

1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour of action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International"

JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOLSHEVIK TENDENCY

No. 22



2000



ELVINE BRIERE

Proletarian Internationalism—Not Protectionism! **Globalization & Its Discontents**

John F. Kennedy's celebrated early 1960s observation that "a rising tide lifts all boats" has been amply refuted by the bull market of the past decade, which has chiefly benefited yacht owners. Many in smaller craft are anxious about the future, and deeply distrustful of capitalist ideologues who celebrate the growth of social inequality in a "globalized" world economy.

The defining feature of the political system regularly touted by America's corporate media as "the world's great-

est democracy" is that only candidates backed by multi-millionaires can get elected. As a result, electoral contests tend to revolve around issues of how best to promote the interests of multi-millionaires. Many of the concerns and priorities of the average voter normally never find electoral expression. Middle America may be more naively religious and patriotic than its rulers, but it is also less attached to notions of "free-market" infallibility and the sanctity of social privileges for the elite. At the same time, the racist, right-



DAVID BACON

AFL-CIO bigwigs in Seattle: Linda Chavez-Thompson, John Sweeney, James Hoffa

wing populists who rail against "tax-and-spend" liberals and oppose abortion, affirmative action and welfare find it necessary to swear allegiance to Social Security and other entitlements provided by "big government."

Public-opinion surveys in the U.S. routinely reveal widespread hostility toward big banks and corporations, and a conviction, held by a majority of Americans, that the current economic system is inherently unfair. Such attitudes are not deemed "newsworthy" by the corporate media, which, particularly since the Vietnam War, has been acutely conscious of its duty to shape political opinion in accordance with the maintenance of social stability. Normally, permissible expressions of "left-wing" opinion do not go beyond the old-fashioned idea that government should pressure corporations to behave in a socially responsible manner, and provide some relief for those whose lives are crushed beneath the wheels of the "globalization" juggernaut. On the right, utopian ideologues of unregulated competition assert that the accumulation of capital is the highest and noblest form of human endeavour, and argue that the only useful function of government is to remove obstacles to this estimable pursuit and to protect the exploiters from their victims.

Occasionally, events too important to ignore occur outside the framework of the "politics as usual" covered by the mass media. Such events illuminate, if only for a moment, the profound alienation felt by vast layers of citizens who are normally too cynical about the "democratic process" to even bother to register an opinion. The mobilization against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle last November was one such event. The determination of the mainly youthful protesters who shut down the WTO caught both cops and media by surprise. What particularly alarmed the ruling class was the extent to which this willingness to defy authority and resist the "inevitability" of corporate control, resonated with tens of millions of ordinary Americans sitting at home watching events on television.

In the widely anticipated follow-up to Seattle, 15,000 protesters demonstrated against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. in mid-April. This time, the media provided plenty of advance coverage, much of it advertising the cops' "proactive, precautionary and preventive" contingency plans to corral the demonstrators. On 15 April, the day before the main IMF protest was scheduled, police seized the organizers' headquarters,

and illegally arrested 678 participants in a demonstration initiated by the Workers' World Party to "Shut Down the Prison-Industrial Complex, Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!" The youthful arrestees were charged with "parading without a permit," despite the fact that a permit had been obtained, and the police had consented to the march route. For many of the participants, this was a valuable lesson in the practical limits of "democratic rights" that collide with the priorities of the powerful capitalist interests for whom "law and order" is maintained.

Reprinted below is the text of a leaflet our comrades distributed in Washington:

Several events during the past year have highlighted a mood of rising popular resistance among young people to the capitalist world order. On June 18 last year in London, thousands of demonstrators caught authorities by surprise when they staged a day-long "carnival against capitalism" in the financial district to coincide with a G-7 summit in Cologne. The media wrote this off as the work of anarchist fringe elements, but the 50,000 protesters at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting last November in Seattle were not so easily dismissed. Today in Washington, the "sometimes scattershot anti-corporate youth movement" (as the *New York Times* describes it) confronts the twin pillars of the global imperialist financial order: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

These demonstrations have involved a range of politically disparate elements, many with sharply conflicting programs. But most of the protesters share a concern about the social consequences of the pursuit of short-term profit. Youth today see working people thrown out of jobs and peasants driven off their land; they watch the social gains won by past generations being shredded as the biosphere is degraded by the toxic emissions of transnational corporations. They live in a world where hundreds of millions of

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Editorial Board: M. Hayes, B. Logan, T. Riley

Signed articles or letters do not necessarily represent the viewpoint of the International Bolshevik Tendency.

Subscription: U.S. \$10/4 issues

Order from/pay to:
BT, Box 332, Adelaide St. Stn.,
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closing date: 5 May 2000

No Faith in Capitalist Courts!

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

The struggle to save Mumia Abu-Jamal, America's most famous political prisoner, is moving toward a climax. Mumia, a former Black Panther, has been behind bars since 1982 when he was framed for the killing of Daniel Faulkner, a Philadelphia cop.

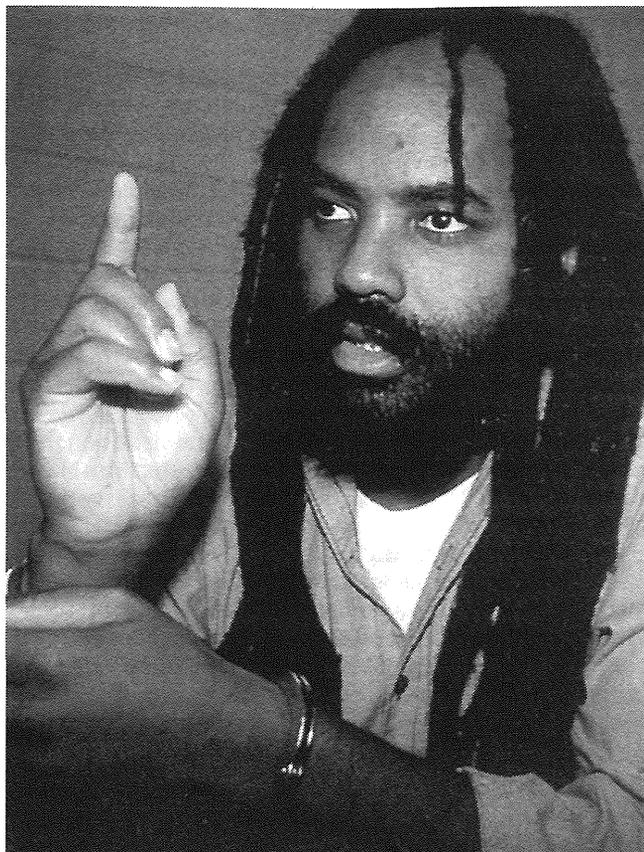
On 22 April 1999, Mumia's legal team filed a writ of *certiorari* before the U.S. Supreme Court, which was tossed out on 4 October when the court announced that it would not hear the appeal. Nine days later, on 13 October 1999, Governor Tom Ridge signed a second death warrant for Mumia. The first one in 1995 was nullified when Mumia was granted a stay following a wave of international protests. The second warrant was also stayed when Federal Judge William H. Yohn Jr. agreed to consider Mumia's request for an evidentiary hearing on a petition for a writ of *habeas corpus*. If granted, this will permit Mumia's defense team to introduce a wealth of new evidence that has been painstakingly excavated since 1982. It will also provide an opportunity to demonstrate how Mumia's constitutional rights were violated in his original trial. Every attempt by his attorneys to present evidence in 1995 during the Post-Conviction Relief hearings was blocked by extremely prejudicial rulings from presiding judge Albert Sabo, the "King of Death Row," who had conducted the original frame-up.

During the prosecution's closing summation at the original trial, the district attorney assured the jurors: "If you find the Defendant guilty of course there would be appeal after appeal and perhaps there could be a reversal of the case, or whatever, so that may not be final" (cited in L. Weinglass, *Race for Justice*). U.S. courts have previously established that urging a jury to find a defendant guilty, while suggesting that their decision may later be reversed, is, in itself, sufficient grounds for throwing out the conviction. Like many arguments presented by the defense, however, this has been repeatedly dismissed out of hand by the Pennsylvania judiciary.

The district attorney's argument is all the more macabre since the appeals process has been short-circuited by Bill Clinton's "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act," which was pushed through in the wake of the deranged rightist bombing of the Oklahoma federal building in 1995. This act guts federal *habeas corpus* by discouraging federal courts from examining state convictions, thereby speeding up the machinery of death. An evidentiary hearing before Judge Yohn would not only be Mumia's first real opportunity to officially present new evidence, it is likely to be his only chance. In terms of legal options, a great deal depends on whether or not Mumia is granted the hearing he has requested.

Ultimately, the legal proceedings in the courthouse will be shaped by political considerations—especially the numbers and level of activity of Mumia's supporters, particularly within the labor movement. The only reason that Mumia was not executed in 1995 was because of the scope of the protests in the U.S. and internationally.

Comrades of the International Bolshevik Tendency



TERRY—GAMMA LIAISON

Mumia Abu-Jamal: exposing racist American 'justice'

(IBT) have regularly participated in the campaign to save Mumia in the localities where we exist. In the San Francisco Bay Area, our comrades have worked with the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia (LAC), which has done valuable work in bringing the campaign into the labor movement, and which helped initiate the International Longshore and Warehouse Union's (ILWU) historic one-day West Coast port shutdown in April 1999 in solidarity with Mumia. The LAC has held public forums on the case, provided speakers for union meetings and organized labor contingents in demonstrations for Mumia.

A fund-raising "Party for Mumia" held by the LAC on 14 February was forced to change venues twice as a result of police intimidation. Originally scheduled for "Sweet Jimmy's," a black nightclub in Oakland frequented by longshore and postal workers, the event had to be moved when the owner canceled the booking after receiving threatening phone calls from the police. In a gesture of solidarity, the "Open World Conference in Defense of Trade Union Independence" offered the LAC space they had previously booked for a social at the Bay View Boat Club. But, at the last minute, the boat club also backed out. The ILWU saved the day by providing Local 10's View Room for the party, which succeeded in raising \$2,000 for Mumia's defense.

Our German comrades in the Gruppe Spartakus (GS) participated in a major demonstration for Mumia in Berlin on 5 February, which drew 8,000 people from across Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. On 10 March the GS sponsored a successful united-front demonstration in Mönchengladbach with Blockbuster/Youth Against Racism, the Party of Democratic Socialism (the successor to the former East German ruling party) and other anti-fascist groups.

In Britain, our comrades have played a central role, along with anarchist militants, in organizing "Mumia Must Live!" (MML)—a united front launched in February 1999 on the basis of two slogans: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal" and "Abolish the Racist Death Penalty." Mumia Must Live! has sponsored a number of significant events in London, including an emergency response rally last October following Ridge's signing of the second death warrant, and a 150-person rally the next month to protest the circulation of anti-Mumia disinformation in the capitalist media. On 4 March, MML sponsored a demonstration that drew 1,000 people to Trafalgar Square, in the largest Mumia defense rally in Britain so far.

In the course of building the March demonstration there were several intense discussions within Mumia Must Live!, particularly after the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) joined. The SWP contributed significant resources, and has given MML a much higher profile. At the same time, SWPers have made several attempts to include, as part of MML's basis of unity, a demand for the U.S. courts to retry Mumia. Our comrades and some of the anarchists were opposed to including this demand, and after some to-ing and fro-ing, the SWP relented, and agreed to only raise it in their own name.

The SWP is not alone among Mumia's supporters in attempting to make a new trial the focus of the defense campaign. In the 1960s and early 70s, there was a wave of demonstrations in the U.S. in defense of the chairman of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton. Anyone who had raised a call for giving Newton a "New Trial" at one of these "Free Huey" rallies would have been regarded as either extremely dubious or insane. Today, some of the same "revolutionary" groups who called for freeing Huey are advocating a "new trial" for Mumia. They rationalize this adaptation to liberalism as a tactic to enhance the campaign's mainstream appeal and thus make it easier to obtain celebrity endorsements from ephemeral glitterati.

We take a different approach, and recall Leon Trotsky's injunction to "speak the truth to the masses." And the truth is that the U.S. judicial system is shot through with racism and class bias. While every possible legal avenue must be pursued in the campaign to save Mumia's life, the best way to protect him is not to pander to liberal illusions in the impartiality of the courts, but to use his frame-up to expose the whole corrupt system of racist capitalist injustice, and thus help win a new generation of youth to the program of socialist revolution.

The IBT published the following statement on 28 February:

The campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther framed for the 1981 killing of a policeman, is reaching a critical stage. Over the past 18 years, as Mumia has sat on death row in Pennsylvania, his case has won worldwide attention and the campaign to save his life has steadily gained momentum. Trade unionists around the world, from Brazil, to South Africa and New Zealand have taken

up his case. In the U.S., the longshore union shut down all the ports on the Pacific Coast for a day last April as a gesture of solidarity with this class-war prisoner.

Mumia was a founding member of the Philadelphia branch of the Black Panther Party in the 1960s. He subsequently won a reputation as the "Voice of the Voiceless" for his work as a reporter and his fearless criticisms of police brutality and racist persecution. The Philly cops knew him and hated him—his FBI file alone is over 700 pages.

He was convicted in a farcical trial presided over by Judge Albert Sabo, a life-long supporter of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), and a well-known "hanging judge." Sabo also handled Mumia's 1995 appeal for "post-conviction relief" where he ruled in favor of his original decision.

In January of this year, federal judge William Yohn in Philadelphia agreed to hear challenges to Sabo's "findings of fact" in the case. Mumia's attorneys have documented 29 separate claims of constitutional violations in a petition for a federal writ of *habeas corpus* to overturn his conviction. (A copy of the defense memorandum can be found on the internet at mojo.calyx.net/~refuse/mumia/court.html).

Judge Yohn is scheduled to begin considering defense arguments in April. This hearing, at the federal district court level, is Mumia's only opportunity to introduce new evidence into the official record. Subsequent appeals in higher federal courts are bound to only review evidence heard in the district court. The defense is seeking to present new evidence, including statements from key prosecution witnesses at Mumia's original trial, that their testimony had been coerced by the Philly police. Sabo refused to admit these admissions on the bizarre grounds that these witnesses, who had provided the "evidence" for Mumia's original conviction, were no longer "credible."

The outcome of these hearings is impossible to predict. In a memo issued in late January, C. Clark Kissinger, who is close to Mumia's legal team, outlined a series of possibilities. The judge could permit new evidence to be heard and then overturn the conviction. But he could also deny an evidentiary hearing and uphold Sabo's decision. He could also let the guilty verdict stand, but ask the Pennsylvania courts to reconsider whether the sentence should be execution or life imprisonment. He could also rule that Mumia's conviction was unconstitutional without hearing any new evidence. In that case, the state would likely appeal, thus setting the stage for a subsequent decision on the basis of the "facts" established by Sabo's kangaroo court.

'Free Mumia' or 'Re-Try Mumia'?

Mumia's case is at bottom about politics—not legalities. The reason that he was not executed after his death warrant was signed in 1995 is because there was a groundswell of popular political protest that exposed the racist vendetta by the Philly cops and courts. In November 1999 the national conference of the FOP, the largest police organization in the U.S., called for "boycotting" anyone who spoke out for Mumia, and singled out popular entertainers like Sting and Rage Against the Machine. The capitalist media has ignored the sinister implications of this unprecedented campaign of police intimidation. But it is a powerful confirmation of the fundamentally political character of this case.

Within the movement to defend Mumia an important disagreement has arisen over the political direction of the campaign. Some who once called for "freeing" Mumia are now calling for him to be re-tried. While it is necessary to pursue every possible legal avenue, the demand for winning freedom for Mumia must remain the political focus of

the defense campaign.

Every fair-minded person who investigates this case can see that it is a classic frame-up. Every activist in his defense campaign knows that Mumia is *innocent*—which is why the prosecutors had to coerce witnesses and suppress evidence at his original trial. Why then should we focus on a call for the same racist state to re-try him?

In January 1927 when the International Labor Defense (ILD) campaigned in defense of Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian anarchist immigrants framed for a murder they did not commit, James P. Cannon, National Secretary of the ILD at the time, wrote:

"One policy is the policy of class struggle. It puts the center of gravity in the protest movement of the workers of America and the world. It puts all faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the justice of the courts. While favoring all possible legal proceedings, it calls for agitation, publicity, demonstrations.... This is what has prevented the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti so far. Its goal is nothing less than their triumphant vindication and liberation.

"The other policy is the policy of 'respectability,' of the 'soft pedal' and of ridiculous illusions about 'justice' from the courts of the enemy.... It tries to represent the martyrdom of Sacco and Vanzetti as an 'unfortunate' error which can be rectified by the 'right' people proceeding in the 'right' way."

—"Who Can Save Sacco and Vanzetti?," reprinted in
Notebook of an Agitator

If Mumia's conviction is overturned, the prosecutors are likely to demand a new round of legal hearings. What will the "revolutionaries" who are now calling for a new trial say then?

Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, subject of a recently released film, was targeted by the FBI and local police after he advocated black self-defense against racist cop terror. He was

convicted of murder in 1967 on the testimony of two petty crooks whom the prosecutors paid \$10,500. In 1976, after the state's "witnesses" recanted their testimony, Carter was granted a new trial only to have it turn into a re-run of the original frame-up. In 1985, after 18 years in jail, a federal court judge granted his *habeas corpus* petition and released him. The prosecution initially threatened to try him yet again, but ultimately decided not to.

In 1997, when Geronimo Pratt, former Black Panther Party Deputy Minister of Defense, was finally released from jail after serving 27 years on a bogus murder charge, the prosecutors talked of forcing him to face a re-trial. In Pratt's case, the FBI's own wiretaps and surveillance logs proved that he had been 500 miles away when the murder was committed. His real "crime," like that of Mumia and Hurricane Carter, was that the cops and state authorities considered him their enemy.

Liberals, civil libertarians and others who have confidence in the integrity of capitalist legality may view Mumia's case as a product of collusion between a few corrupt cops, an over-zealous district attorney and a racist judge. Such people may indeed be more comfortable with a campaign which sets as its goal a new trial for Mumia, but they are also likely to accept the result, including a second guilty verdict.

The entire state apparatus exists to defend social inequality and perpetuate racial, sexual and class oppression. Mumia's campaign has already helped expose the workings of a system which routinely puts innocent people on death row. Why should we drop the call for his freedom in favor of calling for a new trial which might only provide an alibi for his execution? Mumia's case is a political one and ultimately it is through a political appeal to the workers' movement, the black community and other layers of the oppressed that we will win his freedom. ■

Bristol Anarchists Run Amok

For United-Front Defense of Mumia!

Reprinted below is an exchange from a British Mumia Abu-Jamal e-mail list. The first item was posted on 4 March by an anarchist attempting to justify an assault on members of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) during a Mumia demonstration in Bristol which led to a split in the local Mumia support group. While written by an individual, the letter expresses attitudes that are widespread in anarchist circles. The second item is a response posted on 8 March from a supporter of the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) who is active in the Mumia Must Live! (MML) campaign in London.

Swat the Swipes!

No Platform for the SWP in Bristol Free Mumia Group About Today's Mumia Demo and the SWP

The actions of the Socialist Workers Party [SWP] at today's Free Mumia demonstration in Bristol has caused a split between the Party [SWP] and the rest of the Bristol group. Does the Party have an ulterior motive behind joining the Free Mumia campaign nationally? Does the SWP view selling copies of *Socialist Worker* [as] more important than working cooperatively to prevent Mumia's execution? Unfortunately, we think the answers to these questions are

yes. After the Socialist Workers Party exposed itself today to be no more than a mere opportunist, using Mumia Abu-Jamal's life as [a] means to further its own political agenda, the procession in Bristol split in two with the second group deciding to take an alternative route to the SWP's. As the group reflected on the day's events, it decided that there is a greater chance to help save Mumia without the distractions of the SWP's recruitment operations and diversionary tactics.

The following is an account of our experiences with the Party.

As you may have experienced yourself, the Bristol Free Mumia Group has had problems with the SWP's interest in joining the campaign, in particular with its inability to operate as individuals, in such a plural and non-partisan/neutral campaign. The SWoPies recent interest in the International Day of Action for Mumia seems to be the same as the rest of its long history of attempts to hijack popular movements (Poll-Tax, Marlon Thomas campaign, and most recently N30). The presence of Party members at meetings, flyer-drops and demos appears to be just another recruitment drive—although this time it is even more sick-

ening as they are capitalising on the emotions and anger surrounding the imminent execution of a political prisoner. Unsurprisingly the SWP commented on its hard work for Mumia over the last few weeks, despite the fact that he's been on death row for 17 years and the Bristol group has been active for over 5 years.

Although we were sceptical of their involvement we were glad to have more bodies onboard to progress the campaign. We did try to make some preliminary and honourable agreements to start with, to avoid the problems we expected.

1. Publicity—no party politics, information must remain non-partisan to provide information about Mumia with no attempts to pursue other agendas. Although this was agreed, the posters we received (from London) did have a very SWP look about them. We countered this with our more imaginative posters and both were flyposted all over the city.

2. No party speakers at the public meeting—this applied to all parties, and it took a great deal of effort for the SWP to agree. This took a couple of meetings to confirm but they then wanted a union member from Rolls-Royce to speak (do you think that they may have been SWoPies too?), we refused this as well because we did not see the relevance of the union's presence. Instead we agreed (the SWP too) to have speakers from the London Free Mumia campaign [and] Amnesty International because of the recent report on Mumia's case and its uncompromising international campaign against the death penalty. Members of the former Friends of MOVE were unable to attend as was Marie Mullvey Roberts, a Bristol lecturer specialising in death-row literature (author of a book on poems from death row together with B. Zephaniah and member of Life-lines).

On the whole the meeting was successful with over 60 people attending....

However, conflict occurred when a suggestion concerning the selling of ANY PAPERS at the demo was made. Although the main concern was with the SWP, it did relate to all papers. Although most people wanted no papers to be sold, non-SWoPies suggested compromises of 50% donation from sales, or no sales until all neutral Mumia-specific

information had been given out. Despite this, and after a lengthy hour-long debate which smoked out the party members who were present...the SWP refused to guarantee anything of the sort. Instead the SWP's last comment was that they would turn up with papers, SWP placards and banners, and trade-union banners (the last of which we had no real problems with although it would be better to have no organisation's presence).

The SWP then stated that it had mobilised the poll-tax rebellion and many other similar movements, claims which were spurious and insulting to say the least. The SWP also commented on its financial contribution to the campaign, although we did receive their posters and flyers from London, etc., no monies were contributed to the group and we did our own leaflets and photocopying too. Not to mention hiring the meeting room and speaker's travel expenses.

As expected they had done their best to mobilise on today's demo. Paper sellers, placards, recruitment petitions and all their renowned activities were in full force. Even though they had placards with Mumia Must Live, on the back there was the SWP headers, and the banners were SWP platforms as well. We had made our own banners and placards which simply stated Mumia Must Live, Abolish the Racist Death Penalty, etc., all of these were neutral/non-partisan. Many people were sickened with the SWP's attempts to use Mumia's life for ulterior motives and the Party's mere presence had put many people off from turning up. For some people the propaganda, party-platform, and petitions which had not been discussed was a step too far. At this point some non-SWoPies liberated some of the *Socialist Worker* papers and also the petition, [and] the papers were ripped up because of the disrespect shown to the campaign and more importantly Mumia himself. Some of the SWP responded by hitting people with their placard sticks. The scuffle ensued for a minute or two and then the SWP contingent started marching towards town shouting things like "freedom of expression" and encouraging people to join them because they were there for Mumia and not for violence. There were about 100 in their group and 40 people stayed with us....

After the demo we regrouped and discussed the events of the day, where most people agreed that the SWP exposed themselves as opportunists which had clarified the issue. One of the group said that he also thought that they had not put their heart into the campaign and all agreed that our focus was much clearer. As such we have decided to have an active split with them, which basically comes down to ignoring them. If they decide to do their own thing then it is more publicity for Mumia, if not, then so be it. We realise that the so-called united front that the SWP talk about is meaningless politician-speak, and creative, determined action in which everyone has equal say is so much more powerful. The Bristol Free Mumia Group has agreed to place quality before quantity, and empty, lifeless mass organisation is no substitute for an egalitarian and honest approach.

We will be upping the ante as far as the campaign goes and more meetings, information, flying and actions are being planned. Also, Interference FM (Bristol) will be broadcasting in support of Mumia on Sunday with info about the campaign and with some of Mumias readings as well as the usual conscious tunes.

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!!!!

Ona Move!!!!

Mumia Must Be Free!!

Martin (for the Bristol Group)

MML United-Front Motion

The following motion was passed in early April, after some discussion, by the London MML campaign. It was posted to the British Mumia Abu-Jamal e-mail list on 15 April:

"That the Mumia Must Live support group reaffirms the two slogans 'Free Mumia Abu-Jamal' and 'Abolish the Racist Death Penalty' as the political basis for membership in the united front. All participants are free to advance their own views in their own name at MML events, as long as these do not contradict these slogans. Written material produced in the name of Mumia Must Live must prominently include these two slogans and other information must be limited to statements of fact. MML contains groups and individuals who may favour a variety of tactics to achieve our goal of Mumia's freedom, such as calls for a new trial or for strikes in the workers' movement, or petitions to the U.S. authorities, etc. But MML does not take positions on the relative merits of tactics advocated by its components. Anyone speaking on behalf of Mumia Must Live must limit themselves to the commonly agreed basis of unity."

Reply by IBT Supporter

One of the most striking things about the split in the Bristol Mumia campaign is the lack of clarity about the political issues involved. This incident illustrates for me the importance of two things—first, the need to be clear about the basis of our unity and, second, the need to recognise that the Mumia campaign includes people and organisations with a range of political views. If we try to pretend this isn't the case, either to ourselves or the public, then sooner or later the agreement we do have will be impossible to sustain.

The Bristol split is presented by some comrades as a disagreement over whether constituent groups in the Mumia campaign, and particularly the SWP, have the right to an independent profile at united-front events through paper sales, placards, banners and speaking in their own name, etc. At the same time, those who would exclude the SWP are happy to invite Amnesty International and Friends of MOVE (whose political positions are just as distinctive as those of the SWP) to speak in their own names.

Comrade Martin may complain about the SWP's separate "agenda," but it is clear to me that he and the others who want to exclude the SWP are pushing their own political agenda. (This censorship is something akin to the exclusion of groups identified as communist from the "anti-capitalist" MayDay2000 events.) I share Tony's objections to Martin's use of the "No Platform" slogan towards the SWP—this is a policy for dealing with the fascist foot soldiers of the class enemy, not for fellow members of the movement of the workers and oppressed. I hope that all members of MML deplore the appalling actions of those who tore up copies of *Socialist Worker*. Physical violence in any form has no place in the workers' movement.

The outrageously sectarian proposal to exclude trade unions, as well as left groups, from Mumia defence rallies flies in the face of Mumia's wishes. On 6 September 1999, "Labor Day" in North America, Mumia released the following statement entitled "A Salute to Labor's Strength":

"When one considers the recent actions of labor in support of this fight for justice and freedom, one can only be deeply and profoundly impressed. The Teach-Ins, the Brazilian Teachers' 2-hour work stoppage, the unprecedented Coast-wide ILWU [dockers' union] shutdown of the ports on 24th April last, the international workers' actions in support of the *Neptune Jade* defendants in relation to dockers in Liverpool; we are witnessing something remarkable; the internationalization of support and struggle for fellow workers. I thank and applaud the Labor Action Committee for your principled support! I see this battle as only growing in strength, as it broadens and deepens its reach; and as it challenges capital's lust for death; and as it supports the cause of life, of freedom, and of justice. Isalute you! As a recent member of the National Writers Union (affiliated with the UAW, and through them, the AFL-CIO) I join you as we broaden this fight, as we labor on behalf of a better world, and a better life!"

Comrades of the International Bolshevik Tendency in San Francisco, who have been active in the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, have actively sought to involve the ILWU and other unions in Mumia's defence.

The attempt to exclude the SWP (or others who dare present ideas not approved by comrade Martin and his friends) can only weaken the movement to win Mumia's freedom. All views on the left have a right to be heard—let people figure out for themselves who is worth listening to and who is an idiot, an "opportunist" or a "sectarian." We



London, 4 March: 1,000 at Trafalgar Square Mumia demo

are not afraid to politically criticise the SWP (see, for example, the current issue of our *Marxist Bulletin*) and as a result our comrades have on occasion been subject to undemocratic measures by the SWP. But that does not change our attitude at all.

Within our united front, different groups should be able to put forward their own ideas, in their own names, about Mumia's case, as well as the wider social issues surrounding it. We must defend the right to discussion, debate and political criticism at all MML events for every group that is prepared to work on the basis of our two demands—"Free Mumia Abu-Jamal" and "Abolish the Racist Death Penalty." Of course anyone who speaks on behalf of the united front, rather than one of its constituent groups, must limit themselves to the agreed demands and a simple explanation of the facts of the case.

Finally, I think it is important that MML does not add a call for a retrial to its basis of unity. Judge Yohn can rule that Mumia should go free—why should we demand anything less? The demand for a retrial can create illusions in the racist justice system in America. And a retrial can result in a new frame-up, as it did for Hurricane Carter. Yet while I oppose adding such a demand to the basis of unity of MML, I believe that those (like the SWP) who want to call for a new trial should be free to do so in their own name.

Alan,
for the IBT

Globalization...

continued from page 2

human lives are destroyed by hopeless poverty and disease. At the same time, obscene aggregations of wealth are piled up by a tiny elite: it is estimated that today the income of the world's 500 richest individuals exceeds the combined income of half of humanity—three billion people.

Bill Gates, one of the privileged 500, and an official co-host of the Seattle WTO confab, unctuously intoned:

"The greater the success of this meeting at establishing fair and predictable conditions for expanded world trade, the better the future prospects not only for our own economy but for global prosperity."

—*New York Times*, 29 November 1999

But "success" never materialized as 20,000 protesters blockaded the meeting hall and turned the conference into a debacle. One corporate consultancy firm, "Black, Kelly, Scruggs & Healy," described events in Seattle as "an alarming window on the future," and produced a "Compendium of Activists at the WTO Ministerial" listing 49 of the organizations involved. It was quite a melange: trade unionists, feminist "witches," Christians, anarchists and eco-activists concerned about turtles, butterflies and rain forests.

The AFL-CIO rally that drew 30,000 unionists was a dull and rigidly-controlled affair in which the pro-capitalist labor tops reiterated their usual litany of reformist and chauvinist nostrums. The main objective of the labor bureaucrats was to get a seat at the table, and so they were immensely pleased to be invited to participate in a WTO "working group."

Far more significant was the action of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) which closed all West Coast ports for the first day of the WTO meeting. This is the second time in less than a year that the dockers' union has shut down the coast in a political protest action (the first time was in April 1999 in solidarity with black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal). The ILWU leadership is ultimately as pro-capitalist as the rest of the American labor establishment, but they sit atop a union with a militant tradition and a relatively combative membership. The ILWU's demonstration of union muscle was considered too dangerous for the *New York Times* to report. It preferred to concentrate on de-

WTO Secretary-General Mike Moore in Seattle



nunciations of the "violence" by a handful of youthful window-breakers.

Perhaps the most significant thing about the Seattle demonstration was that the union bureaucrats, environmental lobbyists, consumer advocates and NGO staffers did not call the shots. The direct action of thousands of protesters made the impact. Opinion polls after the event confirmed that for every demonstrator on the streets in Seattle, there were thousands of people back home cheering them on. Sizable anti-WTO demonstrations also took place in Manila, London and New Delhi along with smaller ones in Prague, Paris, Berlin, Geneva and across North America.

Setback for 'Globalizers'

Bill Clinton cynically attempted to co-opt the dissidents by meeting with a few union bureaucrats and promising to push for trade sanctions to enforce "core" labor standards. As police beat protesters outside, Clinton told the assembled delegates:

"What they are telling us in the streets is that this is an issue we've been silent on...and we won't be silent anymore."

—*New York Times*, 2 December 1999

Clinton's immediate objective was to enhance Al Gore's presidential prospects, but the Indian, Brazilian and other "third-world" delegates immediately recognized that WTO-imposed labor and environmental standards would be used by the U.S. and other imperialist powers as a protectionist instrument. Working people in the semi-colonies will get no support from the imperialist overlords in their struggles. What they need in their battles with their domestic rulers and the transnationals is active internationalist labor solidarity.

Clinton's talk of mandated labor standards helped derail the attempt to extend the WTO's mandate over agriculture and "services" (i.e., education, healthcare, housing, transport, libraries and other public-sector activities.) WTO Secretary-General Mike Moore, a former prime minister of New Zealand, complained that:

"he was shafted by the Americans. He won't say it publicly, but once President Bill Clinton decided to use Seattle to back Al Gore's presidential run, there was no way to get the thing back on track."

—*Sunday Star Times*, Auckland, 26 March

Business Week, the *Economist* and every other major business publication internationally acknowledged that the protestors had come out on top in Seattle.

Life Doesn't Have to Be This Way

The young protesters who stood side by side in the streets for the first time discovered both the efficacy of mass action and the extreme brutality with which capitalist "order" is maintained. Seattle cops repeatedly attacked peaceful protesters with billy clubs, pepper spray, concussion grenades, tear gas and rubber bullets. Buying, selling or carrying gas masks was prohibited within city limits. Many demonstrators were injured and over 500 were arrested, although most charges have since been dropped.

The confrontation at the WTO confab represented the highest point of broad-based mass resistance to the effects of capitalism in the U.S. since the 1970s. It was a novel event for a generation whose experience has been shaped by a string of defeats and retreats for the left: from the fall of the Soviet Union to the collapse of leftist insurrectionary move-



Seattle police attack protesters

ments from Latin America to South Africa. The neo-liberal insistence on the omnipotence of the market that has so permeated the world's mass social-democratic labor parties has also had its effects in the extra-parliamentary left. The events in Seattle resonated with rebellious youth around the world because they revealed, on a small scale, that popular resistance to the elites is not necessarily futile and that a different kind of future is at least a tangible possibility.

Lessons from the 1960s

It is hardly surprising that the forces gathered for mass action against symbols of imperial power are today a very mixed bag. For earlier generations there was an assumption that if you didn't like capitalism you could always support one or another brand of "Communism." But the demise of the bureaucratized "actually existing socialism" of the former Soviet bloc has been widely interpreted as proof that a modern industrial economy can only be organized on the basis of a competitive market system. Consequently most youth who hate the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the rest of the international agencies of imperial rule, do not identify themselves as socialists.

Despite this difference, the social and political character of many of the forces gathered in Seattle last year was not so very different from the forces that in 1968 shook the established order from Paris to Chicago. Then, as now, insurgent youth mixed anti-authoritarianism, utopianism and idealist third-worldism with liberal, single-issue reformism. Then, as now, the denominator sufficiently common to allow fleeting unity was a vague "anti-capitalism," subject to a wide variety of interpretations. For some capitalism was an eternal evil to be kept in check through trust-busting and regulation. Others were prepared to strike more rhetorically radical postures but usually lacked clear conceptions about how the existing social system could be uprooted or what should replace it.

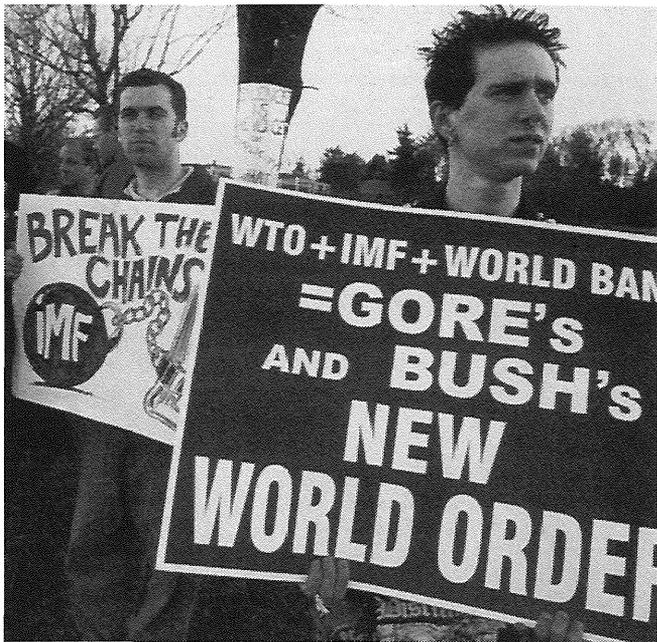
The rebel youth of the 1960s were shaped by the ultimately successful military struggle, led by the Vietnamese Communist Party, to drive U.S. imperialism out of South East Asia. Today Stalinism in all its variants has lost its allure, and the default political identification for dissident youth is "anarchism," which can mean anything from vegetarian lifestylism to syndicalist trade unionism.

The turn of the 1960s New Left toward Stalinism was marked by a rash of political exclusions and physical attacks on adherents of rival groupings. Those who practiced such "hard" tactics imagined that they were demonstrating revolutionary firmness, but in reality the attempt to suppress other points of view within the radical left blocked the process of political development toward a genuinely revolutionary praxis.

Regrettably some of the same tendencies are evident today among elements of the "anti-authoritarian" left. In Britain, the anarchist movers behind last year's June 18 demonstrations are currently planning a major "Mayday 2000" celebration where Marxists are not going to be permitted to run workshops or sell literature. The organizers' rationale is that "unless you are non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian and anti-state you are not anti-capitalist." There is something downright Pythonesque about one group of leftists excluding others for being insufficiently "anti-authoritarian." Such behavior ensures that the necessary process of thinking through "what is to be done" will be short-circuited.

Revolution vs. Reformism

In participating in struggles against the symptoms of capitalist rule (e.g., poverty, racism, sexism, unemployment or environmental degradation) revolutionaries seek to explain the necessity to overturn the social system which produces them. Important victories can be won through



STEVE RUBIN—CORBIS SYGMA

WTO/IMF can't be fixed—expropriate the expropriators!

struggles around particular issues, but any concessions gained can later be reversed as long as social priorities are determined by the pursuit of private profit rather than human need.

"Globalization" has always been a feature of capitalism, as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels observed a century and a half ago in the *Communist Manifesto*:

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

"The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country....In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production."

Revolutionaries oppose the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank as imperialist agencies, but we do not imagine that if they were to disappear tomorrow, the market system could somehow be made to "serve the people." However capitalism is organized, it will always be characterized by oppression, poverty and war.

The starting point for building effective resistance to imperialism is the recognition that our main enemy is at home, i.e., our own ruling class. The AFL-CIO leadership, which for generations has acted as a tool of American corporations in undermining militant workers' movements around the world, today pushes the poison of trade protectionism and national economic retrenchment as the answer to capitalist "globalization." In particular, the union bureaucrats are trying to direct popular protests away from resistance to U.S. corporate power and toward a focus on China bashing. Their campaign, which combines a noxious mixture of "yellow-peril" racism, anti-communism and chauvinist "human rights" hypocrisy, plays right into the

hands of Pat Buchanan and other reactionary "Fortress America" demagogues.

Half a century ago the Chinese masses, led by Mao Tse Tung's Communist Party, carried out a social revolution that expropriated the foreign capitalists. Owing to the absence of revolutionary working-class leadership, the result was a deformed workers' state, qualitatively similar to the USSR under Stalin. The U.S. and its allies, stung by the "loss" of China, have never given up their ambition to reassert control over this strategically important country. Washington sees China's integration into the WTO as a means of promoting this objective. Revolutionary Marxists adamantly oppose the restoration of capitalism in China, while advocating a working-class political revolution against the venal and repressive Chinese bureaucracy whose policies are paving the way for that restoration. At the same time, we oppose any imperialist trade sanctions against China.

Despite rhetorical commitments to "free trade," questions of trade and flag are as intertwined as ever. All the major capitalist powers engage in one or another form of protectionism. The U.S. uses "anti-dumping" duties, while Japan relies on complex regulatory requirements. In the European Union agricultural producers get an annual \$44 billion subsidy.

Contemporary capitalism is characterized by an increasing drive to move money and goods internationally in pursuit of maximum profit. Even so, capital retains a national identity to the extent that, politically and militarily, the profiteers remain organized on a national basis. Global capitalism is administered by a patchwork of national states. As the interests of the major powers diverge, the contradiction between the international extension of capital and its national roots will strain the framework of the IMF, WTO, World Bank and other institutions designed to ameliorate inter-imperialist antagonisms. This will lead to overt trade wars between competing imperialist blocs. Economic conflict between the major powers has twice in the past century led to world wars. If that were to occur again, it could very well mean a thermonuclear World War III, an event which would threaten the very existence of human civilization.

But it is also possible for humanity to transcend the irrationality of global capitalist disorder through a social revolution that expropriates the transnational corporations and establishes a rational, planned economy. The chief obstacle that a mass revolutionary movement would face is the armed force of the state. A decisive victory against the capitalist social order requires that the coercive state apparatus wielded by the elites be broken up and replaced by a social power based on the exploited and oppressed. This requires the active participation of an aroused working class, championing the interests of all the oppressed, and committed to establishing a new and egalitarian world order.

Such class-consciousness and unity of purpose may seem unattainable today, and indeed it will be impossible to achieve without the creation of a revolutionary organization that can win the confidence of millions of those oppressed and exploited by capitalism. It is through the struggle to create such a political instrument that the revolutionary consciousness and unity of purpose necessary to vanquish world capitalism can and will be forged.

**Neither Free Trade nor Protectionism—
Expropriate the Transnationals!
No to AFL-CIA's China-Bashing!
Workers of the World Unite!**

Opportunists Adapt, Sectarians Abstain Seattle & the Left

On the Monday before the World Trade Organization (WTO) conference opened in Seattle last November, a group of right-wing Republicans, Chamber of Commerce functionaries and bible-thumpers, advertising themselves as "Working Families for Free Trade," staged a media event to "demonstrate that Christians and conservatives are pragmatic and understand the relationship between free trade and missions opportunities in foreign countries." Participants in this pro-imperialist publicity stunt were treated sympathetically by the media and Seattle's civic authorities. Tens of thousands of unionists, environmentalists and miscellaneous liberal-leftists, who arrived a few days later to protest the WTO, received a very different reception. They were assaulted by thousands of cops using tear gas, pepper spray, billy clubs, concussion grenades and rubber bullets. This confrontation, and the protesters' success in disrupting the opening of the conference, created a political sensation and excited considerable discussion within the radical left internationally.

The response by the British centrists of Workers Power was typical. While noting that a "deep ecology" fringe of "reactionary cranks" was present, Workers Power portrayed the polymorphous direct action reformism of the protest's mainstream as anti-capitalist consciousness:

"[T]he Seattle events attracted trade unionists, campaigners against Third World debt and greens who recognise that the real enemy of the environment, both human and natural, is multinational capital."

—*Workers Power*, December 1999/January 2000

Many of the demonstrators did indeed object to the inequitable way in which the world economy is structured, but in general, they did so from the perspective of *reforming* the mechanisms of capitalist world trade to produce a more ecologically friendly and less exploitative result.

Britain's Socialist Workers Party (SWP/B—flagship of the International Socialist tendency) took a relentlessly upbeat approach. Proclaiming that "the main trend at the meetings was firmly anti-capitalist," *Socialist Worker's* initial reports pronounced the WTO protests "a brilliant show of opposition to the multinationals and to the naked rule of profit." The following week, *Socialist Worker* responded to suggestions that the demonstrators "had nothing in common" with each other:

"The fundamental divide in Seattle was between those on the inside of the World Trade Organisation conference and those who were protesting outside...."

"Politicians would like to make people believe that demonstrators were in Seattle for selfish reasons. People may have been motivated to go to Seattle by specific aspects of capitalism, but they were united against the WTO. The police did not discriminate between environmentalists and trade unionists—they all got teargassed and shot at. All the protesters wanted was to take back power from the multinationals."

—*Socialist Worker*, 11 December 1999

While enthusing about the "unity forged between trade unionists, students, environmental activists and many oth-

ers," the SWP/B ignored the fact that this ephemeral "unity" was based on overlapping forms of bourgeois consciousness. Transfixed by the prospect of a mass movement to participate in (or, more precisely, to tail) *Socialist Worker* tended to equate objections to one or another effect of capitalism with opposition to capitalism *per se*. Rather than challenging the reformist conceptions of the protesters, *Socialist Worker* celebrated and even promoted them. In response to a query about whether "governments are powerless before the multinationals," the SWP/B replied:

"The problem is that governments repeatedly cave in to threats from multinationals. The British government, for example, has watered down plans to curb greenhouse gas emissions after threats by Ford and other car makers to pull out."

—*Socialist Worker* (Britain), 11 December 1999

This is textbook Labourite cretinism; it has nothing whatsoever in common with Marxism. The "problem" is not that British imperialism "caves in" to corporate elites—the "problem" is that the British state is a machine that exists solely for the purpose of serving and protecting the rule of the big capitalists. This is why Marx, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky advocated revolution, not reform.

The SWP/B claims to stand firmly in this tradition. In its literature and study classes, its cadres explain to new recruits that the existing capitalist state cannot be reformed—that it must be smashed and replaced by a new state dedicated to advancing the interests of working people and the oppressed. John Rees, Alex Callinicos and other talented SWP/B writers often capably expound these ideas in the pages of *International Socialism*. Precious as the "revolutionary tradition" may be to the SWP/B leaders in the abstract, they do not consider it of any value in engaging people who imagine that the capitalists' state can somehow be transformed into an instrument for advancing the interests of the downtrodden. Instead of telling young militants interested in the Seattle events the simple truth, the "revolutionary" SWP/B reinforces their illusions by repackaging standard reformist criticisms of the imperialist government's failure to "stand up to" the evil corporations.

SL: Saleless in Seattle

The response of Workers Power and the SWP/B was typical of most of the left internationally, but not everyone gave Seattle such a positive spin. Several American left groups flatly denounced the mobilization, including James Robertson's Spartacist League (SL), which proudly announced that, weeks before the event, they had already decided not to:

"participate in, or sell at, the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle on November 30 which are a circus...dominated by national chauvinism, racist protectionism and counterrevolutionary attacks on the Chinese deformed workers state."

—*Workers Vanguard*, 10 December 1999

The protests were not dominated by "national chauvin-

ism, racist protectionism and counterrevolution." In fact, Marxists have important things in common with large numbers of the Seattle protestors outraged by the wreckage caused by imperialism. In the WTO (sister to the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and World Bank) they had certainly selected an appropriate target for their anger. Reformist illusions and protectionist sentiments were certainly widespread at the protests, but that reflects the current political level of the left and workers' movement in North America. Marxists do not turn their backs on mass protests against imperialist institutions just because they are led by people whose ideology is unsupported. Instead, we seek to intervene to counterpose a revolutionary internationalist perspective to the reformist nostrums of the petty-bourgeois utopians and class-collaborationist labor bureaucrats.

Workers Vanguard's posture of defending the Chinese deformed workers' state against "counterrevolutionary attacks" in Seattle is a desperate (and nonsensical) attempt to rationalize its abstention from the anti-WTO protest. The American labor bureaucracy's opposition to China's entry into the WTO is only partly motivated by anti-communism and racism; their main concerns are protectionism. Yet Beijing's membership in the WTO will only accelerate the process of counterrevolution (i.e., capitalist restoration) in China, which is why Trotskyists condemn the ruling bureaucracy's attempts to join the WTO in the first place.

Principles, Schmintzibles: SL Joins the 'Circus'

The SL leadership's abstention in Seattle was not motivated by political principle, but rather by a desire to avoid exposing their youthful members to the political universe that exists outside their "party." Yet the ripples from Seattle impacted politicized American youth so powerfully that the SL controllers decided to drop their lofty "principles," and turn up in Washington for the April demonstrations against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Workers Vanguard's account of the Washington demonstration begins by brazenly reiterating its earlier denunciation of the Seattle protest (minus the mighty oath not to appear):

"The D.C. demonstrations were consciously built in the 'Spirit of Seattle'—the protests last fall against the World Trade Organization (WTO) which we characterized as a circus 'dominated by national chauvinism, racist protectionism and counterrevolutionary attacks on the Chinese deformed workers state'."

—WV, 21 April

Yet in D.C., the SL made an amazing discovery:

"The student youth who converged on Washington over the weekend did not share this flag-waving enthusiasm for trade protectionism and belligerence toward China....SL/SYC comrades encountered little overt anti-Communism...and sold hundreds of copies of *Workers Vanguard*...."

Had the SL appeared in Seattle, they would have found the same thing. When we noted this in a 3 January posting on our web page, the SL objected, "the IBT denounces our principled opposition to joining the chauvinist, anti-Communist mobilization in Seattle...." (WV, 11 February). In the same article, the SL related how the Internationalist Group (IG—led by WV's former editor, Jan Norden) had initially tried to

avoid characterizing the Seattle protests, but was finally badgered by the SL into declaring that they had been: "built on a chauvinist program of protectionism and proletarian internationalists would not participate in them."

The IG's inordinate sensitivity to criticism from the SL, and its political cowardice in addressing the issues of the history of the Robertsonites' degeneration, derives in part from a fear of alienating current, and former, SL supporters who the Nordenites consider an important constituency. It must have come as an unpleasant surprise to the IGers when they learned that the capricious SL had decided to forsake its abstentionist "principles" in order to sell hundreds of papers in D.C., while Norden *et al.* performed their "proletarian internationalist" duty and stayed home.

Barnesites: 'No Redeeming Value Whatever'

Jack Barnes' American Socialist Workers Party took a position similar to that of the SL and IG on Seattle. The 13 December 1999 issue of the *Militant* carried an article entitled "Anti-WTO protests give social cover to U.S. imperialism." Denouncing the "sharply nationalist character" of the protest, the Barnesites declared:

"[T]he actions, and the participation of the demonstrators—whether unionists or others—had no redeeming value whatever from the point of view of the interests of working people. The protests, regardless of the views of participants, gave social cover to and reinforced the American nationalist framework promoted by Washington and the billionaire families it serves."

In the absence of a class-conscious political leadership capable of rejecting *both* the free-trade and protectionist models for organizing capitalism, it is hardly surprising that opposition to the effects of "globalization" tends to take on a protectionist coloration. However, most of the rank-and-file unionists on the streets in Seattle did not subscribe to the traditional "Buy American" jingoism of the union bureaucracy, as an IBT member who attended the Seattle demonstration reported:

"The very heterogeneous nature of the protests was not accurately represented in the media, which generally subsumed the participants as 'protectionist trade unionists and flat-earth fanatics.' This heterogeneous nature extends to the trade unionists who participated. Comments and interviews with trade-union participants showed a strong internationalist thrust with many trade unionists expressing views that workers in the U.S. must protect trade-union rights and support workers' struggles in other countries in order to bring wages, etc., up, and prevent the 'race to the bottom.' If I had to summarize the ideology of the anti-WTO protest in Seattle, I would describe it as populist internationalism with reformist illusions."

Marxists must take the long view of history and not permit the struggle for a little bit today to displace the historic necessity to fight for workers' power. Ending the ravages of imperialist disorder requires overturning the tyranny of capital and establishing a socialist, planned economy based on production for human need rather than profit. Yet, the forces necessary to lead larger and more decisive revolutionary struggles in the future can only be accumulated by politically intersecting those who are prepared to resist the effects of global capitalism today, and struggling to help them transcend reformist and petty-bourgeois utopian illusions. ■

Barbarism in the New World Order

NATO's 'Humanitarian' Terrorism



REUTERS

NATO's 'collateral damage' in Pristina

The following is an edited version of a talk given by Tom Riley at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario on 12 June 1999.

Following NATO's victory in Kosovo, the situation in the Balkans is bleak. We are not partisans of Slobodan Milosevic or his regime, but we defended the Yugoslavs against the imperialists' "humanitarian" terror bombing. The attack on Yugoslavia was not motivated by any concern about the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians. Every class-conscious worker can only bitterly regret NATO's victory.

We begin our analysis with the recognition that the imperialist powers can *never*, under *any* circumstances, play a politically progressive role in the semi-colonial world. Yet it is also important to understand why the NATO powers acted as they did. We can identify three factors at work here. Firstly, the wish to "stabilize" a potentially explosive area of Europe; secondly, the desire to punish an insufficiently obedient (i.e., "rogue") regime and extend imperialist control in the former Soviet bloc; and finally, each of the major NATO powers (particularly the U.S. and Germany) used the confrontation with Milosevic to pursue its own (often divergent) agenda and maneuver for position against each other.

In imperialist military adventures, truth is always the first casualty, and so it has been in the propaganda war against Serbia. The campaign to demonize the Serbs has systematically glossed over the fact that the vicious

communalism on all sides is a direct result of the victory of the "Free World" over "communism" and a predictable by-product of capitalist restoration in the former Yugoslav deformed workers' state. During World War II, the Yugoslav Stalinists, under Tito, built a base in all the ethnic communities, through an aggressively *anti-sectarian* policy. Everyone knew that any soldier in Tito's army who killed or raped a civilian would be shot, regardless of the nationality of either the victim or the perpetrator. On that basis, the Yugoslav Communists built a movement that successfully resisted the Nazis and smashed the grip of the traditional communalist elites. The destruction of the Yugoslav deformed workers' state resulted in an explosion of ethnic and national hatreds.

While the media has been treating "ethnic cleansing" as something peculiar to Serbs, the worst single instance of this barbaric practice was the forcible eviction of a quarter of a million Serbs from Croatia. Of course, this was carried out with NATO's connivance, so it is generally ignored by the capitalist media.

Milosevic sits atop a very unstable bonapartist, capitalist-restorationist regime. Through much of the 1990s, Yugoslavia was regarded favorably by NATO as one of the few powers in the region with enough muscle to maintain "order." Where possible, this kind of work is subcontracted to local strongmen, thus avoiding the costly overheads and political headaches that come with maintaining foreign

garrisons. Those who show too much independence from their masters can sometimes have the rug pulled from beneath them as Saddam Hussein discovered a decade ago.

In the 1980s, Hussein's regime had been regarded as an important pillar of stability in the Persian Gulf, which is why the U.S., Britain, Canada and other imperialists were indifferent to Hussein's various crimes—including the mass murder of Kurdish villagers with poison gas. But a few years later, when Big Oil's control in the Middle East was threatened by the Iraqi incursion into Kuwait, Hussein suddenly became a menace to civilization, and the papers were full of "eyewitness" lies about 550 Kuwaiti babies being dumped out of incubators by the Iraqis. It was later revealed that the whole thing was a cynical invention, but it served its purpose in whipping up popular support for a "UN" war on Iraq. The half million children who *have* died in Iraq as a direct result of the U.S./UN embargo on food and medicine are, unlike the imaginary Kuwaiti babies, simply not "newsworthy."

Like Hussein, Milosevic is no anti-imperialist—he aspires to the role of imperialist underboss, perhaps one day gaining entry to the European Union and even NATO. The U.S./UN made a deal with Milosevic to end the conflict in Bosnia—he was given a free hand in Kosovo in exchange for getting the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Dayton "peace" settlement. But that was then—this is now.

Before NATO could launch its "humanitarian" assault, domestic public opinion had to be softened up. The *New York Times* and the rest of the semi-official news organs took up this challenge and began churning out a barrage of human-interest stories about the plight of Kosovo's Albanians, along with suitable background pieces tracing the history of the conflict. What's interesting is that almost all of them began with Milosevic's rise in 1987 as a Serb chauvinist. The [New York] *Times* is at least candid enough to proclaim on its masthead: "all the news that fits." And suddenly one of the things that did not "fit" was that the Albanians have not been the only victims of ethnic violence over the years. In 1912, 40 percent of Kosovo's population was Serbian—today it is less than 10 percent. This is only partly due to differential birth rates; it also reflects pressure on the Serbs from Albanian communalists as the *New York Times* had itself reported in the past. In 1982, for example, there was an account of the repercussions of an attempt by Albanian communalists to set a 12-year-old Serbian boy on fire:

"Such incidents have prompted many of Kosovo's Slavic inhabitants to flee the province, thereby helping to fulfill a nationalist demand for an ethnically 'pure' Albanian Kosovo. The latest Belgrade estimate is that 20,000 Serbs and Montenegrins have left Kosovo for good since the 1981 riots."

—*New York Times*, 9 November 1982

Ethnically pure! A few weeks later a similar story appeared:

"There have been almost weekly incidents of rape, arson, pillage and industrial sabotage, most seemingly designed to drive Kosovo's remaining indigenous Slavs—Serbs and Montenegrins—out of the province."

—28 November 1982

Five years later, another article reported:

"Ethnic Albanians in the Government have manipulated public funds and regulations to take over land belonging to Serbs....Slavic Orthodox churches have been attacked, and flags have been torn down. Wells have been poisoned and crops burned. Slavic boys have been knifed and some

young ethnic Albanians have been told by their elders to rape Serbian girls....

"As Slavs flee the protracted violence, Kosovo is becoming what ethnic Albanian nationalists have been demanding for years, and especially strongly since the bloody rioting by ethnic Albanians in Pristina in 1981—an 'ethnically pure' Albanian region, a 'Republic of Kosovo' in all but name."

—1 November 1987

The most recent report of this sort that I have come across appeared less than a year ago, i.e., *after* Milosevic launched his campaign to eradicate the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army]. The title of the article was "Rebel Terror Forcing Minority Serbs Out of Kosovo":

"After a wave of kidnappings and terror, which foreign diplomats and human rights workers say is part of the strategy of ethnic Albanian rebels, the Smigics [a Serbian family whose ancestral home was torched] and nearly every ethnic Serbian family that lived in areas controlled by the rebels have fled or disappeared. More than 80 Serbian civilians are missing, and human rights workers believe that they have been killed."

"Dotted around the territory dominated by ethnic Albanian rebels are dozens of villages and small towns where a few Serbs lived until the kidnappings started in April [1998], weeks after a police crackdown on rebel forces swelled ethnic Albanians' support for armed revolt....

"That caused such alarm that most Serbs in rebel areas left, human rights workers say."

—*New York Times*, 31 August 1998

Similar accounts appeared in other papers, but today all of this is shoved down the memory hole as the "free press" dutifully assumes responsibility for demonizing the Serbs. It's not only the Americans who have short memories. Right up to the time that NATO commenced bombing, the German government's official position was that there was no credible evidence of persecution of Albanians in Kosovo. The "International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms" in a 29 April 1999 press release observed that:

"Until mid-March 1999, just a few days before the start of NATO's air attacks against Yugoslavia, Joschka Fischer's Foreign Ministry constantly stated in its status reports and official intelligence information produced for asylum hearings: 'Even in Kosovo an explicit political persecution linked to Albanian ethnicity is not verifiable'....However, since the NATO countries' air war, begun on March 24, 1999, had to be justified before German public opinion and the Bundestag, the Foreign Ministry spoke of 'genocide,' 'deportations,' and 'ethnic cleansing,' practiced by the Milosevic regime against Kosovo-Albanians not just since the war's beginning, but as having preceded the NATO attack for a considerable time."

The German government was lying in both cases—Milosevic's regime had been persecuting the Albanians for over a decade, but there was no "genocide."

The KLA: 'A Popular Uprising Waiting to Happen'

In early 1998, the KLA is estimated to have had only a few hundred members. According to the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* [May-June 1999], they first appeared in public in November 1997 at the funeral of an Albanian schoolteacher killed by Serbs. A few months later, on 23 February 1998, Bill Clinton's special envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbard, made his famous pronouncement in Pristina that

the KLA "is without any question a terrorist group" and that the U.S. "condemns very strongly terrorist activities in Kosovo."

Belgrade took this as a green light to crack down on the KLA. Two weeks later, Serb security forces surrounded the farm of the Jashari clan near Prekaz, in central Kosovo, an area where the KLA had its deepest roots. Fifty-one people were killed—including women and children—some of whom were executed in cold blood. The Yugoslav authorities had hoped that killing Adem and Hamza Jashari, two brothers who were among the KLA's best known leaders, would deal a fatal blow to the insurgency. But instead, the massacre produced an explosion of popular anger that transformed the KLA almost overnight from a marginal guerrilla fringe to a mass political movement.

The September 1998 issue of *Foreign Affairs* described the KLA as a "blend of terrorist organization, a guerrilla force, and a popular uprising waiting to happen, which fights for the unity of all Albanians in the Balkans." By early 1998, the KLA had:

"built close ties or melded with much of Rugova's League of Democratic Kosovo (LDK) [previously politically hegemonic among Kosovo's Albanians]. It was no coincidence that once the rebellion erupted a year ago, local LDK leaders immediately picked up weapons and became commanders of village units. By the time of the uprising, Rugova had lost control of his own party."

—*Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1999

In the summer of 1998, as the KLA emerged as the recognized political leadership of the Kosovar Albanians, Washington changed its signals: the "green light" for Milosevic turned to "red." When Belgrade ignored American instructions, the most pointed of which was issued in October 1998, the U.S. decided that its own "credibility" required that Milosevic be taught a lesson. The Rambouillet "negotiations" were to provide the pretext.

Rambouillet 'Peace' Plan

The Rambouillet Agreement was written so that Belgrade could not approve it—one of the many facts that didn't "fit" the picture the *New York Times* and the rest of the American mainstream media were painting. Since the Serb capitulation a week ago, there have been reports about how the State Department had told journalists, at the time, that the bar had quite deliberately been set "too high" for Belgrade. Among other things that were not reported at the time was a demand that NATO be given control of the Yugoslav media, as well as the right to virtually occupy Serbia.

Milosevic could not possibly accept such terms, but he was quite ready to make concessions. At Rambouillet, the Serbs proposed a settlement very similar to the one that NATO has now imposed. The U.S. wouldn't agree because the Serbs first "needed bombing."

The whole provocation almost came apart when the KLA suddenly refused to go along:

"After two days of nonstop talks, Madeleine Albright, the U.S. secretary of State, phoned Adem Demaci, an obscure ex-novelist with Coke-bottle glasses who last year emerged as the political power behind the ragtag Kosovo Liberation Army. Albright asked Demaci not to block a NATO-backed agreement giving Kosovo limited autonomy. But Demaci, who had refused to attend the talks, insisted on full independence. He curtly told Albright that a phone call couldn't solve such a 'bloody and serious' problem. Then he hung up. 'Basically he stiffed her,' says



P. LANGROCK/ZENT

German poster denouncing aggression against Serbia

one U.S. official. 'Here is the greatest nation on earth pleading with some nothing-balls to do something that is entirely in their own interest—which is to say yes to an interim agreement—and they defy us.'

"...Demaci's refusal upset the key U.S. strategy at the Rambouillet talks. A Kosovar 'yes' would have shifted the pressure to Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic, who was resisting the idea of NATO troops as guarantors of Kosovo's autonomy....

"Rambouillet was yet another lesson in how an indecisive superpower can be humiliated by a small, determined foe. Albright, traveling on to China this week, was described as exhausted. She told friends that it was the worst experience she'd ever been through. 'She is so stung by what happened,' said a close associate."

—*Newsweek*, 8 March 1999

'Humanitarian' Terrorism

Imperialist "humanitarianism" is always and everywhere a cynical charade. The supposed "catastrophe" that impelled NATO's attack had produced 2,000 fatalities in Kosovo in the preceding year (300 Serbs—mostly cops and soldiers—and 1,700 Albanians, mostly civilians). NATO's bombing campaign has certainly killed at least that many in a matter of months—mostly Serb civilians, but also at least a few hundred Albanians.

Two thousand deaths in a year is not something the Western media normally bothers to report if it takes place in Colombia or Sri Lanka. The Turkish government, a full-fledged member of NATO, was among the chorus of neo-colonial vassals feigning outrage at Milosevic's misdeeds, secure in the knowledge that no one on Pennsylvania Avenue or Downing Street was worried about the fact that the Turkish military's campaign against the Kurds has killed at least 40,000, destroyed thousands of villages and created a million refugees. No pictures of this in the papers, no television coverage, no government declarations. In 1975, none of the world's great "democracies" were much concerned

when Suharto's rightist Indonesian regime, a major imperialist asset at the time, killed 200,000 people in East Timor (about a fifth of the population). There are lots of other examples where the scale of state repression against civilians far exceeded what was going on in Kosovo while the NATO "humanitarians" sat by with folded arms. As Noam Chomsky aptly commented, such measures are only treated as criminal when they are committed by "officially-designated enemies."

Throughout this recent campaign, President Clinton and the other NATO war criminals endlessly repeated that the Serbian people were *not* their enemy. But the deliberate destruction of the civilian infrastructure of Yugoslavia—bridges, factories, refineries, power stations, water-pumping stations, schools, hospitals, houses and apartment buildings—tells a different story. Western news outlets dutifully reported NATO's claim that Serbia's television stations had been destroyed because they were broadcasting "propaganda." No one knows the extent of the "collateral" ecological damage inflicted on the region, but it is safe to say that in the years to come, many thousands more civilians, both Serb and Albanian, will die as a consequence of NATO's "humanitarian" assault.

This campaign has been a disaster for everyone concerned, except NATO, which has not only preserved its precious credibility, but enhanced it, by asserting its "right" to intervene anytime and any place it chooses. But even the servile media hacks and B-52 liberals who endorsed NATO's Kosovo adventure are sceptical about talk of a new "Marshall Plan" to rebuild the region after the bombing. Yugoslavia will get a blockade and Kosovo an open-ended imperialist occupation. The 30,000 NATO troops already garrisoned in Bosnia are to be joined by another 50,000 in Kosovo. This may be enough to keep the lid on, at least for a while, but it changes nothing fundamental in the equation.

The 4 June 1999 *New York Times* was already worrying that the "real difficulties" for NATO's army of occupation in Kosovo are not likely to come from Serbs, but "from the Kosovo Liberation Army, which has received NATO support and is unlikely to give up its ambitions for independ-

ence." The imperialist powers don't support independence for Kosovo, because they fear that changing one border in the region could set off a chain reaction with Albanians in Macedonia, Greeks in Albania, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia, Hungarians in Romania and various other national and ethnic minorities, all seeking to assert their own conflicting territorial claims.

The nationalist and ethnic rivalries in the Balkans are overlaid with significant divisions within NATO, most clearly reflected in the differences between the U.S./British axis on the one hand and the Germans, Italians and, to some extent, the French on the other, over the proper mix of military versus diplomatic pressure. (As usual, the Canadian bourgeoisie played no role beyond automatically endorsing any and all proposals advanced by its American senior partner.)

U.S. policy in the region is designed to advance a series of overlapping strategic objectives. In the first place, U.S. policy-makers want to prevent an explosion in the Balkans that could ultimately destabilize Europe. They are also intent on maintaining America's pivotal role in European affairs while seeking to extend U.S. leverage within what was formerly a Soviet zone of influence.

NATO's attack on Yugoslavia would not have occurred 15 or even 10 years ago. Like the attack on Iraq in 1991, it is part of the "peace dividend" resulting from the imperialist victory in the Cold War. It is the latest in a series of low-risk imperialist military attacks on "rogue" neo-colonial regimes. To date, these adventures have unfortunately not had serious military or political consequences for the aggressors, but even so, important elements in the imperialist brain trust are questioning the wisdom of resorting to the big stick so frequently. Samuel Huntington (a big-name Harvard foreign policy wonk) was recently fretting in *Foreign Affairs* that the U.S. was increasingly seen in much of the world as a "rogue" superpower. Henry Kissinger has also expressed concern that Washington's new "unilateralism" may ultimately destabilize the imperialist world order. The Republican right in Congress picked up on this in initially opposing Clinton's policy, but its main objection was that the U.S. did not have enough at stake to warrant the expense and potential risks.

Many liberals who disapproved of NATO's intervention did so on the grounds that it should have been carried out by the United Nations, like "Desert Storm" in 1991. For Marxists, the question of which imperialist agency officially sponsors an assault is a matter of indifference—we are every bit as opposed to UN attacks on Iraq as to NATO aggression against Yugoslavia. The dispute over UN involvement is significant only to the extent that it reveals tensions within NATO.

Tony Blair is clearly just as enthusiastic about backing U.S. policy as Margaret Thatcher or John Major were, but the rest of the European Union powers have evinced concern about the long-term consequences of slapping around Russia's traditional allies in the Balkans. Yeltsin's humiliation in Kosovo has clearly fueled anti-U.S. sentiment at home—and the Russian seizure of the Pristina airport yesterday has to be seen in this context.

Initially Italy, Greece and even France were pushing the U.S. to get UN authorization, but the White House insisted on the "principle" of NATO's right to act independently. Greece and Italy have substantial political exposure in the region and, potentially, a considerable economic interest in Yugoslavia. The German bourgeoisie is growing visibly

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less enthusiastic about following the U.S.—as far as they are concerned, the Balkans is a German sphere of influence, rather than an American one. German imperialism has traditionally taken an interest in the mineral wealth of northern Kosovo.

NATO's attack on Yugoslavia represents an assertion by the American colossus of its "right" to do what it wants, when it wants, without regard to the UN Charter or other scraps of paper. Madeleine Albright, U.S. Secretary of State boasted:

"If we have to use force, it is because we are America," she said. "We stand tall. We see further in the future."

—quoted in *The Nation*, 7 June 1999

At present the U.S. has sufficient military and economic clout to compel its allies to go along with its overseas adventures. Whatever their misgivings, they too have a stake in preserving the "credibility" of NATO, and in forcibly reminding stropo neo-colonial rulers like Milosevic that their first responsibility is to the metropolitan banks and multinationals.

Geo-Strategic Considerations

Recently, in a special 75th anniversary issue, *Foreign Affairs*, the premier journal of the U.S. foreign-policy establishment, considered how American supremacy could best be secured. One of the more interesting contributions was from Josef Joffe, of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who drew a parallel between U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s and Germany's in the late 19th century. In both cases, the object was to become the hub in a series of alliances with each of its major allies and/or rivals. German policy under Bismarck was, of course, limited to continental Europe, whereas the U.S. operates around the globe. In both cases, however, the strategic objective was to incline each of the lesser powers to seek cooperation with the dominant power, rather than to combine against it.

An accompanying article by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's former national security chief, provided an example of this approach. American policy, he wrote, should aim to ensure that "no state or combination of states gains the ability to expel the United States or even diminish its decisive role" in Eurasia. Brzezinski suggested that NATO provided a lever for the U.S. to ensure that West European development:

"will expand the range of American influence without simultaneously creating a Europe so politically integrated that it could challenge the United States on matters of geopolitical importance, particularly in the Middle East."

One region that is assuming greater "geopolitical importance" these days is formerly Soviet Central Asia. The newly discovered oil and gas fields of the Caspian Basin are not yet subject to a great deal of discussion in the popular media, but they figure increasingly in the calculations of all the imperialist powers. The existence of oil in the region (particularly around Baku) has been known since the time of the Tsar, but recently the multinational oil corporations have discovered that the reserves are far larger than previously estimated. Some reports suggest there may be as much oil in this region as in Saudi Arabia.

Moscow regrets Yeltsin's decision to grant independence to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and the Kremlin has been using its considerable influence in an attempt to regain control. The U.S., under the guise of promoting "pluralism" and "democracy" in the region, is seeking to help the American oil majors extend their



Pro-Serb rally in Moscow

stranglehold on this vital strategic resource.

The first act in this developing struggle is being played out over pipeline routes. The U.S. is pushing for a route that avoids Iranian and Russian territory, even though the distances (and thus costs) involved in going through more "reliable" states are considerably greater. The Russians, Iranians and many of the oil companies (which will have to pick up the tab) naturally favor the more direct route.

The intervention against Serbia advances the U.S. objective of expanding its influence in the former Soviet bloc and establishes an important precedent for future NATO "out of theater" interventions. The hypocritical moralism about stopping ethnic cleansing in Kosovo could be useful for future interventions in similar conflicts in the Caspian Basin, a point that Bill Clinton made in his 15 April [1999] speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors (a relatively sophisticated audience):

"Much of the former Soviet Union faces a similar challenge [to Kosovo], including Ukraine and Moldova, Southern Russia, the Caucasus nations of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, [and] the new nations of Central Asia..."

"The potential for ethnic conflict became, perhaps, the greatest threat to what is among our most critical interests, the transition of the former communist countries toward stability, prosperity and freedom. We are in Kosovo because we care about saving lives and we care about the character of the multiethnic post-Cold War world."

In other words: *we want the oil!*

Kosovo and the Left

The duty of revolutionaries in this recent conflict was clear: to oppose NATO's criminal aggression and defend



YANNIS BEHRAKIS—REUTERS

KLA: makeshift guerrilla army

Serbia. We wanted to see “our own” side defeated. Regrettably, things turned out differently.

Some left groups (like the born-again British Shachtmanites of Sean Matgamna’s Alliance for Workers’ Liberty) aped the social democrats, and supported NATO on the grounds of defending poor little Kosovo. Most fake-Trotskyist groups in the imperialist countries did not go quite so far—instead they adopted a social-pacifist “anti-war” position. For example, Tony Cliff’s International Socialist tendency raised calls to “Stop the Bombing!” and “Stop This Madness!” But NATO’s attack was not a misguided or irrational act—on the contrary, it was clearly calculated to serve imperialist interests.

The Cliffites’ slogans were tailored to their objective of building a “mass movement.” Since big anti-war movements tend to have liberal politics, at least in the beginning, the International Socialists (IS) thought that by adopting liberal slogans, they would soon find themselves at the head of a mass movement. But politics is not so simple—instead of attracting liberals to the IS, this opportunist political adaptation only taught young ISers to respond to predatory imperialist wars like liberal pacifists.

The response of the United Secretariat (USec) was somewhat worse. Its leading section, the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), scandalously suggested that the imperialist Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) should be conducting operations rather than NATO! This contemptible social-imperialist reflex, reflecting the anti-Americanism of a wing of the French ruling class, speaks volumes about how far Alain Krivine and the rest of the LCR leadership have traveled since the heady days of 1968.

Here in Canada, the USec affiliate (Socialist Action) characterized NATO’s attack as an “imperialist intervention” and called for “Hands Off Yugoslavia.” But their main concern was to appeal to the labor bureaucracy and NDP [New Democratic Party—Canada’s right-wing social democracy], both of which fulsomely supported NATO’s aggression, to:

“call on the government of Canada to immediately break from NATO’s war in the Balkans and act concretely to

support the self-determination of the people of Kosovo by granting political and material support to the KLA.”

—Socialist Action statement, March 1999

There was no need to break with NATO to provide “material support” to its auxiliaries! Apart from that peculiar bit of confusionism, we find the Socialist Action comrades seeking, as usual, to pressure the Canadian bourgeoisie to adopt an anti-imperialist policy. This is a standard reformist response to all bad things. The NDP adopted a similar stance during the Vietnam War. In those days, Socialist Action’s forerunners in the USec called for defeating imperialism. Today the NDP openly supports imperialist aggression, while the USec calls on the NDP to call on the imperialists not to be imperialists.

The prize for the most confusionist position has to go to the British Workers Power group [leading section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International—LRCI] who claim to side with the Yugoslavs militarily against NATO *except* in Kosovo! In Kosovo they called for “the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Yugoslav forces...from Kosovo.” This amounts to a call for a NATO victory, which, unfortunately, we now have.

The LRCI was not worried about the KLA’s subordination to NATO, and proclaimed that the KLA has “the right to take any military advantage they can from the NATO bombing campaign” [LRCI International Secretariat statement 16 May 1999]. The KLA exercised this “right” by calling in NATO air strikes! Camouflaging their position with tongue-clucking about the KLA’s “adventurist attempt to draw NATO into Kosovo,” the LRCI statement flatly denied that the KLA operated as an auxiliary of NATO “despite the [KLA’s] recent cooperation in Kosovo with the British SAS”!

The Spartacist League (SL), to its credit, took a Yugoslav defensist position, but it made a rather peculiar flip-flop on the KLA that it seems unwilling or unable to either explain or justify. The 3 July 1998 *Workers Vanguard* (WV) reported that “defense ministers in Washington and European capitals are openly mooted plans for air strikes against Serb-dominated Yugoslavia” and “posing as champions of ‘human rights’ in Kosovo.” The SL denounced the imperialist axis and declared:

“We defend the right of the Albanian-populated areas of Kosovo to self-determination—that is, the right to secede from the Serb-chauvinist regime in Belgrade.”

Fair enough, although we would note that unlike Quebec today, where it is sufficient to defend the *right* of self-determination, by 1998, relations between the Serbs and Kosovo’s oppressed Albanian majority were so poisoned that it was necessary to call for immediate separation.

A few months later, when Serbia was once again threatened with NATO air strikes, the SL wrote:

“As we go to press, the threat of a massive bombing and missile assault by 16 NATO powers still hangs over the people of Serbia and the southern province of Kosovo. After mobilizing an armada of more than 400 military aircraft, Washington has now announced a ten-day postponement of any military assault to allow for a promised withdrawal of Serb police and army units.”

—*Workers Vanguard*, 23 October 1998

The article reiterated the SL’s earlier position on independence for Kosovo:

“We defend the right of self-determination—that is, the right to secede from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia—for the Albanian-populated areas of Kosovo, so long as the sepa-

ratist struggle is not subordinated to direct military intervention by the imperialists.”

A few months later, in the 5 February 1999 issue, *WV* abruptly changed its position without offering any explanation. Dropping the correct criterion they had outlined previously, the SL leadership announced that they no longer sided with the oppressed Albanians in Kosovo in their struggle against their Serb overlords:

“Today, to call for self-determination for the Kosovar Albanians can only be a cover for support to imperialist intervention.”

Nothing essential changed between October and February. NATO was still threatening Belgrade, but had not yet attacked. Nor was the KLA’s separatist struggle any more “subordinated” to the Western imperialists than it had been previously, as its intransigence at Rambouillet the next month [March 1999] demonstrated. The Spartacist League has consistently declined to offer any explanation for its change in position, so we can only presume that, as in previous abrupt flip-flops, the SL’s *el supremo*, James Robertson, simply changed his mind.

The Internationalist Group (IG), which emerged from the SL in 1996, tends to avoid any serious discussion of the origins of the once-revolutionary SL’s political degeneration. This reluctance is partially explained by considerations of prestige, as most of the important milestones in this transformation were passed while the IGers were SL members. The IG, which remains very much under the influence of its parent, only went into print on the KLA after the SL’s flip-flop, and “solved” the thorny problem of Kosovo independence with an assertion that the KLA was never anything other than a gang of imperialist spies and provocateurs. Their “proof” was a bit thin: reports of KLA leaders driving “expensive brand-new 4X4 all-terrain vehicles,” wearing “German uniforms” and possessing “high-power German arms” (see: *Internationalist* No. 7). I wonder how the IG evaluates the attempts of James Connolly and his Citizen Army in Dublin in 1916 to get their hands on some “high-power German arms”?

There can be no doubt the KLA had a range of unsavory connections—German intelligence, CIA, bandits, Islamists and drug dealers. (They also had an attenuated link to

Enver Hoxha’s Stalinist regime!) And there is also no doubt that they took whatever equipment they could get from the Germans and anyone else, although most of their weaponry came from Albanian arsenals looted during last year’s popular uprising. But, unlike the Afghan *mujahedin*, prior to NATO’s air assaults, the KLA got very little from the imperialists—certainly nothing to counter Serb helicopters, tanks and artillery.

The KLA are certainly nasty petty-bourgeois nationalists—but it just so happens that they have been embraced by the masses of the oppressed Albanians in Kosovo. The issue for Marxists is whether (or rather, when) the KLA became *subordinated* to the imperialists, and that is a concrete question.

At the beginning of the conflict, the KLA had no anti-tank weapons or other means to effectively resist the Yugoslav Army’s armoured units, which is why they were so easily driven out of their base areas. The decisive change in the relationship between the KLA and the NATO butchers occurred during the early weeks of the conflict and was closely reported in the British press as we documented [see 1917 No. 21].

Marxism and Anti-Imperialism

Almost all the labor bureaucracies and reformist leftists in the imperialist countries sided with their own masters in this brutal war. Unfortunately, the imperialist alliance suffered minimal casualties. We deeply regret that at least a few, or preferably all, the [Canadian] CF-18 pirates involved in this criminal aggression were not shot out of the sky. Of course we are not narrow nationalists and so we also wish that the same fate had befallen the other participants in NATO’s war of aggression, particularly Britain and the U.S., the two most gung-ho. We well recall how Ronald Reagan’s attempt to establish a U.S. garrison in the Middle East in the early 1980s was abruptly terminated by an Islamic Jihad truck bomb. This was a serious blow to imperialism, and one that revolutionaries defended. Similarly, when U.S. Rangers took some casualties in Somalia in 1993, it was enough to force Clinton to pull out the rest of his troops. This too was a welcome event for anti-imperialists.

The Clinton administration was acutely conscious of the limits of its popular support, and succeeded in keeping casualties extremely low among NATO’s killer elites. Within the imperialist countries, domestic support for NATO’s “humanitarian” terror-bombing was very shallow even if, at times, it appeared broad. Despite the fact that U.S. polls showed support declining steadily as the murderous campaign continued, protests did not spread beyond the organized left and expatriate Serbs.

We look forward to the day when masses of working people in the imperialist countries understand that their interests are diametrically counterposed to those of their rulers and, as a consequence, begin to actively solidarize with the victims of imperialist aggression. Such a class conscious layer within the working class can only develop through sharp political struggle to expose the social patriotism pushed by the labor misleadership. The International Bolshevik Tendency seeks to carry forward the best traditions of the Marxist movement and help develop the program and analysis necessary to forge an internationalist proletarian party capable of leading all the victims of the “new world order” in the struggle for revolutionary justice. ■

Toronto anti-NATO protest, October 1999



Cliffites on Kosovo: Born-Again Kautskyites Revolutionaries & Imperialist War

The following article originally appeared in the January issue of Marxist Bulletin, journal of the British section of the IBT.

In his 1976 biography of Lenin, Tony Cliff [leader of the International Socialist tendency] warmly endorsed the Bolsheviks' call to convert 'the present imperialist war [World War I] into a civil war'. Cliff asserted that, 'to aim at overthrowing one's own ruling class through civil war, one must welcome the defeat of one's "own" country', and noted that 'Lenin rejected with utter disgust the pacifist programme of Kautsky and his group'. But Karl Kautsky, long regarded as the champion of Marxian orthodoxy within the Second International, was not the only self-proclaimed revolutionary who capitulated to his own ruling class:

'The world war....put to the test all the various traditions, organizations and leaderships. It laid bare the rottenness of many who disguised their contradictions during peace time, but could do so no longer. Throughout this very hard time, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were steeled and ready to lead a revolution.'

—Tony Cliff, *Lenin*, v. 2

Unfortunately the same cannot be said of Cliff's own organisation, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) during the recent imperialist assault on Yugoslavia. Unlike Lenin and the Bolsheviks, whose policies Cliff recommended so highly in his tome, the SWP did not choose 'the line of revolutionary defeatism', but rather struck a pacifist 'anti-war' posture similar to Kautsky's. At the outset of Nato's bombing campaign, SWP theoretician Alex Callinicos sharply denounced 'the complete bankruptcy and cynicism of Nato policy':

'In this supposedly "postcolonial" epoch, imperialism is alive and well. The great military and economic powers are still bullying everyone else to obey their demands. The only sane response is to rally all the forces we can against this barbarous war—and, beyond that, against the system that makes such horrors.'

—*Socialist Review*, May 1999

While opposing Nato's bullying, Callinicos deliberately refrained from calling for either the *defeat* of the imperialist aggressors, or the military victory of the Yugoslavs.

Lindsey German, editor of *Socialist Review* (SR), scoffed at Nato's 'humanitarian' pretences and explained that the real issue was 'the maintenance and extension of imperial power' in the Balkans:

'[Nato's] aim is to extend its influence over the region, looking on the one hand to ensure that oil extraction in the Caspian Sea will benefit western capitalism, and on the other hand to extending the rule of the EU—and by proxy the US—further east. This war in Serbia is not about the wellbeing of the refugees and of the ordinary Albanians from Kosovo. It is about attempting to use the pretext of war against Slobodan Milosevic to dominate the whole of the Balkans.'

—*Ibid.*

German chided the Blairites and their leftist camp followers for backing Nato:

'So the left is taking sides with an organisation which has never had a humanitarian aim and which is bent on an all out war. What will that war mean? It has already made

things worse. The Nato bombing has led to an escalation of the humanitarian disaster.'

—*Ibid.*

Concluding that socialists should not 'take sides' in either the Balkan ethnic conflicts or Nato's attack on the Serbs, German argued:

'For the further logic of taking sides is to cause much greater instability in the region, which in turn will be met by greater use of force by the west....'

'Yet, despite the horrors of what is happening in Kosovo and the wider Balkans, it is precisely through approaching the question with a class analysis that we can begin to make any sense of it and begin to find a solution. That means rejecting taking either the side of the Serb regime or of the KLA, and rejecting the role of US imperialism in the region.'

—*Ibid.*

'Rejecting' the imperialists' role does not count for a great deal if it does not include advocating their defeat. Instead German can only suggest: 'It is the duty of every socialist to demonstrate and argue against this war, and to try to stop the bombing'.

Chris Harman, another prominent SWP leader, took a similar tack:

'The imperialist purpose behind Nato's continuing war is clear....the war has nothing to do with humanitarianism, but with the insistence by US imperialism that it can punish any state that defies it. The war is completely at one with US policy elsewhere in the world.'

—*Ibid.*

To counter this aggressive globalism Harman timidly suggests, 'the responsibility of socialists in the bombing states is to do our utmost to bring the war to an end'. Any pacifist could agree with that, as could Blair and Clinton who, right from the beginning, were anxious to 'bring the war to an end' as quickly as possible. The critical issue was not how long the conflict would drag on, but which side should *win*. Yet the SWP steadfastly refused to 'take sides'.

'The Line of Revolutionary Defeatism is a Universal One'

Revolutionaries in imperialist countries *always* want their rulers to lose, as Tony Cliff observed: 'The line of "revolutionary defeatism" is a universal one, applicable to all imperialist countries' (*op cit.*). In inter-imperialist conflicts Leninists are defeatist on both sides, while always defending semi-colonial countries (e.g., Yugoslavia or Iraq) against imperialist aggression.

In response to Nato's attack on Yugoslavia, the SWP and its co-thinkers in Germany, Greece and America issued a joint declaration entitled 'The main enemy is at home', which denounced the imperialist aggressors, but drew social-pacifist political conclusions:

'One of the many reasons why we demand an end to the war is that a return to peace can help create the conditions in which working people from the different fragments of former Yugoslavia begin to unite against their real ene-

mies—the local ruling classes...and the imperialist states whose intervention has, yet again, unleashed catastrophe upon the Balkans.'

—reprinted in *Socialist Review*, May 1999

But everything depended on how the war ended. A defeat for Nato that sparked a renewed wave of class struggle across Europe and beyond could have helped drive the imperialists out of the region. It would have certainly undermined Nato's precious 'credibility' and made it considerably more difficult for Blair *et al.* to launch their next campaign of 'humanitarian' mass murder.

The joint declaration tries to conclude on a militant, internationalist note:

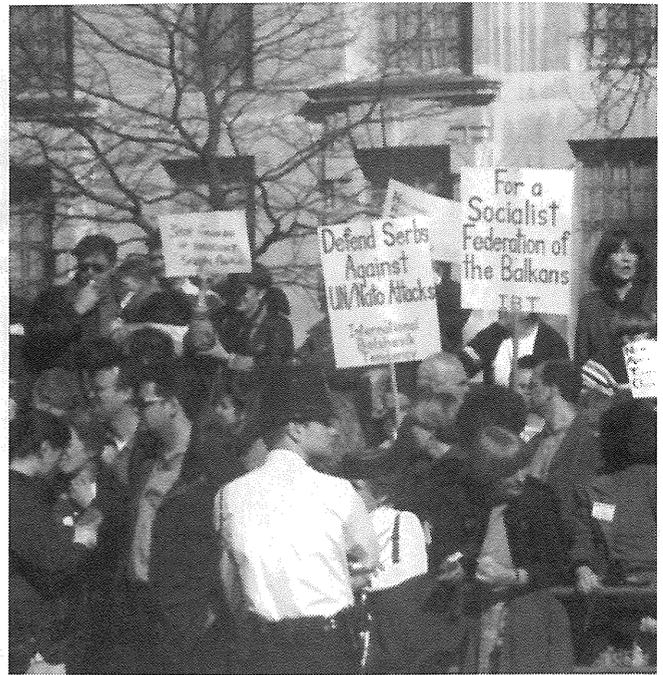
'The urgent task of revolutionary socialists today is to take the initiative in building mass anti-war movements throughout the Nato countries. For us, as it was for Karl Liebknecht during the First World War, "the main enemy is at home". The example of Vietnam shows the impact that domestic protest can have on imperialist warmongering. Mass opposition at home can force the Nato leaders to end the slaughter. Stop the bombing! Nato out of the Balkans!'

These two demands are fine as far as they go. But the SWP's repeated invocation of World War I and the war in Vietnam in its attempts to conjure up 'mass anti-war movements' over Kosovo was fallacious. Liebknecht's slogan must be understood in its context: in World War I, while defeatist toward both gangs of imperialist bandits, socialists in every country had a duty to treat their 'own' rulers as the 'main enemy'. When a semi-colony is under imperialist attack, the *only* enemy is the imperialist aggressor.

In Vietnam revolutionaries had a side, just as in the recent attack on Yugoslavia. Yet there was more at stake in Vietnam than national sovereignty. In the anti-Vietnam War movement in America, reformists (of both Stalinist and 'Trotskyist' persuasions) emphasised bourgeois pacifist calls to 'end the war', while more militant elements gradually came to understand that the key issue in Vietnam was the American attempt to strangle a social revolution. This issue became clearer as the conflict dragged on, and eventually tens of thousands of young Americans went from mere opposition to the war, to active support for the *victory* of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. The growth of overtly revolutionary sentiments on the campuses, the ghettos and within the draftee army itself, alarmed America's rulers and was an important factor in their decision to pull out.

'Stumbling Towards Disaster'

In the June [1999] issue of *Socialist Review* the anti-imperialist rhetoric is noticeably toned down. This was presumably calculated to avoid offending Tony Benn or any of the other eminent persons the SWP leadership hoped to entice onto the platforms of the 'peace movement' they were seeking to build. The lead editorial commented on the fears of Nato leaders that their ground troops 'would get bogged down in a long war, sustaining heavy casualties', without even a hint that the SWP would welcome such a development. 'So given these three unpalatable options, Nato keeps stumbling towards disaster', the *SR* editors wrote, and recalled that, 'The national demonstration last month was over 15,000 drawn from around the country to protest at a war from which there will be no winners'. The notion that there would be no winner may have been comforting



IBT at London anti-war demonstration, April 1999

for any SWPers who felt uneasy about not opposing the imperialist aggressors, but it was obviously ridiculous. Every war produces winners and losers. The editorial concluded:

'There is therefore a real duty for socialists to build the movement and to deepen and widen it, so that it involves more and more forces which will eventually make this government and the other members of Nato sit up and listen.'

This reformist nonsense recalls Kautsky's proposal during World War I that the imperialists should be pressured into disarming. Lenin savagely responded:

'The Kautskyite advocacy of "disarmament", which is addressed to the present governments of the imperialist Great Powers, is the most vulgar opportunism, it is bourgeois pacifism, which *actually*—in spite of the "good intentions" of the sentimental Kautskyites—serves to distract the workers from the revolutionary struggle.'

—'The "Disarmament" Slogan', October 1916

The Bolsheviks flatly opposed attempts to build an anti-war movement on a pacifist basis:

'If the present war arouses among the reactionary Christian socialists, among the whimpering petty bourgeoisie, *only* horror and fright, only aversion to all use of arms, to bloodshed, death, etc., then we must say: Capitalist society is and has always been *horror without end*....the dream of disarmament, is, objectively, nothing but an expression of despair at a time when, as everyone can see, the bourgeoisie itself is paving the way for the only legitimate and revolutionary war—civil war against the imperialist bourgeoisie.'

— *Ibid.*

The SWP agrees with Lenin in both hindsight and in theory—only in practice do they differ. But despite the anti-imperialist rhetoric, there is a logic to political adaptation. The June issue of *Socialist Review* reprinted a letter to the *New Statesman* (10 May 1999) signed by an assortment of prominent left liberals and pseudo-socialists (including supporters of the 'United Secretariat of the Fourth Interna-



NATO occupation forces in Mitrovica, Kosovo

tional' and the SWP's own Alex Callinicos), asserting: 'Nato is not the only or above all the best fulcrum for an agreement [over Kosovo]. One could find the elements of a multinational police force (embracing notably Serbs and Albanians) in the ranks of the OSCE to enforce a transitional agreement.'

To liberals it is a matter of indifference that the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) is just as much an imperialist alliance as Nato. But the fact that Alex Callinicos, on behalf of the SWP leadership, was prepared to sink to the level of advising how best an imperialist-dictated 'peace' could be imposed is evidence of total political bankruptcy. The July issue of *SR*, appearing after Milosevic had thrown in the towel, observed that, 'The victory of western imperialism over Yugoslavia, far from ushering in a period of peace, is likely to lead to further wars'. True enough, but this only highlights the SWP's cowardice in failing to call for Nato's defeat. Lindsey German was cheeky enough to write:

'It is true that Nato was victorious. But probably no one involved in protesting against the war really expected a different outcome.'

Perhaps German has a short memory, or maybe she just hopes her readers do. In the preceding issue, German's editorial described Nato's assault on Yugoslavia as 'a war from which there will be no winners'. Impressionism never wears well.

Marxism and Imperialist War

In July's *SR*, Harman tried to give a semblance of political coherence to the SWP leadership's eclectic revisionism, by arguing that the assault on the Serbs was part of a 'new phase of imperialist wars':

'Imperialist wars in the 20th century have taken two forms. One is the very crude oppression of people in the colonial and ex-colonial countries by the native imperial powers....'

Harman cites the anti-colonial rebellions in Kenya, Cyprus and Algeria in the 1950s and 60s as examples, and remarks that in the case of Algeria:

'the best sections of the French left did not merely support the right of Algeria to self determination...but identified with the FLN [Algerian insurgents]. Similarly, those involved in the campaign against the Vietnam War recognised that they represented something better than what the US offered in terms of the peasants and workers of Vietnam.'

The admission that the system of collectivised property in Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam was 'something better' than what existed in the US neo-colony in the South constitutes a rejection, at least implicitly, of a central premise of the SWP's theory of 'state capitalism'. It is significant in this connection that Harman omits the Korean War of the early 1950s from his list of examples, even though British troops were heavily involved, and the conflict was considerably more significant historically than either Kenya or Cyprus. Moreover, the stakes and the social forces in the Korean War were identical to those in Vietnam. Yet while the International Socialists eagerly joined hundreds of thousands of 1960s New Leftists in supporting the Vietnamese Stalinists, in the 1950s, Cliff & Co. capitulated to the prevailing anti-communist political atmosphere and refused to defend the North Korean Stalinists against an imperialist alliance headed by the US.

Harman's article proceeds to discuss a second 'form' of imperialist war:

'There are other sorts of imperialist wars—the inter imperialist wars, or ones in which your ruling class's enemy is just as bad as your ruling class....The Karl Liebknecht slogan, "The main enemy is at home", or, in a different context, Lenin's slogan, "Any revolutionary has to wish for the defeat of their own ruling class in such a war", was psychologically important. It wasn't a question of saying we support the other side in this war—it was a question of saying you can't fight against the war by being even-handed....'

'Most of the direct struggles against colonial oppression won some sort of victory or half victory by the 1980s....What we entered was a new phase of imperialist wars which people have designated as wars between the greater imperialisms and the sub-imperialisms.

'Because of this, a section of the left has been completely disoriented, because it looks at the trainee bullies and their horrible counter-revolutionary regimes. In 1990-91 in the war between the US and Iraq, all sorts of people traditionally on the left said we have to support the US because Saddam Hussein is so horrible.'

While stopping short of outright support to the US-led 'Desert Storm', the SWP leadership considered Hussein's Iraq, like Milosevic's Yugoslavia, too 'horrible' (i.e., unpopular) to defend against the imperialist blitzkrieg. Harman also cites US assaults on Panama, Libya, Somalia and Afghanistan, but instead of advocating a policy of defending them against imperialist aggression, he proposes:

'The left has to reach back to the traditions of 1914, rather than just to the traditions of the struggle against the Vietnam War. We have to remember who our main enemy is....We don't support the Serbian government....At the same time we also have to understand that the power which wanted to crush the Serbian government is a much greater evil.'

The Bolshevik 'traditions of 1914' are applicable to situations like 1914: i.e., conflicts between rival imperialists. They are *not* applicable when one or more imperialist powers attacks a dependent capitalist country, colony or semi-colony. Lenin made this point repeatedly. In 1915, for example, he wrote:

'if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Russia, and so on, these would be "just", and "defensive" wars *irrespective* of who would be the first to attack; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slave-holding and predatory "Great" Powers.'

—'Socialism and War', July 1915

In 1916 he made the same point again:

'It would be sheer folly to repudiate "defence of the fatherland" on the part of oppressed nations in their wars against the imperialist Great Powers....'

—'The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution', September 1916

In a letter to Alexandra Kollontai written a month earlier, Lenin even addressed the question of an imperialist attack on Serbia:

'I think it mistaken in theory and harmful in practice *not* to distinguish types of wars. We cannot be against wars of national liberation. You quote the example of Serbia. But if the Serbs were *alone* against Austria [instead of being tied to the Allied imperialists], would we not be *for* the Serbs?'

—letter to Alexandra Kollontai, August 1916

In 1999, when the Serbs stood alone against America, Germany, Britain, France and a half dozen other imperialists, the SWP refused to take a side. Milosevic was too 'horrible'. This is not how revolutionaries react to imperialist aggression. In 1935, as Italy prepared to invade Ethiopia, Trotsky's stance was clear:

'Of course, we are for the defeat of Italy and the victory of Ethiopia....

'When war is involved, for us it is not a question of who is "better," the Negus [Haile Selassie, Ethiopia's emperor] or Mussolini; rather, it is a question of the relationship of

classes and the fight of an underdeveloped nation for independence against imperialism.'

—'The Italo-Ethiopian Conflict', 17 July 1935

The Negus was a reactionary autocrat who could not be equated with the leaders of national liberation struggles in the 1960s. Yet this did not prevent Trotsky from denouncing Fenner Brockway and other self-proclaimed revolutionaries in the Independent Labour Party for refusing to take sides in what they characterised as a struggle between two dictators:

'The victory of the Negus...would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole, and would lend a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed peoples. One must really be completely blind not to see this.'

—'On Dictators and the Heights of Oslo', 22 April 1936

One must be equally blind not to see that a defeat for Nato in Kosovo would have had a similar effect. Opposition to the US in Vietnam grew as American casualties mounted:

'25 years after the humiliating defeat of US imperialism in the Vietnam War, the Vietnam syndrome is not just a nightmarish memory of a bloody and unjust war but a continued unwillingness of the US population to accept the possibility of its repeat. The mere mention of "body bags" brings forth images and memories of the 58,000 US troops whose mission was to slaughter 1.3 million Vietnamese civilians.'

'The Vietnam War exposed the barbarism of US imperialism and showed that it could be defeated....The US ruling class fears not only a rerun of an unpopular war abroad, but the war at home to which it inevitably leads.'

—Sharon Smith, 'Ghost of Vietnam',
Socialist Review June [1999]

America's 'Vietnam syndrome' is a product of a military defeat. Military casualties in Lebanon in 1983 and again in Somalia in 1993 led directly to US troops being pulled out of both those countries. A defeat for Nato in 1999 in Kosovo would have increased the pressure to pull imperialist troops out of the Balkans.

To Speak the Truth—No Matter How Bitter

Tony Cliff quite correctly observed:

'The superiority of Lenin's position [on World War I] was that by its extremism, by its "bending the stick"—by speaking about the defeat of one's own country as being the lesser evil it was better calculated to create a clear division between revolutionaries and social patriots.'

—*Lenin*, v. 2

In Nato's recent war against Yugoslavia the divisions were equally clear, but Cliff followed Kautsky rather than Lenin and ended up with the social patriots. Like Kautsky, the SWP leadership can sometimes sound quite 'Marxist' on abstract or historical questions, but in their practical activity attempts to get rich quick invariably take precedence over Marxist principle.

Genuine revolutionaries must be able to swim against the stream—to put the long-term interests of the working class ahead of short-term popularity. The refusal of the SWP leadership to defend Yugoslavia against Nato demonstrates once more that it entirely lacks any revolutionary capacity.

Militants within the SWP who are seriously committed to the revolutionary traditions their leaders sometimes pay lip-service to, must break politically with the revisionism of Cliff & Co. and embrace the revolutionary programme of authentic Trotskyism. ■

Letter to the Spartacist League

For a United Front Against Fascism!

13 November 1999

Comrades:

We congratulate you for the Spartacist League's (SL) role in ensuring that the KKK provocation in New York City on 23 October was met by mass protest. Despite many serious differences with the SL over the years, we freely acknowledge that you were critically important in triggering the demonstrations against these fascist terrorists. In taking this initiative, you acted in the interests of all working people and the oppressed.

Without seeking to minimize the importance of your contribution, we also find it necessary to raise certain important criticisms, and make some factual corrections to the 29 October *Workers Vanguard* (WV) coverage of the event. WV described the rally as:

"a united-front mobilization, which allowed for the expression of many diverse political viewpoints by all those who shared a commitment to the urgent necessity to *stop the KKK*."

Unfortunately you organized the protest as an SL controlled affair, rather than a united front. While you sought to involve other organizations (including your leftist competitors), they were only presented with the option of endorsing your event. There were indeed "diverse political viewpoints" among the participants in the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) demonstration, but it was the SL leadership that decided which of them would get the chance to be heard.

It would have been better to have invited representatives of a spectrum of labor, black, leftist, Jewish, Asian, Hispanic, feminist and other organizations known to actively oppose the Klan to a meeting for the purpose of organizing a common demonstration. Instead, the SL/PDC

PDC's Gene Herson (2nd from left) on speaker's platform

WORKERS VANGUARD



made all the decisions and arrangements itself, a conception reflected in WV's description of it as "a microcosm of a workers party in action." A party is a different thing than a united front. One of the main benefits of a united front is that it permits various groups to unite their forces in pursuit of a common goal without first resolving their differences. While you undoubtedly derived certain advantages from holding all the strings, both in terms of simplifying the logistics and not having to share the political credit, they were gained at the cost of narrowing the sponsorship of the action, which created new problems.

A more broadly-based initiative which involved activists outside the orbit of the SL might have made it much more difficult for the Democrats to get their divisive "demonstration for tolerance" off the ground. WV mentions that at a meeting endorsed by the International Socialist Organization (ISO) that had been "called by a variety of lawyers and liberals to organize behind [Democratic State Assemblyman Scott] Stringer's 'demonstration for tolerance'" PDC representatives found "no takers" for their proposal for unity. But it seems that even at that late date, the PDC was only proposing "unity" on the basis of having the liberals endorse the SL's event.

The Democrats' demonstration was clearly a response to the PDC initiative—an attempt to divert people from a militant anti-fascist mobilization. Their willingness to share a sound permit with the Klan murderers was outrageous, and the fact that the ISO, the Communist Party (CP) and assorted other leftists backed them is a scandal. But unlike the Democrats, the ISO, CP and other leftist organizations are contradictory formations. They are of course politically hostile to the SL and unwilling to promote, or even participate in, a PDC event, let alone follow your leadership. A demonstration organized on a more inclusive, united-front basis that gave other groups the chance to take part in the planning and building of an anti-KKK rally might have helped undercut this sectarian response.

At the PDC rally, a couple of pro-socialist political opponents of the SL (Emily Woo Yamasaki of Radical Women and Roy Rollin of Staten Island's *College Voice*) were called on, but none of the SL's more serious competitors (i.e., the Internationalist Group, the League for the Revolutionary Party and ourselves) were permitted to speak. WV's explanation is that:

"Because the speeches were interrupted when the KKK was sighted, a number of scheduled speakers from endorsing organizations did not get to address the rally..."

Yet your rally started at noon, and the Klan did not appear until 2 pm as expected. During the intervening two hours a variety of SL speakers and unaffiliated individuals were called on.

We recall that you employed the same tactic in November 1988 at a PDC anti-Klan rally in Philadelphia. On that occasion, there was no "interruption" as the fascists did not appear at all. Yet despite the fact that we were the *only* group (besides the SL and its affiliates) that organized a contingent in that demonstration we were not put on the speakers list, supposedly due to a lack of time.

This time *WV* failed to even list us as an endorsing organization, despite the fact that, at your instruction, I personally visited your office several days prior to the event, signed an endorsement form, made a financial donation and was even issued a receipt by comrade Joel S. Comrade Jake of the PDC promised to look into this and we expect to soon see a correction.

The *WV* account seeks to alibi what was clearly a policy of political exclusion by claiming that "the Partisan Defense Committee itself" did not get a speaker. Yet you print a picture of "PDC labor coordinator Gene Herson...on the speaker's platform" and even report the crowd's response to his remarks:

"Many shouted, 'That's right, that's right' when PDC labor coordinator Gene Herson denounced both the Democratic and Republican parties as enemies of labor and the oppressed."

And then there is the issue of what actually took place on 23 October. The impression conveyed by *WV* is misleading:

"As these hooded-and-robed racists scurried back into the courthouse under police escort barely mid-way through their scheduled rally, the trade unionists and others assembled under the PDC 'Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK!' banner broke into nonstop chanting: 'We stopped the Klan! We stopped the Klan!'"

Anyone not present at the event would hardly deduce from this that the participants in the PDC rally never got within a block of the KKK racists. *WV* claims that the PDC rally drove the Klan "off the streets." We wish this were true, but unfortunately it is not. The handful of Klansmen who appeared were indeed besieged by some 8,000 angry anti-fascists, and would certainly have been smashed had it not been for the 1,000 cops provided by New York mayor Rudy Giuliani. But the fact is that under massive police protection the Klan provocation did take place at the scheduled time and place. This was no Klan victory, but a few of these murderous racists did appear and stand around for over an hour, and despite the fact that a few individuals managed to get through the police lines and deliver a couple of punches, the KKK terrorists were (unfortunately) not driven off the streets.

The *WV* account also fails to even hint that the Democrats' competing rally "for tolerance," not the PDC rally, took place right in front of the Klan at 60 Centre Street. Nor does it report the fact that most of the demonstrators attended the Democrats' event, rather than the PDC's which was held at 100 Centre Street, a block away.

The Democrats' pleas for "tolerance" (and their willingness to share a sound permit with the Klan terrorists) were disgusting. But SL agitators dispatched to the other rally to try to convince people to leave and walk over to join the PDC, were heard denouncing it as a "pro-Klan rally." This was simply not true. The vast majority of people assembled in front of the Democratic windbags had not come to display "tolerance" for genocidal racists, nor devotion to Scott Stringer or Al Sharpton. They were there because they wanted to stop the Klan, just like those who came to the PDC rally.

Ed Kartsen, a prominent SL leader, stated at your 30 October forum in New York, that most of the protesters at both rallies had come in response to the SL's leaflets and that most people only ended up with the Democrats because of ISO misdirection. There is no question that without the kind of serious mobilization the PDC carried out, the Democrats would never have done a thing. But it is not true that

Fun With Figures

Inattentive readers of *Workers Vanguard* (*WV*), flagship of James Robertson's Spartacist League (SL), may have missed a remarkable bit of good news buried on page nine of the 10 March issue. It seems that the anti-Klan mobilization in New York last October 23rd has undergone a posthumous growth spurt. The front page of the 29 October 1999 issue of *WV* had reported that "at least 8,000 determined anti-Klan protesters" participated in the event (of whom fewer than 2,000 attended the SL rally, while the rest joined the Democrats at the site where the KKK actually appeared—see our letter to the SL of 13 November 1999). We now learn:

"This program [i.e., the SL's program] was given concrete expression in the mass labor/black mobilization led by the Partisan Defense Committee and the Spartacist League to stop the Klan on October 23. Despite the efforts of the Democrats and reformist leftists like the ISO [International Socialist Organization] to stop that mobilization, up to 10,000 trade unionists, blacks, immigrants and youth turned out on October 23...."

This gain of 25 percent in total attendance at an October event over the past several months is impressive enough, but the information that it all took place under the SL's leadership is perhaps equally important. If this continues at its present rate we may soon see reports of 20,000 or more. Regrettably the increased turnout is only available retrospectively.

—posted on www.bolshevik.org, 1 April

most people at the Democrats' rally had actually intended to join the PDC's. The time and place of the Klan's appearance had been widely advertised in the news media and that is why most people went to the other site.

We understand that the PDC organizers planned to march to the other rally when, and if, the Klan appeared. But by the time this was attempted, the PDC demonstration was cordoned off by the police and prevented from moving. Had you sought to join the larger demonstration earlier, when people were still able to move relatively freely in the area, we might have been on site when the Klan appeared. The police presence was so massive that the fascists would still probably have escaped unscathed, but it would have been preferable to have been there to confront them, rather than a block away.

You comrades deserve credit for taking an important initiative, but it is our communist duty to frankly criticize mistakes, challenge factual inaccuracies and pose suggestions for how things can be done better next time.

No Free Speech for Fascists!

Samuel T.

p.s. I drafted this letter before seeing the latest (12 November) *WV*. The suggestion that instead of "some form of progressive organization," the ISO *et al.* are "now exposed as enemies of the working class and of all the would-be targets of fascist terror" is a bit over the top, even for you. It reminds me of *Challenge*. We presume you still consider the ISO (and the CP, etc.) to be part of the left and workers' movement. So what's with this "enemies" stuff? ■

NYPD: Murder Inc.

Justice for Amadou Diallo!

Reprinted below is an 18 March statement by the IBT on the murder of Amadou Diallo:

In the Albany County courtroom on Friday, 22 February, the four cops tried for the murder of West African immigrant and Bronx resident, Amadou Diallo, were acquitted on all charges. Soon after the verdict, chanting protestors took to the streets in Albany and the Bronx, wallets held high in a ritual of solidarity with the innocent last gesture of the unarmed victim; a gesture which the cops' lawyers had claimed justified the 41-bullet fusillade that extinguished this 22 year-old man's life.

The verdict was hardly a surprise—cops routinely get away with murder. In fact, no New York City police officer has ever been convicted of murder for a killing that occurred while on duty (*New York Times*, 2 April 1999). Even after massive popular upheavals in Los Angeles in 1992 forced the retrial of three cops in the savage beating of black motorist Rodney King, the perpetrators all received less than the federally-mandated minimum sentence for the civil-rights violations for which they were convicted. And even that time was served in "Club Fed," country-club jails where the justice system sends its own when their crimes are just too egregious to ignore.

Such occasions are rare—135 years after Sherman's celebrated march to the sea through the heartland of the Southern slavocracy, and three decades after the civil-rights movement reversed the most blatant manifestations of Jim Crow segregation, black Americans remain a caste integrated into the U.S. economy, but overwhelmingly concentrated at the bottom. White-supremacist ideology has served the masters well through the years, rationalizing slavery and subsequently hobbling a potentially powerful insurgent labor movement. The cancer of racism is manifest throughout American society, from the universities where "scholars" produce books like *The Bell Curve* arguing that the oppressed are genetically inferior, to the workplace where blacks are traditionally the last hired and first fired.

American Justice: Racism and Repression

Liberals typically portray every incident of racist terror by police officers as the work of a few "rogue" cops. But the problem is much more profound—the entire system of capitalist "justice" (the cops, the DAs, the judges and the screws) exists to protect a social system based on exploitation and inequality. The police cannot be reformed because racism is inextricably woven into the fabric of the capitalist social order in America, it always has been and always will be.

The simple fact is Amadou Diallo was executed because Mayor Rudy Giuliani's hit squads have a license to kill. While black and other minority youth are the first and most obvious targets, the growth of the state's repressive apparatus, symbolized by New York's street crime squads and the rapid growth of police paramilitary units across the country, poses a threat to the democratic rights of all working people. America today is characterized by stark and growing social inequality:

"Since 1977, the after-tax income of America's wealthiest 1 percent has shot up 115 percent, and the income of the

richest fifth of Americans has grown by a less spectacular but still robust 43 percent, according to a study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal-leaning think tank. All these numbers are adjusted for inflation. "Meanwhile, though, the poorest fifth of the American population is getting 9 percent less income than it did in 1977..."

—*Washington Post*, 5 September 1999

The privileged elites are seeking to secure their positions by reinforcing their praetorian guard, curtailing political and legal rights and restricting the constitutional right of citizens to bear arms.

The cops who murdered Diallo got the best attorneys, as well as the automatic sympathy of a judicial system of which they are an integral component. Black youth rounded up in the "war on crime" are jailed with barely a pretense of a trial. America's death rows are full of innocent people whose only crime is not being rich enough or well connected enough to defend themselves effectively. As they say on the street, capital punishment means that "If you don't have the capital, you get the punishment."

The campaign to hold Diallo's killers accountable was an uphill struggle from the start. The police brass would have preferred to sweep the murder under the rug, but the angry protests in the Bronx, including the thousands-strong march across the Brooklyn Bridge on 15 April 1999, and weeks of civil disobedience outside One Police Plaza eventually forced the District Attorney's office to take the case to court.

At almost every major juncture, the judges and prosecutors undermined the chances for a murder conviction. First there was the motion to move the trial from the Bronx. The defense did not want to appear before Judge Patricia Williams, who is black, nor did they trust a jury of Diallo's peers—poor and working-class blacks and immigrants—to acquit the killer cops. In moving the trial upstate, the cops could count on a predominantly white jury less likely to view the street crimes unit as a racist death squad and more willing to swallow bogus claims about "self-defense." The four black women who did end up on the jury were there to lend credibility to the proceedings.

The prosecution's opening convinced some that the state might actually be seeking the conviction of the four trigger-happy cops. The defense also appeared to be in some trouble after their first (hostile) witness testified. But things began to shift with the sympathetic media coverage of the obviously rehearsed, teary-eyed testimony of Diallo's executioners. The prosecution made only token attempts to discredit these cynical performances, and passed up a major opportunity when the defense cited the prior records of the police officers which the judge, in a key pre-trial ruling, had ruled inadmissible. The jury never heard that officer Boss had shot and killed a man in 1997, that two of the other cops (McMellon and Carroll) also had prior shootings on their records and that all three had multiple complaints filed against them.

Defense attorney Stephen C. Worth's outrageous and widely publicized comment that in the course of the trial, the "racism nonsense will be put to rest" (*Albany Times Union*, 3

February) went unchallenged in the courtroom. Diallo's murder was a textbook example of the racist reality of the supposed "war on crime." As the trial unfolded it became painfully clear that the Bronx DA's office was not prepared to criticize the functioning of the New York City police department in general or the elite street crimes unit in particular. Nor was it prepared to attack the racial profiling used by police to haul in black and other minority youth. This is hardly surprising, as most of the daily quota of convictions recorded by the DA's office result from the use of such methods.

The cops' lawyers made two arguments. The first was the absurd claim that the gunmen had acted in self-defense—something that could only have been true if they had all been subject to a synchronized hallucination. The second tack taken by the defense was to assert that these cops had followed police protocol when they emptied their magazines into an unarmed, prostrate and inert victim. This only serves to highlight the murderous character of Giuliani's "law-and-order" drive. The attempt to claim immunity from prosecution on the grounds that one was only following orders (or in this case, "procedures") was rejected by U.S. prosecutors at the Nazi war crimes trials after World War II, but it was accepted without demur in the killing of Diallo.

Judge Teresi's instructions to the jury were practically a recommendation for an acquittal. He hammered hard on the necessity of the prosecution proving its case beyond reasonable doubt—something the Bronx DA's office had clearly failed to do. Richard Emery, a defense lawyer who specializes in police abuse cases observed:

"The judge's charge was improper and outrageously unfair. The judge shaped the evidence in a way that the jurors felt they had no choice but to vote to acquit."

—*New York Post*, 2 March

Jail Killer Cops!

Of course a murder conviction for these killer cops would not have ended police brutality nor resurrected Diallo. But whenever a few cops can be held accountable for a few of their crimes it is a small victory for their victims and a small setback for the proponents of the racist "shoot first, ask questions later" style of "crime-fighting" pushed by Giuliani and his ilk. Conversely, the fact that Diallo's killers were acquitted only encourages further abuses. This month NYPD hit squads have gunned down another two unarmed black men: Malcolm Ferguson on 1 March and Patrick Dorismond on 16 March.

Revolutionaries support demands to jail individual cops guilty of murder, while combating illusions in the possibility of reforming the police. The once-Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL), which historically took such an approach, has recently changed its tune:

"The main slogan raised by the WWP [Workers World Party] on February 26 was 'Jail the Killer Cops!' while the ISO [International Socialist Organization] chimed in with the call, 'Jail the Racist Thugs in Blue.' This appeal to the capitalist rulers to chastise their racist killers for doing their job reflects the view of the ISO/WWP opportunists that the capitalist state can be pressured to serve the interests of the workers and minorities."

—*Workers Vanguard*, 10 March

While the SL stops short of chastising itself for having raised similar demands in the past, we note that this new "leftist" posturing parallels other recent line changes, including rejection of both the general strike demand and the

united front.

If calling for jailing killer cops only creates illusions in the capitalist state, one might imagine that this would also be true of demands for freeing Mumia Abu-Jamal or abolishing the racist death penalty. Yet *Workers Vanguard* reprints a March 1st letter from the SL's legal arm to U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and San Francisco DA Terence Hallinan raising both of these. Go figure.

Break with the Democrats— For a Revolutionary Workers' Party!

The cops and courts are two agencies of a social system that, despite democratic trappings, [oppresses] the many in the interests of the few. For the hundreds of thousands of people in Diallo's neighborhood and other ghettos and barrios across the U.S., who carefully followed the case on Court TV and other broadcast specials, what was on trial was the system itself. The acquittal of the four killer cops only confirms the impossibility of getting real justice from the rigged structures of capitalist law and order.

Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and the rest of the black misleadership occasionally talk tough, but their strategy is to channel the anger of the victims of racism into the dead-end of Democratic Party electoralism. When Diallo's killers walked, these demagogues offered sermons, prayer vigils and appeals to the Clinton administration to intervene and press violation of civil-rights charges. There is no reason to expect that the feds will lay such charges, but even if they do, a conviction would have minimal impact.

In reality there is very little, apart from rhetoric, separating Democrats like Clinton from Republicans like Giuliani. They agree on increasing the numbers of cops on the streets to harass black and Latino youth. Under Giuliani's Democratic predecessor, David Dinkins, the NYPD expanded by 6,000. Democrats and Republicans agree on slashing welfare and on using "workfare" as a battering ram against organized labor. Since Reagan, the Republicans have cracked the Democrats' electoral hold on the South, but Malcolm X's 1964 observation remains true: "When you keep the Democrats in power, you're keeping the Dixiecrats in power."

In the immediate aftermath of Diallo's shooting, mass anger was palpable, and the protests were so large that some New York union leaders were forced to publicly denounce police brutality, and even participate in the march across the Brooklyn Bridge. But when the killers walked, there were no reports of objections from any labor bureaucrats. Like Sharpton and the rest of the black misleaders, the capitalists' labor lieutenants don't want to rock the boat for their Democratic friends.

The key to successful struggle against cop attacks lies in unlocking the power of the labor movement through a political struggle within the unions to forge a class-struggle alternative to the present pro-capitalist bureaucracy. Such an alternative leadership would have to be firmly committed to a revolutionary program of replacing production for profit by a rational, socialist, planned economy. The only way to eradicate racism, poverty, sexism and every other form of social oppression, is by uprooting the economic system which creates and perpetuates them.

Justice for Amadou Diallo! Jail the Killer Cops!

**For Working-Class Action to
Fight Racist Cop Terror!**

Break with the Democrats—

Forward to a Revolutionary Workers' Party!

'Peace Process' ...

continued from page 32

ulation. If present demographic trends continue, Catholics are expected to constitute a majority in Northern Ireland within a generation. The agreement's backers have sought to allay Protestant concerns by suggesting that the veto given to the present Catholic minority in Northern Ireland under the power-sharing agreement provides a precedent for safeguarding a Protestant minority in a future 32-county Irish state.

Economics of the 'Peace Process'

Britain partitioned Ireland in 1922 in order to create an artificial statelet with a Protestant majority. By retaining the industrially developed northeast corner of the island, which kept its privileged access to the imperial market, Britain continued to exert indirect control of the largely agrarian clericalist backwater in the South. From its inception, the Orange statelet was based on the oppression of the Catholic minority and privileged access for Protestants to housing, education and employment.

The political and economic realities on the island have changed a great deal in the 30 years since the "troubles" erupted. The Irish Republic, no longer so dependent on exports to Britain, has become the fastest growing economy in Europe. Massive foreign investment, mostly from the U.S., has been attracted by the combination of low wages, low taxes, access to the European Union, and a young, educated, English-speaking labor force. This has created a "Celtic Tiger" whose GDP grew 8.6 percent last year, compared to a mere 1.7 percent in Britain. Public spending has been slashed to fund corporate tax breaks, and the government actively intervenes to hold down wages. Even though the income of a third of the population in the Irish Republic is below the official poverty line, living standards are still considerably higher than in Northern Ireland. In 1997, per capita gross national product in the Republic was \$19,200, compared to \$14,350 on the other side of the militarized border (*New York Times*, 7 May 1998).

Northern Ireland's economy is in a protracted decline. Its traditional industries are shrinking and its swollen public sector, largely concentrated in military and police functions, is only maintained by massive British subsidies. Unemployment rates in Northern Ireland are almost double those in the rest of Britain.

In short, the political arrangements of 1922 no longer serve the interests of those who created them. The Protestant Ascendancy is an anachronistic fetter on capitalist activity in the Six Counties and a financial drain and political liability for the British ruling class. Each year, Northern Ireland siphons off more than £3 billion from the British treasury—an overhead London is anxious to be rid of.

The growth of U.S. investment in Ireland has increased America's role in Irish politics. The negotiations that produced the Good Friday Agreement were chaired by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, and the White House has taken a continuing interest in keeping the faltering "peace process" alive. The economic integration of the island is seen as a means to ensure political stability, spur growth, cut state expenditures and increase the labor pool. The prospect of future investments in the North on the scale of those in the South is a powerful inducement to Northern Ireland's capitalists to put an end to the "troubles" through

salvaging the Good Friday Agreement.

The basic calculation for the monied interests on both sides of the communal divide was that, by ending the armed conflict in the North, it would be possible to cut overheads and increase profits. The agreement institutionalizes sectarian divisions within the population through confessional representation in parliament, and the maintenance of separate publicly-funded Catholic and Protestant school systems. By ensuring that sectarian formations on both sides will have a role in the administration of their own communities, the basis is quite deliberately laid for the continuing manipulation of a divided working class.

The Political Calculus

The oppressed Catholic minority no longer believes that the IRA's military campaign can produce a united (capitalist) Ireland, while many Protestant workers, who have watched as their living standards have been overtaken by those in the Catholic South, have concluded that the Protestant Ascendancy cannot be maintained. A mood of war-weariness in both communities after 30 years of shootings and bombings, barbed wire and security checks, helped set the stage for the agreement, which was pitched to working people on both sides as a guarantee of peace, democracy and prosperity.

After a massive advertising campaign promoting a "yes" vote, the Good Friday Agreement was overwhelmingly approved by Catholics, and very narrowly, by Protestants in Northern Ireland. The Nationalists anticipate that, in the short term, it will end their second-class status in the Six Counties, and, in the long term, result in a united, 32-county Ireland.

Protestant support for the Good Friday Agreement was largely motivated by the calculation that power-sharing would provide a better chance of avoiding incorporation into a Catholic-dominated 32-county Ireland than the dead-end rejectionism advocated by Ian Paisley's plebeian Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the smaller Progressive Unionist Party (closely linked to the Loyalist murder gangs) saw the accord as the best chance to modernize the British connection. Trimble, a certified Protestant bigot, who in 1995 danced a jig with Paisley at an Orange Order provocation at Portadown, represents the leading elements of Northern Ireland's Protestant bourgeoisie who are willing to take a chance on power-sharing. By giving "moderate" Catholics a stake in the status quo, and alleviating the worst forms of discrimination, Trimble *et al.* hope to reconcile some of them to the idea of remaining in the United Kingdom.

Sinn Fein & the RUC

The Good Friday Agreement is the latest in a series of attempts to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement that began with the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed by Margaret Thatcher in 1985. Previously, the British government had excluded Sinn Fein, the political representative of the IRA, from the negotiations. There is still a Tory/Unionist rump within the British ruling class that rejects the idea of talking to Sinn Fein, but the majority is quite prepared to be rid of the Six Counties and recognizes that any deal negotiated without the IRA would not be real.

Sinn Fein has eagerly participated in the "peace process," despite the fact that the IRA is required to turn over

its weapons, while Britain's army of occupation is permitted to maintain whatever forces it considers "consistent with the level of the overall threat." The British Army has used the ceasefire as an opportunity to refurbish and expand its presence in the IRA's stronghold of South Armagh, which was already the most militarized region in Western Europe. Sinn Fein, however, remains enthusiastic about the deal because it sees an opportunity to emulate South Africa's African National Congress as the administrators of capitalist rule in their own community.

Within the short-lived power-sharing executive, Sinn Fein was awarded the portfolios of education and health, where the largest cuts in social spending are slated to occur. While the pending hospital and school closures will be unpopular, these two ministries will give Sinn Fein control of the bulk of government expenditure outside of security, and the opportunity to make most civil-service appointments.

The stickiest outstanding questions about the "peace process" are posed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, well known for its murderous sectarianism and collaboration with Loyalist death squads. Chris Patten, a former Tory parliamentary under secretary for Northern Ireland, and Britain's last governor of Hong Kong, was appointed to draw up plans for updating the RUC. Patten's report, released in September 1999, called for changing the name to the "Police Service of Northern Ireland," removing the crown from its insignia and ceasing to fly the Union Jack from its stations. The report also advocated closer co-operation with the *Garda* (the Irish Republic's police), for gradually reducing the number of cops from 13,000 to 7,500, and for ensuring that half of the new recruits are Catholics.

The prospect of getting rid of the Union Jack and integrating Sinn Fein supporters into the police has rankled Unionist bigots, but the leading elements in the Protestant bourgeoisie do not care much about symbols. They are more concerned about the capacity of the police to suppress "disorder" and safeguard capitalist property. They see the proposed reforms as a means to cut costs while raising the efficiency of their repressive apparatus. In a sop to Orange sentiment, Blair had the Queen award the George Cross for "heroism" and "bravery" to the murderous thugs of the RUC.

Orange and Green Rejectionists

The implementation of the Good Friday Agreement hinges on neutralizing Protestant opposition, a task proving more difficult than its architects perhaps imagined. In November 1999, the UUP, under considerable pressure from Northern Ireland business interests, voted to proceed with the power-sharing experiment by a narrow margin, but only after David Trimble promised to resign in February if the IRA had not commenced "decommissioning" its weapons by then. When the IRA rejected this ultimatum, New Labour's Northern Ireland Secretary, Peter Mandelson, suspended the executive he had earlier hailed as a "historic institution," to save Trimble from having to honor his pledge.

The Unionist rejectionists, strengthened by dissent within the UUP, are now supported by at least three quarters of the Protestant population. The Northern Ireland business elites and the British government remain committed to the project, but as popular support among Unionists crumbles, some of Trimble's supporters have been jumping



Civil defense preparations in Catholic ghetto, Belfast

ship. The annual meeting of the UUP's ruling council in late March further restricted Trimble's room to maneuver by adding a demand that the RUC's name and logo be preserved to its list of preconditions for future power-sharing with Sinn Fein.

Support for the agreement among Catholics remains high, and those Republicans who have broken with Sinn Fein and rejected the deal, have been unable to counterpose any kind of coherent political alternative. The 32 County Sovereignty Committee of Bernadette Sands McKeivitt (sister of Bobby Sands, the famous Provo hunger striker), which is linked to the Real IRA, found itself isolated and widely vilified after a 1998 car-bombing in Omagh's town center, which killed 28 and wounded 220, both Protestant and Catholic. In the aftermath of the bombing, Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein, called for the Real IRA to disband. This move was welcomed by the British government, which asked for the IRA's help against the Real IRA.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), the political wing of the Irish National Liberation Army, has criticized Sinn Fein for surrendering, but it can only counterpose a proposal for a negotiated ceasefire between Unionist and Republican paramilitaries (a position perhaps better suited to containing internal differences in the IRSP than providing a political answer to the crisis of Republicanism). Republican Sinn Fein/Continuity IRA remain flatly hostile to the "peace process," and advocate the indefinite continuation of the low-level "armed struggle" tactics that the Provisionals have abandoned as pointless. So far, critics of Adams' detente with Blair have been unable to win support

beyond their existing constituencies, but this could change in the event of a "Peace Express" derailment.

Workers Power and the 'Revolutionary' Provos

Britain's ostensibly revolutionary left has traditionally addressed the difficult problems posed by the Irish national question by advocating "self-determination for the Irish people as a whole"; this amounts to supporting the creation of a united Ireland through the forcible incorporation of the Protestant population of the Six Counties into the clericalist Irish Republic. This ersatz Green nationalism is rationalized by labeling as "revolutionary" the Republicans' armed struggle against the British Army.

Workers Power (WP), the leading section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), is adept at camouflaging Green nationalism with revolutionary phrases. They combine calls for withdrawing British troops with advocacy of a united Ireland, adding that "the goal of a united Ireland...must be linked inseparably to the fight for a 32 county workers' republic" (*Workers Power*, December 1999/January 2000). The problem is that these two objectives are not "linked inseparably," even in the pages of the LRCI's press. For example, the July/August 1999 issue of *Workers Power* demanded "self determination for Ireland as a whole and a democratic 32-county constituent assembly with full sovereign powers!" This simply echoes the Republicans' call for a 32-county capitalist state.

While in the past Workers Power tended to adorn Sinn Fein's calls for a "united Ireland" with talk of a workers' republic, they now complain that "Sinn Fein and the IRA have effectively abandoned their goal of a united Ireland." In fact, the "peace process" could conceivably result in a 32-county bourgeois Ireland.

In sitting down to negotiate power-sharing with the Unionists, the IRA sorely disappointed Workers Power and its various other leftist admirers. In a 1987 polemic against us, Workers Power made the claim that the IRA was engaged in a "revolutionary national struggle of the oppressed" against imperialism. We responded:

"Today there can be no 'revolutionary national struggle' standing separate and apart from the class struggle in the society in which it takes place. Only the proletariat, led by its conscious Marxist vanguard...can give consistent expression to the progressive national content of national liberation movements. The national bourgeoisies of the semi-colonial countries act primarily as *agencies* of imperialism within their own nations."

—*Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 3

We also note that petty-bourgeois nationalists like Sinn Fein:

"have the capacity to betray their followers by seeking accommodation with imperialism...In the epoch of imperialism, when the liberation of humanity demands the establishment of an *international* socialist economy, no national ideology can play a consistently progressive historical role."

—*Ibid.*

While denying that they harbored illusions about Sinn Fein, Workers Power advocated an "anti-imperialist united front," based on the IRA's program of "self-determination of the Irish People as a whole" through the forcible incorporation of the Protestants. The latter were dismissed as

agents of imperialism.

When the IRA agreed to lay down its arms in exchange for the Republicans' admission to the negotiations, Workers Power was bitterly disappointed:

"[T]he idea that a peaceful road to unity exists through negotiations with the British state, the Southern bourgeoisie and the Unionists marks an historic betrayal of Irish revolutionary democracy by Sinn Fein and the IRA...."

—*Workers Power*, October 1994

Correctly anticipating that the IRA would "in time...take responsibility for imposing bourgeois order on their supporters," the LRCI declared that "the revolutionary, anti-imperialist threat from petit bourgeois nationalism is at an end." As we observed in 1917 No. 16, "the only thing the IRA has 'betrayed' is WP's illusions in petty-bourgeois nationalism." Yet some illusions die hard, and four and a half years after declaring the IRA's "revolutionary" role at an end, the LRCI was again proffering free tactical advice to the IRA:

"[A] guerrilla army picking off selected targets in the armed forces continues to be no substitute for a community that organises its own armed defence. Today this is not a matter of each nationalist household being armed to the teeth but of each estate and nationalist area having a permanently on guard, trained and visible militia that can prevent loyalists moving around planting bombs and the RUC giving cover and intelligence for it. If Sinn Fein and the IRA built such a permanent militia—accountable to the nationalist masses—there is no telling how many could have been saved from the death squads."

—*Workers Power*, April 1999

Unlike these Green nationalists of the second mobilization who want to help the IRA strengthen their links to "the nationalist masses," Trotskyists seek to polarize society along *class* lines. To this end, we advocate *integrated* workers' defense guards of class-conscious Protestant and Catholic workers to protect the workers' movement against attacks by Loyalist murder gangs, or by any Republicans who might stoop to sectarian violence.

There is a logic to nationalism, just as there is a logic to Marxism, but there is no logic to centrism. After the power-sharing executive was established, and it became clear that the IRA and Sinn Fein expected a free hand to run things in the urban Catholic ghettos, the political chameleons of Workers Power shifted their position once again, this time taking a step to the left. They indignantly declared:

"[N]either do we trust the Republican movement to police the anti-Unionist communities. That is a job for a democratic militia, accountable to the mass organisations of the working class."

—*Workers Power*, December 1999/January 2000

The *Workers Power* scribes coyly avoid the question of whether this reference to the "working class" includes Protestants or just Catholics, although the mention of policing "anti-Unionist communities" suggests it does not. The use of the term "democratic" to describe WP's projected militia is perhaps even more significant, for this is the language of reformism. Trotskyists advocate *workers'* defense guards as a vital step on the road to *workers'* revolution, while Stalinists and other reformists routinely posit the necessity for some democratic "first stage" before the struggle for socialism can be put on the agenda. Is Workers Power's call for a "democratic [Catholic?] militia" merely sloppi-

ness, or does it have some more profound programmatic significance? We look forward to a clarification.

SWP: Defenders of the 'Peace Process'

Britain's largest left group, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), founded by the late Tony Cliff, seems chiefly concerned that the "peace process" may be endangered by Tony Blair's tendency to capitulate to Unionist intransigents:

"So once again everything is stalled by a British government unwilling to face down Unionist bellicosity. John Major allowed them to wreck the first ceasefire, but Blair seems to be doing his best to copy him."

—*Socialist Review*, September 1999

Complaining that "Blair gyrate[s] to the latest Unionist tune," the SWP scolds the political leader of British imperialism, and demands that he stand up to the Orange bigots to save the imperialist "peace process." These criticisms, which echo those of liberal boosters of the power-sharing scheme, are tailored to what the Cliffites think will sell. Similar considerations explain why the SWP's press rarely, if ever, advocates the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Yet unconditional and absolute opposition to Britain's occupation forces in Northern Ireland is the only possible foundation for a genuinely Marxist program for ending the communal conflict. British "socialists" who fail to advance this demand are not worthy of the name.

The same impulse that today leads *Socialist Worker* to implore Blair to "face down" the Unionists led it in 1969 to support the introduction of British troops in Northern Ireland, on the grounds that they would provide a "breathing space" for the oppressed Catholics:

"Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists."

—*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969

Only when the initial illusions of the Catholic population evaporated did the Cliffites change their position. Today the SWP supports the demand for "Troops Out" (in theory at least), while generally refusing to advance it. On this question, as on many others, the International Socialist tendency is consistent only in its opportunism.

Not Orange Against Green, But Class Against Class!

One of the effects of almost three decades of direct rule from London is that Catholics have gained access to a variety of jobs, particularly in the public sector, which had previously been the exclusive preserve of Protestants. This has produced a good deal more social differentiation within the Catholic population than existed at the time of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s. Yet male unemployment is twice as high for Catholics as Protestants, and Catholics remain significantly underrepresented in managerial positions, even within the public sector.

"Peace-process" publicists project a rosy picture of a future 32-county Ireland as the site of high-tech, low-cost manufacturing within the European Union. This presumes that the capitalist elites will continue to politically dominate the working people of both communities in the future as they have in the past. The Good Friday Agreement is an attempt to update the political framework for capitalist exploitation in Northern Ireland by enlisting Republicans, as well as Unionists, as guarantors of capitalist stability.

While Irish nationalists (and the British leftists who tail



Orangemen on parade

them) frame the struggle in terms of Green against Orange, Marxists advance a fundamentally different principle: class against class. Where geographically interpenetrated peoples share a common territory, as Protestants and Catholics do in Northern Ireland, Marxists do not advocate the exercise of self-determination by one people at the expense of the other.

The complex national/communal divisions in Northern Ireland can only be resolved in a just and equitable manner through linking the struggle against Catholic oppression to a rejection of the petty-bourgeois ideology of Republicanism, and hard opposition to the bourgeois clericalist regime in the South. Marxists must put forward a class-struggle program that addresses the common concerns of both Protestant and Catholic workers—for decent housing, good jobs, free quality healthcare and free, secular education—in ways that help transcend sectarian divisions and point to the necessity of overturning the entire system of capitalist exploitation. For example, in addressing the problem of unemployment in the North, revolutionaries must cut against Paisleyite attempts to suggest that more jobs for Catholics must mean fewer for Protestants, by advocating a sliding scale of wages and hours and a massive program of public works to rebuild the infrastructure and eliminate the housing shortage.

The legacy of communalism in England's first colony can only be resolved through a social revolution that breaks the grip of both the Orange and Green bourgeoisies, as well as their imperial patrons, and replaces the tyranny, brutality and corruption of life under capitalism—which Marx referred to as "the muck of the ages"—with a federation of workers' states throughout the British Isles.

At this point, the question of what sort of arrangement Ireland's Protestant minority will choose within such a federation is historically unresolved. One thing that is certain, however, is that a historically progressive solution to the "troubles" that have plagued Northern Ireland for decades requires the intervention of Marxist revolutionaries committed to the creation of an anti-sectarian workers' party with roots on both sides of the communal divide. ■

From Bloody Sunday to Good Friday

The Green, the Orange & the 'Peace Process'



British 'sweep and search' operation: Derry, 1972

The collapse of Northern Ireland's "power-sharing" government in February, after only nine weeks in office, represented a major setback for the much-touted Irish "peace process." It took years of maneuvers, ultimatums, horsetrading, deadlines and postponements before Catholic Republicans and Protestant Unionists finally signed a deal on Good Friday 1998, and it is too early to consign it to the terminal ward. Leading capitalist interests on both sides of the Irish border, as well as in the governments of the United States, Britain and the European Union (EU), remain committed to pushing through some kind of "democratic" resolution to the "troubles" that have plagued the Orange statelet for decades.

Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland is to be governed by an assembly presided over by an executive representing both Protestant and Catholic political parties. All members of the Northern Ireland Assembly must register as Nationalist, Unionist or "other," and all important decisions need the consent of both Catholic and Protestant legislators before they take effect. This can occur either through "parallel consent" (a majority of both Unionists and Nationalists voting) or a "weighted majority" of 60 percent (including at least 40 percent of votes cast by representatives of each community).

In a nod to Republican sensibilities, members of the executive are not required to swear allegiance to the British Crown,

but merely to promise to carry out their duties in good faith. The British government also pledged to reform the notoriously sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and to set up an independent inquiry into the infamous January 1972 "Bloody Sunday" massacre of 14 unarmed Catholic demonstrators by British soldiers.

The agreement also sets up a North-South Council of Ministers and various all-Ireland agencies to oversee trade, fisheries, business development, inland waterways, tourism and other areas of joint economic interest. This ministerial council is designed to facilitate the economic integration of the declining North with the booming "Celtic Tiger" in the South. It is also charged with helping administer European Union programs in Ireland. The EU has earmarked 400 million pounds to fund "cross-community partnerships" of Protestant and Catholic groups on both sides of the border.

Britain acknowledged that the people of Northern Ireland had the right to join the Republic if they wished. In a reciprocal move, the Irish government amended its constitution to delete all territorial claims to the six counties of the northeast. The Good Friday Agreement acknowledged the political aspirations of the two communities as "equally legitimate," and promised the Protestant majority that Northern Ireland would not be integrated into a unitary 32-county state without the consent of the majority of the pop-