

No. 1

Fall 1976

50¢

# **SOCIALIST VOICE**



Reconstruct  
the Fourth International!

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY



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in Southern Africa page 13**

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Published by the *League for the Revolutionary Party*

Editorial Board: Walter Dahl, Sy Landy, Bob Wolfe.

Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily represent the viewpoint of the LRP.

Subscriptions: \$2.50 for six issues, supporting subscription \$5.00, libraries and institutions \$5.00, overseas airmail \$5.00. Make checks payable to *Socialist Voice*.

Address all correspondence to: LRP, 170 Broadway, Room 201, New York, NY 10038, USA.

# Editorial

Leninism means among other things a willingness to call things by their right names. Bourgeois society ripe for overthrow gives rise to diseases which corrupt everyone who lives under its sway; in the throes of its deadly crisis it is more lying and hypocritical than ever. Its lying character was typified by the obscene cynicism of the recent Democratic convention: Coretta King and George Wallace, Tom Hayden and Mayor Daley, trade union bigwigs and an anti-union peanut speculator all cohabiting the same house of ill repute. The last concern of the candidate or his party is to be truthful about the policies the next President will carry out. True to the highest morality of capitalist hypocrisy the candidates' ultimate lie is the that he doesn't lie; this is known to almost everyone as "artful".

The same cynicism pervades the proletariat. As we explain in several articles in our first issue, hypocrisy and maneuverism are accepted as normal in a wide section of the working class movement. The League for the Revolutionary Party, dedicated to the socialist revolution in every country, is publishing *Socialist Voice* to tell the truth to the working class and point the way out of the swamps of illusion, pessimism and dismay.

The world (and how it got this way) must be examined honestly and without sentimentality — but with Marxist optimism and not bourgeois fatalism. The triumph of reaction through statified capitalism in the Soviet Union and the world-hegemonic expansion of American imperialism after the Second World War is what provided the basis for the stabilization of state monopoly capitalism internationally. The efforts of the Stalinized Communist Parties and the other labor lieutenants of capitalism saved the old order from destruction at the hands of the working classes. The proletarian revolutionary forces of the Fourth International were defeated along with their class; they barely survived the war, weakened and degenerating under the pressure of Stalinist expansion and imperialist stabilization.

The Fourth International was the product of the Left Opposition, the vanguard of the heroic struggle waged by Leon Trotsky against the forces of capitalism and its Stalinist tools inside the workers' state. Trotsky misjudged the speed and power of the bourgeois restoration in Russia and still believed it to be a degenerated workers' state after the great purges; nevertheless he pursued a revolutionary course against capitalism in all its forms. The various sections of the Fourth International were unable to maintain his example and adapted to the conservatizing stabilization of the post-war period. It is one of the chief tasks of this magazine to analyze the degeneration of the Russian revolution and the collapse of the Fourth International, a task begun in this issue. Along these lines, subsequent issues will take up the errors in Trotsky's position, the character of the Communist Parties today, and the operation of the law of value under a workers' state as well as state monopoly capitalism — all central questions for a revolutionary Marxist understanding of the world today.

The adaptations of the Fourth International, and the growth of many groupings claiming adherence to Trotskyism after the working class upsurges of the 1960's amounted to a mass revival of centrism. The phenomenon of centrism in Trotskyist clothing is ironic but understandable. In the 1930's, centrist parties (such as the Spanish POUM, which had been a decisive force in preventing a proletarian revolution during the Spanish civil war) had sneered at the Trotskyists for their small size and "sectarianism." These centrists have largely disappeared, leaving little positive tradition in the working class. Just as utopians, anarchists, state socialists et al appeared falsely (although sincerely) under the banner of Marxism at the turn of the century, so it is logical that the centrism of the past now reappears falsely under the flag of the only revolutionary inheritor of Bolshevism, Trotskyism.

Centrism performs a necessary mission for capitalism. It is able to win over advanced workers who are no longer fooled by the outright reformists and Stalinists, workers who believe that revolutionary

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# Labor and the Election

The media journalists have labored long and hard to explain the Presidential campaign but they have barely scratched the surface. What lies behind the "meteoric rise" of Jimmy Carter, a politician whose previous responsibility was limited to one term as Governor of Georgia? How to decipher the "unexpectedly strong showing" of Ronald Reagan against an incumbent president of his own party? Whatever happened to George Wallace?

The press pundits saw their job at the outset of the primaries to be the prediction of which horses would win the races. The failure rate was high for both candidates and pundits. Now their explanations are breathtakingly simple: the people are "apathetic" and "alienated from Washington." The voters are said to be disenchanted because of Vietnam, Watergate and economic troubles. Carter and Reagan are popular as well because there is a "swing" back to the right, as if public opinion is foreordained to behave like a pendulum.

To penetrate below the surface of the elections it is necessary to examine the class questions, for the bourgeois pundits' answers are far from adequate. What sort of "apathy" is it that explodes into a general strike here and racist violence there? What kind of right turn is it that leaves George Wallace stranded at the starting post?

The reason for the voters' apparent conservatism, with all the dangers it poses lies fundamentally in the treacherous role played by the labor bureaucracy in its near-total capitulation to capitalism. An examination of this role, as it is affected by mass pressure from its base and by the demands of the various wings of the bourgeoisie, will get us to the heart of the electoral campaign and enable us to outline its future direction.

The right turn was marked by the early elimination in the primaries of all the liberal Democratic candidates. But this year the trend started in reverse. President Ford vetoed the construction industry's "common situs" bill, that miserable piece of legislation dear to the hearts of the labor bureaucrats. Among the Democrats, the early front-runner was Carter, who originally had little support

from the union bureaucrats (except for the UAW's Woodcock) because of his anti-labor record. Wallace was supposed to be the main danger.

To gauge the right turn more precisely it is necessary to go back to early 1975, when there was a right-wing threat to bolt the Republicans and set up a new reactionary party. Reagan's opposition to such a movement earned him the suspicions of widespread forces, mainly from the South and Southwest but including New Hampshire publisher William Loeb. By 1976, however, these forces returned to Reagan's camp, and talk of a Reagan-Wallace ticket disappeared.

Wallace's campaign was more moderate than ever before. This well-known racist demagogue had to insist that he was not racist and had never been one! "I have no positions of my own left," he complained after Carter beat him in the North Carolina primary. "All the other candidates are now saying what I've been saying all along." And Wallace's newly moderate anti-Washingtonism couldn't compete with the more credible campaigns of Carter and Reagan.

Thus the quenching of the far-right drive is evident. Today, in fact, Reagan and Ford are not very different in outlook. During the New Hampshire primary, Reagan had to confess that he was neither a bleeding-heart liberal nor a right-wing extremist: "I guess some place between the two I must fall." His only actual issue has been a greater degree of chestbeating on how to conduct imperialism's foreign policy.

Nevertheless, the two Republicans appeal to different wings of the bourgeoisie, and even though their contest has been restricted to peripheral issues their differences reflect the class tensions in American society. As the official representative of the state, the ruling class' executive committee, Ford is inevitably drawn to the vantage point of the bourgeoisie's dominant wing. Wall Street finance capital, representing the major banks and corporations. Every recent President has operated within the limits set by the corporate giants; what is good for General Motors and Chase Manhattan is good for capitalist America.

Reagan during the primaries spoke for a wing of the bourgeoisie



*Jimmy Carter, candidate of the capitalist Democratic Party, greets supporters at a \$500-a-plate Detroit dinner. UAW head Leonard Woodcock [2nd from left] is surrounded by Detroit mayor Coleman Young and bosses from General Motors, Chrysler and Ford.*

which has interests somewhat different from the Northeastern sector. William V. Shannon, an editor of the *New York Times*, wrote on June 21st:

"The raw, newly rich Republicanism of the South, the Southwest and the Far West condemns the power of the Federal Government, would smash the labor unions if it could, and remains reluctant to share any real power with the racial minorities. Rather than admiring Rockefeller-Percy Republicanism as a triumph of adaptation and survival, Sunbelt Republicans view it as a species of betrayal.

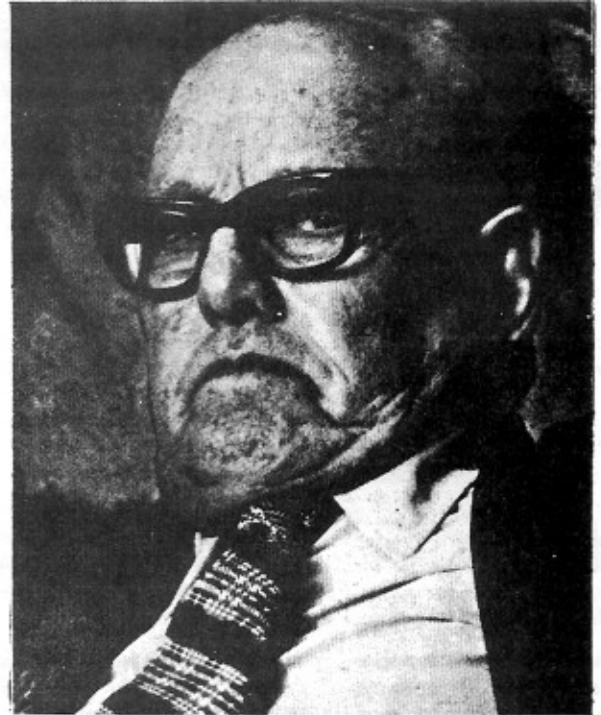
"How can the Republican conventional wisdom of Houston and Phoenix seem like fantasy in Pittsburgh and Detroit?"

"One reason is that steel, coal, automobiles and other Northern industries are labor-intensive while the oil and petrochemicals of the Southwest are not. Other industries such as textiles moved south precisely to escape unions. Thus Northern businessmen routinely take account of unionized labor relations and union-backed politicians while their counterparts in the South and Southwest do not."

Shannon is right as to the basic attitudes within the medium-sized corporations and the subsidiaries of Northeastern industries which are powerful in the South and Southwest. But Reagan's electoral base is not simply a section of the bourgeoisie, which is short on numbers although long on money. His mass base is composed of section of the petty bourgeoisie, the small and small-town businessmen who proliferate during times of prosperity like the post-war boom. This section of the population is extremely volatile. When driven to the wall (as by rampant inflation) they explode against the enemies they feel are crushing them, big business and big labor. Their pressure can compel the Reagan-type industrialists to follow their conservative bent and mount a right-wing campaign against the Northern monopolies and, most forcefully, against the working class.

Reagan or Wallace in the White House backed by a mass movement from the petty bourgeoisie could become a semi-Bonapartist strongman (or worse), superficially hostile to the dominant sections of capital but in reality aiming the full, centralized power of the state at the unions. Even in times of relative class peace (actually class collaboration led by the union bureaucrats) the centralizing tendency of capitalism advances, politically as well as economically. There has been a steady increase in Presidential power at the expense of state and local governments, Congress, and now even the cabinet. The bourgeoisie needs strongman rule to act decisively in the crisis-ridden world of today. It has gradually built the Presidency into a stronger and stronger role, of course under the control of finance capital. A severe enough crisis, however, would make today's "imperial Presidency" look like a powder puff compared to what the bourgeoisie will willingly install, a Bonaparte who pretends to stand above the class struggle in order to defend the long-term interests of capitalism as a whole by crushing the independent forces of the working class.

Such a crisis is not yet upon us. In the quotation above, Shannon failed to note that the Reaganites have done very little anti-union agitation; domestic issues generally have been played down in the pre-convention campaign. A good example of this is the busing issue: the fratricidal warfare in Boston between black and white workers has failed to spread. The school busing schemes could have resulted in pogroms by whites against blacks instigated by the bourgeoisie, but at this juncture the bourgeoisie is trying to cool the entire controversy. They generally wish to avoid bloody conflicts in their cities, and above all they wish to avoid anything that could interrupt production or damage their property. But the danger of racist mass violence is always present since the capitalists will turn to it to divide the working class when workers' resistance to capitalist profit and productivity drives mounts. Although there are divisions within the bourgeoisie, its sections are financially interpenetrated. The "sun belt" elements have no wish to upset their class brothers' apple carts if it is not necessary to do so. It is one thing to gain an edge over the Eastern "establishment;" it is another to cause trouble that would provoke a dangerous response from below.



*AFL-CIO head George Meany looks askance at general strikes, favoring deals with capitalist politicians.*

The bourgeoisie now is able to dampen its crisis temporarily by using the labor bureaucracy to contain the working class. The present bureaucracy allowed the unions to be tied into the state and to surrender various rights in order to win short-lived gains during the post-war boom. Encrusted with collaborationism and corrupted by its stake in the system, it has permitted the workers' living standards to be steadily eroded through inflation, unemployment and universal cutbacks in governmental services. The almost incredible series of capitulations by the leaders of New York City's municipal unions is only one case in point; nowhere has this bureaucracy produced one credible "left-wing" figure to compare with the John L. Lewises and the Walter Reuthers of the past. The Arnold Millers and Edward Sadlowskis of today have not led any notable fight against the bosses.

The bureaucrats might argue (and some do) that their capitulations are really retreats in the face of stronger forces; were they to stand and fight they would expose their members to bloody battles that could not be won. The shallow upturn in the economy which results essentially from workers here and abroad sacrificing for the good of profit keeps the right-wing wolves from ravaging the labor movement. However, when the little bubble bursts just as the big post-war bubble did then the anti-union attack will come with full force. The ranks, trained by the bureaucracy in capitulation, may be unable to respond. The present bureaucratic policy, if successful, could make the working class a sitting duck for reaction. But this policy will have to contend with the growing militancy of the ranks.

The bureaucracy's strategy is not merely the containment of strikes. The labor leaders see their task as the restoration of faith in the "American way," the regeneration of American capitalism so that workers have some illusion to replace the now dismal expectation of what collective bargaining can bring. Their main tool is electoralism and the Democratic Party in particular. As George Meany put it,

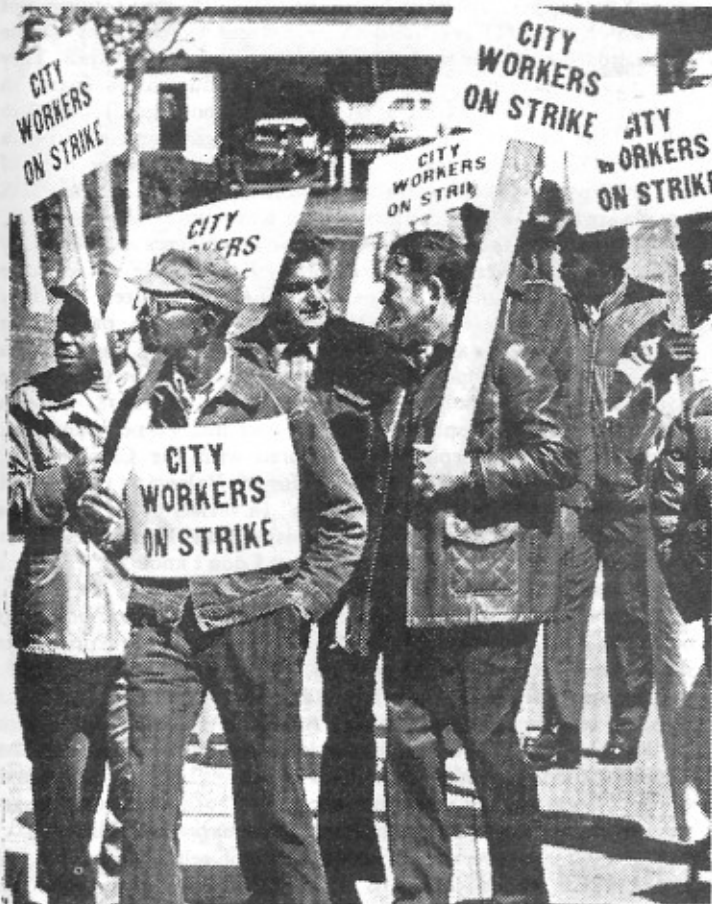
**"...The AFL-CIO is pretty conservative in certain ways. We believe in the American system. We believe in working within the American system. When we get laws passed over on Capitol Hill that we feel are detrimental to us, we just bat away and try to change them."**

The "American system" once returned the compliment through the medium of the *Wall Street Journal* (November 21, 1974):

"If George Meany, 80, ever decides it is time to begin a second career, perhaps he would consider a job writing editorials for this newspaper. Then again, if he does not read us regularly, he may not realize in recent years his view of the world has frequently come to coincide with ours."

The labor bureaucracy represents the interests of the aristocracy of labor, those with a vested interest in capitalism, a base which is fast eroding as the economy declines. Large sections of the working class in the United States are not taken in by the bureaucrats' electoral policies or by the bourgeois "friends of labor." The turnout of voters in the 1976 primaries has been very low; the 1974 Congressional elections drew only 36 percent of possible voters; the last Presidential election drew 55 percent, whereas previous Presidential years drew over 60 per cent. 1976 may be the first Presidential election in which under half of the eligible voters bother to vote.

It is largely the unemployed, blacks and Latins and young workers who do not vote. The labor bureaucracy and its bourgeois allies are unable to reach the most critically affected sectors of the working class. The cause is not "apathy" but hostility and — unfortunately, due to the policies of the labor lieutenants of capitalism — cynicism, and demoralization.



*San Francisco municipal workers struck against savage wage cuts last spring. General strikes of city workers can win major gains and spread the struggle to halt capitalists' offensive against working class.*

Jimmy Carter's boom is as shallow as the economic upturn. Carter will probably win, but the working class is not enthralled with him, despite the AFL-CIO's hurried endorsement. Carter's "ethnic purity," his support for "right to work" laws and his non-union operation in Georgia that pays \$2.54 an hour and offers two paid holidays a year are not calculated to turn on the masses of oppressed workers. But the bureaucrats' policy is not just a failure, it is a dangerous trap for these workers. Carter's "time of healing" is only a mask covering the violence beneath the surface of American society, a violence reflecting the class struggle that the bureaucrats are preventing the workers from waging successfully.

Revolutionists tirelessly point out that electoralism is no answer for the working class. Unfortunately it is not revolutionary consciousness but cynicism that motivates the electoralist abstentionism of most workers. Their cynicism towards the state tragically extends to the power of the working class itself. It is the task of revolutionists to fight to turn the workers' healthy recoil from the capitalist system into a positive recognition of the capability of the class to overthrow capitalism.

In this task we do not depend upon ourselves alone. Underneath the workers' fears and cynicism there is an enormous fury and combativeness waiting for a realistic alternative, a realistic way to combat the system. The bottled-up anger is what frightens the bureaucrats and encourages the revolutionaries.

The revolutionary message must be that an economic depression can be averted. The petty-bourgeois elements now searching for a way out of the looming crisis have no independent solutions of their own. The lower layers of the petty bourgeoisie, their overwhelming majority, can be won to the side of the workers if the working class acts decisively. The attraction of Wallace and Reagan today, of the reactionaries tomorrow and the fascists the day after lies in the craven capitulation of the labor leadership which offers no way out to its own membership nor to the desperate petty bourgeoisie.

Far stronger than any electoral strategy would be a general strike to defend the interests of the masses and their endangered unions against the encroachments of capital. It could tap the fury the working class feels and cut through its rampant cynicism by demonstrating its own power. The tasks of the working class are political as well as economic. Any such massive action would bring it into headlong conflict with the bourgeois state. By demanding full employment, full public works programs to make the cities fit places to live in, labor-monitored price controls and full cost of living clauses to counter inflation, a general strike would speak in the interests of all the victims of capitalism's crisis. Such demands, taken from the Transitional Program, show how to end the threat of depression, and the general strike of the working class shows where the power behind the program lies. Revolutionists have to begin showing the way now.

A powerful general strike graphically demonstrates the need for political power. In Lenin's terms, it poses the question of revolution even though by itself it need not be the insurrectionary act. Masses of workers would learn in practice the need for the workers' state; this means an enormous growth in the revolutionary leadership of the working class. While sections of the bureaucracy might hang on even through a general strike the stage would be set for its destruction. The reactionary tops would certainly be tossed aside. For as George Meany says,

"We don't man the barricades, and we don't take to the streets. And we don't call general strikes, and we don't call political strikes."

He doesn't. But the working class does and will.

positions were the best militants, but when trying to negotiate things like wage increases or the details of the contract with management one was pretty powerless and up against a brick wall; many resigned in frustration.

The Francoist coalition is disintegrating, with the Carlists (followers of the Borbon kings) in opposition. The Francoists themselves are even divided into various parties; the genuine fascists have reconstituted the old party of Primo de Rivera (JONS), while other old hard-line Francoists ("the bunker") are also opposed to the government and stomp the country organizing meetings and rallies to expound their principles. There are about half a dozen liberal, center or Christian Democrat parties, regional affiliates and breakaways, and some of the leading figures in them were former fascists or extreme-rightists like Gil Robles, whose rightist party's possible entrance into the government provoked the workers' uprising of October 1934.

Because of the peculiarities of Spain, especially its "regionalism" due to the historically uneven development of capitalism and industry, the various trends in the working class movement have stronger roots in some places than in others. Some are restricted to one or two places. The main organizations in the class are the

Workers Commissions I spoke to had no time for the Maoist tendencies like FRAP who set up their own "revolutionary" workers commissions, and pointed to the negative role played by such groupings in Portugal. The PSOE, while unimportant as yet in the class, has a good chance of rapid growth — with outside help, like Soares' party. The PSOE has tradition, a history of struggle and of tendencies, some of its worker militants have good reputations, and older workers from the Bilbao area think of it as it was before Franco's victory, i.e., very leftist. Workers from different regions will have different attitudes to the various political trends; some will remember what the old organizations were like, others will have absorbed it from their parents, whereas others might have no knowledge or simply the opinion of their particular tendency and its version of history.

The huge strike wave of the first months of the year had subsided by the time I was in Spain. There is a danger for outsiders to overestimate the political consciousness of the Spanish masses. The mass strike wave had concrete reasons — an attempt to stop the fall in living standards due to high inflation and devaluation of the peseta, against government repression, etc. — and an attempt by the Communist Party to organize an unlimited general strike on May 1st



*Anti-government demonstrators in Barcelona chased by police smoke bombs.*

Communist Party (PCE) which dominates the leadership of the Workers Commissions and, according to Fraser in the *New Left Review*, does so on a factory scale also. It appeared to me that it did this only through acceptance of its line, but this could be broken if a credible alternative existed. The class collaboration policy of the PCE led it to attack certain big strikes and especially the militant picketing.

Other important tendencies are USO and ORT from a similar background but more political. Then come the groupings which are virtually indistinguishable from the PCE. The Pabloist United Secretariat (Ernest Mandel) group LCI exists in various areas, enough to get attention from the press, but I didn't hear anything about the pro-SWP grouping LC. The representatives from the

to finish off Francoism completely was a failure (there were considerable arrests just before). An attempt by Basque nationalist elements to get mass participation in demonstrations for amnesty throughout the area on May 15th also failed; numbers were usually in the hundreds, but there again arrests were made and no demonstration allowed to gather.

A truck driver from Andalusia who gave me a lift from a town in Navarra to Lerida in Catalonia to me seemed to sum up the present attitude of many workers. He said, "I'm not interested in politics. As long as I can eat well and drink enough I'm satisfied. But if I can't, I'll get a machine gun and shoot the bastards."

R. KIRBY

# Editorial

continued from page 2

rhetoric means revolution and not reformism. Centrist by its nature vacillates, caught between the pulls of the advanced workers it attracts and the pro-capitalist practice of the leadership. The leaders' centrism reflects the flux of highly unstable elements in society, the radical sections of the petty bourgeoisie. The multiplicity of "Trotskyist" groups is evidence, on the one hand, of petty-bourgeois influence among the most political workers. On the other hand, it is testimony to the growing numbers of revolutionary minded workers throughout the world.

What makes these groups centrist is that they have turned their proclaimed political program, the Transitional Program of Trotsky, into a paper document. For some, the Transitional Program is little but rhetoric to be borne as a religious burden and worshipped — but never used. For others, this or that demand lifted from the Transitional Program is used to hide the *revolutionary* content of the program as a whole. The program becomes a disguise to conceal the necessity of revolution.

The League for the Revolutionary Party adheres to the Transitional Program; we proclaim that it is the revolutionary program, no matter how many other workers believe that revolution is neither necessary nor possible. But revolution is the only way for the working class to free itself or even maintain what little it has.

Simply to defend the necessity of revolution is a major step forward when most "socialists" do their best to hide the fact from the workers, who they believe have to be manipulated into recognizing the truth. But this step is not all. The entire working class has to learn through struggle the need to fight independent and united against capitalism. While we disagree with large sections of the workers' movement on the need for revolution at present, we have agreement or potential agreement on a series of practical actions. We constantly raise the necessity of the unions to join together and with the organizations of the oppressed in common struggle. In participating in the unified actions of mass forces we attempt to illuminate the struggle and demonstrate the power of the proletariat and its revolutionary tasks.

## SOCIALIST ACTION

is the monthly bulletin of the City Workers Committee of the LRP. This bulletin covers the crisis in New York City and the response of the working class. It is an important weapon in the fight to defend all New York workers from the current attack on jobs, income and vital services, and it crusades for the general strike, the revolutionary party and socialism. At all times it campaigns for the cause of working class unity — citywide, nationally and internationally.

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In our practical work in the trade unions we have constantly counterposed the revolutionary solution and the aspirations of the masses to the bourgeois, impotent and divisive programs of the traitorous leaderships.

In seeking to wed the revolutionary program to the united mass movement, we do not claim that reforms are impossible. A massive revolutionary struggle can win reforms prior to the victory of the revolution. We urge this form of struggle not because we expect reforms to be either lasting or sufficient in themselves but because the victories gained will expand and deepen the revolutionary course of the masses. Therefore we stand opposed both to the opportunist cynics who raise only reforms (for "this stage," of course) and to the sectarian cynics who believe that revolutionary consciousness comes only from defeats. Leninism rejects both minimalism and maximalism.

Our assurance in the Transitional Program derives from our belief that it represents the material interests of the proletariat. It is the program that puts forward the political, social and economic ways in which the workers' state will function. It does so through demands which are understandable under capitalism and can be fought for; they can be achieved under bourgeois rule, however, only in part and for limited intervals. The victory of the Transitional Program means the victory of the workers' state, the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat which Marx and Lenin saw as the necessary transitional stage towards communism.

The Transitional Program is an international program expressing the underlying material unity of the interest of the workers of the entire world. Enriched and corrected by the years of experience since it was first elaborated, it will come to be recognized as such by the workers in struggle and practice as they grow conscious of their true needs and their power to achieve them.

The struggle for the Transitional Program is the struggle for the vanguard party. Our belief that we and our sympathizers internationally represent the embryo of the reconstructed Fourth International, the World Party of the Socialist Revolution, is based not only on the truth of our program but equally on the underlying strength of the reawakening giant, the working class.

Despite our small size we offer no false humility about our intentions or capabilities. The "revolutionaries" who adopt a less "arrogant" world view, who smugly speak of the complexity of events and programs, are — despite their apparent reasonableness — the greatest of cynics. Revolutionary socialism, communism, demands sacrifices. Workers do not lightly give up even shreds of security to become revolutionaries unless the alternative is real and confident. Who sacrifices for ambivalence but the skeptic? — and he doesn't sacrifice for long.

The tasks are immense, for the goal is the creation of a new world. No compromise with the miserable and reactionary system that now spans the globe is possible. We make no capitulation to it or its pawns inside the workers' movement, not the reformists, the Stalinists nor the centrists. The years in which anti-Marxist ideology has enveloped the proletariat are not overcome in a day. Cynicism bred by these misleaderships still coils around the movement in a death grip. As Lenin and Trotsky stated, the Bolsheviks must be steeled through hard times as well as good. Telling the truth, calling things by their right names, frequently means becoming targets of the same cynical laughter and ridicule they were subjected to.

We proclaim the very unsophisticated (read "uncynical") conception that socialist revolution is objectively possible and objectively necessary *now*. We believe that the proletariat can forge its own party. We believe that the workers will reject their self-cynicism and their totally false sense of weakness by rejecting the viral misleaderships carrying this ideological disease. We believe that the proletarian cause is international and that the party must not be a smorgasbord of deals and non-aggression pacts like the several pseudo-Fourth Internationals, but a real International built upon a solid agreement on the Marxist program. These naive (read "uncynical") notions used to be the most sophisticated ideas. They still are.

**Build the League for the Revolutionary Party!  
Reconstruct the Fourth International!**

# The New York Crisis

Since late 1974, the bankers, bosses and politicians of New York City have more or less openly wielded that city's financial crisis as a weapon in the class struggle. A vivid illustration of this stares out from the city budget figures. The budget cut of almost half a billion dollars (derived from very real layoffs of municipal workers and severe cutbacks in public services) is neatly balanced by an increase in the figure for debt service to the banks, and as a result the annual deficit — supposedly the culprit preventing the city from borrowing enough money to live on — has gone up, not down. While the figures are ever-changing and notoriously unreliable, one lesson is clear: the fiscal crisis is the excuse not for saving money but for transferring funds from public employees and in fact the entire working class population that benefits from city services, to the banks.

The fundamental cause of the fiscal crises of New York and other U.S. cities is of course the crisis of world capitalism as a whole. There are a number of reasons why urban decay is so visible an indication of the decay of bourgeois society. New York is a center of low-paying industries (garment, hotels and restaurants, light manufacturing) which hire job-hunting immigrants from the Caribbean and Latin America (the victims of U.S. imperialism) as well as other regions of the United States. The rising welfare budget, so often attacked as a subsidy to the poor, is in large part a subsidy to low-wage employers whose workers could not otherwise survive. Under these circumstances, the collapse of the post-war boom at the end of the 1960's produced a disproportionate rise in welfare spending.

During the same years New York (both city and state) has deliberately reduced its taxes on business in favor of a policy of borrowing money. Far better for capitalists to loan money to their government at interest than to have it taxed from them! New York's reliance on borrowing turned into a crisis with the recession of the early '70's. When the city's sources of revenue began to dry up, the possibility of a default on debt payments loomed. The city crisis was really a bank crisis; living conditions in New York had been critical long before. The banks then moved in and imposed an austerity plan on the city, or more precisely on its working class, and that is why the "solution" to the crisis takes the form we have already described.

The bankers had to reckon with the response of New York's working class and its decades-long history of fighting for its rights. In their calculations they no doubt counted on the cooperation of the municipal union leaders, a particularly subservient crew which has gone to enormous lengths to prevent the public workers from uniting against the cuts and layoffs. This aspect of the struggle — showing the importance of the general strike — has been thoroughly analyzed in the issues of our sister publication *Socialist Action*, which will take up in its forthcoming issue the latest turn: the 10-day strike by 40,000 hospital workers and its sellout by the left-talking Leon Davis leadership of District 1199. For now we will only cite the major conclusions to be drawn.

1. Workers in the private sector now face the same attack as public workers. The Emergency Financial Control Board's dictum that no wage gains are permissible except those paid for by the workers themselves is now being applied to all workers. In the case of the hospitals, largely funded out of tax revenues, the bankers are using the city and state fiscal crisis as the excuse. But private employers, who used to complain that decent wages and benefits for public workers would drive up their labor costs, now are happily following the government's example and slashing away at their workers' gains.

2. Even the unions with the most militant reputations can be beaten if their leaders hesitate to confront the bankers and politicians. Davis deliberately ran a no-win strike (among other things refusing to allow picketers to organize to keep scabs out) in the hope that "public opinion" would wring some concessions from the hospital managements. But bourgeois pressure brought the hospitals to the bargaining table only when the union had conceded the last of its major demands in favor of binding arbitration.



Leon Davis [right] and his slogans.

Davis, who has been at the head of several militant strikes in the past, refused to lead a fight this time because he knew that the capitalist system — which he supports — was itself in an emergency. He tried to use 1199's militant history alone to squeeze a face-saving sop out of the bosses and bargained for binding arbitration in the hope that the blame for the defeat he had already conceded would fall on other shoulders. The Davis bureaucracy in dealing with a strong and angry membership used an ostensibly militant strike weapon coupled with a sellout policy in its demands and tactics to contain and weaken the ranks. The intention was to teach the lesson that even a militant membership can be defeated in these times.

The lessons of the struggle were summarized in leaflets distributed by the LRP hospital workers committee:

"Such rotten leadership as Davis' must be replaced. The bureaucrats can be pushed to fight only when the ranks' struggle threatens to go far beyond what they want, only as a side effect of the growing struggle of workers for an alternative leadership. Workers must recognize that any leadership that accepts capitalist rule will never solve the capitalist crisis nor even stop the bosses' attacks. The banks and corporations, who refuse to pay for the crisis, will have to be taken over by a workers' state. Workers need a nationalized health care system under workers' control, full cost of living increases, and massive public works programs to end unemployment and make the cities fit to live in. The needs of the masses of people can be met only by a revolutionary solution, workers' rule. Revolutionary leadership is an urgent necessity for today's struggles and the vital needs of the working class."





Italian Communist Party calls for "historic compromise" with capitalists.

## Italian and Portuguese Leftists Support Popular Fronts

Of all the imperialist countries, the "extreme left" organizations, those to the left of the Communist Parties, are strongest in Italy and Portugal. Both of these countries held bourgeois elections in June and in both the far left attracted mass support from the working class. In Italy, the Democrazia Proletaria slate won half a million votes (1.55 percent of the total) and six seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and in Portugal the left's presidential candidate Major Otelio Saraiva de Carvalho got 800,000 votes, one-sixth of the total, and came in second. Both campaigns, however, were run on a Popular Front basis; they were designed to tie the politically advanced workers to a left-talking section of the bourgeoisie.

In Italy, the major working class party is the Communists (the PCI). It campaigned on the slogan of a "historic compromise" with the bourgeoisie. The PCI's goal was a government of "all democratic parties" (that is, all but the fascists and monarchists) ranging from the Communists and Socialists (PSI) to the right-wing and notoriously corrupt Christian Democrats whose 30 years in power have left Italy in a severe economic crisis.

The PCI claimed that a government without the Christian Democrats would lead to another Chilean disaster for the workers. Allende's *Unidad Popular* in Chile had been a Popular Front government that included some sections of the bourgeoisie as well as the Communists and Socialists, but not the sizeable force of Christian Democrats. For Italy, the PCI now proposed in effect a "National Front" with the major bastion of the bourgeoisie, in the hopes that this would enable the entire ruling class to accept the deal and not attempt to overturn it by military means.

But the lessons of Chile and the entire history of working class participation in Popular Fronts lead to quite opposite conclusions. "Compromises" with the bourgeoisie fool only the workers into thinking that the capitalist crisis and the consequent attacks on the masses can be solved within a capitalist framework. Allende's regime was smashed not because it made too few concessions to the bourgeoisie but because it made too many, and tried to straitjacket the workers and peasants from organizing independently to struggle

against their exploiters. It was impossible to keep the bourgeoisie friendly and allow the masses to attack the sanctity of their property. The regime tried to divert mass struggles into parliamentary channels and did succeed in restraining a large proportion of the land seizures and strikes — and in demoralizing and disarming the masses, thereby enabling the reaction to triumph.

When such a "compromise" is offered by reformist working class parties, revolutionaries must unequivocally denounce it. The tactic of advocating a workers' government (that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie) in order to raise the program of the socialist revolution and the workers' state, can be used effectively to expose the reformists' betrayals before the masses.

The Italian left failed its test miserably. Instead of a workers' government, Democrazia Proletaria raised the slogan of a "left government" clearly open to bourgeois parties aside from the Christian Democracy:

**"Democrazia Proletaria is the only electoral formation that clearly poses the objective of providing a positive way out of the crisis of the regime through a government of the left in which the historic parties of the working class, the PCI and the PSI, will have decisive weight, a government open to Catholic forces that free themselves of the domination of the political Catholicism of the Christian Democracy, open above all to the movements of struggle within society, whose strength can impose a program based on the popular interest and devoted to its realization."** (From the DP Platform Document, reprinted in *Inprecor*, June 24.)

The DP program called for Italy to leave NATO but not the Common Market, an equally imperialist institution. With a bourgeois program, inviting suitably left bourgeois elements into the government, this was clearly a Popular Frontist campaign along lines similar to Allende's. While the Italian Communists moved to the right in response to Allende's defeat, the centrists who used to support Allende with a little leftist carping now occupy Allende's position, having tailed the PCI's rightward slide.

Democracia Proletaria was a joint slate put forward by almost all the groups on the Italian far left, led by the three strongest: the PDUP (Party of Proletarian Unity, the publishers of the paper *Il Manifesto*), Avanguardia Operaia (Workers Vanguard) and Lotta Continua (Continuing Struggle). Their willingness to blur their own distinct programs in a electoral melange was typical for right-centrist formations who hesitate to state the necessity for socialism in their platforms. While revolutionaries can in principle support the electoral campaigns of other working class parties critically in order to promote class unity while showing that such unity can only be effective under the revolutionary program, a campaign which does not even stand for the independence of the working class should be given no support, critical or otherwise, by revolutionary workers.

Also participating in the joint slate with candidates of its own were the GCR (Revolutionary Communist Groups), the "official" Trotskyist organization adhering to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Proudly calling for a workers' government, the GCR blithely ignored the fact that the slate it was committed to called for something quite different, a Popular Front. Their electoral capitulations to allies who in turn capitulate to the bourgeoisie have nothing whatever in common with Trotskyism, which has historically fought against all forms of the Popular Front.

In Portugal, the "Otelos" campaign was backed by three major centrist groups; the MES (Movement of the Socialist Left), the Maoist UDP (People's Democratic Union) and the PRP (Proletarian Revolutionary Party, linked to the International Socialists in the U.S.). Carvalho, however, specified that he was not the candidate of any party or parties; that is, he could be held to no promises. The main point of his campaign program, according to his supporters, was to defend the new Portuguese constitution — written by the same Constituent Assembly that the same left groups were denouncing last summer! The Assembly had been antagonistic to the "left" bourgeois government of Prime Minister Vasco Goncalves, President Costa

Gomes — and then-General Otelo de Carvalho.

The centrists' change of heart is due to the changed political scene since the workers suffered a setback last November 25. At that time, an uprising of left-wing soldiers was put down by forces led by General Ramalho Eanes (who won the presidential election in June) after being betrayed by none other than Otelo de Carvalho. Throughout, the centrists chose to support the left-most wing of the bourgeoisie; they moved right because the bourgeoisie did. Carvalho has proved himself to be a good horse to follow in tailing the bourgeois left.

The Constitution is a demagogically left bourgeois document, calling for transforming Portugal into a society without classes and for the formation of organs of "people's power." These powerless bodies would be nothing but "popular" justifications for continued military rule. Eanes' campaign was also leftist in rhetoric; like the Constitution, it had to be, to reach the revolutionary aspirations of the Portuguese masses who overthrew the reactionary dictatorship two years ago. The bourgeoisie's leftism, however, is designed to fool the masses into leaving the construction of the classless society in bourgeois hands. This deception is to be expected. What is criminal is for self-proclaimed revolutionaries to accept such notions and pass them off as good coin among the workers.

Despite the centrists' capitulations, the electoral support they received is an indication that a sizeable section of the working class wants a revolutionary alternative to the crisis-ridden status quo. It is no wonder, however, that the Italian centrists were disappointed with their showing; their decline is undoubtedly due to their failure to counterpose a real alternative to the PCI's National Front. In their search for the revolutionary road, the masses often pass through the way-stations of centrism; they will find the proper path of a revolutionary party is able to lead the way. Nothing can make clearer the need to destroy the centrist leaderships, which are obstructions to the building of revolutionary parties.

## Jamaican Workers Under Fire

*The following article is reprinted from the July issue of Socialist Action, the bulletin of the City Workers Committee of the League for the Revolutionary Party.*



*Jamaican Foreign Minister Dudley Thompson embraces Henry Kissinger. Jamaican government blames the CIA for undermining regime, but its emergency measures will ultimately be turned against the working class.*

An indefinite state of emergency has been declared by the government of Jamaica. Terror against the working class continues unabated. Workers' meetings have been bombed. Hundreds of people have been killed in recent months as death squads and arsonists roam the ghettos. Murder, massive unemployment and deep agricultural crisis have exposed the utter bankruptcy of the Peoples National Party (PNP) regime of Michael Manley. Manley has vacillated in the face of right-wing attack. His only act has been to prevent the workers from organizing a class defense against the reactionaries. The "indefinite state of emergency" will not solve the problem of right-wing attack. In the long run it will be turned against the workers. A united working class defense is a stark necessity lest the workers and small farmers be crushed by reaction.

World recession and inflation have showered new blows upon the already battered Jamaican economy. Sharp increases in the prices of consumer goods, industrial commodities and fuel which Jamaica must import created a staggering balance of payments deficit. Foreign exchange reserves in November dwindled to the point where only two weeks' imports could be covered. There has been a growing flight of capital and a precipitous decline in foreign investment since 1972. Every leading sector of the economy, which is dominated by U.S. and Western imperialism, has faltered. There have been plant closures and layoffs in the important bauxite industry; 1,000 out of a

workforce of 10,000 have been thrown out of work. Hotel workers have been locked out as tourism has dropped off. The ranks of the unemployed have swelled as the imperialist countries increasingly prevent workers from emigrating. In the ghettos of Kingston, unemployment is as high as 50 percent. In agriculture, large areas of the most fertile land owned by the foreign imperialists remain uncultivated, and there has been a steady decline in exports.

The economic crisis has created mayhem inside the Jamaican ruling class and provoked a widening rift between the conservative Jamaican Labor Party (JLP) led by Edward Seaga and the PNP which has governed since 1972. Prime Minister Manley, looking to head off mass upheaval, tells the Jamaican people that he is leading the country toward socialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Manley's strategy is to make the slow "well-orchestrated" moves toward nationalization of some industries, while appealing to the private sector to continue to "play a dramatic role" in the Jamaican economy. In other words, he wants the Jamaican bourgeoisie to take a larger share of the profits of the bauxite and tourist industries. The PNP is attempting to establish links with the state capitalist regimes in Cuba, Russia and Eastern Europe to open up new markets for Jamaican exports and put Jamaica in a somewhat stronger bargaining position with the Western imperialists. Manley quite clearly does not want the Western imperialists to pull out. While "making new friends" he has every intention "keeping the old." In fact, when the most recent International Monetary Fund conference was staged in Kingston, the PNP appealed to it for loans to keep the Jamaican economy from going under.

Manley's "democratic socialism" has not relieved the suffering of the Jamaican workers and farmers. Under the PNP government wage controls were ushered in, workers in some industries have gone for weeks without pay, the police and military apparatus has been strengthened and repressive crime legislation introduced. Curfew has become a way of life in the slums of Kingston. The conservatives, appalled by Manley's overtures to Cuba and his failure to contain the



*Right-wing terror campaign in Jamaican ghettos raises urgent need for united working class defense against reactionaries.*

increasingly restive workers and small farmers, are clamoring for an end to PNP rule. The JLP does not want the Jamaican government to make any moves to tamper with the bourgeoisie's life-line with the imperialists. Using hired gunmen and gangs the JLP has spearheaded a wave of violence in the capital city. Entire sections have been razed by arson and PNP youth have been gunned down.

The political crisis has led Manley to increase the size of the police force and military. Gun-related offences and the use of Molotov cocktails are punishable by life imprisonment at hard labor. (The death penalty is a likelihood.) The military police are kept on full alert. Characteristically, Manley has pleaded with the JLP instigators to join him in this campaign "against violence."

Manley's repressive legislation will be used against the working class, not to defend it from the mounting violence of the right. The trade unions must create armed defense squads to defend working class neighborhoods and organizations. Manley has called specifically for unarmed PNP defense groups. An armed working class would be too dangerous for him to use in defending PNP rule.

Reformism, the PNP's "democratic socialism," can only pave the way for a defeat such as in Chile. There, the semi-fascist military dictatorship was able to crush the working class and suppress its organizations because the masses relied on the reformist strategy of Allende. The working class must not allow itself to be led into disaster. Workers must respond to capitalist lockouts with plant occupations. Industries must be nationalized under control of the workers, not the capitalists, to call a halt to the drain of surplus-value. The government must undertake massive public works to raise living standards and end unemployment.

The transitional demands for wage scales which rise with the increase in prices of consumer goods and for a shorter work week with no loss in pay demonstrate the only real solution to unemployment and the eroding standard of living. Such demands are measures which a workers' state would carry out and are therefore part of the program of socialist revolution.

The agricultural crisis in Jamaica cannot be solved by the PNP land-lease programs (in which small farmers are allowed to farm land from the government land pool for five years). The imperialist landowners must be expropriated. Jamaican small farmers are already seizing land. A workers' government is the only government that would defend their actions.

The collapse of bourgeois democracy as the Jamaican ruling class turns to right-wing reaction again proves the correctness of the theory of permanent revolution developed by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. Jamaica's bourgeois democratic revolution cannot be completed and consolidated unless the proletariat takes power on a revolutionary Marxist program.

The solution to the crisis of Jamaican capitalism and the threat of imperialist intervention is the construction of a revolutionary party that will carry out the socialist revolution and establish a workers' government, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The victory of the Jamaican workers and oppressed would unleash upheaval throughout the Caribbean and beyond out of which a socialist federation of the Caribbean would be forged to end imperialist domination and capitalist rule. A socialist Caribbean would give tremendous impetus to the struggle to build the international revolutionary party, the Fourth International, to lead the socialist revolution in the United States and throughout the world.

# Permanent Revolution in Southern Africa

The June uprisings in Johannesburg's black enclaves heralded a new day for the masses of South Africa. The renewal of the historic struggle by the black proletariat against the apartheid regime is an event of tremendous importance not only for South Africa but for the whole continent and, indeed, the world. There is a direct link between the new upsurge by the most formidable sector of the black population in all of southern Africa and the recent defeat suffered by imperialism in Angola.

The military victory earlier this year of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (the MPLA) was a crushing setback for the policy of the United States, the world's dominant imperialist power. The FNLA and UNITA forces who opposed the MPLA were propped up by South Africa's apartheid army and financed and armed by the U.S. and other Western powers with direct imperialist interests in Angola. Their defeat, together with the rout of the American puppets in Vietnam and Cambodia a year ago, symbolizes both the long-term decline of imperial power on a world scale and the immediate, acute crisis of imperialism. Masses of people in the economically drained countries will now struggle with increased confidence for their liberation from the grip of the colonialists who have strangled Africa, Asia and Latin America for centuries.

The shock of the Angolan victory, especially the debacle of the South African troops, has already shaken Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), where guerrilla movements have renewed their warfare against the white minority government. Revolt has intensified in Angola's neighbor Namibia (Southwest Africa), a colony long in the clutches of the South African regime. Black African leaders like Kenneth Kaunda

of Zambia and Mobutu Sese Seku of Zaire, who had collaborated with the U.S. and South Africa in propping up their FNLA and UNITA pawns, were quick to back off and recognize the MPLA victors. In South Africa itself the black proletariat is watching events closely. The retreat of the South African army from Angola was welcomed, according to many reports, as a sign of the white regime's vulnerability. The Vorster government, while still wedded to apartheid, is now backing away from overt support to the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia. The masses will identify this policy, correctly, as an additional sign of apartheid's fears and vacillation.

These immediate events are only the surface tremors warning of the earthquake that threatens imperialism and the decaying system of world capitalism that produces it. The near-depression conditions that have agitated the advanced countries in recent years for the first time since the 1930's have wreaked far greater havoc on the economies of the underdeveloped countries, largely because of the constant drain of surplus-value from the imperialized world. The rapid inflation, high unemployment and capital shortages of the imperialist countries represented deadly catastrophes for their former colonies. Starvation, the product not of callous nature but of capitalist bestiality, stalks Africa. Economic chaos makes even the "normal" poverty of imperialism's victims seem acceptable. The imperialists are aware that the vcollapse of the ex-colonial economies (Zaire, heavily indebted to the West, is already defaulting) would be a portent of a new worldwide depression.

The recent successes of national liberation struggles have awakened further popular upsurges and have prevented economic



*Ruins of South African government office issuing apartheid documents testify to explosiveness of black struggle.*

desperation from straitjacketing the masses. The most servile of the ex-colonial governments have been forced to react under the pressure of the rising tide of mass rebellion. Moreover, the same capitalist crisis has cracked the shell of conservatism that kept workers in the advanced countries passive as passive supporters of imperialism. After Vietnam, the U.S. rulers have been unable to send conscript armies to fight their colonial wars; even mercenaries were hard to recruit for the repression of Angola. The aspirations of the masses are making themselves felt, more and more directly, throughout the world.

### Kissinger's New Policy

Imperialism has been sent reeling but is far from being knocked out. The United States has been forced into an agonizing reappraisal of its policy, and a significant (if not yet fully coherent or elaborated) alteration has been made. A step to the "left" — that is, a strategy of limited concessions to the so-called third world regimes — has been initiated.

Far more major shifts in imperial policy have occurred many times before this one. In the years following World War II, for example, it was necessary to abandon direct colonial rule under the pressure of mass revolt, in favor of "neo-colonialism": independent nations were formed with formally independent regimes, but they remained tied to imperialism through the strength of the world capitalist market. The dominant U.S. imperialism became even more powerful, at the expense of the weaker imperialisms. The new change in U.S. policy, to a sort of neo-neo-colonialism, is of lesser magnitude; in fact, it is dubious that the U.S. will be able in practice to carry out much of its new line. But it will have important consequences, as the American rulers strive to keep imperialism afloat in a world where capitalism is in crisis and the masses are again on the move.

The former African policy of Kissinger and Nixon had been "malign neglect": verbal concessions to black nationalism coupled with the insistence that the nationalists collaborate with the vicious racists of South Africa and Rhodesia. But the old forces led by the Smiths and Mobutus that this policy depended on no longer have the means to ensure stability against the rising masses on the one hand, and against Russia's penetration of the West's former colonies on the other. The fall of Haile Selassie indicated their weakness elsewhere in Africa. These reactionary forces will not be abandoned, although a recalcitrant tool like Ian Smith may have to be jettisoned if he refuses to bow out gracefully. For it is South Africa, the industrial and military power of the southern part of the continent, that remains the hub of U.S. policy.

Reaction, racism and apartheid will have to be cleaned up in the hope that imperialism can establish firm ties with "moderate" leaders of South Africa's 20 million blacks and the black-ruled African countries. British Foreign Secretary Anthony Crosland told Parliament that "if the United Kingdom government and Dr. Kissinger had not taken the line we have taken, we could have undetermined every moderate black leader in the entire continent of Africa. Kissinger has concluded that the United States cannot win the influence game in Africa by appearing to be on the side of colonialism."

For its part, the United States has to commit itself to supporting these moderate forces in Africa and the ex-colonial world in general if they are to be able to stem the tide of rebellion. Hence Kissinger's proposal made in Nairobi before the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development with delegates present from 150 nations. Kissinger advocated the creation of an International Resources Bank designed to stimulate private capital investment in the underdeveloped countries for the extraction of natural resources. The bank would back up the international corporations and provide them with profitable incentives, insure foreign investors against nationalization of their holdings, and finance the purchase of raw material stocks in order to stabilize prices. Around this centerpiece Kissinger tastefully placed hors d'oeuvres like the transfer of Western technology and the promise to deter economic blockades of the products shipped by the ex-colonies.

Kissinger's proposal was designed to stimulate an even greater degree of imperialist penetration of the former colonial world. It is a program for exploiting these lands more intensively. Nevertheless the moderate regimes greeted the proposal with interest, although the Nairobi conference went on record demanding further concessions from the West. The shaky comprador ruling classes that underpin the moderate regimes survive by serving as brokers between the foreign corporations and the domestic economy. Imperialist aid for the local economies goes through their hands. At a time when their economies are staggering, Kissinger's plan offers them the hope of stability and a larger rake-off from imperialism's increased winnings.

The second notable aspect of Kissinger's new policy was his statement on the white-ruled countries. He demanded a negotiated settlement in Zimbabwe leading to black majority rule within two years. He promised to enforce the U.N.'s economic sanctions against Rhodesia. He offered \$12.5 million to compensate Mozambique for closing its border to Rhodesian trade. He also called for a "definite timetable" for Namibian self-determination but made sure that his call was indefinite. And although he urged South Africa to moderate its apartheid, he definitely did *not* call for black majority rule in South Africa. He carefully distinguished the "outlaw" Rhodesian regime from South Africa, in order to allow elbow room for Vorster to reconstruct his local "detente" policy with moderate African rulers. Both Kissinger and Vorster hope that the latter will have time to overcome internal pressures and better camouflage the virulence of apartheid. While Kenneth Kaunda was "visibly moved" by Kissinger's Rhodesian line, according to reports, the Soweto uprisings prove that the black masses who have nothing to gain are not so easily fooled.

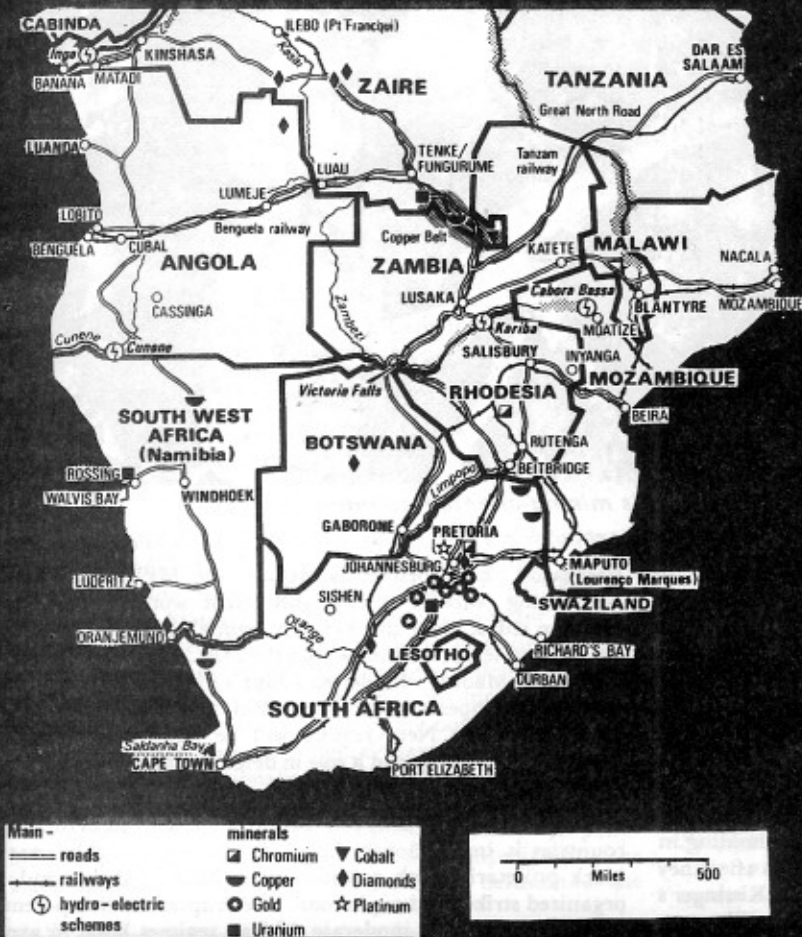
Kissinger's African policy, old and new, is based on the stability of the Union of South Africa. South Africa has about \$3 billion in British investment (much of it really U.S. capital) and over \$1.5 billion in direct U.S. investment. Like Israel in the Middle East, it represents a substation of U.S. imperialism and a subimperialism in its own right. Vorster's recent visit to Israel only highlights the parallel. The apartheid regime serves as the "alternative" that legitimizes the moderate black African regimes, who also use the South African threat to forestall popular uprisings. Thus Zambia and Zaïre were willing to go along with South Africa's invasion of Angola. They are forced into the contradiction of straddling the masses' sentiments and the need for the stability that South Africa provides.

This delicate balance is the key to Kissinger's global strategy. Besides South Africa and Israel, the U.S. makes use of Iran in the Persian-Arabian Gulf and of Brazil in South America as sub-imperialisms for weaker regimes to cluster around. The policy offers the U.S. as the "honest broker" (really the enforcer) to bridge the gap between the conservative black African leaders and the reactionary South Africans. Kissinger's global policy is based upon maintaining the existing dictatorships while adding a very thin figleaf of human concern, unlike the old Alliance for Progress with its blarney about democracy and land reform. Because of the contradictions it straddles and the explosiveness of the masses, the policy is unlikely to succeed.

### The Role of Russia

The Western imperialists are especially fearful that the chaotic situation — the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in southern Africa, the impending doom of white rule in Zimbabwe and Namibia, the threat to South Africa and the feebleness of the moderate black regimes — will enable the USSR, America's major imperialist rival, to strengthen its toehold in the region. Russian arms and Cuban troops helped turn the tide in favor of the MPLA at a decisive moment in the Angolan war, and the Russians have made clear their intention of displacing Chinese influence as the "socialist" force backing wars of national liberation.

In the last decade, Russian power has expanded, despite the loss of its alliance with China. At the end of World War II the United States was the unchallenged world power, while the USSR retained the conquests of the old Czarist empire, decisively controlled Eastern



prevent world war. The factor that has delayed World War III and has forced the imperialists on both sides into a temporary coexistence has been the anti-imperialist struggle of the masses throughout the world. Both world wars of this century have led to massive victories against imperialist domination; the horrors of a new one could lead the masses to overthrow the rotting hulk of capitalism everywhere. Thus the politics of detente is the continuation of war by other means. The imperialists' fear compels them to pursue their rivalry under the guise of what the pro-Russian Communist Parties call a "lasting peace." For Russia, detente expresses its acceptance of a status second to the U.S. in the interest of world imperialist stability.

Russia's attempts to penetrate sub-Saharan Africa have ebbed and flowed. In Guinea, Ghana, Mali, etc., Russian influence has declined, while some level of pro-Russian sentiment remains in a few other countries. Angola represents a new escalation of Russian efforts in Africa and it is in effect a notification of a sustained Russian presence. Nevertheless, Russian influence in Africa is tiny compared to that of the U.S. The African economies were warped by imperialism and are still caught in the Western web; the ex-colonialists like Britain and France play a role but only under U.S. domination. Without their deals with imperialism, one-crop exporters like Ghana could not market their cocoa, nor Angola and Zaire their minerals. Russia's economic role, aside from the armaments it exports, is still small. Because of its economic power, the U.S. still holds the strongest cards in the maneuvering to set up new imperialist relationships after the Angolan war.

The USSR then, although the world's second imperialist power, is far weaker than the U.S., especially outside of its own direct

Europe, and held strategic power in Northern Asia. Since then the Russians have acquired heavy influence in South and Southeast Asia through their relations with India and Vietnam. Their economic, military and political pressure is growing in the Middle East, although the U.S. is still the dominant imperialism in this combustible area. Russian fleets now traverse the waters of the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, where Stalin's flag never flew. In Latin America, the Russian impact takes the form of loyal Communist Parties in several countries, friendly political and economic relations with a few governments, and most tangibly, a substantial economic and political control over Cuba.

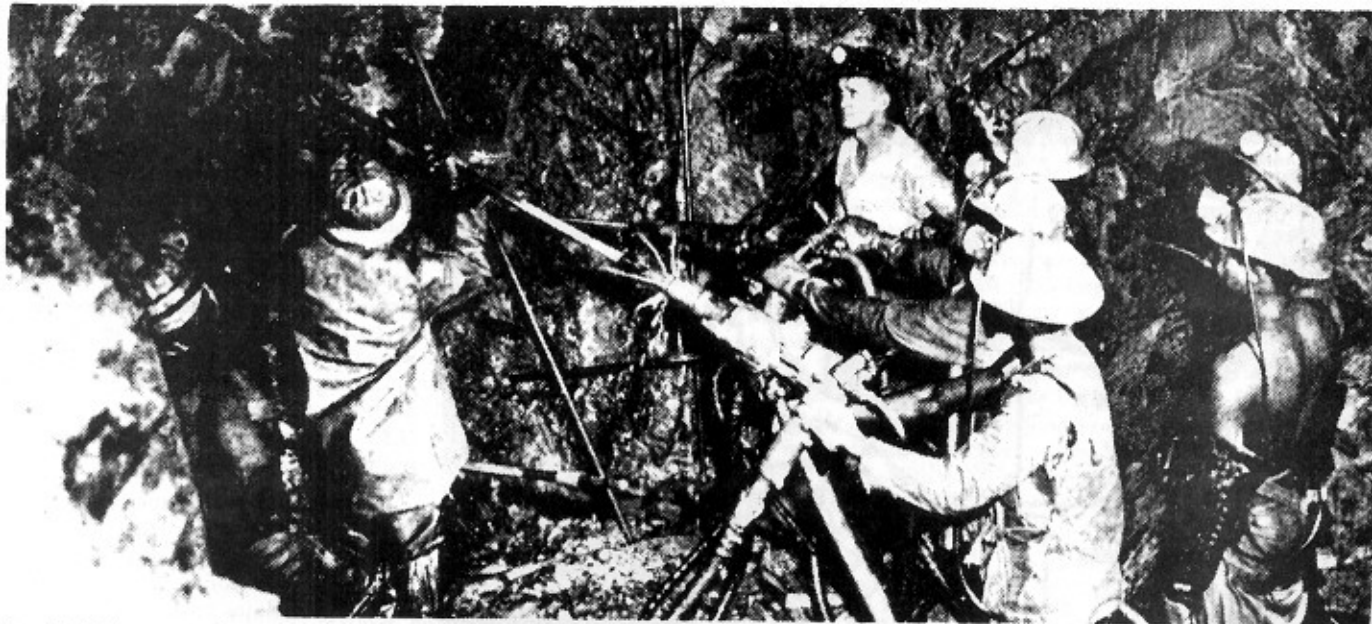
The inter-imperialist rivalry is being fought out in the context of "detente." Detente does not of course mean that the U.S. and the USSR are now friends; they are in fact the deadliest of rivals, and a war between them — a constant danger — would engulf the world. World wars, characteristic of this century of capitalist decay, are the result of the cannibalistic contradictions of imperialism. The major national powers who siphon resources and surplus-value to themselves from the countries they dominate must inevitably clash, as the economic crisis deepens and the need to step up exploitation intensifies.

But the imperialists prefer to struggle "peacefully" or at least to limit their violent conflicts to a scale small enough so that they can be waged by others. They seek to avoid world war because of its destructiveness; yet this "deterrent" would be insufficient by itself to

sphere of influence. But Russia is also bourgeois, although of the state capitalist variety of state monopoly capitalism. Where traditional capitalism fails to support and stabilize local regimes, Russia steps in — either to prop up leaderships like the MPLA which restore a statified but still anarchic form of capitalism, or to support a state capitalist political revolution against a rotting traditional capitalist regime. The latter option can be taken only if the proletariat has already been decisively defeated or eliminated from political contention, as, for example, in Vietnam after the Second World War. In Angola, the proletariat is a growing force, and Russian intervention in behalf of the MPLA was needed because of the U.S.'s blindness to the inability of its pawns to control the situation. The danger of proletarian revolution required Russian intervention, not just to win an edge for its own imperialism but to maintain the hegemony of imperialism as a whole. The Cuban troops armed by Russia are the major stabilizing factors in Angola today, according to approving reports by American and Portuguese businessmen in the country.

### MPLA: Bourgeois Nationalism

For despite the Marxist label awarded by the imperialist press and despite the illusions of some of its own supporters, the MPLA is a bourgeois nationalist movement that is trying to construct a capitalist regime in Angola. Its goal is not even a state capitalist regime on the



*South African workers will play a key role in the future of this mining-oriented country.*

model of Russia, China or Cuba. Even if the MPLA nationalizes many sectors of industry (as it must, for there are no local individual capitals large enough to run large-scale enterprises), it does so to build the basis for the privately-owned sector — and for imperialist exploitation as well.

The MPLA's victory, however, did allow it to bargain among the imperialists for a better deal than a dependent FNLA-UNITA government could have begged its masters for. While Russian imperialism is now a factor, the MPLA has been eager to deal with the West on amicable terms. The Gulf Oil Corporation, for example, whose oil concession in Cabinda is the largest imperialist holding in the country, negotiated with the MPLA to re-open its wells after they were shut down for two months during the fighting on Kissinger's orders. Gulf was eager to resume paying Angola's \$500 million annual share of the profits (for its 50 percent interest) in order to prevent competing European oil companies from taking over in Cabinda. The MPLA for its part promised not to nationalize the wells.

The need to stabilize international capitalism which is pushing the U.S. and the conservative African regimes into a "leftist" stance also is having its effect upon the "leftist" governments. The MPLA has stated its willingness to deal with the U.S. and South Africa over the future of Namibia. Zaire, once the fierce enemy of the "communist" MPLA (Holden Roberto, head of the FNLA and paid agent of the CIA, is Mobutu's brother-in-law), was among the first to establish relations with the MPLA, and both governments have agreed not to permit guerrilla activities against the other. The Angolans allowed Mobutu to link himself to the MPLA's revolutionary image in order to forestall a more far-reaching struggle against imperialism's pawns. There is a danger confronting all the bourgeois black regimes of southern Africa — from servile to moderate to "revolutionary" — which forces them all to lean together and even on South Africa for support: the demonstrated weakness of imperialism may well inspire the working class to move

### **The African Proletariat**

The fear of the proletariat haunts the Kaundas, the Netos and the Mobutus as well as Washington, Moscow and Peking. Despite the small numbers and the relative youth of the African working classes, there is a sizeable proletariat in the ports and mines of Angola, Zambia and southeastern Zaire (Katanga). The Angolan working class played a key role in the liberation struggle, fighting in or alongside the MPLA in the absence of an independent working-class

alternative. Even before its victory, the MPLA had a record of suppressing workers' strikes and leftist workers' organizations in Angolan cities. Since the war, the regime has signalled its intentions by crushing leftist factions within the MPLA and other left groupings (including Maoists who defied China's line and opposed the U.S. as the major imperialist enemy). But the new labor disciplinary measures of the Neto regime will be hard to enforce against a working class that played a role in defeating imperialism.

The willingness of many black African regimes to talk with Vorster of South Africa is directly related. If the proletariat in the black-ruled countries is small, South Africa has a large, highly concentrated black proletariat with a history of militant, tightly (and secretly) organized strikes and explosions. The eruption of this potent force is a menace which the moderate African regimes hope to avoid at all costs, lest it spread like wildfire into the heart of Africa.

### **Bourgeois Leaderships**

Because of the centuries of racism, both colonial and apartheid, the African proletariat has only the tiniest labor aristocracy, the privileged layer that can keep the entire class chained to the bourgeois status quo. Since it has no inherent commitment to capitalism, the working class represents the interests of the African masses far better than do the aspiring bourgeoisies of Angola, Mozambique, etc. Angola is still a tinderbox, and the MPLA's repressions only testify to the new regime's fear of the workers. The retention of Cuban troops in Angola serves to defend the regime not only against the remnants of UNITA and the FNLA, but also against the awakened proletariat. If not controlled with the aid of the Cuban forces (backed by the USSR and tacitly by the West), the Angolan workers could renew the struggle against imperialism and press it beyond both capitalist and national boundaries.

The Angolan revolution is going the way of the other national revolutions in Africa. Conducted on a bourgeois basis and led by middle class and petty-bourgeois politicians, its course is predictable. After all, Kaunda, Nyere, Kenyatta and many of Kissinger's new-found friends were once "socialists" or even "Marxists," just like Agostinho Neto is today. The fundamental tragedy of all the African revolutions has been the absence of Marxist leadership in reality. All the leaderships so far, whether linked to the West or to Russia or to China, have found no alternative but to make their peace with world imperialism and to suppress the masses accordingly. Only through proletarian revolutions led by revolutionary communist parties could the democratic and national struggles for freedom be carried out to a

successful conclusion. Such parties would necessarily be internationalist, sections of a reconstructed Fourth International, because the program for victory can only be the Permanent Revolution. This program, raised originally by Marx after 1848 and developed for the epoch of imperialism by Trotsky, explains the material basis underlying Lenin's policy towards the bourgeois-democratic liberation struggles of this epoch.

### The Epoch of Imperialism

The expansion of capitalism reached the point (around the turn of the century) where the economy transcended national boundaries. Individual nation-states could no longer rise to an advanced level because of the magnitude and international power of the existing capitalist states; nor was it possible for an advanced capitalist state to continue to expand without systematically appropriating the products and surplus-value produced elsewhere. The nation, however, arose with capitalism and is the basis for the defense of capitalist rule. Imperialism thus represents the bourgeois attempt to control the inevitable drive toward international centralization by superimposing the power of the strongest nation states over the entire world. Capitalist "internationalism" can only mean the nationalism of the imperialists (thus the United Nations is not based upon the equality of all peoples but upon accommodation to the needs of imperialism).

This is why communists cannot be nationalists, why a revolutionary proletarian party leading the African revolution would fight not only for national liberation but under the banner of the Socialist Federation of African States. When revolutionists fight for national independence it is not because the independence of nation states is the basic goal; it is because only through national independence can the masses of the nation make their free choice for internationalism, for socialist federation of nations, which they are now prevented from making by imperialism and its national pawns. Marxists would proclaim their hostility to nationalism from the beginning because no viable national economy can be built in isolation in this epoch, and the workers have to know this truth. Nationalism today can mean only the subordination of the nation to world imperialism; the MPLA is the latest proof that nationalism is a deadly delusion for the masses.

Bourgeois nationalism must fail in the end to break with imperialism because of its ties to capitalist property. In an epoch when all forms of property are intertwined, the defense of national bourgeois property requires the defense of imperialist property to which it is subordinated — from the proletariat, the class that represents a fundamental challenge to private property (that is, property in the hands of a minority ruling class). Similarly bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists cannot fulfill the democratic demands of the masses, because democratic rights inevitably conflict with the privileges of the ruling classes. The proletariat, on the other hand, in the course of making its internationalist revolution would freely grant the rights of minority languages, trade unions, etc. For example, it would accept the division of the land by the tillers if the peasants wish it, as the Bolsheviks did in 1917. It is the strength and organization of the proletariat that both make the socialist revolution possible and also frighten bourgeois "revolutionaries" from carrying their anti-imperialist struggle through to the end.

Nevertheless, the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie have interests that run against the immediate needs of imperialism. They desire to create their own economies and not divide the profits with the imperialists who get the lion's share. Or at least they wish to lower the percentage of the imperialist's take. In the decades since World War II the national petty bourgeoisies have exercised increased leverage because of the pressure of mass upsurge in the colonies and former colonies, on the one hand, and the defeat of the proletariat and the crushing of its Marxist vanguard after the war, on the other. Without a militant proletariat in the advanced countries under the leadership of revolutionaries, the danger of a socialist challenge to capitalist property receded, and the nationalists could confront imperialism in their own interests without constantly stopping to

suppress the proletariat. But under bourgeois rule not even the countries that won national independence could break free from the domination of the international capitalist market.

China's nationalist revolution under Mao, for example, led to a state capitalist regime that attempted to isolate itself from imperialism in order to expand its economy on its own. But even with the best intentions (which Mao's were not: the Chinese rulers continually used their bureaucratic power to crush all moves towards independent political activity of the masses) isolation cannot overcome backwardness. Today China has turned openly towards an implicit alliance with the United States in order to import advanced technology from the West and play off the West against the Russians. As a result, China has chosen to side with imperialism against the national liberation struggles in Angola, Bangladesh and other countries yet to come. Similarly the Vietnamese rulers, despite their crushing defeat of the pro-U.S. forces last year and their "socialist" pretensions, has found it convenient to begin dealing with Gulf and



*Struggle of Eritrean rebels against Ethiopian regime demonstrates inability of nationalist governments to carry out the bourgeois-democratic revolution.*

Shell, the oil companies whose interests among others the American forces were defending in their decade-long attempt to prevent Vietnamese liberation.

The MPLA's eagerness for a new arrangement with Western imperialism results from similar considerations, with the difference that there has been a renewed upsurge of the world proletariat since the late 1960's and therefore the pressure for the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces to accommodate to imperialism is greater. The contradiction facing the imperialist pawns and imperialism itself becomes all the more apparent. With the working class playing a larger role in the resurgent drive for national liberation, both masters and pawns are forced to take a more overtly "leftist" stance. Yet at the same time the fear of the mass movement and the proletariat in particular makes the petty-bourgeois regimes scurry under the wings of imperialism for protection.

### Permanent Revolution

The proletariat in Africa faces a grave danger. It cannot allow the "socialist" rhetoric of Nyerere, Kaunda or Neto to deceive it. In China of the 1920's, Chiang Kai-Shek's bourgeois Kuomintang party raised the banner of revolution and "socialism," and the masses were led by the Stalinized Communist Party to subordinate their interests to the Kuomintang. The result was the massacre of the workers at Chiang's hands and a tremendous setback to the revolution. This is what is in the offing in Africa unless resolute Bolshevik parties are built. The proletariat has no choice but to sift through the lessons of the recent struggles and strive in this direction. As the South African events testify, it is already on the move.





*"Death to the Mercenaries." Aroused Angolan masses show no sign of letting up in struggle for national liberation.*

The MPLA's role confirms what revolutionaries have learned from the entire history of bourgeois and working class struggles and from the Marxist program of Permanent Revolution based upon this history: that only the extension of the bourgeois nationalist revolutions throughout (in this case) southern Africa, and to the overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat, can safeguard the masses' independence from imperialism. The fact that the MPLA's victory resulted in a bourgeois regime that represses the workers must not deter revolutionaries from supporting the military efforts of bourgeois-led anti-imperialist struggles. Only by backing every such struggle and by pointing out and fighting the inevitable betrayals of the bourgeois leaderships, openly opposing the nationalism of the petty bourgeoisie, can revolutionaries prove in practice that the socialist revolution is the sole alternative to imperialism. The MPLA's class character leads it to suppress Angolan workers and to make deals with imperialism at the expense of other liberation movements. Consequently the revolutionary workers have to defend the working class and the peasant masses from the MPLA while defending the MPLA from imperialism. This is the Leninist method of "military support," an openly stated tactic for winning the masses to revolutionary leadership. It is the only way, in the absence of a proletarian revolutionary party, to overcome the masses' nationalist illusions in order to build the party and to defeat imperialism at the same time. The Leninist method is to support national liberation struggles, but "under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most rudimentary form," as Lenin specified in his 1920 draft theses for the Communist International.

### **Maoists' Betrayal**

The shifting roles of the United States, Russia and China have served to disorient much of the left, to the extent that would-be revolutionaries have taken positions that brazenly defend the imperialist side. Most prominent have been the followers of Mao who lined up against the MPLA because of its Russian backing and welcomed China's military aid to the CIA's pawn, Roberto. The Maoists' slogan "Superpowers out of Angola" was by no means as even-handed as it pretended to be. It overlooked the right of the anti-imperialist forces to get aid wherever it could be found, even from imperialist Russia, and equates the imperialist and anti-imperialist

sides of the Angolan struggle. Such a slogan therefore stood in the interests of the U.S. and its puppets who were the real threat to Angolan independence, since the dominant imperialist could "oust" itself from Africa and still work through its paid-for intermediaries, maintaining its influence through its control of the world market. The slogan was in fact endorsed by Kissinger since it meant only the elimination of his Russian rival. China's policy towards Angola should shame, not inspire, its admirers; and in fact recriminations and debate among Maoists have exploded as a result of Angola.

Some Maoists, like supporters of the *Guardian* newspaper, found China's policy too much to swallow. They put their faith instead in the bourgeois MPLA and suggested that the USSR was now playing a progressive role in the world. They demanded unconditional support for the MPLA on the grounds that it was the only effective anti-imperialist force on the scene. For some this represented ignorance of the MPLA's actions against the masses, or illusions about a bourgeois government's capacity to evolve into socialism. For others (the Communist Parties, for example), this line is a conscious defense of Russia's interests in Africa. Since Russia stands for the international status quo (detente) and therefore against any serious disruptions of imperialist interests, the uncritical pro-MPLA line becomes a pro-imperialist one. Thus the Maoists in Western and former colonial countries who originally broke from the Communist Parties because of their gross capitulations to U.S. imperialism, have unwittingly rejoined the imperialist side either along the Chinese route or by returning to the Russian fold.

The Maoist and Communist Party leaderships are petty-bourgeois elements in the workers' movement whose function is to support capitalism under a far more radical ideology than can be provided by the new Kissinger policy or even by the nationalism of Neto or Kaunda. In the long run such currents in the working class are extremely dangerous because they can capture the sentiment of advanced workers during crucial revolutionary situations just as they disorient the subjectively revolutionary cadres they have today. As the masses move further to the left, these radical petty-bourgeois elements represent capitalism's last ideological defenses; they provide the most "revolutionary" reasons for staying within bourgeois limits.

One of the subtlest pro-imperialist positions, because it claimed to stand for military and not political support to the MPLA, was that of the Spartacist League. Originally the Spartacists refused support to the MPLA (as well as the FNLA and UNITA) on the grounds that

all three were petty-bourgeois nationalist groups whose "civil war poses the possibility of tribalist genocide" (*Young Spartacus*, Sept. 1975). By ignoring the FNLA and UNITA's subservience to imperialism the Spartacists arrived at the same analysis of the Angolan war that the imperialists employ to justify their conquests — tribal rivalries.

By November the South African invasion had become too overwhelming to overlook, so the Spartacists declared that the situation had changed. They recognized that an FNLA-UNITA government would be a "puppet regime in Angola essentially subordinate to South Africa and the U.S." (*Workers Vanguard*, Nov. 14) Consequently the SL adopted a military support position but was hard-pressed to explain why it hadn't pointed to the danger of a puppet regime before. The Spartacist press had previously reported that the South African invasion on the side of UNITA and it had characterized the FNLA as "after 1965... increasingly dependent upon Washington and increasingly uninterested in fighting the Portuguese." All that changed in November 1975 was the military situation — the South Africans had driven further into Angola — but the pro-imperialist politics of the FNLA and UNITA were the same. Leninists understand that war is a continuation of politics by military means; hence military considerations without fundamental political changes constitute an inadequate basis for changing sides in a war. The Spartacists' change of heart in November thus rested on shaky ground (even though the formal position was now correct), and a new rationalization was required.

In January, the SL announced that the Angola struggle was neither a civil war (as in September) nor a question of national independence (as the SL had believed in November), but a war between the great powers.

"... the present war in Angola is not a national liberation struggle against U.S. imperialism. Rather, as the London *Economist* accurately described it, 'Angola has become a proxy battlefield between the major powers.'

"... the assumption of command by imperialist forces over the FNLA-UNITA military coalition ... together with the introduction of Soviet military advisers and Cuban troops, decisively internationalized the conflict.

"The fighting in Angola is no longer a domestic civil war, but a 'war by proxy' between the U.S. and the USSR. ... even though the social conquests of the October Revolution are not directly threatened by the battle over Angola, in this simple contest ('war by proxy') between American imperialism and the Russian degenerated workers state, communists must take sides." (*Workers Vanguard*, Jan. 16; emphasis in the original).

In reality the SL again refused military support to the MPLA against imperialism; only the Russian intervention merited support. Once more the Spartacists' reversal was based on military, not political, analysis. The Soviet-Cuban intervention was "decisive" only because "for weeks the decisive military engagements in Angola have been fought by Cuban troops and South African-Portuguese mercenary units." (*Young Spartacus*, Feb. 1976). The Spartacists believe Russia to be a workers' state and therefore backed the Soviet intervention; however even from their point of view the politics of the war were unchanged by Russian arms since "the social conquests of the October Revolution are not directly threatened." The Russian presence aside, the Spartacists still regarded the conflict as a "fratricidal-tribalistic" civil war among three equally unsupportable factions. Rather than backing the MPLA because the Russians did, the SL should have denounced the USSR for aiding the MPLA just as it denounced the Chinese "workers' state" for arming the FNLA.

The Spartacists' Angolan policy explodes their claim to maintain Trotsky's position on the defense of the Soviet Union. "We have never promised to support all the actions of the Red Army which is an instrument in the hands of the Bonapartist bureaucracy. We have promised to defend only the USSR as a workers' state and solely those things within it which belong to a workers' state." (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 29). Yet the Spartacists find it necessary to defend a Russian intervention even though nothing that they consider

anti-imperialist or proletarian is at stake. The SL is not defending the conquests of the October Revolution (which have in any case long since been negated) but the global interests of the Stalinist rulers in Moscow. In this light, the Spartacists' refusal to recognize the USSR as state capitalist and imperialist can be seen for what it is: the defense of one imperialism (the USSR) as a cover for denying defense to the victims of another (the U.S.).

Precariously balancing on the class line over the Angolan struggle, the Spartacists had the gall to proclaim that "revolutionary politics are impossible without a correct position on the 'Russian question,' and the most important lesson to be drawn from Angola is the counterrevolutionary conclusions inherent in the doctrine of 'Soviet imperialism.'" Accordingly, the SL attacked the Maoists for siding with the CIA and has repeatedly criticized Trotskyists who oppose Russian imperialism for "opportunistically" supporting the liberation forces Russia backs, like the MPLA and the Vietnamese NLF. However, it is the Spartacists who share the Maoists' pro-imperialist methods. The Maoists take the U.S. side because "socialist" China does, and the Spartacists opportunistically managed to oppose the U.S. only because "workers" Russia intervened. Neither Maoists nor Spartacists grasped the Leninist method of supporting the military factory of national liberation struggles in order to win the masses to revolutionary proletarian leadership. This is possible only for genuine



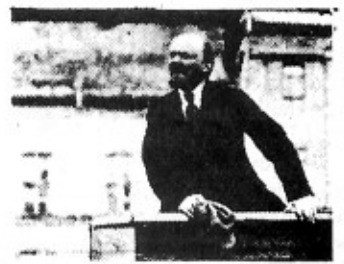
MPLA soldiers examining captured U.S.-made weapons.

Trotskyists, those who recognize that it is the proletariat and not any section of the bourgeoisie that will rid the world of imperialism.

The present capitulation of the various centrist groups, Maoist and pseudo-Trotskyist, in the U.S. and abroad, stems from the massive defeat of the proletariat at the end of the Second World War. The defeat and the resulting temporary stabilization of world capitalism led to the degeneration of the Fourth International. Unable to withstand the consequences of proletarian defeat, the centrist remnants adapted to the reality of bourgeois imperialism and nationalism as well as the corrosive ideologies of the different variants of capitalism.

But the inevitable imperialist decline reawakened mass struggles, and one important consequence was the hothouse growth and proliferation of subjectively revolutionary groups on the international scene. Vietnam, Chile, Portugal and now Angola have added their lessons in partial victories, defeats and setbacks, and all the groupings are being tested by these events in theory and to a degree in practice. The new round of struggles in the heart of imperialism's bastions will not only smash the best-laid plans of the imperialists but will sweep aside as well the centrist blockades to revolutionary consciousness and action. The working masses are in the process of forging their new vanguard, the reconstructed Fourth International, whose program represents the real material interests of the oppressed and the exploited.

# The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party



The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) has been formed to carry out the struggle for revolutionary leadership of the working class that was undertaken in the past by the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). The RSL's left wing, the Revolutionary Party Tendency, was expelled on February 15th of this year, and its members joined with several previously-expelled comrades including Central Committee members Sy Landy and Walter Dahl to organize the LRP. The LRP stands for the program of Lenin and Trotsky, the revolutionary communism of our epoch, that is rapidly being abandoned by the RSL.

The expulsions were criminal acts against the interests of the working class.

In 1976 world capitalism is skirting the edge of a profound crisis. The bourgeoisie is seeking to claw its way out of the impending disaster by chipping away all the hard-won gains of the proletariat. In the face of this assault the workers are tragically misled and therefore disunited. The bulk of our class feels itself to be powerless, lacking any credible alternative to the trade union bureaucrats and liberal politicians who betray them at every turn. Many of these workers resign themselves to hanging on, hoping that the present shallow economic upswing will bring relief. Others, a distinct but crucial minority consisting of the most politically advanced workers, are still searching for an alternative. They are fighting, attempting to forge a new leadership built upon a program that will put an end to the prevailing desperation.

The real solution to the looming disaster, the only real deterrent to the attack on the working masses by capitalism, is the socialist revolution. The defense of even the present working class living standards must come from the revolutionary struggle, because capitalism will yield its minimal sops and reforms only out of fear of mass upsurges that cannot be controlled. But where are the revolutionaries to lead such a struggle? In the United States, what passes for a left alternative to the reigning bureaucrats — the various Maoist and allegedly Trotskyist groups — offers only one-step-better leaflets and no clear-sighted direction. The RSL, which once sought to be a real alternative, has now chosen to be "realistic" like the centrists, those who in their vacillations preach socialism but practice reformism. In order to move right it was forced to expel its steadfast revolutionary wing. The lessons drawn from this struggle, although based on the history of one organization, are of vital importance for revolutionaries everywhere.

The split was produced by a profoundly pessimistic attitude toward the working class and its capacity to make the socialist revolution. The majority, in its constantly changing justifications for expelling the left wing, never even claimed that the issues at stake were decisive enough to warrant dividing the revolutionary cadre. By themselves the issues were not decisive; in a healthy organization they would have been tested in practice, and the minority repeatedly stated its loyal willingness to do this. But the loyalty was contemptuously sneered at. The expulsion itself and the supremely cynical way it was carried out by the RSL leadership proves that the split was the result of a deep political differentiation.

Trotsky, shortly before his murder at Stalin's hands, had waged a critical faction fight in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the American section of the Fourth International, against the Shachtmanite minority who traitorously split the party on the eve of World War II. In answer to the question of whether the political differences

warranted a split, Trotsky stated:

"If we take the political differences as they are, we can say they were not sufficient for a split, but if they developed a tendency to turn away from the proletariat in the direction of petty-bourgeois circles, then the same differences can have an absolutely different value; a different weight; if they are connected with a different social group. This is a very important point.

"We have the fact that the minority split away from us, in spite of all the measures taken by the majority not to split. This signifies that their inner social feeling was such that it is impossible for them to go together with us. It is a petty-bourgeois tendency, not a proletarian." (*In Defense of Marxism*, page 181)

With the roles of majority and minority reversed, the RSL leaders revealed their inner class nature by the very act of splitting and the methods used for the task. Their utter cynicism and the politics that flow from it testify to the petty-bourgeois nature of the RSL bureaucracy.

## Politics of the Faction Fight

The fight began in September 1975 when a minority of RSL members raised objections to a proposed resolution before the Central Committee. The resolution introduced fatalistic and defeatist ideas into the generally agreed upon perspective for heightened class struggle:

"There will be a rise in the class struggle, greatest in the countries most affected by the crisis. *At the same time, the struggles will not be united* although the struggle in the semi- and under-developed countries will be 'joined' by workers in the more healthy, advanced countries, *this will not be impressed on the consciousness of the overwhelming majority of the workers. The struggle will retain its fragmented unconscious level.*"

"Thus while we do not expect a massive outbreak of the class struggle in the U.S. or on a world scale, we do not expect the relative peace of the past period to continue to the same degree. Rather we see a rising curve of class struggle *largely limited to trade union and democratic struggles.*" (Emphasis added.)

Thus the RSL majority put forward an openly stagist view and accepted the limitation of the class struggle to bourgeois consciousness for the next period. Accordingly, the majority made its central political slogan the demand for a labor party in the U.S. In the late 1930's the Trotskyists of the SWP had advocated a labor party in order to translate the massive struggles that created the CIO into political action against the bourgeoisie. They put forward a revolutionary program for such a party in order to lead the workers' upsurge towards the building of the revolutionary vanguard. Whereas Trotsky hoped that the labor party slogan would intensify the struggle between the classes, the RSL's purpose is to accept a reduced level of struggle. Whereas Trotsky argued that it would be absurd and reactionary to advocate a reformist labor party, the RSL's labor party is designed for a democratic and trade unionist stage which condemns it to a reformist program.

"There is no mass revolutionary party intervening in this

year's elections. Should we let the labor hacks go hat in hand to the Democrats until a revolutionary party is formed? No. A revolutionary party cannot be built separate from the struggles of the working class..."

"Revolutionaries will fight for the labor party to adopt a revolutionary program. But we will support a labor party which makes a break on clear class lines to put forward the defense of the workers as a class against the capitalists and their parties." (*Torch*, April 15, 1976)

It is true that there is no revolutionary party, and it is equally true that there is no labor party. The RSL position is not only that a labor party struggle must precede a revolutionary party, but that it will be a reformist struggle. The promise to fight for a revolutionary program once the reformist labor party is built at the first stage is simply a revolutionary cover for a stagist conception. The labor party that the RSL advocates (not just "will support") is a reformist party; this Trotsky was never willing to concede.

Without Trotsky's revolutionary content, the labor party slogan leads the workers into the electoralist illusions deliberately fostered by the labor bureaucrats. It is not only the Democratic Party that the bureaucrats press for; in the wake of Vietnam, Watergate and the economic crisis, they seek at all costs to reestablish faith in the system, the government and its "orderly processes," elections. It is no accident that the RSL uses the slogan in a purely electoralist fashion. In different ways but for related reasons, the union bureaucrats and the RSL use their electoralist slogans to forestall confrontation between the workers and the state.

Just when it is of the utmost necessity to fight the reformist bureaucrats' attempts to shackle the working class within a democratic and trade unionist program, the RSL proclaims its agreement that such is the limit of this "stage." If workers' consciousness does go only this far it will be the responsibility of capitulatory leadership which determines that nothing more is possible. The RSL has joined the chorus instead of appealing to advanced workers to fight this self-fulfilling prophecy. Marxists must reject this surface "reality" if they are to survive as revolutionaries.

During the dispute the RSL leaders moved even further right. They renounced the slogan of the general strike fought for by the minority in favor of the labor party. Whereas the labor bureaucrats refused to call the working class into action to fight the bourgeois attacks, rightly fearing the latent power of the class, the RSL based its refusal on the alleged weakness of the workers:

"Therefore, we use the defensive general strike as a goal to be built towards, as something which requires preparation and an understanding of the forces confronting the proletariat. It is not something which we in general want to call for launching under immediate circumstances and certainly not on a national scale." (*Torch* editor Jack Gregory, "The Marxist Approach to the Labor Party and the General Strike," RSL internal bulletin)

Thus the RSL opposed the general strike, accepting the backward workers' mistaken understanding of objective reality as instilled by the labor bureaucrats. The Bolshevik understanding is that the world situation is objectively mature for revolution, and it is the workers' backward consciousness — their conservatism, fear, and sense of impotence — that must be changed. The mass of workers have a mixed consciousness; anger and explosiveness run as a steady current just below the surface. Coupled with the objective situation that a unified working class in the United States would have enormous power, this means that an explosion is building up. To those who tail backward consciousness the workers' response will come like a thunderclap out of the blue — as in France in 1968.

The RSL's fears of the workers' weakness led to further capitulations. In the turbulent struggle of the New York City workers against the massive bourgeois attacks around the city's financial crisis, the RSL sought to avoid confrontation. That it did call backhandedly for a general strike in its newspaper (despite its private opposition cited above) was further proof of its cynicism and its opportunism in tailing a militant sector of the proletariat. The leadership also began a policy of adapting to out-of-power

bureaucrats in the trade unions in order to gain "legitimacy." Frequently, it refrained from counterposing revolutionary leadership to the present bureaucracy and proposed an "independent rank and file" alternative. This has by now almost totally displaced the call for revolutionary leadership in the RSL's trade union work reported in the *Torch*. Once again, the RSL is assuming a stage when revolutionary ideas cannot be placed before the masses.

These two two-stagist conceptions were opposed in documents put forward by Comrade Landy and other oppositionists. The Landy documents maintained that the roots of opportunist politics in the RSL lay in its isolation from the class struggle and the limitations imposed on that struggle by the labor bureaucrats. In a bourgeois society isolation does not mean removal from all social pressures; it subjected the RSL to class pressures from the petty bourgeoisie and made it susceptible to backward — i.e., pro-bourgeois — sentiments within large layers of the working class.

## The RSL's Bureaucratism

The isolation from struggle permitted an internal bureaucracy to flourish in the RSL. Clique relations substituted for politics. For example, the controversial Central Committee resolution had never been discussed with Cde. Landy, a member of the organization's leading Political Committee. In response, the Landy documents called for a fight against the growing bureaucratism, exemplified by the majority's proposal to narrow the Political Committee to long-term personal associates of National Secretary Ron Taber (thus removing Cde. Landy) and by the fact that every single member of the Central Committee except for Cdes. Landy and Dahl was now on the full-time staff of the organization. The new right turn signalled the victory of the apparatus.

For months the RSL leaders conducted an internal fight that was almost unique in its steadfast refusal to deal with the opposition's views. After the majority's new line was thoroughly analyzed and refuted in the document "The RSL in Crisis: Behind the Labor Party Slogan" by Landy and Dahl, the right-wing leadership quickly issued an edict banning the opposition and its documents. It then retroactively prohibited the circulation of the Landy-Dahl document even though it had already been accepted for internal publication. No rebuttal was ever written, as the RSL leaders had turned to bureaucratic pragmatism as a method of struggle, instead of developing the political understanding of the working class or even the RSL membership.

Throughout the fight the right wing relied almost exclusively on petty organizational maneuvers and bureaucratic harassment against the minority, relieved only by liberal doses of slander and character assassination. A few examples will suffice:

— Both minority Central Committee members were expelled in quick succession on trumped-up charges, one by telephone without even the semblance of a trial.

— After the expulsion of the left wing's senior leaders it was then denied representation on any leadership body, local or national, even in proportion to its numbers.

— Members of the Bolshevik opposition were arbitrarily transferred to different branches for the express purpose of breaking up the opposition.

— The majority leadership attempted to force a member of the minority to sell the *Torch* publicly at her workplace, thus fingering her to her bosses, when there was no conceivable justification for such a risk.

— When Cde. Landy was expelled, the *Torch* deliberately avoided citing the wild personal charges that had been concocted against him and published instead another set of lies, never attempting to warn the workers against what the RSL considered his dangerous political errors. The article was such an obvious camouflage that the *Torch* was forced to print Cde. Landy's "Open Letter" exposing the fraud. In its reply, the *Torch* produced yet a third set of outright lies including a completely fabricated quotation and a denial that the minority's major documents even existed!

— The final trial of the remaining opposition members was

modeled after Alice in Wonderland. The minority was accused of being in political agreement with its own expelled leaders! It was also accused of circulating the Landy-Dahl document to other RSL members (a fiendish move, considering that the document had already been made publicly available by the expelled members). Materials needed for the defense, including minutes of the previous expulsions, were denied to the minority on the grounds that it was "disloyal" — before the "trial".

— At the trial itself the minority comrades so annihilated the right-wing leadership politically that the leadership could only reply with a frenzied physical attack on the left.

Why did the left opposition stand up under the constant harassment and remain with the rapidly degenerating RSL? The RSL bureaucrats certainly hoped to intimidate the younger minority comrades into quitting voluntarily by expelling the tendency's leaders. Instead, the left opposition stayed and fought for its politics, a "maneuver" that RSL leaders could not understand because they had abandoned politics for maneuverism and could only interpret the minority's stance in that light. That the left wing was committed in principle to fighting for the revolutionary gains embodied in the RSL against its betrayers, was incomprehensible to tricksters.

### The Roots of the RSL

The RSL owed its existence to the massive workers' struggles of the late 1960's and early 1970's. The depth and the limitations of these struggles go a long way toward explaining the RSL's dynamic rise and subsequent dismal decline. During the 1950's and 1960's many radical

facade in the imperialist countries and the worsening of the already critical conditions in the former colonies. Although workers' struggle had of course occurred throughout the post-World War II period, the late 1960's outburst was a qualitative breakthrough. It signalled the end of the democratic movements of the 1960's, or at least their end in the form they had taken. The same deep crisis of capitalism that propelled the workers into motion was also setting the limits beyond which the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia could not go on its simple democratic and reform program.

The democratic movements were petty-bourgeois both in composition and in politics. In the U.S., the anti-war movement, the black movement in both its civil rights and nationalist phases, and the women's movement were led by students and sections of the intelligentsia. Working class people were certainly involved, especially in the black and Latin movements, but nowhere did working class groups take the lead on the basis of the working class program. The upsurges of the late 1960's brought working class demands to the fore.

Typically the left wing of the New Left movements began to "add" such demands to the bourgeois-democratic programs. For example, "full employment" and similar slogans were adopted by the movements in order to "orient towards" the working class. Students used the slogan of "Open Admissions" to colleges and schools, which they tacked on to nationalist demands for community control.

Some New Left groups or sections of them, evolved into "socialist" groups. Others trickled into the older socialist sects which had gone through the period as semi-New Left groups themselves. Nevertheless, the essentially democratic and reform programs were



*Student demonstration in Paris, May 1968, calls for solidarity with workers. French events showed many New Leftists the power of the working class.*

intellectuals and students had written off the working class as a serious factor in society, let alone as the revolutionary agency. In the New Left bourgeois-democratic movements, cynical tears shed over the seeming quiescence of the working class passed for blinding practical insight. Suddenly in the late 1960's the ghetto uprisings shook the urban centers of the United States. In France, the most massive general strike in history nearly toppled the "impregnable" strongman regime of DeGaulle. The eruption, which seemed to the intelligentsia to come from nowhere, reverberated throughout the world.

The chain reaction upsurges were an unmistakable demand, despite their mixed level of consciousness, for a sharp change in the status quo. They bore witness to the crumbling of the prosperity

retained, and a major effort was made to attract workers to movements that were still fundamentally bourgeois-democratic. Revolutionary working class slogans, capped by the demand for a workers' state — the dictatorship of the proletariat — were viewed as "added" demands to be raised in the future after the first-stage demands were achieved. The proletarian upsurge had forced the left to rearrange itself, to sort out its programs and demands and to undertake a process of rethinking and experimentation, as the New Left movement crumbled.

The International Socialists (IS) in the U.S. was one of the most profoundly affected groups. It was the successor to the original Shachtman split from Trotskyism in 1939-1940. Although the founders of the IS had broken from Shachtman to the left, they never

reexamined the past course of their tendency nor the basis of Shachtmanism and were therefore doomed to repeat the errors of the past, albeit in new forms. They merely called a halt when Shachtman carried the logic of his method into the Democratic Party but they still accepted the strategy which had led to that capitulation: since it seemed obvious that the workers were not ready for revolution (Step 2) and were only beginning to fight for trade union and democratic demands (Step 1), the thing to do was to lie in wait for the workers with a program of democratic demands. There would be time later for Step 2.

This was the same approach that led Shachtman to pose democracy and national liberation as the key to the struggle in Europe during World War II, with the socialist program put off for the future. Similarly, the growing movement in the U.S. auto industry at the end of World War II was restricted by the Shachtmanites and their allies into "rank and file" minimalism and thereby paved the way for Walter Reuther's victory, since it raised nothing beyond which a left bureaucrat could not go. The same sort of reasoning led Shachtman into the Socialist Party of Norman Thomas (and worse), on the grounds that American workers were to the right of the SP and would have to go through it (Step 1) before they could grasp his "revolutionary" ideas (Step 2). Therefore Shachtman advocated a "broad" Socialist Party with the most minimal right-wing program as the necessary first step. Finally, the method led the Shachtmanites into the Democratic Party (and its Scoop Jackson-Jay Lovestone right wing, the next-to-last resting place for State Department Socialists.) Only Shachtman's death cut his retreat short.

This method inevitably leads to class collaboration, despite the sincere attempts of the ISers to hang back from Shachtman's conclusions. The IS's support in Portugal today for the Presidential candidacy of General Otelo de Carvalho, former head of the military government's security force, is proof of the betrayal inherent in the two-stage method.

The method is characteristic of most of the centrist ideologies that permeate the working class movement, not just the Shachtmanites. The Pabloites who destroyed the Fourth International as a revolutionary body in the 1950's are less overt about it, given their need to pay lip service to Trotsky's historic fight against stagism; nevertheless, they asserted the need for deep and lasting entry into the Communist Parties (and the Social-Democratic Parties where they were the key force) in order to reach the workers at Step 1. In the various Pabloite interpretations, either history, the pressure of the masses or Pabloites themselves would insure that the social revolution would follow after the workers had gone through Stalinism for an inevitable and lengthy period.

The prime users of the stagist method, of course, are the Stalinists, whose Popular Fronts, "Historic Compromises," People's Democracies, New Democracies, etc., are all stages that tie workers to the bourgeoisie while putting off "socialism" for the future. And Stalinism furnishes the final proof of the consequences of stagism, since the only "socialism" that the People's Democracies ever achieve is state capitalism. Step 2 turns out to be only a more resilient form of Step 1.

### Achievements of the RSL

The RSL was created in 1973 out of a split in the IS. The RSL represented the re-establishment of revolutionary Marxism in a living organization after the organizational continuity of the revolutionary tradition had been broken for two decades. It initially attracted wide interest outside of its own ranks and had the enthusiastic devotion of a young militant cadre.

Against the stagism of the IS and other centrists, the RSL proclaimed the necessity of fighting openly as revolutionaries for the revolutionary program. "Say what is" to the working class was the slogan the RSL inherited from Trotsky. To tell the workers the truth, the RSL maintained, is to fight for revolutionary leadership, in particular to build the revolutionary party and the reconstructed

Fourth International. The alternative of reforms, democracy and trade unionism by itself — that is, the bourgeois reformist program — solves nothing in the epoch of capitalist decay; indeed, it is the inevitable failure of reformism that paves the way for reactionary and fascist "solutions." Thus saying the truth is not an abstract moral question but a practical necessity.

In working out its program the RSL made a number of fundamental contributions. It analyzed the post-war boom in the advanced countries as the result of the hegemony of American imperialism and the defeat of the working masses in Europe and Asia. The prosperity bubble in the imperialist homelands was the material basis for the reformism that sank the Marxist movement in the 1950's and early 1960's. The RSL was able to point out the superficial nature of the boom and to predict the resurgence of the underlying decay. The end of the boom was seen as the consequence of the underlying material causes embodied in the epoch of imperialist decline, not of capitalist monetary manipulations (as with the Healyite International Committee) or of inevitable but inexplicable "long cycles" (according to Ernest Mandel of the Pabloite United Secretariat). Thus the Trotskyist Transitional Program was grounded on firm material roots.

In addition, the RSL expanded Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as it applied to the question of black liberation in the United States. American blacks were specially oppressed and forced to the bottom of the U.S. working class because of their denial of the fruits of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, the basic rights and liberties won by mass struggles including the Civil War. Because of capitalism's inability to grant these rights in the epoch of its decay, black liberation could be achieved only through the proletarian revolution in which blacks as an oppressed and critically placed section of the working class would play a role far beyond what simple numbers would indicate. Since Trotsky's contributions on this question in the late 1930's, his centrist "followers" had decided that black liberation was a first stage which would be coupled to a future second stage of proletarian revolution: either that black nationalism was in itself progressive (the modern-day SWP), that the blacks' democratic demands were irrelevant and frequently an obstacle (the Healyite Workers' League), or that integration of blacks and whites under capitalism was a necessity before socialism could be achieved (the Spartacist League). The restoration of a Trotskyist analysis of black liberation was a major advance and a pivotal guide to the struggles of the oppressed, in addition to being a blow against the theory of democratic demands as a necessary first stage.

By the 1970's the truth that the bourgeois-democratic movements could not achieve their goals under a crisis-ridden capitalism was becoming manifest. The petty-bourgeois movements, standing essentially for the democratic reforms of capitalism despite their revolutionary verbiage, came to a grinding halt. Gains won during the past period began to atrophy. Similarly, minimalist gains won by the trade unions under the petty-bourgeois reformist bureaucracy were now being gutted by inflation and unemployment. The surface post-World War II prosperity which had enabled the bureaucracy to have its Step 1 and which enabled the IS and the New Left to operate on a stagist basis was evaporating. Thus, the material basis for the old approach was disappearing.

However, the working class eruptions that had challenged the first blows of the new period had receded by the early seventies. The U.S. bourgeoisie, still the dominant imperialist class, was able to fend off the dissipation of the boom for a short time with the compliance of the union bureaucracy. Despite the RSL's understanding of the nature of the boom and the limitations of the liberation struggles, it was the temporary decline of these struggles and the feeble new economic upturns that lay behind the RSL's recent collapse. The small, draining ponds left by the ebbing of the prosperity wave are the shallow material basis for the RSL's sad and very old "new" politics. Indeed, the pronounced rightward direction of virtually all the centrist currents is derived from this eddy in the class struggle.

The LRP is committed to drawing all the lessons of the RSL's defeat. For the high hopes once raised by the RSL have turned to ashes. The only compensation for the tragedy of its degeneration is

that the lessons can be analyzed and learned from; every such lesson deepens revolutionary understanding. Personal and psychological assessments, "wrong ideas" against "right ideas" have their limited importance, but serious disputes among revolutionaries are reflections of, and factors in, the class struggle. The differences represent the volatility of the objective conditions and the reaction of the various classes; this Lenin and Trotsky pointed out on innumerable occasions.

For us to penetrate to the fundamental lessons it is necessary to re-examine two interrelated questions that have long been disputed on the left: the question of the vanguard party and the so-called Russian question, the degeneration of the Russian revolution.

### The Revolutionary Vanguard

For genuine communists, the building of a revolutionary party is fundamentally a struggle for class consciousness. Once workers understand their material interests, not just as good ideas or moral imperatives but as inescapable necessities, they will embrace revolution. Workers recognizing their self-interest will see the absolute need for the unity of their class in order to overthrow the bourgeoisie. They will see that there is no link between bourgeois (even bourgeois reformist) programs of any sort and the revolutionary proletarian program. "Advanced" bourgeois ideas are not the first stage of Marxist ideas but their mortal enemy. "Advanced" bourgeois consciousness is a tool for restricting and combatting the development of working class consciousness, Marxism. "Step 1" is inimical to "Step 2."

But since uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism, different layers of the working class achieve different levels of understanding of their material interests and how to fight for them. This differentiation appears in struggle as different rates of development. Thus Marxists speak of advanced workers, those who are revolutionaries, and backward workers, who do not yet see the need for world revolution.

Revolutionary consciousness is not a matter of education in any narrow sense. Real consciousness comes from combat, the struggle between the classes, struggle in acts as well as ideas which are in turn derived from action, past and present. For Marxists, the only proof of consciousness (or of theories of any sort) lies in the test of practice, the living class struggle. The decisive role in such events is played by revolutionaries, who draw the lessons and point out the necessity of communism at every stage, and counteract the lessons of defeatism drawn by petty-bourgeois elements. The working class continually generates and regenerates its consciousness — that is, its revolutionary leadership, the vanguard party. In the course of its struggle the proletariat selects from its own ranks and from other strata of society those who will lead the fight for proletarian interests.

As Lenin pointed out, both the old petty bourgeoisie and the new middle class of intellectuals, professionals, bureaucrats, etc. are ground between the rising proletariat and the centralizing bourgeoisie in the imperialist epoch. The intellectual thus comes to recognize the impotence of his own social layer. Caught between the decisive classes in capitalist society, the propertyless intelligentsia thinks of itself as altruistic, objective, materially disinterested and a force for good against evil. Sections of this class become radicalized and play a role in the workers' movement.

So long as they break decisively from the world outlook of the middle class intelligentsia (even its most radical extreme), individual intellectuals can aid the proletariat, which must carefully sift and test them. But as a layer the intelligentsia can be and has been extremely dangerous for the working class. The radical intellectuals who grow cynical about the potential of the workers' revolution (as well as those workers who are drawn into their orbit) come to a different view of the vanguard party. The defeats that the working class has suffered in the epoch of imperialist decay, most notably the degeneration of the Russian revolution, are the objective material grist for the mills of fatalism and defeatism concerning the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat.

Confident that superior education provides him with science and

understanding to lead the downtrodden to victory, and because his own class demonstrably lacks the capacity to change society, the radical intellectual turns to the masses — frequently the peasantry or the "people" in general (including certain powerful but excluded sectors of the bourgeoisie), and in the most mature situations, the working class. In order to change a society which appears degrading and anarchic to the intellectual he tries to manipulate the masses to achieve his own goals: the rationalization of capitalism, meaning planfulness rather than anarchy, order rather than chaos and decay, and economic security rather than poverty.

In the hands of such petty-bourgeois radicals the vanguard party becomes not the embodiment of the Marxist program, the steered cadres and general staff of the proletariat, but a tool wielded by intellectuals "in the name of the working class" or as "servants of the people." Instead of a weapon of workers who are conscious of their own real material interests, it becomes an instrument of those who seek to aid the workers' cause by manipulating the workers themselves. Fatalistically convinced that the actual proletariat cannot accomplish its tasks, the intellectual assumes that his own subjective "socialist" beliefs are an adequate replacement for the unachievable Marxist consciousness of the workers. The party designed by such types bravely adopts the bright man's burden and nobly attempts to become the "condescending savior" of the masses.

Such is the organization that the RSL leadership is in the process of creating. It attempts to manipulate the radical workers by publicly lying in the *Torch* and to its own membership. Having forgotten any other methodology, Taber and his friends learned to maneuver program, principles and the few workers they can lead. They learned from their "success" in the faction fight (the majority succeeded in expelling the minority) that manipulation is an efficient and therefore good weapon. Although the glories of the proletariat are proclaimed when they are remembered, this is done only to cover the reality of substituting petty maneuvers for the conscious acts of the working class. That is, they have abandoned the building of the vanguard party.

In so doing they have wiped out the RSL's original reason for existence. They have adopted the stagist outlook of the petty bourgeoisie within the workers' movement. Their "socialist" Step 2 is a cover for the bourgeois limits (democratic and trade union demands) they impose on the first stage, but even covers have their material reality. The purpose of the second stage, in the face of the deepening bourgeois crisis, is to try to get rid of capitalism's anarchy (or at least to paper it over and postpone its consequences). The function of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia is to present or to apologize for an advanced form of state monopoly capitalism or its state capitalist aspect as the content behind the covering words of Step 2. This is why the "Russian question" is so vital. Every previous strand of Trotsky's "successors" has taken such a course and the RSL is now on its way.

### The "Russian Question"

The cynicism of the RSL and the centrists, primarily cynicism towards the revolutionary potential of the working class, is far more pervasive and deep than any momentary phenomenon. Its wellspring in this epoch is the defeat of the Russian revolution.

The source of the cynicism is not fundamentally the theories of the nature of the USSR — "degenerated workers' state," "bureaucratic collectivism" or "state capitalism" — but the actual, material degeneration of the Russian workers' state itself. This meant not only the end of workers' power in Russia but it gave rise as well to the Stalinist regime and its minions abroad who have effectively bolstered world capitalism by restraining and defeating the proletariat in its course toward revolution. The cynicism and the authoritarian anti-Marxist methods used by the Stalinists to maintain themselves in power have been a corrosive disease within the workers' movement, affecting virtually all sectors of the proletariat.

As part of its task in regenerating revolutionary Marxism the RSL had to come to grips with the "Russian question," the class nature of the USSR. It concluded that Trotsky's theory that the Soviet Union

was still a degenerated workers' state was no longer valid. Trotsky had expected that World War II would lead to an overturn in Russia, either a workers' political revolution to revitalize the proletarian state or a bourgeois counterrevolution. To the Trotskyists of that period, Russia was a rapidly degenerating workers' state, a "hollow shell" that could not withstand a war. Likewise, the Communist Parties were considered to be heading for disintegration; they were reformist (or nearly so) and counterrevolutionary. Had the expected post-war revolutions occurred, Trotsky's mistaken analysis would have been seen as misleading.

But the USSR and the Communist Parties made sure that the post-war workers' uprisings were crushed. Stalinism survived the war and expanded its hegemony to Eastern Europe and Asia. This was possible because Russia's degeneration had already transformed the Soviet workers' state into its opposite by the end of the 1930's. The purge of every vestige of working class leadership stemming from the October Revolution and the congealing of the bureaucratic caste into a self-interested and self-confident class announced the victory of capitalism in the Soviet Union by the time of the great purge trials. Far from being a hollow shell with a thin divided petty-bourgeois caste controlling a society alien to it, Russia had now a strong bourgeois regime based upon the crushing of the once-revolutionary Russian proletariat. Similarly, the Communist Parties did not weaken but grew enormously, and were powerful enough to chain the workers of Western Europe to their bourgeoisies in the name of "Bolshevism," thus aborting the anticipated post-war revolutions. Stalinism proved to be a reinforcer of world capitalism that developed capitalism's long-term tendencies toward centralization and statification to a point which the shareholding sections of the bourgeoisie could never reach. It was a system whose strength was based on the achievements and then the defeat of the world's only proletarian state.

The bulk of the Trotskyist movement under the guidance of Michel Pablo tried to adhere to Trotsky's words ("degenerated workers' state") even though their content had been refuted. By the end of the 1940's the Fourth International had labeled the new Stalinist states as "deformed" workers' states, despite the counterrevolutionary role of the Russian army and the ruling Communist Parties in smashing the working classes in order to seize power. These petty-bourgeois formations were credited with the fundamental proletarian tasks of overthrowing capitalism and making the socialist revolution. Such a theory represented the worst cynicism towards the working class in that it saw "workers' states" built upon workers' defeats! With the increasing number of "deformed workers' states" proving each day that the Stalinist accession to power is no accident or exceptional case but a general phenomenon, the workers who heeded the Pabloites were taught to discount the absolute necessity of the proletariat making its own revolution.

### Defeatist Theories

Trotsky had pointed out that maintaining the theory of Russia as a degenerated workers' state was a defense of revolutionary optimism. The theories which proclaimed Russia to be no longer a workers' state, because they recognized the defeat of the proletariat in the overthrow of the Soviet workers' state, opened the door to a defeatism towards the proletariat. Those who gave up on the gains of the Russian revolution too quickly and too easily were likely to give up on other gains of the workers like trade unions and the revolutionary vanguard party and therefore on the revolutionary capability of the working class itself. The crushing of the workers' state called into question the power of the proletariat to achieve socialism. In Trotsky's words:

**"The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If the second prognosis proves to be correct, then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world**

**proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognize that the socialist program, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new 'minimum' program would be required — for the defense of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society."** (From "The USSR in War," *In Defense of Marxism*, p.9)

Trotsky's foreboding that the abandonment of the gains of the October revolution would lead to defeatism and the surrender of the revolutionary program proved to be essentially right. Shachtman fell into the trap with his break from the Fourth International. He put



*Max Shachtman follows Trotsky in Mexico, 1937. Within three years he deserted the Fourth International.*

forth the view that Russia was neither bourgeois nor proletarian but a new form of slave society ("bureaucratic collectivism") which was more dynamic than capitalism. This system was a fulfillment of Trotsky's "second prognosis" in which only a fight for the minimal rights of slaves was called for. Although Shachtman was often forced by his pragmatism to refer to "workers" rather than "slaves," he did reduce the program to "the struggle for democracy." And although initially he denied Trotsky's charge of defeatism by claiming that Stalinism was limited to one country, his program became a democratic Step 1 for all countries. That is, Shachtman saw the world as a three-cornered struggle between capitalism, bureaucratic collectivism and the "third camp" of socialism; he inevitably came to the defense of capitalism against bureaucratic collectivism because the new dynamic society that so effectively subordinated the masses was a threat to democracy and trade unionism and the socialist alternative was "obviously" a far-distant Step 2.

In giving up on the proletariat and linking himself to what he saw as "the forces for democracy," Shachtman entered upon the road through the various Step 1's that we have already described. In the course of his various Socialist Party and Democratic Party ventures, his organization came to see itself as the grand maneuverer, shifting the proletariat into position to see the several Step 1's more clearly. Shachtman finally came to the correct conclusion that the trade union bureaucracy could maneuver with far greater strength than he for the goals he had come to adopt as his own. There was no longer any need for a vanguard party; all that was required was a coterie of "democratic and trade union"-conscious advisors attached to the ear of George Meany.

The early state capitalist theories that were devised in opposition to Shachtman, Pablo and Trotsky also carried out the logic of Trotsky's prediction. One of the first of these was that of Johnson (C.L.R. James) and Forest (Raya Dunayevskaya), who had split with Shachtman from the Fourth International but later rejoined the SWP for a few years. They regarded Russia as capitalist because they saw Marx's law of value at work in the Russian economy. However, Lenin and Marx had recognized that the workers' state that emerged after



the socialist revolution (a "bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie") would necessarily utilize bourgeois tools for a definite period — including wage labor and other economic forms as well as the state — in its struggle against the remnants of the bourgeoisie and against bourgeois (i.e., backward) consciousness. It is not the forms alone which are utilized. A workers' state is still bourgeois until it accumulates abundance to lay the basis for communism. Hence the law of capitalist accumulation, the law of value, still operates. In the economic sphere the struggle takes the form of a struggle between socialist consciousness — planning according to the needs of the masses — and the law of value.

In rejecting the Stalinist state as capitalist because of the law of value, Johnson and Forest could no longer distinguish between the Leninist workers' state (law of value and all) and the new Stalinism. They rejected the very meaning of the workers' state: the triumph of advanced workers' consciousness. Since the embodiment of this advanced consciousness is the vanguard party, it is no accident that the Johnson-Forest tendency became known for its worship of spontaneism, the notion that the workers would instinctively throw up dual-power institutions such as soviets without revolutionary leadership. Soviets by themselves, however, represent only democratic institutions of the class. In 1917, it was the Marxist program fought for in the soviets by the Bolsheviks that made them socialist institutions for the revolutionary seizure of power. Without socialist leadership the democratic institutions not only provide no solution for the workers, they enable the one remaining "solution" to triumph — reaction, which among other things destroys democracy.

Like the nineteenth century anarchists who fought against Marx's insistence on the proletarian dictatorship, James took the logical step of replacing the vanguard party by the only possible alternative to lead the way to "socialism": the Bonapartist ruler who interprets "the will of the people" for their own good by appearing to stand above the class struggle. Thus James at various times accepted the (Step 1) leadership of "great men" like Fidel Castro, Eric Williams of Trinidad-Tobago, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere et al. With C.L.R. James as their proposed advisor, their platonic dictatorships ("guided democracy") would gradually prepare the proletariat to rule. Giving up on the vanguard party led James to give up on the proletariat and to return to a classic petty-bourgeois scheme for manipulating the masses.

Also, without the vanguard party to overcome capitalist economic laws, Johnson-Forest saw the all-pervasive law of value bringing about a new epoch of state capitalism. Lenin's analysis of this century as the epoch of capitalist *decay* was thereby shattered — for James, but not in reality.

The theory of "bureaucratic state capitalism" promulgated by Tony Cliff and adopted by the British International Socialists was somewhat different. It denied the internal operation of the law of value in Russia and was therefore akin to bureaucratic collectivism. The logic of Cliff's position is that Russian capitalism without the law of value has no proletarian class struggle and therefore no tendency towards crisis and decay. Such a society, although Cliff does not say so, must be progressive in comparison to Western capitalism. Nevertheless, Cliff learned from the horrors of Stalinism's triumph that the vanguard party is too dangerous a tool to play with, and he turned to notions of the "independent rank and file." When he subsequently returned to the advocacy of a vanguard party, it became (as with Shachtman and James) an instrument for manipulating rank and file struggles which the "vanguard" kept from becoming political by reserving political wisdom to itself. The IS's support for General Carvalho's "apolitical" Bonapartist dreams in Portugal was a perfectly consistent application of Cliff's method. Cliff's anti-Stalinism reduces to "anti-leadership" rhetoric that is designed to leave power over the masses in the hands of skilled manipulators with, of course, the masses' best interests at heart.

The conception of a dynamic new system — bureaucratic collectivism, the epoch of state capitalism, or bureaucratic state capitalism — which displaces the proletariat as the successor to state monopoly capitalism must at bottom see the working class as impotent or as a tool useful for its militant weight but not for its Marxist

consciousness. All these versions followed the path Trotsky foresaw and dropped the vanguard party in favor of a variety of stagism. Like Pabloism, the other "Trotskyist" successor theory, they placed their faith in bourgeois or petty-bourgeois elements within or above the working class (Bonapartists, Stalinists, or Social-Democrats) as the only reliable forces that could hold out against the decay of capitalism. Each of these tendencies, born out of defeatism and cynicism towards the working class, moved into a position of supporting the very misleaderships responsible for the defeats and cynicism in the first place.

## The Workers' State

The various "successor" theories to Trotsky developed out of the decline of the Fourth International. The victory of the Stalinist counterrevolution against the great October revolution, the destruction of the proletariat's massive achievement, had its impact even upon those who fought against it. The cynicism which spewed



*Lenin and Trotsky with soldiers of the Soviet Army, 1921.*

forth into the workers' movement as a result of Stalinism engulfed even the Trotskyists. The RSL had begun the process of rejecting these theories born out of defeat, but its early and incomplete efforts were cut short and are now being rolled back.

It is absolutely necessary for any tendency which asserts revolutionary Marxism and believes Russia to be a degenerated workers' state to critically examine its own theory and the theory's history, in order to account for its inability to predict the expansion of Stalinism or to come to terms with the modern imperialist world. Such a tendency must also explain and change those elements of the theory (since they wrongly hold that it is not the theory itself) which have enabled so many to capitulate openly to the bourgeoisie, both the Stalinists and their own rulers. They must account as well for the causes of this degeneration in material and class terms.

Any proponent of a "state capitalist" theory has a similar obligation. How is it that the early practitioners from James to Cliff (as well as Urbahns and those of the '30's) have made such obvious capitulations? Does not Trotsky's prediction prove that any notion of Russian state capitalism leads to disaster? It is insufficient to simply castigate the other theories and claim that now the lessons have been learned. The IS "knew" that it was made of sterner stuff than Shachtman yet it fell into the same traps. Since Shachtman, James et al fell by the wayside by overestimating Stalinism's capacities, it is necessary for us to begin by weighing Stalinism's achievements against those of the Soviet workers' state.

It is fundamental for Marxists to realize that "state capitalism"

could never have come into existence without the proletarian revolution. It did not just happen that way historically; it was the only possible channel. No Russian bourgeoisie, indeed no bourgeoisie at all, could have nationalized, concentrated and centralized the means of production to enable Russia to expand as it did. Russia is now the second most powerful nation in the world and maintains a far greater imperial sway than the Czars ever envisioned. Even though the degree of state consolidation of industry was already high under the Czars, the bourgeoisie could not forge the separate capitals into one in the face of capitalism's anarchic economic laws and, most important, out of fear of the revolutionary potential of the organized proletariat.

When the Soviet Union was still a workers' state, Trotsky summarized the workers' conquests in this way:

"Gigantic achievements in industry, enormously promising beginnings in agriculture, an extraordinary growth of the old industrial cities and a building of new ones, a rapid increase in the number of workers, a rise in cultural level and cultural demands — such are the indubitable results of the October revolution, in which the prophets of the old world tried to see the grave of human civilization. With the bourgeois economists we have no longer anything to quarrel over. Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory, not on the pages of *Das Kapital*, but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth part of the earth's surface — not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement, and electricity. Even if the Soviet Union, as a result of internal difficulties, external blows and the mistakes of its leadership, were to collapse — which we firmly hope will not happen — there would remain as an earnest of the future this indestructible fact, that thanks solely to a proletarian revolution a backward country has achieved in less than ten years successes unexampled in history." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p.9)

Russian growth took off in the 1930's but was due to the accomplishments of 1917. The enforced series of economic quotas and allocations known under Stalinism as planning, the state monopoly of foreign trade, the state-controlled credit and banking system, etc., rested upon the breakthroughs of the workers' revolution. The self-sacrifice under brutal conditions of the working class that thought it was creating socialism depended on the fact that the USSR was still a workers' state, although degenerating rapidly. Russia made substantial gains during the Depression, when the capitalist powers were foundering, not because of its Stalinist bureaucracy but because of its original proletarian consolidation and its remaining proletarian character.

No other Stalinist-ruled country has been able to accomplish what the workers achieved in Russia. What gains the others have made in industry and centralization are due in large part to the existence of the Russian model and to the strength afforded to the new bureaucracies by Russian power. But none of these nations have been able to consolidate in any way approaching the earlier strides taken by the USSR. The Chinese Maoists, for example, have never been able to integrate and effectively centralize China's economy; China still lies open to imperial domination from Russia and the West. The North Korean economy for all its self-trumpeting and forced development is in shambles, heavily in debt and in default to Western banks. Those Eastern European states which are economically advanced got their start under the rising bourgeoisie of the last century, not under state capitalism, and in fact they are now severely restrained by Russian imperialism. "State capitalism" is far from being a new dynamic system able to overcome capitalist decay and outdistance state monopoly capitalism. The fact is that Russia and all the Stalinist countries are utterly dependent upon shareholding capitalism in the West. The fact that they do not generate new levels of technology without which no industrial state can accumulate or even maintain itself is one proof of this.

"State capitalism" is part of the world system of state monopoly capitalism. Capitalism turns to partial statification in its epoch of decay in order to maintain its individuated private property character. But partial statification is frequently insufficient. State

capitalism is another aspect of the system, one whose special function is to bolster the decaying world capitalist system as a whole. Where capitalism in its traditional anarchic form can no longer defeat or contain the proletarian struggle, where it can no longer maintain sick and profitless but vital industries, here state capitalism steps into the breach. After World War II, state capitalism on the Russian model triumphed in economically imperialized countries whose old bourgeoisies could no longer rule in the old way and whose working classes had been eliminated as contenders for power. In the face of the proletariat, all forms of capitalism strive to hold together despite their basic rivalries and different forms of property ownership. The destruction of the sanctity of property held private from the working class by a socialist revolution anywhere is a deadly threat to all.

Even though state capitalism represents the limit of capitalist tendencies toward statification and centralization, it is not the historical outcome of capitalist development. In those state capitalist countries like Russia and parts of Eastern Europe where the economy has approached an advanced level, the laws of capitalist anarchy are reappearing as open and decisive factors, with a vengeance. Internal competition has to be reintroduced for the sake of efficiency, and the working class has to be kept divided through unequal rewards. On the other hand, in the traditional advanced capitalist countries hit by severe crises, state capitalist nationalization is regarded with hostility by the ruling classes because of the danger from the powerful proletariat. The bourgeoisie in crisis turns to renewed imperialism and intensified repression at home. The future, if the proletarian revolution is long delayed, will see a world of decaying state monopoly capitalism — with their attendant militarism, Bonapartism, fascism and war.

Far from being a new stage in history supplanting the epoch of state monopoly capitalism described by Lenin, state capitalism is a facet of degenerating state monopoly capitalism, a temporary and dangerous expedient. All sections of the bourgeoisie find that a statified national capital is impossible to administer for long on a bourgeois basis. Statified, concentrated and centralized capital is the final, logical limit of capitalist development *which can only be maintained and then transcended by the proletarian state*. The only conceivable circumstance under which a "state capitalist epoch" or a "bureaucratic collectivism" could exist would be another, more cataclysmic defeat of the world working classes. As Trotsky demonstrated, Marxists cannot remain Marxists while basing their actions on such a cynical, defeatist and fatalist perspective.

## The RSL and State Capitalism

The RSL had taken important steps towards a Marxist understanding of state capitalism but it never felt obliged to make its own analysis systematic nor to engage in the dialectically related task of making a systematic analysis of rival theories. It failed to take on a task that Marx, Lenin and Trotsky would never have let slip by. For example, the faction fight inside the IS that produced the RSL avoided the Russian question, despite the IS's historical link with Shachtman. The degenerated "degenerated workers' state" theory of the Pabloites was occasionally swiped at but never given a serious treatment. And other state capitalist theories were never dealt with publicly. In its uncompleted internal documents the RSL had begun to accept the fact that workers' gains were still embodied, even in negation, in state capitalism. However, little importance was attached to it. This understanding rarely saw the light of day in its public press, that which attempts to convince advanced workers.

Now with the recent turn such a world view has to be abandoned altogether. In Taber's recent series of articles in the *Torch* (March 15 through May 15) the RSL's new version receives its authoritative treatment. Nowhere in three extensive articles is there the conception that Russia's dynamism was not due to Stalinism but to the proletarian revolution, whose impact on state capitalism is totally ignored. What Taber writes of the period of rapid industrialization is the following:

6"Meanwhile, having destroyed the kulak threat, Stalin and the apparatus turned on the workers. The bureaucracy was

now able to feel its independent strength, based on its control of the state and state production, more than ever before. It had routed the immediate threat to its power. Now, with millions of peasants pouring into the cities to escape starvation in the devastated countryside, Stalin had a reserve labor force with which to batter the workers and force down their wages and working conditions. Between 1928 and 1933 the workday was lengthened to 10 or more hours per day while wages were cut in half. Wage differentials were increased far beyond what existed in the western capitalist states. Piecework, which Marx had termed the method of production 'most suitable to capitalism,' was reintroduced. 'Socialist emulation' was transformed into the code-name for almost unbearably vicious speed-up. What protection had been offered by the trade unions was eliminated. All in all, Stalin's apparatus was establishing the preconditions for capitalist rule through the state power."

Taber is obviously correct in pointing to the monstrously working-class character of the Stalinist industrialization policies. But his treatment is dangerously one-sided: while Trotsky left no opportunity unused to catalogue Stalin's crimes, he also cited the enormous strides made by the still-proletarian Soviet Union, as we have already shown. In the RSL's version the achievements of the Russian economy are purely the products of Stalinism's brutal oppression. The idea is not new with Taber.

**"The modern Stalinist bureaucracy has to its credit the development of an industrial basis for the socialist reorganization of Russian society which Russian capitalism was never able to achieve and which the Russian socialist working class, left in the lurch by the proletariat of the West, could not hope to carry out by itself."**

So wrote Max Shachtman. The thought was a stock-in-trade for bureaucratic collectivist theory. Just substitute bourgeoisie for bureaucracy and there stands Taber's theory in what is only a more explicit form.

The same parallel is repeated in a slightly different way. According to Taber:

**"But rather than openly proclaiming itself as capitalist and its victory the triumph of state capitalism, the state-capitalist bourgeoisie continued to drape itself in the flag of Marx, Engels and Lenin — in the banner of the proletarian revolution. This ideological cover has served exceptionally well as an aid to the police and military apparatus as a means of propping up the system and warding off the danger of proletarian overthrow."**

To see the Stalinists' ideological proletarianism as a mere "aid" and disguise rather than an indispensable feature is to grant state capitalism credit for an internal strength that no capitalist society retains in this epoch. This is another leaf from Shachtman's book. Stalinist "Marxism" is not a mere "masquerade," as Shachtman claimed, which could be removed or replaced by an alternative disguise. All too easily, the drape or masquerade theory lends itself to a view of Stalinism as a diabolical conspiracy rather than an aspect of the bourgeois social system. The proletarian cover is an absolute necessity for a ruling class that rests on the negation of a working class revolution. Even in countries like China where the Maoist revolution was in no sense made by or even with the proletariat, the regime is forced to establish its relation to the working class. The state capitalist attempt to create a modern ordered nation-state where older forms of capitalism are unable to do so requires a drive to advance production and accumulate. This is impossible without winning over at least a section of the only creative class in society, the proletariat; hence their attempts to create a labor aristocracy and garner a measure of support while dividing the working class. The fact that these attempts fail over time does not contradict the absolutely necessary relation between the Stalinist ruling class and its new labor lieutenants. Without the Marxist proletarian cover, state capitalism would not only be ideologically weaker but would stand exposed as a usurper and be unable to play its role as a world prop for decaying capitalism.

Imputing the enormous leap in production of the USSR to a dynamic Stalinism has disastrous consequences for a Trotskyist. The theory of permanent revolution is based on the understanding that the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution cannot be carried out by the bourgeoisie in the epoch of its decay; only the workers' revolution can do so. If Stalinism is adequate for the job then permanent revolution, the strategy for the socialist revolution in this epoch, can be given lip service but fundamentally must be cast aside in favor of a stage theory: bourgeois (minimal) demands can be achieved without the socialist revolution. That is just what the RSL has done.

In its campaign to pick Shachtman's pocket the RSL is coming to see Stalinism as a new society too. After years of experiencing the IS's "third camp" notions and the Jamesian and Cliffite notions of a new epoch, the RSL strove to return to Lenin's understanding that no new epoch was on the agenda — that the struggle was between proletariat and bourgeoisie. But the RSL never reached the point of proving that a "new bourgeois class" was incompatible with its world view, so the road was left open for Taber's steps backward.

The Taber essays are replete with references to capitalism's tendencies towards monopolization, concentration, centralization and statification. He notes that the "logical" conclusion of these tendencies is state capitalism, and duly observes that the traditional capitalists "violently oppose this end result." Like every observer (Trotsky, Shachtman, Cliff, etc.), Taber points out that Stalinism acts as a prop for world capitalism.

But Taber never once sees fit to mention that state capitalism is a system in crisis! He overlooks state capitalism's subjection to the cyclical crises that affect all capitalist societies. He ignores the effects of the epoch of decay on the state capitalist countries (and even suggests that they are able to withstand these effects: "Although this growth is limited, partial and occurs at the expense of the stability of capitalism as a whole, it is a significant attraction to many of the world's masses.") And he fails entirely to see that capitalist decay means that state capitalism decays in the direction of anarchic state monopoly capitalism. The picture emerges of a society that solves the masses' most fundamental problems — certainly with brutality and waste, but solves them nevertheless. Such a society must be a new phenomenon (even if the RSL's formal theory stops short of this conclusion), a new stage that revives the old "third camp" world view. The IS stopped short, verbally, of Shachtman's conclusions, but their theory led them down the same path. So too for the RSL.

Inevitably, any concession towards a supposedly crisis-free capitalism leads to downplaying the proletarian struggle. Thus it is no accident that Taber leaves out the workers' revolts against Stalinism. There is repression galore, the ruling class is able to "blunt" the class struggle, the Russian army invades Eastern Europe — but never do the masses act, in Taber's account. Not that Taber is unaware that the proletariat continues to struggle against oppression; any schoolchild knows of the conflict within the Stalinist countries. The *Torch* writes about it often enough. The problem for Taber is that he can't account for it theoretically, because his theory is designed to distinguish between, not identify, Eastern and Western capitalism. How explain Liberman, Sik, Dubcek, Tito and their reintroduction of market forms and controlled competitive prices if state capitalism is the last resort of capitalism? To avoid this problem Taber avoids the obvious decay of the Stalinist system and thereby allows only a journalistic account of the masses' role in the history of the Stalinist countries.

The avoidance of any attempt to understand the tendencies for the unitary forms of state capitalism to break down into approximations of the competitive forms of state monopoly capitalism is not simply an oversight. It stems from the view of state capitalism as a successor state to state monopoly capitalism and as the logical outcome of capitalist development under the bourgeoisie. Its consequences are in line with the capitulations the RSL makes in its stagist view of Western capitalism (the initial struggle for democratic and reform demands). This is exactly the program of the majority of the bourgeois liberal dissidents in the USSR, the elements who most clearly reflect the reassertion of openly anarchic capitalism. While

Marxists defend the rights of these liberals against the Stalinists, to confuse our banner with theirs is a capitulation and a disaster. The RSL at this point has no intention of confusing banners but theoretically the question is left open. Once again, the experience of the IS in not really breaking from Shachtman's theory is directly relevant.

The reversion of the RSL back toward the earlier non-workers' state theories of the USSR is now under way. Its advances in understanding the Russian question had not sufficiently transcended the problems of defeatism and cynicism lodged in the previous anti-Marxist theories. The RSL's failure to examine the capitulations made by the earlier state capitalists meant that the RSL still suffered from the same defeatism. Today, we can see that its once-revolutionary but incomplete analysis of the USSR was one important

masses," on the other hand, is the process the workers go through while searching for; weighing and finally selecting its revolutionary leadership; it is a passing phenomenon on the road to power.

The RSL has already made all of the theoretical concessions to bourgeois thought typical of centrism, and now its practice is moving into line. Its trade union propaganda typically calls for the ranks to "organize independently" of the bureaucracy, as if organization without revolutionary politics is the solution revolutionaries have to offer. It counterposes "rank and file organization" to revolutionary leadership. With the exception of overseas events (safely distant from the RSL's purview!) the necessity of revolutionary leadership for workers' struggles is ignored in the RSL's public press.

The "rank and file," however, contains within it many different levels of consciousness, political tendencies and leaderships. "Rank

## Documents of Struggle

The League for the Revolutionary Party is publishing the major documents that the Revolutionary Party Tendency, now the LRP, issued during its fight inside the Revolutionary Socialist League. Two documents of this series are now available in pamphlet form.

No. 1 *The RSL in Crisis; Behind the Labor Party Slogan* is the first major re-evaluation of the labor party concept by Trotskyists in decades. The persistent use of this slogan regardless of time and place represents a denial of the need for a revolutionary party.

No. 2 *Statement of the Revolutionary Party Tendency* examines the specific features of the decay of the RSL. It resurrects the Bolshevik position on the united front as a front for action, as opposed to programmatic and propaganda blocs.

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source of the cynical theory and practice that it has adopted in its degeneration. Reciprocally the RSL's decay causes its theory of Stalinism to display even more cynicism towards the proletariat. It is not accidental that the various earlier theories of state capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism were developed during periods of working class defeats. The RSL's theory was accelerated by the workers' upsurge of the 1960's and its theoretical capitulation stems from tailing the present consciousness of backward and cynical petty-bourgeois layers in the working class.

Whatever the RSL might now say against the evils of bureaucratism becomes increasingly difficult to believe in the light of its glorification of its own internal bureaucracy and its adoption of the petty-bourgeois cynic's view of the proletariat. To downplay the workers' fight against Stalinism means, necessarily, to understand the world from the bureaucratic vantage point, to see it from the top down. From this point of view, the strength of state capitalist production comes from the Stalinist bureaucrats, their actions and maneuvers. George Meany and a Stalinist bureaucrat disagree yet share the same understanding of who controls events. They are now joined by a minor league compatriot, Taber. If the Stalinists could "maneuver" the working class into overthrowing one form of capitalism in favor of a more advantageous form, then he too can maneuver the working class towards his own version of Step 1. The RSL leadership has unwittingly made the connection between its theory and practice all too clear.

Thus the RSL leadership has capitulated, and the organization as a whole is rapidly degenerating into centrism. Centrism is an inherently vacillating phenomenon which serves the interests of capitalism by waylaying the most advanced workers and keeping them away from revolutionary action. Centrism's revolutionary rhetoric promises revolution as a far-off Step 2 in exchange for a "realistic" or reformist practice in the present stage. Its vacillating quality arises from the pressure of the advanced workers, in or outside of its ranks, who conflict with the practice imposed by the leadership. To call a group centrist is not to use a swear word but a precise label for this unstable, imprecise phenomenon.

For the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and its allies in the labor aristocracy, centrism is a lasting condition. The "centrism of the

and file leadership" in the trade unions can only mean the least common denominator of all out-of-office tendencies and therefore amounts to the program of the left bureaucrats whose road to power is through "rank and file" caucuses. It is therefore a stagist conception, a surrender to reformist practice.

The RSL is moving to the right in the wake of the various centrist groups. The material basis for stagism and reformism which existed on the surface in the post-war decades has eroded. In the 1970's, the trend in the U.S. has been towards struggles of a conservative and bewildered working class which had known a degree of prosperity and now faced a frightening and unexpected economic collapse. Although there was hostility to the bureaucratic leadership of the unions this consciousness did not coalesce politically and did not make its weight felt. Even this militancy receded, however, as the U.S. bourgeoisie reasserted a shadow of its past international and internal economic power. The temporary and slight economic upturn — which may now even be ended — signified to workers the possibility of a return to the days when reforms and benefits could grow in a linear fashion. This mini-upturn, this puff of wind, is the material "reality" that has sent the centrists sailing to the right with the RSL scurrying after them. The RSL has proven itself unable to withstand this feeble a test.

The RSL is on the road to centrism. In declining to affirm that it has already reached that goal we stand with Trotsky: do not give up on the gains of the working class until they have been lost without a doubt. As the RSL is a propaganda group with little direct impact on events, the signs of its outright betrayal of the workers in practice need not come right away. Just as the RSL was created out of the mass struggles of the late 1960's, the next upsurge of the proletariat will provide the decisive test for the RSL in its decay. That same upsurge, whose signs can already be detected on an international scale, will produce not only centrists but Bolshevik cadres, the leadership whose steadfastness will have been tested as well in times of adversity, by its fight "against the stream." Acceptance of cynicism is the common coin of all tendencies save Bolshevism in the world today. To the forging of a leadership which is the product of a renewed and fighting working class we dedicate the League for the Revolutionary Party.

# Lebanon, Victim of Imperialism

The bloody civil war in Lebanon bears striking confirmation of the new turn in U.S. imperialist policy brought about by the defeat of the old policy in Angola (see the article "Permanent Revolution in Southern Africa" elsewhere in this issue). Ever since the current war began with the cold-blooded murder of a busload of Palestinian refugees by the semi-fascist Phalange militia in April 1975, the U.S. has directly supported its faithful allies among the Lebanese Christians (most notably, the Phalange) in order to suppress the threat of a Lebanese and Moslem left victory.

Within the varied petty bourgeois dominated forces of the left, the revolutionary potential of the proletariat is the most dangerous element for the United States and its allies and pawns. A *New York Times* dispatch at the beginning of the war underlined the American interest, reporting "deep concern" that *"the Palestinians could join other Moslem and leftist political forces here in an armed revolution based on the grievances of industrial workers, Syrian and Kurdish laborers and poor peasants."*

In the past, the imminent defeat of the U.S.-backed forces would have led to an invasion by the U.S., its Israeli allies or its Jordanian puppets. Today the mass struggle is too deep to permit such an openly imperialist intervention. So it was Syria — armed by and until recently chiefly dependent on the USSR — that carried out the repression with 13,000 troops, 400 tanks and aerial bombings to insure imperialist stability.

What the U.S. gains by working through Syria is first of all legitimacy and deception — the Lebanese and Palestinian "leftists" had led the masses to believe that the self-styled "socialist" Syrian regime was on their side. Very important as well for the U.S., Russia's attempt to gain an edge in their imperialist rivalry has been undercut in the Middle East. In Angola, the U.S. lost out by backing the Portuguese colonialists and later the South African invasion of a black country while Russia ranged itself on the side of a national liberation struggle. In Lebanon, Kissinger succeeded in borrowing Russia's ally Syria to carry out U.S. interests. Thus Russia is left arming both sides in the civil war with no gains to show for it.

## Auto Contract

*continued from back page*

the "democratic" facades the UAW presents. While supposedly it provides the ranks an opportunity "to be heard," the convention itself is a rigged affair that has little impact on the negotiating demands. The convention is also a time for the bureaucracy to present vague and posturing promises for the contract — the better to cover rank and file pressure. The actual content will be watered down at the bargaining table.

This year, even the blustering was poor. Woodcock summed up the tops' approach with the remark, "We didn't come into these contracts with a chip on our shoulder." He certainly didn't! A major theme of the convention was supposedly "job security," including a revision of COLA, improved pensions, and a shorter work week. As for COLA, the leadership's emphasis has been on "preventing tampering" with the already inadequate plan, rather than a major overhaul. Little concrete was indicated about SUB. And, allegedly, little could be done about re-negotiating pension funds because of past contractual agreements.

In the name of "job security" the bureaucrats have promoted a "holding action" line towards "formidable" foes during uneasy times. This is also true of the UAW's response to General Motors' "proposal" that workers share the cost of medical insurance premiums. UAW Vice-president Ken Bannon's statement that this amounts to a wage cut is true, and Woodcock declared that "we will not agree to that." But workers know that the insufficient medical benefits were won by



*Syrian forces move against Lebanese capital.*

The new U.S. policy, however, can be successful only to the extent that the masses in Lebanon are kept down. This is the task not only of the Lebanese reactionaries and the Syrian army but also of the "socialist" leaders of the Lebanese workers and the Palestinian liberation groups. These elements have sold out the masses at every opportunity, agreeing to various compromises over the division of power in the capitalist state apparatus, none of which could conceivably satisfy the needs of the masses.

But out of these betrayals the lessons will be drawn of the true nature of all the bourgeois forces, both pro- and "anti"-imperialist. The continued uprisings in Lebanon and the Israeli-held territories demonstrate that the masses' struggle continues. By clearing away all the obstacles, including those "allies" who represent the bourgeois enemy, the proletariat will find the road to the vanguard party and the Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

sacrificing wage gains; if Woodcock is playing for a "holding action" now, what will he try to sell to the ranks after he actually faces the bosses across the table?

Most notable was the leadership's attitude towards the shorter work week, a basic need for UAW members and all workers since a shorter week with no cut in hourly pay would provide more jobs and at the same time raise wages for all. All that has to be cut is profits. The demand for "30 hours work for 40 hours pay" has long been fought for by revolutionaries. This policy can be fought for under capitalism but cannot be maintained except under a workers' state. It is in fact a feature of the economy of a workers' state and is therefore a central demand of the Transitional Program, the Marxist program for our epoch.

The bureaucracy's attitude towards even the modest "36 for 40" demand was hostile. "It wouldn't make new jobs. It would cost us jobs," said one union rep, reasoning that higher wages would lead to higher price tags on autos; thus nobody would buy cars and workers would be thrown out on the streets. Nothing could better expose the bureaucracy's subservience to capitalism! If higher wages cost jobs, why have unions at all? Woodcock & Co. accept whatever level of exploitation the bosses demand and even promote the wage-push inflation theory that blames rising prices on "greedy workers." The bureaucrats' line only proves the point revolutionaries make about capitalism. Lasting gains cannot be won without a struggle for a revolutionary workers' state.

The other major theme during and after the bargaining convention has been support to the Democrats. In order to carry out their strategy successfully, the UAW tops hopped on the Carter bandwagon early, prior to his lock-up of the nomination and despite

the fact that other candidates at the time had closer ties to other sections of the bureaucracy. This support for an advocate of Southern "right-to-work" laws allowed Carter to posture as the workingman's friend in the "workingman's party." As well, it made a mockery of the bureaucrats "holding action" protests against the shifting of auto production into non-union shops in the South, for these laws are a prime reason for the open shop situation the bosses are exploiting.

The leadership's past presidential choices have not jibed well with the ranks. While one element of this dissatisfaction with the government, the control by the monopolies and the shackles of the labor bureaucrats manifested itself among backward white workers in the form of the phony but strident "anti-establishment" demagoguery of George Wallace, many other workers — particularly blacks — have been as unimpressed with the capitalist candidates as with the bureaucrats. "Anti-Washington" Carter seemed to be a way for the bureaucrats to gain sway with the membership in an acceptable manner, one that leaves the ranks in a passive role. Woodcock praised Carter as a "healer," and one Detroit newspaper columnist noted that he "was talking about the country, but his words were also aimed at his members."

Woodcock's healing strategy, despite its hypocrisies and class betrayals, has not panned out that well. While much of the working class vote in Michigan went to Carter, the fact is that not many workers voted. Because of this "apathy" Carter's victory in Michigan was surprisingly slim. The ranks have not shared in the Carter enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the bureaucracy is committed to its electoralist strategy, for nothing else can take the edge off its unwillingness to lead a fight. As one hack put it in the April *Solidarity*, "I don't expect our union to attain full employment in this country at the collective bargaining table. The issues of cost of living for pensioners, health care and full employment are the primary responsibilities of our government. Our job in that area is to commit ourselves to educate our members that if they register to vote, they can change the direction of our government."

If the ranks accept Woodcock's plan for the contract, a defeat or a standoff with no real gains is quite possible. But a defeat is not pre-ordained. Woodcock's leadership is hardly founded on the trust and admiration of the ranks; it is cynicism and the absence of a viable alternative that leads many to accept the existing leadership and the capitalist politicians. And there are many autoworkers who are actively seeking an alternative to Woodcock's capitulations. To capture these workers and lay their own claims to leadership in the union, a number of "out-bureaucrats" are appearing from the woodwork with alternative approaches to the contract. Their role is to confine the workers' militancy within pro-capitalist channels.

One left-talking bureaucrat with influence in the union is Frank Runnels, president of Local 22 in Detroit. Runnels calls for "36 for 40" and has made minimal attempts at mobilizing the ranks for this demand. He argues that the auto bosses "could pay us that shorter work week with no cuts in pay and never miss it." Undoubtedly, the companies are in better shape now than a year ago, and Woodcock's talk of the "tenuousness" of the upturn is meant to be a preparation for a sell-out. Nevertheless, any real solution for autoworkers will not be based on what the bosses "won't miss." Runnels' loyalty to the bosses is revealed under his militant garb.

Another notable element because of its more left posture and certain abilities to attract and mobilize advanced workers, is the Coalition for a Good Contract. This coalition is composed of the United National Caucus (UNC), the Independent Skilled Trades Council, "rank and file" reformist caucuses such as the United Coalition at Local 51, and is backed by the centrist International Socialists.

The Coalition's program includes demands for "32 for 40," upward revision of COLA, guaranteeing SUB and short work week benefits against bankruptcy, authorization of local rights to strike over supplementary agreements, and "a steward for every foreman." These demands are better than Woodcock's, and many can serve as a

basis for united action with revolutionary workers. One particular demand, however, is outright reactionary — the support of a contract veto by the skilled trades. This demand serves to re-inforce craft chauvinism, isolate the trades from the more powerful production workers, and in general further divide and weaken the union.

Even the correct demands are wielded by the Coalition in a treacherous way. Their original demand for "30 for 40" was regarded as a "practical" question, not because it represents the workers' needs but because the capitalists can accept it. When they found out that the capitalists wouldn't accept it, they lowered the demand to what seemed more reasonable, "32 for 40." This attitude applies not only



*Demonstrators at April 26, 1975 Washington rally for jobs shouted down Democratic politicians and trade union bureaucrats.*

to its program but to the Coalition's entire outlook. Pete Kelly, co-chairman of the UNC, emphasizes that "the fact that the Coalition terminates at the end of the contract ratification indicates that it is not a political thing."

But is it a "political thing," as is any current in the union, whether or not Kelly likes to admit it. The statement is also somewhat phony, given that the groupings in the Coalition have been collaborating for some time. What Kelly is actually trying to do is prevent the struggle for its demands to be anything more than a "contract thing," a struggle that might encourage the political mobilization of the workers. Such an approach will not be effective in fighting the class-dividing tactics of the companies and the Woodcocks but will only reinforce them.

Groups like the Coalition and the one coalescing around Runnels may play important roles in the future. They may gain support as the ranks press them to take actions that the more conservative bureaucrats refuse. Revolutionary autoworkers have the task of winning leadership not only from the entrenched officials but from the left-posturing out-bureaucrats as well. In this contest for leadership the revolutionaries have one immense advantage, their confidence that only their program can meet the needs of the workers. When the ranks' indignation explodes as it inevitably will, the revolutionary program will have a profound impact.

# The Contract Fight in Auto

One of the key contracts in a big contract year is the United Automobile Workers' bargaining round with the four domestic automakers. As the contract involves a traditionally militant union with a large base of black workers in a vital industry that has borne the brunt of the capitalist crisis in the U.S., advanced and revolutionary workers must see the contract struggle as an important test of strength between the bosses and the working class.

In order to understand the issues of the contract, the bargaining which begins in July with contract expirations in September should be framed against an assessment of the current balance of forces in auto. The industry at present is in an upswing, in line with the general pattern of consumer goods. With the exception of American Motors, the smallest of the auto companies, sales and production of cars are going at a significantly faster clip than at this time a year ago. This has meant a large amount of recalls and new hirings of workers since the disastrous years of '74 and '75.

But the hard facts are that by the end of the spring there were still 34,000 hourly employees on permanent layoff, with temporary layoffs occurring regularly. The auto magnates may be feeling more secure these days, but the crisis for autoworkers is still very much present. And further significant reduction in unemployment can by no means be assured.

This economic situation has made a deep imprint on the consciousness of rank and file autoworkers. Unemployed autoworkers as well as those "fortunate" to be facing the speed-up and disciplining of the workforce are angry over the bosses' attacks. Militant displays such as the recent strike at Ford Axle, called by the local leadership under pressure from the ranks, may be a sign of a step-up in activity. But up to the present the ranks have felt frustrated over how to effectively fight back.

This mood is not due to any desired passivity on the part of the ranks. The UAW bureaucracy has failed to lead a fight against the capitalist attacks. When the massive layoffs got into full swing in the fall of 1974, the immediate need was an equally massive and militant mobilization of auto and other workers for full employment — a nationwide general strike. What Woodcock offered instead was the February 15th rally in Washington last year, a diluted mobilization of

a few thousand auto workers that combined a mere veneer of militancy with a plug for the Democratic Party.

Even such minimal attempts at mobilization were later considered impractical, since workers got "out of hand" at the industrial unions' Washington rally on April 26, 1975, angrily demanded a fight for jobs and booed Hubert Humphrey and other Democratic Party hacks. Despite promises to the contrary, Woodcock has not scheduled any further demonstrations of this sort. The UAW's strategy is to counterpose electoral "action," via the Democrats especially, to the necessary mass action.

The actual severity of the autoworkers' crisis has largely been due to the inadequacies of past contracts these leaders have negotiated. The celebrated Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB) plan, which "guarantees" a liveable income to laid-off workers from company funds, was revealed to be a farce when the massive layoffs came. Chrysler's fund, for example, ran out as early as April of last year.

Then there is the Cost of Living Adjustment Clause (COLA), a plan that supposedly keeps wages up with inflation; it is considered a step above what other major unions have previously negotiated. But this plan actually means that autoworkers get one penny back for every three-penny rise in inflation, and this according to the government's rigged Consumer Price index. In other words, it is built-in that workers will not keep up with the soaring rate of inflation. All those gains won in the past which were won in struggle by the ranks, are now underfire.

To these failings should be added various contract formulations on both national and local levels which allow the bosses to run roughshod over the workers and allow union leaders to give them the green light because "its all in the contract." Notable in this category is the voluntary overtime scheme of 1973. This allows for various loopholes for overtime (e.g. critical plants, operative only after nine hours), and a tricky "concerted action" clause that can technically allow the bosses to discipline workers who merely talk with their brothers and sisters about refusing overtime. Many of these formulations, though, are subject to the balance of forces in the plants, and the bosses are not in a strong enough position generally to use "concerted action." Nevertheless, the potential danger of such schemes is real.

The union bureaucracy accepts and promotes capitalism and more specifically the rule of auto bosses. As a general method, it treats the contract rounds as the "time of struggle" for autoworkers and presents what few tidbits the bosses are willing to give as its goal. This year, the indications are that the sell-out will be particularly rank. The bureaucracy has not concealed its pleasure in the workers' quiescence, and Woodcock publicly announced that he had no desire for a strike and would prefer to use the "threat" of one — which he had just undermined.

The Production Workers Conference in January, followed by the Skilled Workers Conference in February provided more examples of the bureaucracy's desire to avoid confrontation with the bosses to defend the besieged past gains of the workers from the auto magnates' attack. A real production workers conference would have had rank and file-elected delegates mapping out a militant strategy. The January conference was a phony show for bureaucratically selected hacks who spent their time carping about imports (in effect attempting to divide the interests of American and foreign autoworkers) rather than promoting a united international stand for the upcoming struggle. The Skilled Workers Conference was even more rabid about protectionism, allowing Woodcock to posture as a "free trade unionist." It has been Woodcock, though, who in the past has fanned the protectionist flames. And his "free trade" motivation was the conception that in the current conjuncture American imperialism could rip off profits from other nations in a "free" world market to provide enough for "its" workers.

The March bargaining convention provided an even more graphic lead on the bureaucracy's perspectives. This convention is another of  
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