military threats, factory shutdowns and lockouts, etc. Any movement that threatens the class rule of the bourgeoisie had better be prepared to destroy it — and that is precisely what a popular front is designed *not* to do. Whatever its initial successes, a popular front only serves to set the workers and the liberal middle class up for slaughter.

Is this prospect inevitable? In the 1930’s the popular fronts did prevent revolutionary alternatives from developing. The stiffening for the popular fronts, their cadre, came not from the reformist Social Democrats but from the Communist Parties. The CP’s were the hardcore policemen of the left who held the most militant sections of the proletariat in coalition with the liberal politicians. They had considerable authority with the most active workers, even in the United States, because they appeared to stand for the Bolshevik revolution and the advancing “great experiment” in Russia. They alone could sell revolutionary workers the idea that it was possible to have both revolution and a bloc with the bourgeoisie. Part of the bourgeoisie itself became aware that the Stalinists could be relied upon for carrying out counterrevolution among the workers.

THE REAL CHOICES

Today, in contrast, Russian strength is in a shambles. Its economic anarchy means that neither it nor its satellites can weather the present crisis. The iron disciplined CP’s taking direction from Moscow no longer exist; the CP’s today, like the reformists and centrists, no longer have the firmness and power to curb revolutionary masses.

In most parts of the world where major class collaborationist fronts are developing, they are composed of a wide variety of small centrist and reformist groups collected into “networks” or fronts as loose as the old-time reformists. The working class, undefeated on a world scale at this time, no longer is faced with a counterrevolutionary force like that based on Stalin’s Russia. The centralized power of a degenerating workers’ state is no longer available as a weapon against the proletariat.

The proletariat is objectively stronger than ever. The bourgeois alternatives, whether Reaganist de-statification or popular frontist reformism, are all doomed to fail. The real choices before the radicalizing masses will be fascist and imperialist war, on the one hand, and socialist revolution class war, on the other. Despite the momentary smallness of Bolshevik organization, the objective weakness of the popular front as a trap for the workers affords far greater optimism today for the proletarian victory over fascism. ■

Miners Defy Capitalism

The coal miners' strike has left the bourgeoisie in a state of shock. Virtually all the media had echoed the confident boasts of United Mine Workers president Sam Church that the miners would approve the contract. Euphoria that the militant seventies would give way to a more peaceful period in the coalfields lasted only a short time. Now the speculation is that this strike may even exceed the 110-day strike in 1978.

Following the contract's decisive two-to-one defeat, the bourgeois press was forced to come up with some explanation for its miserable failure to foresee the outcome. While pointing to the miners' anger over the elimination of royalty payments for non-union coal and the permission to use non-UMW labor in subleasing and subcontracting work around the mines, most of the explanations explained nothing at all. Miners are portrayed as independent, stubborn hillbillies who are simply strike-happy. A *Wall Street Journal* article the day after the vote even offered the notion that the miners had already made vacation plans and were determined to strike no matter what. The absurdity of this and other similar explanations is contradicted by the bourgeois press's own reports that the strike will mean a severe hardship to the miners, who have already suffered economic difficulties as a result of layoffs, inflation and losses during the long 1978 strike.

The left papers were little better. None predicted the overwhelming contract rejection, even those with supporters in the mining areas. Thus the *Militant*, boasting four reporters in the coal fields during the strike, neither foresaw the contract's defeat nor called for a No vote. It simply waffled, as usual:

"This contract is less than the miners are entitled to. But it is not what the operators were shooting for. They wanted to break the union.

"The miners will now exercise their right to read the contract proposal, discuss it, and vote on it.

"The next voice to be heard on the contract will be that of 160,000 miners. They will decide." (*Militant*, April 3)

The workers, however, understood that the contract did give the operators a tool to break the union; they voted accordingly. Only after the contract was turned down did the *Militant* see fit to shed its "objective" cover for Church's position and weakly tail the membership's decision: "The miners had good reason for voting no" (April 10). And its four reporters could do little but list the miners' specific objections, the same ones listed by the bourgeois press after the fact. Other left papers did not hesitate to call for a contract rejection in advance but none foresaw what would actually happen.

The bourgeois commentators cannot explain the miners' strike because from their point of view the strike is unreasonable. Miners are refusing to accept "reality," that is, what is possible under capitalism. Though the UMW is a trade union, the miners' actions mean that they are not playing by the rules and accepting compromise and the limitations of selling their labor power on the capitalist market. Why, the miners don't even listen to their own leaders, and they flagrantly ignore the orders of the capitalist courts!

What appears to the bourgeoisie as unreasonable is the miners' unwillingness to accept the sacrifices it wishes to impose upon the working class. Propaganda from both the coal companies and Church argued for labor stability in order to keep the small companies afloat and to take advantage of the potential market for exported coal. Arguing that the



Mineworkers burn contracts after refusing to ratify 'Sellout Sam' Church's proposed deal with the owners.

courts had ruled against the subcontracting provision and that the royalties clause failed to stop the growth of non-union coal, Church's position amounted to saying that if you can't beat them, join them.

However, the miners understand that they are under an attack which threatens to destroy their union and past gains. The subcontracting and royalties provisions, which the bourgeoisie and Church present as a question of a reasonable trade-off, have become symbols of the deteriorating position of the miners who see their power eroded by the ever-growing dominance of non-union coal. Beyond that is the anger over mine safety, black lung and the increase in new technology as well as over the growing demand for higher productivity at the expense of the miners' working conditions.

In rejecting the contract, the miners also rejected the reformist politics of Sam Church and his leftist allies. Church's support for the anti-nuclear power demonstration in Harrisburg on March 28 and his calls for substituting coal for nuclear power amount to a political strategy of getting the capitalist state to protect the interests of the coal industry, supposedly in the interest of the miners. Like the protectionist strategy of the United Automobile Workers president Douglas Fraser, Church's solution is no solution. Not only is it utopian to believe capitalism will throw away its \$150 billion nuclear investment, but military needs and imperialist rivalries dictate the expansion of nuclear power under capitalism. The miners

have often seen that state power is a weapon drawn *against* the workers, not one that works in their interests.

The problem the miners face is that they cannot defend themselves simply by defeating the latest contract proposal, since that alone will not reverse the trend towards non-union



UMW Pres. Church supported Harrisburg anti-nuke rally. Church's call for "safe coal" as opposed to unsafe nukes is a mockery of black lung victims. Nothing is safe for workers under capitalism.

mining nor solve the basic problems facing the miners. No union contract can meet the real needs of workers, which come into sharp conflict with the interests of the capitalists. The miners' continual rejection of contracts reflects this fact while expressing their revolt against this condition and their search for an alternative.

Thus, in order to defend their union, the miners find themselves revolting against the conditions of trade union bargaining. Their strike is not just against the coal industry's contract offer but against the social conditions the miners live under. The strike represents a tremendous working-class explosion against the capitalist system. But a strike that pushes against the bounds imposed by capitalism must also push against the limitations of trade unionism. In order to defend their union the miners have not only rejected their leadership but they have pointed to the necessity to go beyond trade unionism.

Although the miners today do not consciously accept the socialist alternative, their actions reject capitalism and point in the direction of revolutionary struggle. The capitalists' attempts to downplay the strike and to treat the miners as working class eccentrics reflect their fears that other workers will be contaminated with the miners' class struggle "disease." Imagine if the Chrysler workers had said no to the wage-cutting deal their leadership made! Imagine if the entire

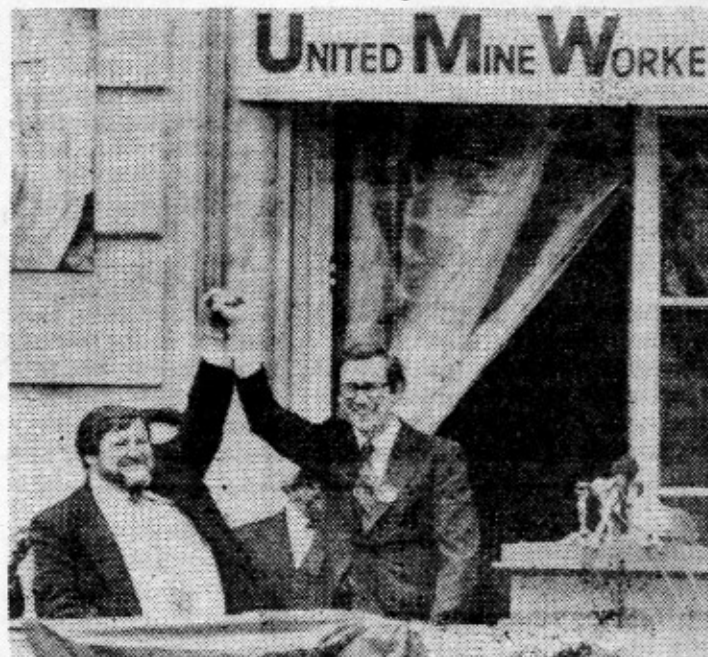
working class rejected the sacrifices demanded by Reagan to prop up the collapsing system. This would be nothing but a declaration of open class war.

It is precisely because the miners' strike lays bare the war between two fundamentally opposed social classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, that gives it a critical importance. The miners are conscious of their power. Their strike can become the focal point for a working class response to Reagan and his bourgeois program. Class conscious proletarians, especially those in the mines, must strive to realize this potential by transforming the miners' strike into a general strike aimed to beat back the capitalist attacks.

The role of revolutionaries must be to pose the political tasks of the miners struggle and to explain to the working class the significance of the strike, the need for a political struggle, the general strike. The task of revolutionaries is not to serve as cheerleaders telling miners to be more militant but to carry out the necessary propaganda role of demonstrating the revolutionary logic of the miners' action.

During the 1970's the miners have gone through the experiences of militant trade unionist strikes and "rank and file" outfits like the Miners for Democracy. They have virtually exhausted the possibilities of serious gains through trade unionism. If Church's strategy of propping up the coal industry is no way out, neither is the left's continued call for a militant trade unionist struggle.

Even Church sees the need for political action; hence his



Sam Church and West Virginia Governor Jay Rockefeller clasp hands. Mineworkers must break this class collaborationist embrace.

foray into anti-nuclear politics and black lung protests in Washington. However, this agreement with the left's call for militant reformist struggle is no more an answer than the unionist strategy. Trade union economism has always been coupled with objectively pro-capitalist politics. The miners need not go back and relive the experiences of the early 1900's when Lenin first pointed this out. Neither do they have to relive their own experiences of the 1970's. The way forward is through leading the working class in a general strike that will break the bounds of trade unionism and open the road to the revolutionary struggle to destroy capitalism and reconstruct society on a socialist basis. ■

Guardian Covers for 1199 Sellouts

The following letter was sent to the "independent radical" *Guardian* newspaper by an LRP supporter who is active in District 1199, the hospital workers union. The *Guardian* has not published the letter or replied.

As an 1199 member for over eight years as well as a union delegate for over two years, I am enraged by both the sellouts of the union's leadership and the *Guardian's* kowtowing to these bureaucrats. You reported in the February 11 article, "District 1199 Sellout?" that Community General Hospital workers in Sullivan County, N.Y., were angered over secret negotiations between 1199 executive leaders and management without participation of the rank and file negotiating committee, and that the workers overwhelmingly rejected the settlement for the third time.

The question of the degree of democracy in the negotiation process isn't the central issue; suffice it to say that our citywide contracts have been negotiated the same way. The point is that you reported the possibility of the 1199 leaders selling out as a first. I mean, have you seen the 1199 contract with the League of Voluntary Hospitals here in New York? This contract, which covers over 40,000 workers and was negotiated at the same time when the great bulk of city contracts were expiring, is a sellout through and through: President Leon Davis and Executive Vice-President Jesse Olson said it was the "best we could get" at a time when the issue of hospital cut-backs was so explosive that the potential of DC 37 and 1199 workers engaging in a struggle with broad support was never better.

As for the more isolated situation of Community General, where the union leadership was *forced* to call a strike; it is the leadership which *keeps* the struggle isolated, failed to provide a strategy that could win, and then turns around and says, as they did to us, "It's the best we could get." This technique often works because of the seemingly hopeless situation which their policies have created. At Community General, the workers wouldn't stand for it so the *Guardian* had to call it a "sellout, question mark" when the workers already knew it was a sellout, period.

LEADERSHIP REJECTS CRITICISM

In your February 25 issue, you published a letter from Jesse Olson, 1199 Executive Vice-President. Olson is "disturbed" about the criticisms of the union leadership alluded to by the *Guardian*. He talks about all the money the union spent and the hopelessness of the situation. He further states that the *Guardian's* previous article "can only do serious harm to the efforts of District 1199 to help bring unionism to the several million unorganized hospital workers throughout the country." The *Guardian* replied: "with respect for the fine progressive tradition of 1199, which the *Guardian* has long supported...the District's support of the striking local was a good thing and should be continued, not cut off."

Unfortunately, the District's (that is, the union leadership's) "support" for the local (that is, the workers at Community General) was a bad thing, to use your terminology, because it was never more than the minimal financing the constitution requires. Jesse Olson admitted at the February 12 Guild Delegate Assembly that the executive council hoped the strike would be over after six weeks when the workers became

eligible for unemployment, as they had settled two previous strikes that way. He refused to entertain motions from myself and other delegates who wished to allow 150 Community General workers picketing outside the hall into the meeting to present their grievances. He made a speech similar to the content of the letter you printed, except that many often conservative delegates showed the good sense to boo, hiss and shout him down.

BUREAUCRATS TIED TO CAPITALISM

The *Guardian* also admits to a long history of support for the "progressive tradition" of 1199. But the 1199 leadership's tradition is not so stellar. Do you know that the 1199 leadership has always opposed militants who want a no-scab policy during strikes and has physically threatened these militants? Do you know that 120 union members were locked out of Haym Solomon Home for the Aged in Brooklyn before our citywide contract expired, and that the leaders refused to make their reinstatement a citywide strike demand? The union did "the best it could" for those workers too; it went through the NLRB and the courts, spent an impressive sum of our money, and got about 30 union jobs back last month. But Bart Lawson, the union-busting manager of the place, has reneged on the deal.

Lawson was so awed by the "progressive" union's response that he's in the process of busting another 1199-organized workplace, Woodhull Nursing Home in Jamaica. In this case, 1199 organizers are proudly distributing a *Village Voice* article which proclaims "1199's willingness to freeze salaries if a detailed examination of Woodhull's books justified it." This "progressive" leadership is perfectly happy to force sacrifices down workers' throats if the capitalist crisis demands it.

The League for the Revolutionary Party, which I support, presented the only alternate strategy to Community General workers at their February 21st rally. Our first proposal was for the executive council to call a one-day citywide strike to break the isolation of the struggle. On February 21, although we were rebaited by some and physically threatened by two hard-core supporters of Reginald Fant, a paid union organizer, many workers received our proposal with enthusiasm. Many workers at Haym Solomon, Francis Schervier, Logan and Jefferson (shut down), Mount Sinai (layoffs), Woodhull and Community General unfortunately have to learn through the school of hard knocks about the nature of their leadership. They are starting to see that with "progressives" like Olson in power, unionism has brought more retreats than benefits. Further, that the idea of organizing the unorganized is a stark absurdity coming from the pen of one who won't fight to hold on to the places 1199 has *already* organized.

The majority of workers still have many illusions in the reformist misleadership. The *Guardian* bolsters these workers' illusions and forestalls the day when the bureaucrats can be ousted and replaced with the revolutionaries who are not tied, ideologically and materially, to capitalism. ■

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are becoming disenchanting with the future possibilities of the U.S. economy. The capitalists recognize that Reagan's budgetary magic rests on hocus-pocus and are nervous over the workers' reaction once this becomes apparent. A rebellion in Atlanta is a chilling thought for the prospects of "restoring confidence" in a "revitalized America."

The capitalist state relies upon its police to maintain it in power. In the future it will not only accept but also promote naked violence against minorities and workers by both the cops and their boosom buddies, the Nazis and the Klan. Now it regards the black murders to be premature, and worries over their consequences. On the one hand, the government would like the investigation to find the killers so the affair would blow over, but on the other hand, every serious capitalist politician knows that it might well have been the cops who did the dirty work. That too would trigger riots.

The moderate black bourgeois leadership — the heads of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Congress of Racial Equality, Coretta Scott King and the black politicians — have assisted the ruling class. These leaders have been instrumental in building the protest movement, but only in order to channel it into a passive, conservative direction. They like to point out that no racist plot has been proven, an obvious attempt to temper rebellious feelings among blacks regardless of the facts of the case. Their basic message is that the protests must be non-violent and must support the bourgeois state's investigations. They back the cops to the hilt: typical was NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Hook's gushing comment that the police were "doing all they can or any human being can do." Predictably, these same people have rallied against the attempts to organize self-defense by Atlanta blacks.

The moderates' calls for an abstract brotherhood, prayers, and faith in the state are the same that they issued when these misleaders corralled the civil rights movement in the past. That is why what real gains were made came instead from the ghetto uprisings, when the urban black masses announced they were fed up with the lack of progress being made by the middle-class leaders.

This rebellion did not go far enough toward forging a new revolutionary leadership in place of the old in order to challenge capitalism itself. The condition of blacks today testifies to that limitation. In fact, today the moderates feel their own privileged positions threatened, so they make use of the mass protests even as they contain them. Their message to the ruling class is that if they weren't there to contain the black masses, all hell could break loose. To a large extent this is true, but such pleas will not prevent stepped-up assaults on blacks. In the face of growing crisis and right-wing movements, the implications for the masses of the moderates' seditious strategy is a thousand times more disastrous now than it was in the 1960s.

The efforts by the ruling class and the housebroken black "leadership" have by no means won the acceptance of the black masses, even if an alternative leadership has not been built. People know that the capitalist state is hostile to their interests, that blacks cannot gain equal status or treatment, that the poor are getting poorer. Atlanta is a microcosm of these conditions. A seething hostility exists, particularly towards the police force which is supposed to be solving the murders. As the mother of one of the slain youths said: "The feeling in the community is that if it ain't the Klan, it's the

cops."

An additional ingredient in the masses' consciousness is a certain awareness of the class issues involved. As the same mother stated: "It's a class thing ... If it were Mayor Jackson's son or some big-time black, then you would have seen some quick response. But certain people's deaths in our society don't seem to mean anything. They were just ghetto kids." This point hints home particularly in Atlanta, where a black mayor, a black public safety commissioner and civil rights leaders like Coretta King and the SCLC lend protective coloration to the Atlanta "establishment." Objective conditions are building a potential base for genuine class consciousness.

Along with the anger there have been concrete steps towards self-defense. At the Techwood-Clark Howell Homes, a huge housing project, a community patrol has been formed, and similar attempts have begun in other black communities. The defense has included "bar patrols" of younger residents operating on a 24-hour basis. This organization got the police and the moderate black leadership all upset. The cops were openly hostile, and chose to harass and arrest defense leaders for the illegal possession of firearms. A good portion of a beefed-up cop force supposedly designed to solve the murder cases has now been diverted to monitor and harass the community defense efforts!

EXPAND DEFENSE SQUADS

Also aiding the state's efforts have been the Guardian Angels, a New York City based grouping of largely black and Puerto Rican youth who have gained a high profile patrolling subways against crime. The Angels have picked up support and recruits by seeming to provide a real alternative to racist police in dealing with the ever-present dangers of assault and robbery on the trains. The pro-capitalist leaders of the Angels have won many youth who have a gut understanding of the rottenness of the state's police power in order to turn them into instruments of the bourgeoisie.

The Angels recently sent a team to Atlanta, allegedly to promote "self-defense" among black youths. However, they have promoted a concept of non-violent "self-defense" and counterposed this to armed self-defense patrols, as if passivity has ever been an effective response to racist terror. This has not been lost on some city fathers, who have come to see the Angels as a welcome element. In New York, the Angels' leadership has already secured the organization the status of a semi-official auxiliary to the police force, despite the annoyance of the cops. Their role in Atlanta indicates their objective function despite the intentions of many members: they are a popular cover for the racism and anti-working class character of the police force.

The defense of Atlanta's black youth can be expanded. The black community's efforts toward self-defense must, first of all, be supported. The murderers have demonstrated that they cannot be persuaded to end their attacks by moral arguments, only by armed people prepared to defend themselves. The defense squads are effective in their own right and are, as well, counterposed to the work of the pro-capitalist police.

At the same time it must be said that defense squads in Atlanta and similar groupings founded on the basis of community are very limited in what they can accomplish. Such defense groups are fated to rise and fall along with the immediacy of the danger. Urban "communities," black or white, disorganize and atomize people, so local groups tend to disintegrate over time. They can survive only if they become linked to broader working-class formations; capitalism socially organizes the working class at the point of production.

not at its places of residence. In addition, as the crisis deepens, the forces of fascism and racist terrorism will grow to be far greater than the scale of the isolated Atlanta murders. A broader defense is needed.

demoralization and the sense of powerlessness which corrodes the outlook of the working class. Such self-activity raises people's horizons so that fundamental change, revolution, becomes a real solution in their minds.



Techwood Homes self-defense patrol members display their weapons in Atlanta. Such squads are a first step toward a mass national labor-black defense organization. Calls for pacifism in the face of armed police and Nazi assaults are siren songs of degeneracy and duplicity.

Defense is a class question; that is, any successful defense must understand that black liberation is inseparable from class liberation, black defense from class defense. It is not simply a struggle between poor (or poor black) and rich, but a fight that poses the necessity for the working class, the real source of social power and the antagonist to the ruling class, to champion and lead the struggles of the oppressed.

Until now, the reformist leaders of the only working-class mass organizations at this time, the trade unions, have obscured this need by regularly selling out the needs of their own members, both white and black but especially black. No wonder union members are generally demoralized and the unions are regarded with indifference, contempt or hostility by the black masses. What is needed is a completely new strategy, organization and leadership for the workers and their allies.

To begin with, blacks and other union members must demand that the unions support the black moves toward self-defense in Atlanta. Some union locals responding to membership pressure have already solidarized themselves with the anger against the murders. The union leaders, however, have responded in the same vein as the black and liberal politicians: that is, with moral protests. For example, Local 100 of the Transport Workers Union in New York has issued green ribbons to its members. Some UAW officials have expressed support for a national protest day in Washington in May. We are even prepared to believe that Lane Kirkland sometimes wears a green ribbon, and not just on St. Patrick's Day.

But the plaintive appeals of the liberals are only designed to try to restore the old Negro-Liberal-Labor coalition which acted to hinder the civil rights movement. The only way to make the ruling class keep its police dogs and fascist friends at bay is massive class struggle. This would also dispel the

There is a major difference between the ghetto rebellions of the 1960's and the uprisings today. The bourgeoisie could then afford to dribble out sops in response to mass actions. Miami last year struck fear into its heart but won little: the cops got off, blacks were imprisoned. The limitations of the 1960's riots — that they found no revolutionary leadership because they achieved only mass, not class, consciousness — are far more of a dead end now.

Black workers hold a decisive position within the American economy — they work at the heart of production in the heavy, strategic industries in the big cities. Black workers can be a decisive factor in forcing the unions to act. Support to the Techwood defense squads would be a powerful first step in the direction of joint labor-black defense squads across the country to serve warning on the racist and anti-union goons who are crawling out of the woodwork.

As a result of their social position and the struggles of the 1960's, blacks are generally more advanced politically than white workers. The Atlanta murders provide a gruesome impulse to black workers to fight within the unions against not only racist killings but unemployment, inflation and the other conditions that are their seedbed. Obviously blacks would not be fighting alone, since many Hispanics, Asians and whites are searching for similar answers. The idea of a national general strike against all the current assaults on working people would command the active support of unemployed, non-union, young and racially oppressed people. It would be a tremendous, class-conscious blow against the bourgeoisie.

Today there is a choice. The Atlanta murders demand it. Either we follow the liberal politicians, civil rights leaders and union reformists in keeping the lid on for the capitalists by blowing off a little steam. Or else we organize a serious defense by blowing the lid off altogether. It is the working class that has to choose. ■

Stop Atlanta Murders !

As the murder toll of black youth in Atlanta continues to mount and the killer or killers remain free to do their grisly work, the protest to stop the attacks continues to grow. Rallies, demonstrations, benefits and other public events have taken place. The green ribbons as a symbol of the protest have spread nationwide and are worn by many whites as well as blacks. Armed self-defense has become a live issue in Atlanta. In short, the Atlanta killings have become a focal point for the black struggle in the U.S.

decadent social culture in which this insanity can express itself.

Before the growth of the protests, the cops had made little effort to solve the murders. Protecting working-class black youth has never been high on their list of duties. Over time, however, the investigation has grown, and it now includes local and state police, the Secret Service and the FBI. Money started coming in to aid the investigation, including a flashy \$1.5 million donation from the Reagan Administration.



Left: Coretta King, 1199 leader Moe Foner, Andrew Young sing "We Shall Overcome." Liberal bourgeois black-labor bureaucrat alliance wishes to overcome militant response to racist terror. Right: Militants stone KKK scum in Meriden, Conn. who rallied to support police murder of a black youth.

These murders have touched off such a massive protest because of their particular hideousness and because they symbolize the rapidly degenerating conditions that blacks face in this country. The murders seemed to be almost a deliberate attempt to demonstrate the most outrageous and anti-social expression of racism; these were innocent youth, all of whom had been born poor. Thus the revulsion over these murders extends even to many whites indifferent or even hostile to the demands and needs of oppressed minorities.

The crisis of capitalist society has created a more racist climate and spawned numerous fascist groups. The killings of blacks in Buffalo, New York City, Chattanooga and elsewhere, and the murders of black and white leftists by Nazis and Klansmen in Greensboro, N.C., were not "accidents." Even if "nuts" are responsible for the Atlanta murders (or even other blacks, the possibility constantly dangled by the authorities), there is no question that there is an increasingly

Reagan's crocodile tears for the victims will neither stop the budget cuts nor reverse the economic decline. His \$100 million grant to the El Salvador junta that has murdered thousands was made on the same day and proves what his real spending priorities are. The bourgeois government has donned a little green ribbon to cover its naked assault on blacks and other poor working people.

None of the government's actions have anything to do with genuine concern for black people. Quite the opposite. The state is giving the money to keep the lid from blowing off. The ruling class fears that the black working class in Atlanta and elsewhere will erupt over the "unfortunate" events, just as Miami did in 1980.

The danger of Atlanta for the bourgeoisie is that it comes at a time when millions of American workers, black and white,

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