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For complete democracy, for the dictatorship of the proletariat

**THE FRAUDULENT NATURE OF  
DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

**THE DICTATORSHIP  
OF THE PROLETARIAT:  
THE ONLY PATH TO SOCIALISM**

# **THE FRAUDULENT NATURE OF DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES**

By Deborah Thomas and Mark Evans

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Organ of the  
Revolutionary Political Organization  
(Marxist-Leninist)

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# THE FRAUDULENT NATURE OF DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

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## INTRODUCTION

The question of Marxist-Leninist participation in bourgeois elections is a burning issue in the U.S. revolutionary movement. As a result of the struggle against the revisionists, who had completely gone over to reformist electoral politics, an infantile boycottist position developed among some revolutionaries in the U.S. during the 1960's and 70's. The denunciation of the theory of "peaceful transition" and the parliamentary cretinism of the revisionists was mistakenly extended to preclude any participation by Marxist-Leninists in bourgeois elections. From the first, our organization rejected this infantile boycottist position and recognized the importance of using the bourgeois elections for revolutionary purposes.

In order to do so, however, the Marxist-Leninist knowledge of the fundamental nature of the bourgeois state, bourgeois elections and Marxist-Leninist tactics in these elections must be clearly understood. Right opportunism, collaboration with the bourgeoisie and reformism have, on the whole, represented the main danger to the revolutionary movement. They represent a particularly serious danger in the electoral arena under today's conditions.

One need only look at the activity of the revisionists in the electoral arena to see how serious this danger is. The revisionists have completely discarded independent and revolutionary Marxist-Leninist politics. Their electoral agitation is limited to the reformist schemes currently in vogue. They act as flunkies for the reformist bourgeois politicians and

they build up illusions among the masses about the possibilities for revolutionary change through bourgeois elections.

We must reject both the swamp of reformism and the bog of anarchism and follow the road laid out by genuine revolutionaries. The classic writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on the state, bourgeois democracy, parliamentarism and electoral tactics guide the way. In order to prepare for the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is essential that the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state be propagated widely to the working class and its allies. The application of these general lessons to the current conditions in the U.S. illuminates the course of action which should be followed.

In this two-part series, the Revolutionary Political Organization (Marxist-Leninist) sets forward a scientific analysis of bourgeois elections and the character of the participation of Marxist-Leninists in these elections, with particular reference to the U.S. In the first part, we outline the fraudulent nature of elections in bourgeois democratic states like the U.S. and show why there can be no "peaceful" or "electoral" path to socialism. In the second part, which will appear in an upcoming issue of *Workers' Herald*, we will set forth the Marxist-Leninist tactics for using the bourgeois elections as one arena of struggle against the ruling class.

# THE ROLE OF ELECTIONS IN BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

"To decide once every four years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament - this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics."

V. I. Lenin.<sup>1</sup>

Karl Marx once referred to the U.S. as "the model country of the democratic swindle."<sup>2</sup> "Democratic swindle" is a good description of what the bourgeois democratic state is all about. This state is an apparatus of armed forces, laws, legislative bodies, etc., whose sole purpose is to maintain and extend the class domination of a small minority, the bourgeoisie, over the vast majority, the working people. This despotic rule is embellished with nice-sounding catchwords about "freedom," "equality," "democracy," "government of, by and for the people," and so on. This is a trick which the bourgeoisie has practiced and refined over hundreds of years. Elections are an important component of this ruse.

The bourgeoisie trumpets its elections as being "free" and "democratic," and claims they represent the "voice of the people." These claims are designed to conceal the fundamental, irrefutable fact that there can be no equality between the millionaires who own everything and the workers who own nothing. The legal right to vote means little when the ruling class does everything to see that the working class cannot build its own Marxist-Leninist party, organize its own revolutionary political movement or run its own candidates. The "right to assembly" rings hollow when all places of assembly are owned and controlled by the bourgeoisie; the "right to free speech" is a mockery when the bourgeoisie owns and controls all the television and radio stations and large printing presses.

Behind this facade of "democracy" stands the real truth of bourgeois dictatorship - to protect its rule the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth. Its military and police forces stand ready to defend the sanctity of private property

against the insurgency of the wage-slaves, just as the legions of Rome stood against the revolt of the empire's slaves. Lenin was so right when he wrote:

"Take the fundamental laws of modern states, take their administration, take freedom of assembly, freedom of the press or 'equality of all citizens before the law' and you will see at every turn evidence of the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy with which every honest and class conscious worker is familiar. There is not a single state, however democratic, which has no loopholes or reservations in its constitution guaranteeing the bourgeoisie the possibility of dispatching troops against the workers, of proclaiming martial law, and so forth, in case of a 'violation of public order' and actually in case the exploited class 'violates' its position of slavery and tries to behave in a non-slavish manner."<sup>3</sup>

There can be no doubt that bourgeois democracy was a great advance over the feudal monarchy. It is also obvious that the struggle for universal suffrage and the exercise of the right to vote by the working class is a significant part of its education to its historical mission. However, so long as suffrage is exercised in a system which is based upon private ownership of the means of production, there can be no talk of "equality" or "democracy" for the exploited masses. "Democracy" in such a state will always remain "restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor."<sup>4</sup> Nor can there be hope of altering this situation, seizing power and establishing socialism through the "electoral process." The bourgeoisie has created thousands of barriers and restrictions to insure against this possibility. They have organized their government and laws in such a way as to prevent such an occurrence. More importantly, they will always use their armies to maintain their power. Any threat to their rule will be met

with swift and sure military force and any illusions to the contrary must be swept aside.

Perhaps nowhere in the world is the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy so blatant as in the U.S. While posing as the "land of the free," "the leader of the free world," etc., the U.S., from its very inception was designed to be a democracy for the rich alone, a bourgeois

state designed to give the illusion of equality while strangling the working class. The electoral arena is the site of some of the most cynical maneuvers of the bourgeoisie to this end. In order to understand how this fraud is perpetrated we must analyze the original organization of the U.S. state as an instrument of bourgeois rule.

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#### NOTES

All citations to "LCW" refer to V.I. Lenin, **Collected Works**, Progress Publishers, 3rd ed., Moscow (1972). "v." refers to the volume.

<sup>1</sup>LCW, v. 25, pp. 385, 427-8, "The State and Revolution"

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, **Marx and Engels on the United States**, Progress Publishers, (1972), "Letter to Engels," p. 202

<sup>3</sup>LCW, v. 28, pp. 229, 244, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky"

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 243

# THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

The U.S. Constitution, as the framework of the bourgeois government, is a revealing document. Its reality is quite different from the myth, which is typical of bourgeois democracy. It is a far cry from the "last word in democracy" which the U.S. bourgeoisie proclaims it to be. In fact, it fails to express some of the most basic principles of the bourgeois democratic state and its principal function is to ensure the position of the capitalist exploiters.

## PURPOSE OF THE CONSTITUTION

The U.S. Constitution is a product of the bourgeois democratic revolution of 1776 which overthrew British colonial rule with its feudal-monarchical remnants. This revolution was very progressive because it cleared the way for capitalist development.

"The bourgeois revolution is precisely an upheaval that most resolutely sweeps away survivals of the past, survivals of the serf-owning system (which include not only the autocracy but the monarchy as well), and guarantees the broadest, freest and most rapid development of capitalism. That is why a bourgeois revolution is in the highest degree advantageous to the proletariat... The more complete, determined and consistent the bourgeois revolution, the more assured will the proletariat's struggle be against the bourgeoisie and for socialism."<sup>1</sup>

But, like all bourgeois democratic revolutions which are led by the bourgeoisie, the U.S. revolution was incomplete. It retained a number of feudal institutions and, while the bourgeoisie used democratic slogans in its war against British colonialism, it refused to implement these slogans and instead restricted democracy in order to consolidate its rule.

"(I)t is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie," wrote Lenin, "for the bourgeois revolution not to sweep away all remnants of the past too resolutely, but to keep some of them, i.e., for this revolution not to be fully consistent, not complete, and not to be

determined and relentless. The Social Democrats<sup>2</sup> often express this idea somewhat differently by stating that the bourgeoisie betrays its own self, that the bourgeoisie betrays the cause of liberty, that the bourgeoisie is incapable of being consistently democratic."<sup>2</sup>

The anti-colonial revolution in the U.S. was led by the exploiting classes among the colonists - the rich planters and merchant-capitalists, but it was fought by the small farmers and workers. After independence was won, the exploiting classes set about to consolidate their rule over the masses of working people - small farmers, workers and slaves. The class antagonisms between the exploiters and the exploited soon came to the fore. Small farmers demanded that the large landed estates be broken up and the land divided equally.

The poverty-stricken classes protested against imprisonment for debt, the cost of court proceedings, the poll tax and the wealth, arrogance and corruption of public office holders. Armed crowds stopped foreclosures on farms, released prisoners from debtors' jails and prevented courts from convening. This armed resistance reached a high point with the Shays Rebellion in 1786. It was only a few months later that the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia to draft the U.S. Constitution. The proceedings began with the express purpose of protecting the bourgeois order and containing this upsurge.

The participants in the Constitutional Convention were overwhelmingly from the wealthy, exploiting classes. Delegates were appointed by the state legislatures. These legislatures, in turn, had been selected through a process where suffrage was limited to white, male property owners or taxpayers.<sup>3</sup> Only one adult in thirty was eligible to vote in these elections. The Constitution itself, once adopted by the Convention, was never submitted to a vote of the people. Rather, it was presented to the state legislatures, whose delegates represented only the propertied classes.

Omitted from participation in the drafting and ratification of the Constitution were the working class, Afro-American slaves, indentured

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\*All Russian Marxists were known as Social-Democrats before the split in the Second International.

servants, Native Americans and women. Needless to say, the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population were not reflected in the proceedings.<sup>4</sup>

The main authors of the new Constitution, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, were quite candid and forthright in their admissions that the purpose of the document was to legalize the rule of the capitalists and landowners. Hamilton wrote:

"All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people... The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government."<sup>5</sup>

Madison argued for a constitutional system of "checks and balances." This system, which is promoted by bourgeois apologists as a "foundation of U.S. democracy," is expressly anti-democratic. Specifically, Madison argued that the executive and judicial branches of the government be made independent of the Congress (the "people's representatives") in order to assure that they would not fall prey to usurpation by dangerous "factions." By "faction," Madison meant social class and, for

him, the "dangerous" factions were the poor workers and farmers. "The most common and durable source of factions," wrote Madison, "has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society."<sup>6</sup>

Madison argued that the constitutional structure of the government had to suppress the demands of the petty bourgeois masses: the "rage for paper money, for the abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the basic provisions of the Constitution were drawn up expressly to make the seats of state power as inaccessible to the masses of people as possible.

#### PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The bourgeois democratic era enunciated for the first time a number of democratic principles, including the sovereignty of the people and their representatives, universal suffrage, the election of all high officials, the right of the people to recall all elected officials, the people's militia, the self-determination of nations, the equality of all nationalities and the equality of women.\* However, the U.S. Constitution, a product of one of the first revolutions of the bourgeois-democratic era, failed to guarantee any of these principles. Although it has been amended numerous times and many reforms have been achieved as a result of the revolutionary struggles of the working people, the Constitution to this day

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\*These democratic principles inaugurated by the bourgeois-democratic revolutions were most concisely summed up by Lenin in the Bolshevik Program of 1917. We reprint here the 16 points of this program which dealt with democratic rights:<sup>8</sup>

- 1) The sovereignty of the people; supreme power in the state must be vested entirely in the people's representatives, who shall be elected by the people and be subject to recall at any time, and who shall constitute a single popular assembly, a single chamber.
- 2) Universal, equal, and direct suffrage for all citizens, men and women, who have reached the age of twenty, in the elections to the legislative assembly and to the various bodies of local self-government; secret ballot; the right of every voter to be elected to any representative institution; biennial parliaments; salaries to be paid to the people's representatives; proportional representation at all elections; all delegates and elected officials, without exception, to be subject to recall at any time upon the decision of a majority of their electors.
- 3) Local self-government on a broad scale; regional self-government in localities where the composition of the population and living and social conditions are of a specific nature; the abolition of all state-appointed local and regional authorities.
- 4) Inviolability of person and domicile.
- 5) Unrestricted freedom of conscience, speech, the press, assembly, strikes, and association.
- 6) Freedom of movement and occupation.
- 7) Abolition of the social estates; equal rights for all citizens irrespective of sex, creed, race, or nationality.



fails to completely guarantee any of these principles and many are still completely negated.

The Constitution made a profound mockery of the bourgeois democratic claim that "all men are created equal." The most obvious flouting of this principle was the sanctioning and protection of chattel slavery. This barbaric, pre-capitalist system continued for another 75 years until the second great bourgeois revolution in the United States, the Civil War, abolished it. The Constitution reflected the abolition of chattel slavery, but remained an instrument of national oppression, sanctioning Jim Crow segregation in the South and the subjugation of other nationalities.

The Constitution did not provide for the right of nations to self-determination; that is, the right of nations to secede and form their own independent states. The "founding fathers" spoke eloquently of this right for themselves in their "Declaration of Independence," but as soon as they achieved independence they set out on a path of predatory, imperialist wars to subjugate numerous peoples and seize their lands. As we shall see, any

claim about democracy in the territories of the conquered peoples is a farce without this right.

The Constitution did not provide equal rights for women, and the bourgeoisie has refused to include such an amendment to this day.

As adopted by the Constitutional Convention, the Constitution did not provide for any of the basic democratic rights of the people, such as the freedoms of speech, press and assembly, separation of church and state, due process and trial by jury, protection from unreasonable search and seizure, etc. These rights were only recognized in the form of amendments, which were added as the direct result of the struggle of the masses.\*

Moreover, these rights have never been fully realized by the people because of the inherent nature of bourgeois society. All have been curtailed both by law and by extra-legal repression organized by the ruling class to suppress the revolutionary movements of the working people. Freedom of speech, press and assembly are restricted by numerous laws which ban the advocacy of revolution and

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8) The right of the population to receive instruction in their native tongue in schools to be established for the purpose at the expense of the state and local organs of self-government; the right of every citizen to use his native language at meetings; the native language to be used on a level with the official language in all local public and state institutions; the obligatory official language to be abolished.

9) The right of all member nations of the state to freely secede and form independent states. The republic of the Russian nation must attract other nations or nationalities not by force, but exclusively by voluntary agreement on the question of forming a common state. The unity and fraternal alliance of the workers of all countries are incompatible with the use of force, direct or indirect, against other nationalities.

10) The right of all persons to sue any official in the regular way before a jury.

11) Judges and other officials, both civil and military, to be elected by the people with the right to recall any of them at any time by decision of a majority of their electors.

12) The police and standing army to be replaced by the universally armed people; workers and other employees to receive regular wages from the capitalists for the time devoted to public service in the people's militia.

13) Separation of the church from the state, and schools from the church; schools to be absolutely secular.

14) Free and compulsory general and polytechnical education (familiarising the student with the theoretical and practical aspects of the most important fields of production) for all children of both sexes up to the age of sixteen; training of children to be closely integrated with socially productive work.

15) All students to be provided with food, clothing, and school supplies at the cost of the state.

16) Public education to be administered by democratically elected organs of local self-government; the central government not to be allowed to interfere with the arrangement of the school curriculum, or with the selection of the teaching staffs; teachers to be elected directly by the population with the right of the latter to remove undesirable teachers.

\*The first ten amendments to the Constitution known as the Bill of Rights.

revolutionary activities, by the extra-legal repressive activities of the police and fascist gangs, by the fact that the bourgeoisie owns the major means of production and is free to fire and blacklist workers for political beliefs and activities and by the fact that the bourgeoisie owns the major means of communication (the press, radio, television, etc.), the meeting halls, etc.

The Second Amendment to the Constitution speaks of state militias and the right of the people to bear arms. However, this ambiguous amendment did not provide for the universal arming of the people, nor did it explicitly protect the right of individuals to bear arms. It provided for popular militias under bourgeois control, but even these militias were soon to be supplanted by a standing army and police forces, which serve to repress the people.\* Today, the right of the people to bear arms has become a dead letter. The bourgeois state is attempting to completely disarm the people so that only the standing army, the police and the fascist gangs will be armed.

Some of the Constitution's most anti-democratic features concern the structure of the government and the election of public officials. This article will concern itself chiefly with these features, which are:

1. The Constitution did not provide for universal suffrage. It had no provision regarding the right to vote except to authorize the states to establish restrictions on the right. The U.S. bourgeoisie never embraced the notion of universal suffrage. Voting was restricted in England and they saw no reason to conclude that things should be different under the new government. The experience of Shays Rebellion confirmed among the bourgeoisie the view that the masses were unruly and could not

be trusted to docilely accept bourgeois rule. Therefore, with little discussion, the franchise was restricted from the outset. (The struggle to achieve universal suffrage will be discussed later.)

2. The Constitution did not provide for the right to recall elected officials. Federal elected officials cannot be recalled and, in place of that right, the bourgeoisie adopted a procedure of impeachment. This is left in the safe hands of bourgeois institutions and precludes any say by the people. Most state and local officials cannot be recalled either and even in the few states and localities where the right exists, it is severely limited by technical and financial restrictions. Election terms are also staggered in order to prevent any sweeping change in legislative bodies that might result from a wave of mass indignation.\*\*

3. The Constitution established the executive branch of the government as the supreme authority and separated it from the legislative branch, with the aim of insuring that the bulk of governmental authority would be removed from popular influence or the danger of usurpation. The President was given authority to overrule acts of Congress. The Supreme Court, appointed for life by the President, has the same privilege.

Under the Constitution, the President is neither appointed by Congress nor directly elected by the people, but is selected by an Electoral College. Under the original design of the Constitutional Convention, the members of the Electoral College were not to be elected by the people, but rather were to be appointed by state legislatures. In the 1820's, popular elections for the President were introduced, but only indirect elections. They simply determine the members of the Electoral College;

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\*The organization of a people's militia and the right of the people to bear arms are measures which flow from the entire course of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, but as Lenin pointed out: "...in most of the bourgeois revolutions of the usual type, this reform was always extremely short-lived, and...the bourgeoisie...even the most democratic and republican...restored the police of the old, tsarist type, a police divorced from the people, commanded by the bourgeoisie and capable of oppressing the people in every way."<sup>9</sup>

\*\*The right of recall is a particularly significant democratic right of the masses, as once elected, the candidates often reveal their true colors and begin to carry out acts of oppression against the people. As Lenin noted, "In all revolutionary periods in history, a prominent feature in the struggle for constitutional changes has been the fight for the right of recall. Democratic representation exists and is accepted under all parliamentary systems, but this right of representation is curtailed by the fact that the people have the right to cast their votes once in every two years, while it often turns out that their votes have installed those who help oppress them, they are deprived of the democratic right to put a stop to that by removing these men."<sup>10</sup>

only these electors vote directly for the President. Moreover, these electors are not bound by the results of the popular vote. The Electoral College system gives the bourgeoisie another forum in which elections can be stolen and deals struck between different factions of the bourgeoisie. Such deals have resulted in the election of two presidents, Rutherford B. Hayes and Benjamin Harrison, despite the fact they received fewer votes than their main rivals in the popular elections.

4. The Constitution divided the Congress, the central legislative body, into upper and lower houses (the Senate and the House of Representatives), with the main power reserved for the Senate. This bicameral system was modelled after the British "House of Lords" and "House of Commons." Like the "House of Lords," the Senate was not elected by popular vote - senators were selected by the state legislatures. It was not until the 17th Amendment to the Constitution passed in 1913 that this changed. The "bicameral system" was established and the Senate was given greater

constitutional authority in order to curb any potentially dangerous tendencies in the House of Representatives, the members of which have shorter terms (two years, as opposed to six) and smaller electoral districts and are thus, theoretically, more subject to pressure from the people.

5. The Constitution provided for all federal judges to be appointed rather than elected. Today, a number of states have also done away with popular elections for judges, or are preparing to do so.

In short, the U.S. Constitution represents a truncated, narrow form of democracy which is typical of bourgeois states. It set up the framework for a state apparatus designed to maintain the rule of the exploiting classes over the masses of people, a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It carries a certain rhetorical gloss to try to delude the masses as to its real character, yet even this brief review shows that it is specifically designed, not as a bulwark of democracy, but as a barrier to the rule of the exploited classes.

#### NOTES

All citations to "LCW" refer to V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 3rd ed., Moscow (1972). "v." refers to the volume.

<sup>1</sup>LCW, v. 9, pp. 15, 50, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution"

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, St. Martin's Press, 4th ed. (1983), p. 61; Hill & Luttberg, *Trends in American Electoral Behavior*, F.E. Peacock, Inc., 2nd ed. (1983)

<sup>4</sup>For further reading on this period, see: Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, Harper & Row (1980); Parenti, op. cit.; Orville J. Victor, *History of American Conspiracies*, Charles E. Tuttle Co. (1973); Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution* (1913); Goldwin & Schambra, eds., *How Democratic Is the Constitution?*, Amer. Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (1980)

<sup>5</sup>Parenti, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 10

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>LCW, v. 24, pp. 455, 471-3, "Materials Relating to the Revision of the Party Programme"

<sup>9</sup>LCW, v. 24, pp. 55, 70

<sup>10</sup>LCW, v. 26, p. 338, "Report on the Right of Recall at a Meeting of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee"

# THE STRUGGLE FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

The demand for universal suffrage arose as part of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, but it arose primarily from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie and the emerging proletariat. The bourgeoisie also demanded the right to vote, but only on its own behalf. Wherever possible, the bourgeoisie sought to restrict suffrage to "men of property," i.e. to its own class. Therefore, the struggle for universal suffrage has been, in general, a struggle of the exploited classes against the bourgeoisie. In some situations, the bourgeoisie has used the demand for universal suffrage temporarily in their struggle against the aristocracy in order to consolidate their rule, while simultaneously suppressing its exercise by the working people.

The 1848 bourgeois democratic revolution in France was the first to establish universal suffrage. This was a result of the independent revolutionary struggle waged by the French proletariat. Following the bloody suppression of the workers' uprising in June, 1848, the franchise was once again drastically restricted. The Paris Commune of 1871, the first proletarian revolution in the world, established universal suffrage with the right to recall elected officials. The combined forces of the bourgeois and feudal order in Europe crushed the Commune, but the counterrevolution saw fit to acknowledge universal suffrage in the French constitution from that date. In practice, however, the franchise was restricted to the propertied classes.

It was only through persistent and stubborn struggle that the working class of the various bourgeois democratic states was able to wrest the right to vote from the bourgeoisie:

"Throughout the course of its class struggle, the proletariat enjoyed the right to suffrage only in so far as it won it in stubborn conflict. Only by reason of this struggle did the bourgeoisie introduce universal suffrage in certain capitalist countries.

Fear of the worker class compelled the bourgeoisie of America, England, France, Belgium and other countries to leave in their constitutions 'universal suffrage' albeit in a curtailed and falsified form. In a letter to Engels, Marx noted that universal suffrage is only a concession made to the workers and, of course, in a very extreme case."<sup>1</sup>

## THE STRUGGLE FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN THE U.S.

In 1789, the year after the U.S. Constitution was ratified, only about one in thirty adults in the U.S. was eligible to vote. Most states restricted voting to property owners. The remaining states restricted voting to taxpayers. Women were not allowed to vote. The Afro-American slaves and the Native Peoples were excluded from the political system altogether and were denied all democratic rights. Many states also conditioned the right to vote on adherence to the Protestant religion. Most states prohibited Catholics from voting and several also barred Jews and Catholics from being elected to office. This was the "haven of democracy" that the bourgeoisie boasts so much about.<sup>2</sup>

The entire history of the fight to extend the right to vote in the U.S. has been one of fierce struggle by the working class, farmers, oppressed nationalities and women, met with resistance and grudging concessions by the bourgeoisie. The right to vote has only been extended as a direct result of this struggle, and every time the bourgeoisie has made a concession and removed one blatant barrier to suffrage, it established another barrier to take its place.

Most of the laws which had openly restricted voting to property owners, taxpayers and Protestants were done away with during the first half of the 19th century\* under the pressure of the persistent struggle of the workers and

\*Property ownership requirements still existed in many state and local bond elections until 1975.

farmers who had taken up arms.\* However, the bourgeoisie then established poll taxes in most states to reinstate the restrictions.

The second great bourgeois-democratic revolution in the U.S., the Civil War and Reconstruction, did away with slavery and all the laws, in both the southern and northern states, which had openly forbidden Afro-Americans from voting. The 15th Amendment to the Constitution in 1870 barred disenfranchisement based on race. After the betrayal of Reconstruction, however, the bourgeoisie set about writing a host of new laws specifically designed to prevent Afro-Americans from voting. These laws, combined with terror, disenfranchised virtually all Afro-Americans in the Black Belt South, and the majority of the Anglo-American laboring population in the southern states.

"The legal devices included poll taxes and record-keeping requirements, literacy and 'understanding' tests, property and residence qualifications, 'grandfather clauses,' registration provisions, and disenfranchisement for minor criminal offenses. Any remaining loopholes were closed by discriminatory administration, fraud, and intimidation. The purpose of these restrictions was candidly declared — 'universal white manhood suffrage, and the exclusion from the suffrage of every man with a trace of African blood in his veins.' The movement achieved its aims.<sup>3</sup>

In 1944 it was estimated that less than 5% of the adult Afro-American population in the southern states had voted in the previous five years. In 1952 in 24 Black Belt counties in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana and Mississippi there was not a single Afro-American registered to vote.<sup>5</sup> It was not until the 1960's that massive resistance, including armed rebellions throughout the country, forced the bourgeoisie to do away with most of the legal restrictions and slacken the terror. The elimination of the poll tax, the bogus "literacy"

tests and other restrictions was a victory not only for Afro-Americans, but for the other oppressed peoples, and for the Anglo-American working people who lived in the regions of the oppressed nations.

After more than a century of struggle, women finally won the right to vote through a constitutional amendment in 1920. This concession was a direct response to the upsurge in the revolutionary movement in the U.S. following World War I, which was greatly spurred by the October Socialist Revolution in Russia.

Young people between the ages of 18 and 21 finally achieved the right to vote by a constitutional amendment in 1971, a concession to the revolutionary struggles of the 1960's in which millions of youth participated.

The struggle for universal suffrage continues today.<sup>6</sup> Major restrictions on the franchise are the citizenship and registration requirements which were adopted in the 19th Century in order to prevent the millions of immigrant workers who were arriving in the U.S. from voting.\*\* A large part of the U.S. working class, numbering between 10 and 20 million today, is made up of immigrant workers who are denied the rights of citizens, including the right to vote. This disenfranchisement of immigrant workers is particularly important in the industrial and agricultural centers, especially in the Southwest, where they make up a large part (in some places a majority) of the population.

The struggle for universal suffrage also includes doing away with all language barriers and all instances of de facto disenfranchisement through discrimination. It includes doing away with onerous registration requirements that exclude working class people. In many states, registration requires going to downtown offices during working hours at least 30 days before an election. The struggle includes doing away with the common practice of purging the voter registration rolls of people who do not vote on a regular basis, a practice designed to remove working class and oppressed people. It includes

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\* Dorr's Rebellion in Rhode Island in 1841-2 was the most notable instance of armed struggle against the restriction of suffrage to property owners. The insurrectionists wrote a new state constitution based on universal manhood suffrage, organized a referendum to approve the constitution and elected a rival government. Although the insurrection was crushed by armed force, it directly resulted in the adoption of a new state constitution which dropped property restrictions on suffrage.<sup>4</sup>

\*\*Registration to vote was not required in the U.S. until late in the 19th century and by 1900 virtually every state had registration laws, which were designed to block voting by immigrant, migrant and Afro-American workers and, by extension, all workers.

the demand that elections be held on holidays so that polls are accessible to working people.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

The extension of the right to vote helps the working people to see that the cause of their enslavement isn't the absence of the right to vote, but rather the entire system of capitalist wage slavery which divides society into exploiters and exploited. For even if every barrier to the franchise was done away with, the working people would still be unable to free themselves from capitalist tyranny through bourgeois elections.

As voting restrictions fall in the face of revolutionary struggle, the limitations of the bourgeois system are more sharply revealed. Under the leadership of a vanguard revolutionary party the working class will confirm through its own political experience the limitations of the bourgeois electoral system and set as its goal the overthrow of the entire system.

Further, the struggle for the right to vote and participation in the parliamentary arena provides a means for the working class to organize itself as a class, to organize its own political party. This was explained by Lenin in his lecture on The State in 1919:

"The democratic republic and universal suffrage were an immense progressive advance compared to feudalism; they have enabled the proletariat to achieve its present unity and solidarity, to form those firm and disciplined ranks which are waging a systematic struggle against capital. There was nothing even approximately resembling this among the peasant serfs, not to speak of the slaves. The slaves, as we know, revolted, rioted, started civil wars, but they could never create a class-conscious majority and parties to lead the struggle, they could not clearly realize what aims they were moving towards, and even in the most revolutionary moments of history they were always pawns in the hands of the ruling classes. The bourgeois republic, parliament universal suffrage—all represent great progress from the standpoint of the world development of society. Mankind

moved towards capitalism and it was capitalism alone which, thanks to urban culture, enabled the oppressed proletarian class to become conscious of itself and to create the world working-class movement, the millions of workers organized all over the world in parties - the Socialist parties which are consciously leading the struggle of the masses. Without parliamentarism, without an electoral system, this development of the working class would have been impossible. That is why all these things have acquired such great importance in the eyes of the broad masses of people."<sup>7</sup>

The struggle for universal suffrage and participation in the parliamentary struggle is only a tool that the working class can use to organize its forces, it is not a means to freedom from capitalist wage slavery. Engels very eloquently described universal suffrage as a "gauge of the maturity of the working class"...and nothing else. Universal suffrage, i.e. the struggle in the electoral arena, can be used to measure the extent of the independent, revolutionary development of the working class, but it cannot be used to bring the working class to power.

"...the possessing class rules directly through the medium of universal suffrage. As long as the oppressed class, in our case therefore the proletariat, is not yet ripe to emancipate itself, it will in its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible and politically, will form the tail of the capitalist class, its extreme left wing. To the extent, however, that this class matures for its self-emancipation, it constitutes itself as its own party and elects its own representatives, and not those of the capitalists. Thus universal suffrage is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state, but that is sufficient. On the day that the thermometer of universal suffrage registers boiling point among the workers, both they and the capitalists will know what to do."<sup>8</sup>

### WHY THE MAJORITY OF THE WORKING CLASS DOES NOT VOTE

"Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that 'they cannot be bothered with democracy', 'cannot be bothered with politics'; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life."<sup>9</sup>

While many of the laws that barred the masses of people from voting have been eliminated over the years, the class content remains the same. The bourgeoisie and the upper petty-bourgeoisie participate intensively in the electoral process while the majority of the working class does not participate in any way.

The most important electoral events in the U.S. are the presidential elections which take place every four years. There is far greater participation in these elections than in any other. Even in these elections, however, only about 50-60% of the voting-age population actually votes. In 1980 only 55% of the voting age population voted in the presidential elections.<sup>10</sup> While 27% of the voting-age population voted for Reagan a far greater number of people declined to vote at all. **There has never been a presidential election in which the number of votes cast for the victor was greater than the number of non-voters.**<sup>11</sup>

Virtually all of the bourgeoisie vote and the majority of the petty-bourgeoisie vote, but only a minority of the working class votes. A study by a liberal professor of voter participation according to social class in the 1976 presidential election presented the figures in Table 1. These figures are based on a survey conducted by the Census Bureau which usually exaggerates voter participation by 5 - 15%.<sup>12</sup>

**TABLE 1: VOTER TURN-OUT IN THE  
1976 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BY CLASS<sup>13</sup>**

Propertied Middle Class	76.9%
Non-propertied Middle Class	70.4%
Craftsmen, foremen	58%
Workers	46.7%

Another study of participation in the 1976 election showed that unskilled workers were 51% less likely to vote than professionals and that people in the lowest income bracket were 77% less likely to vote than people in the highest income bracket.<sup>14</sup> Those who benefit most from the system vote most often, those who suffer the most vote the least.

Electoral participation is even narrower in congressional, state and local elections. In fact, in many state and local elections less than 20%, and in some cases less than 10%, of the voting-age population actually votes. When electoral participation is this narrow it can be assumed that virtually all of these votes are cast by the bourgeoisie, upper petty-bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy, while the working masses stand on the sidelines. **With such limited participation all talk about "democracy" and "the will of the people" is ludicrous, a mockery of the truth.**

In order to fully appreciate the isolation of the working masses from the bourgeois political process it must be pointed out that voting is the **only** aspect of this process in which large numbers of the working masses participate. All other aspects are largely the private domain of the bourgeoisie, the upper petty-bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy. The typical member of the capitalist class is very active in politics. The bourgeoisie participates in large numbers in the activities of the bourgeois political parties, they are involved in helping to select political candidates, in raising funds and in organizing political campaigns. They present their views in public meetings, meet privately with government officials, and organize lobbying campaigns. The upper petty-bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy are involved in these activities to a lesser extent and at a lower level, but they are nevertheless drawn in quite regularly. On the other hand, the working masses are almost completely isolated from all of this political activity. Only in exceptional instances do they attempt to barge into this unfamiliar territory in order to combat a particularly outrageous abuse. One survey estimated that only 13% of the voting-age population ever contacts public officials, only about 10% makes political contributions, and only about 4 - 5% are active in a political party, participate in electoral campaigns, or attend political meetings.<sup>15</sup>

The bourgeois political system is designed to exclude the participation of the working people.

"Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich," wrote Lenin, "that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy we see everywhere, in the "petty", supposedly petty, details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.) in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for 'paupers!'), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc. etc., we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles, for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of ten, if not 99 out of 100, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy."<sup>16</sup>

The working people are allowed to participate in bourgeois democracy to a limited extent but this is only for show, to convince the masses that the government has been "elected by the people" and that its actions represent "the will of the people". But despite the demagoguery about the "will of the people", the exclusion of the masses of people from participation in state affairs is actually taken for granted among bourgeois social "scientists." The inherent limitations of popular participation in bourgeois democracy are spelled out, for instance, by Samuel Huntington, a professor of government at Harvard University, in a theoretical tract prepared for the Trilateral Commission in 1974 regarding the "governability of democracy."

"The effective operation of a democratic political system", wrote Huntington, "usually requires some measure of apathy and noninvolvement on the part of some individuals and groups. In the past, every democratic society

has had a marginal population, of greater or lesser size, which has not actively participated in politics. In itself, this marginality on the part of some groups is inherently undemocratic, but it has also been one of the factors which has enabled democracy to function effectively."<sup>17</sup>

Although carefully worded, this statement is a direct admission of the anti-democratic nature of bourgeois democracy and the desire of the bourgeoisie to keep it that way. In order to maintain bourgeois rule ("the effective operation of a democratic political system") it is necessary that the majority of the working masses ("a marginal population of greater or lesser size") be excluded from state affairs ("not actively participate in politics"). Huntington goes on to say that the demands of some marginal groups, such as Afro-Americans, to participate fully in the political system, bears the danger of "overloading the political system", "extending its functions" and "undermining its authority."<sup>18</sup> Thus, according to one of the foremost U.S. bourgeois theoreticians on democracy, the U.S. ruling class must check the danger of increased political activity and participation on the part of the oppressed masses or risk the undermining of its authority. "Overindulgence" in democracy, he concludes, will cause the system to "commit suicide."<sup>19</sup>

The extent to which political participation in capitalist countries is extended to the mass of people varies from country to country. In the U.S. participation is particularly limited. For instance, voter participation is 30-40% lower in the U.S. than in such countries as France, West Germany and Italy.<sup>20</sup> In these countries the proletarian movement has historically been more powerful and conscious than in the U.S. The bourgeoisie has been forced to allow the working class to participate to a greater extent. It could not simply suppress the proletarian parties and had to rely much more heavily on the co-optation of these parties through revisionism and reformism. The capitalists in these countries have come to agreements with the social-democratic and revisionist parties and have invited them to join the government and help exercise bourgeois rule, provided that they renounce revolution.

The U.S. bourgeoisie has also made use of social-democratic and revisionist parties to



mislead sections of the workers and radical petty-bourgeoisie, but to a much lesser degree than its European counterparts. Because the development of an independent, revolutionary working class party in the U.S. came relatively late and was never so powerful as those in Europe, the U.S. ruling class was not forced to make many concessions to the "dangerous" idea that the working class should be represented by its own political party. Therefore, instead of promoting renegade "workers parties" the U.S. capitalist class generally suppresses and isolates these parties, demanding that the workers be content with the two major bourgeois parties. Despite the vague populist demogogy of the Democratic Party, neither of these parties makes any pretense of being a working class party or supporting socialism. The result of this policy has been a much greater level of alienation on the part of the workers from the entire bourgeois political system in the U.S.

The U.S. bourgeoisie constantly boasts that the U.S. is the "most democratic country in the world." The companion article in this issue demonstrates how the U.S., like all bourgeois states, inherently is far less democratic than a proletarian state. But even in comparison with many other bourgeois states, the U.S. is distinctly more reactionary. The U.S. political system is run in a more oligarchic, autocratic

fashion, with less participation and more repression than many European states because the more developed struggles of the European proletariat have forced greater democratic reforms.

Further, the low level of participation in electoral politics by workers in the U.S. is a very negative result of the political suppression and the lack of political development of the U.S. proletariat. The lack of a genuine revolutionary proletarian party to organize the political activity of the working class is a major factor in this lack of political development. We cannot be content with the explanation that workers do not vote because they are alienated from the bourgeois political system. This is true. But the failure of the majority of the workers to vote is not, for the most part, the result of a high level of consciousness, i.e., an understanding that elections must give way to a revolutionary proletarian solution. Instead, it is the result of the lack of political consciousness and organization of the proletariat, and first and foremost, the lack of a genuine Marxist-Leninist proletarian party. Such a party must be built, and this party must use the bourgeois elections as one means to mobilize the working class to fight for its own class interests and to agitate for the necessity of socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Andrei Vichinsky, *The Law of the Soviet State*, MacMillan Co. (1948), p. 661

<sup>2</sup>Parenti, op. cit.; Zinn, op. cit.; Gustavus Meyers, *History of Bigotry in the United States*, Random House (1943); Kirk H. Porter, *A History of Suffrage in the United States*, Greenwood Press (1969)

<sup>3</sup>Gerald M. Pomper, *Elections - America*, Dodd-Mead & Co. (1974), pp. 213-14

<sup>4</sup>Victor, op. cit., pp. 449-50

<sup>5</sup>Steven Lawson, *Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South, 1944-69*, Columbia Univ. Press, (1976), p. 22; Pomper, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Richard J. Carlson, ed., *Issues of Electoral Reform*, Nat'l Municipal League (1974); Gitelson, Conway & Feigert, *American Political Parties: Stability and Change*, Houghton Mifflin Co. (1984)

<sup>7</sup>LCW, v. 29, pp. 470, 486, "The State"

<sup>8</sup>Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Int'l Publishers (1971), p. 158

<sup>9</sup>LCW, v. 25, p. 465, "The State and Revolution"

<sup>10</sup>*Voting and Registration in the Election of November, 1980*, Census Bureau (1981)

<sup>11</sup>*Nonvoting Americans*, Census Bureau (1980)

<sup>12</sup>*Voting and Registration...*, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup>Walter Burnham, "Appearance and Disappearance of the American Voter," in Richard Rose, ed., *Electoral Participation*, Sage Publications

<sup>14</sup>Warren Miller, et. al., *American National Election Studies Data Sourcebook, 1952-1978*, Harv. Univ. Press (1980), p. 317

<sup>15</sup>Larry Berg, Harlan Hahn & John Schmidhauser, *Corruption in the American Political System*, Gen'l Learning Press (1976)

<sup>16</sup>LCW, v. 25, pp. 465-6, "The State and Revolution"

<sup>17</sup>Samuel Huntington, et. al., *The Crisis of Democracy*, NYU Press, (1975), p. 145

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Dennis Ippolito & Thomas Walker, *Political Parties, Interest Groups and Public Policy: Interest Groups in American Politics*, Prentice Hall (1980)

# THE FARCE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE OPPRESSED NATIONS UNDER U.S. RULE

The U.S. is made up of many different nations ruled by one central state authority. This is the result of 200 years of predatory wars which have annexed the territories of many different peoples. U.S imperialism rules over the peoples of the oppressed nations and colonies within its state boundaries by means of armed violence, with little pretense of democracy. The right of these nations to self-determination, to secede and establish their own independent states, has been denied and all democratic rights have been trampled on.

The Afro-American nation in the Black Belt South has been ruled in an oligarchical fashion. The U.S. government does not recognize the territorial unity of the Afro-American nation and it is divided up under the administration of twelve different state governments. This is gerrymandering on the largest scale. Afro-Americans make up the majority of the population in the Black Belt territory, but constitute a minority in each individual state.

Within these state boundaries as well, political districts are drawn with the intent of diluting the voting strength of the Afro-American people. Until recently, the Afro-American people were prevented from voting altogether, and their electoral rights are still restricted through legal and extra-legal means. Political power in the Black Belt territory is wielded by the Anglo-American plantation owners and capitalists, who rule in an arbitrary manner which relies most heavily on police terror.

The territory of the Chicano people in the Southwest was annexed by military force and they have also been denied the right to rule their homeland. Like the Afro-American nation, the Chicano nation is divided among different states and, within these states, political districts

have been blatantly and shamelessly gerrymandered. Through poll taxes, English "literacy" requirements and terror, the Chicano people were systematically denied the right to vote.

The peoples of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Micronesia, Guam and other U.S. colonies have been completely denied their right to state sovereignty.\* Until recently, these colonies were ruled by governors appointed either by the U.S. president, the U.S. military or the U.S. Interior Department. In recent years, the U.S. government has attempted to make these colonial administrations appear more legitimate by holding local elections to select "advisory congresses" or, in some cases such as Puerto Rico, local governors. However, these local governments can be nothing more than puppet regimes, because they are subject to U.S. laws and the authority of the U.S. government.

The U.S. government, of course, does not and cannot represent these peoples, who have been subjugated by military force and denied even the semblance of democratic rights. In fact, the U.S. government does not even pretend to represent them. They are not allowed to elect representatives to the U.S. Congress (which makes the laws under which they must live) and, with the exception of the Puerto Rican people, they are not allowed to vote in U.S. presidential elections.\*\*

The situation of the Native Peoples in the continental U.S. is similar. They were forced to sign treaties under which they became "subjects" of the colonial administration of the U.S. government. For many years colonial governors were appointed directly by the Department of the Interior to rule their territories.

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\*The native peoples of Alaska and Hawaii have also seen their territory annexed and their democratic rights denied by U.S. imperialism. Their situation has been further complicated by mass emigration and the inclusion of their territories as states.

\*\*This is not to say that by allowing these peoples to vote in the U.S. elections or elect representatives to Congress democracy would be accomplished. There can be no genuine democracy based on colonialism.

Over the years, however, the U.S. government has established "tribal councils" which are locally elected, but which are still directly subordinate to the Department of the Interior. Until 1948, the Native Peoples were not allowed to vote in U.S. elections at all. Even after they won the legal right, poll taxes and so-called "literacy tests" in English virtually prevented voting for many years.

The peoples subjugated by U.S. imperialism have long fought for the democratic rights denied them under U.S. rule. In some cases, this struggle has included fighting for the right to vote and participate in the political system within the U.S. state. The struggle waged by the Afro-American and other oppressed peoples in the U.S. for the right to vote has made tremendous contributions to the struggle for universal suffrage in general. But this struggle seeks a reform that can only accomplish so much. Achieving the right to vote cannot do away with the system of national oppression, nor can it establish genuine democracy and equality. So long as the economic power of the U.S. imperialists operating within the territory of the oppressed nations remains intact, so long as the oppressive governmental machine of the U.S. imperialists remains intact, the right to vote changes nothing. Only the realization of revolutionary changes such as the expropriation of the U.S. imperialists, the destruction of their state power and the right to political secession can lift the yoke of national oppression.

The U.S. government has organized fraudulent plebiscites (referendum elections) in a number of its colonies in order to provide a veneer of legitimacy to its colonialism. In 1983, plebi-

scites were held in Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands (three of the U.S. colonies in the Pacific). The colonized peoples were given the "free choice" of maintaining their current colonial status ("trusteeship") or accepting a new form of colonial status ("free association") through which the U.S. would continue to enjoy permanent military use of the islands. Similar plebiscites have been held in Puerto Rico and other colonies.

These plebiscites are fraudulent because: 1) they deny the possibility of complete political independence and national sovereignty; and 2) they are held under conditions of U.S. military occupation where the U.S. imperialists control the state apparatus and most of the means of production and communication. All these forms of domination are used to bribe the local bourgeoisie, suppress the independence movement and intimidate the masses.

The only conditions under which a plebiscite for self-determination would begin to be free and express the will of the people would be if the U.S. government: 1) recognized the right of the people to choose complete independence and national sovereignty; 2) removed all its troops and police forces; and 3) allowed the independence movement complete freedom to agitate for its program and access to all means of propaganda. The U.S. imperialist state will never permit these conditions. In order for the colonized peoples to exercise their right to self-determination, the rule of U.S. imperialism will have to be overthrown by armed force. Only then can a truly free plebiscite be held to determine the destiny of the nation.

# THE "TWO PARTY SYSTEM" AND THE SUPPRESSION OF PROLETARIAN PARTIES

Bourgeois elections in the U.S. have as a premise the complete hegemony of the two principal bourgeois parties and the violent suppression of all efforts by the proletariat to build its own independent political party.

## THE "TWO PARTY SYSTEM"

According to bourgeois apologists democracy in the U.S. is exercised through the "two-party system" which is supposedly the greatest guarantee of democracy ever devised. The two major parties (the Democratic and Republican parties), according to the apologists, represent between them all sectors of society. Through regular elections the people can decide which of these two parties and which of their political candidates best represent their interests. If they are unhappy with the incumbent of one party, in the next election they may elect the candidate of the other party.

The biggest lie in this argument is that these parties represent all sectors of society. Both the Democratic and Republican parties represent only the bourgeoisie. Between them these two parties hold state power. They alternate positions, with one playing the executive role and the other the loyal opposition. When the anti-working class policies of one party have sufficiently aroused the anger of the people, power can be transferred to the other party. The opposition party is transformed into the governing party and the governing party into the opposition. The faces in the government change but the class in power remains the same. Lenin described the significance of the "two-party system" in the U.S. for the working class in the following words:

"[F]or a whole half century - since the Civil War over slavery in 1860-65 - two bourgeois parties have been distinguished there by remarkable solidity and strength...Their fight has not had any serious importance for the masses of people. The people have been deceived and diverted from their vital interests by means

of spectacular and meaningless duels between the two bourgeois parties.

The so-called bi-partisan system prevailing in America and Britain has been one of the most powerful means of preventing the rise of an independent working class, i.e., a socialist party."<sup>1</sup>

The electoral system blatantly favors and protects these two major bourgeois parties and, in fact, has institutionalized them as the two governing parties. The ability of other parties, particularly a revolutionary proletarian party, to successfully challenge them has been virtually excluded.

State laws make it difficult for other parties to get on the ballot. In order to get on the ballot in all fifty states a party would have to collect 1,200,000 signatures and spend over \$750,000.<sup>2</sup> Federal elections are run by the Federal Election Commission which is composed of three representatives from each of the two major bourgeois parties. The commission has a history of favoring the two major bourgeois parties and harrasing and bringing charges against other parties in order to get them off the ballot. Almost all of its actions have been taken against non-incumbants.<sup>3</sup> State electoral authorities have similar records.

The recent law providing for "public financing of elections", passed off as a reform to make elections more democratic, is really nothing other than massive government financing of the two major bourgeois parties. Under this law, candidates for the presidential nomination of the two major bourgeois parties are entitled to federal funds matching the funds they raise through private sources; each of the national conventions of the two major bourgeois parties are paid for by the government; and the presidential campaigns of the nominees of the two major bourgeois parties are paid for by the government. Other parties only receive funds after the general election if they receive more than 5% of the vote, and then they can only hope to get a small fraction of the money

awarded to the two major bourgeois parties.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the public financing scheme is a sham designed to further institutionalize the two major bourgeois parties and at the same time shift a greater portion of the burden of campaign financing to the working people (through taxes) while maintaining complete control in the hands of the bourgeoisie. During the 1980 election, the federal government handed nearly \$100 million to finance the presidential campaigns of the Democratic and Republican parties.<sup>5</sup>

Similar outrageous schemes for "public financing" of the two major bourgeois parties can be found in state tax laws, which in some cases, allow individuals to request that the state divert part of their tax bill directly into the coffers of either the Democratic or Republican parties (but not others).

The "winner-take-all" form of the U.S. elections is designed specifically to engender a two party system and stifle the emergence of an independent working class party.<sup>6</sup> Under the more democratic system of proportional representation, parties would receive seats in Congress and the State Legislatures based on the percentage of the popular vote that they get. This would allow smaller parties to take seats in Congress and the State Legislatures and use these halls as forums for agitation and propaganda. It would also give more incentive for people to vote for smaller parties because their vote would actually help elect representatives, rather than simply register their protest. Wrote Engels:

"...it cannot be denied, that American conditions involve very great and peculiar difficulties for a steady development of a workers' party.

First, the Constitution, based as in England upon party government, which makes it appear as though every vote were lost that is cast for a candidate not put up by one of the two governing parties. And the American, like the Englishman, wants to exert an influence on his state; he does not want to throw his vote away."<sup>7</sup>

The institutionalization of the governing parties has been carried down to minor details of the electoral process. In many states the top place on the ballot is given to the party which polled the most votes in the last election, while in other states the top spot is rotated

between the candidates of the two major bourgeois parties. In either case, the candidates of the other parties are relegated to less visible positions. Most states prohibit or severely restrict voting for write-in candidates.<sup>8</sup>

In short, through a whole series of mechanisms, some blatant and others more subtle, the bourgeoisie has arranged its electoral affairs to guarantee the predominance of its two official parties and to freeze out any opposition. But the institutionalization of the two major bourgeois parties is only one side of the story. The other side is the violent suppression of working class parties and candidates and the outlawing of all revolutionary parties.

### THE SUPPRESSION OF PROLETARIAN PARTIES

Under U.S. law it is illegal to advocate the violent overthrow of the government. In particular, it is illegal for a party which advocates the violent overthrow of the government to run a candidate for political office.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the advocacy of violence to maintain the existing order, which is the premise of all of the bourgeois parties, is legal and these parties are all free to run candidates for political office. Revolutionary organizations of the proletariat are violently suppressed and special efforts are made to see that they cannot use the electoral arena. This, of course, is perfectly consistent with the U.S. bourgeois view that "free speech" means only "free speech" for the bourgeoisie and their friends, never for Marxists-Leninists or revolutionary workers.

In fact, not only are revolutionary proletarian organizations suppressed but any party that does not completely represent the interests of the monopoly bourgeoisie. Reformist and revisionist workers' parties have been the targets of fierce repression. The Socialist Party and the Communist Party, USA have at times come under severe attacks despite the fact that, today, both of these parties are completely reformist and neither was ever consistently revolutionary. The Socialist Party in its early days included many outstanding proletarian revolutionaries but it was dominated by reformists and chauvinists. After the split in the party in 1919 it degenerated into full-blown opportunism. The Communist Party played a revolutionary role, on the whole, for many years, but its line was never consistently Marxist-Leninist. During the 1940's it completely degenerated into a revisionist party. The

sharp attacks against these parties indicates the extent of the bourgeoisie's determination to prevent even the semblance of independent political organization among the working class.

The more determined and powerful the working class movement, the more ferocious and open the bourgeoisie becomes in its efforts to crush it. Faced with the option of clearly exposing the rottenness of their so-called "democracy" or permitting the revolutionary movement to pose a real threat to the continuation of their rule, the capitalists have always willingly discarded their fine rhetorical guise and openly resorted to methods of terror. It is particularly in times of political upheaval and crisis that the repression becomes most severe. Two periods in U.S. history best exemplify the most vicious and violent side of the bourgeois dictatorship. The first was during and after World War I and the second followed World War II.

During the final years of World War I, the capitalist World faced a revolutionary crisis unprecedented in the history of bourgeois rule. The victory of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 was followed by proletarian insurrections in a number of European nations, and a great upsurge in the workers' movement around the world. In the U.S. a large part of the working class had actively fought against U.S. intervention in the imperialist war. The war was followed in 1919 by the greatest strike wave in U.S. history up to that date, which included the general strike in Seattle, and powerful strikes in the coal and steel industries. The vanguard of the U.S. workers movement, inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, were taking the first steps in building a communist party.

The U.S. capitalist class met this upsurge in the proletarian movement with violent repression. In 1917, it moved to destroy the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist organization which opposed U.S. intervention in World War I. IWW headquarters across the country were raided and destroyed and 2,000 members were arrested, including its entire leadership. Mass trials held in numerous cities led to quick convictions and prison terms of up to 20 years. IWW-led strikes, involving tens of thousands of miners in Montana and Arizona, were violently

broken by federal troops and several IWW leaders were lynched by vigilantes. The Socialist Party, the left wing of which also opposed the war, came under attack as well. Its offices were raided and many of its leaders were arrested. Eugene Debs, a leader of the left-wing of the party, was arrested in 1918 for making a speech against the war, and sentenced to 10 years in prison. In 1920 he ran for president from his jail cell ("free" elections, U.S. style) and received nearly 1,000,000 votes, the largest tally ever for a working class candidate. Five members of the Socialist Party who had been elected to the New York State Legislature were expelled. They were re-elected and expelled again. In 1920 the Socialist Party was made illegal in New York and its candidates barred from the ballot. The only Socialist Party congressional representative, Victor Berger of Wisconsin, was convicted of violating the Espionage Act, sentenced to 20 years in prison, expelled from Congress, re-elected and expelled again.\*

During 1919 and 1920 many states rushed to enact laws against "criminal syndicalism", "criminal anarchy" and "sedition". Thirty-two states passed laws banning the red flag. An imperialist-patriotic hysteria was whipped up against revolutionaries, immigrant workers and Afro-Americans. Many people were beaten and lynched. In 1920, two revolutionary immigrant workers, Nicola Sacco and Bartholomeo Vanzetti, were arrested and convicted on false charges and later executed.

The largest assault was organized against the two newly formed communist parties. On January 2, 1920, federal agents, under the direction of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, made simultaneous raids in seventy cities. Over 10,000 revolutionaries, including virtually the entire leadership of the two parties, were rounded up in these "Palmer Raids". Thousands more were arrested by state authorities. The leaders of the communist parties were sentenced to long prison terms and 500 immigrants were summarily deported. The communist-led steel strike was violently suppressed and 22 workers were killed.<sup>10</sup>

Following the second World War, the bourgeoisie organized another systematic campaign of repression. During the '30's and '40's the workers' movement had developed

\*This despite the fact that Berger was the leader of the chauvinist and opportunist wing of the Socialist Party.

tremendously. The Communist Party had grown greatly in size and influence, despite constant repression which left hundreds of workers dead. After the war the workers were ready for even greater battles and 1946 produced the largest strike wave in U.S. history, involving mine, steel, auto, electrical, maritime, railroad, and packing house workers. The prestige of the then-socialist Soviet Union had grown greatly as the result of its heroic struggle against Nazi fascism, and the peoples of China and many Eastern European nations were celebrating revolutionary victories. The U.S. bourgeoisie moved decisively in an attempt to crush the communist workers' movement in the U.S.

A series of repressive laws were enacted including the Smith Act (which dated from 1941), the McCarran Act, the Subversive Activities Control Act, the Communist Control Act, and the Taft-Hartley Act. They outlawed the advocacy of the violent overthrow of the government; required that communists register with the state; stripped communist and "communist-infiltrated" organizations, including trade unions, of legal rights; barred communists from leading trade unions; and banned communists from federal jobs and jobs in armament plants.

Between 1948 and 1958, 108 people, including the top leadership of the (now revisionist) Communist Party, were imprisoned under the Smith Act. Hundreds more were imprisoned under similar state laws, or because they refused to testify before the Congressional inquisitions. Tens of thousands were fired and blacklisted and there were, once again, mass political deportations. The FBI announced that, in case of war, it had 40,000 communists under surveillance for early arrest and that 500,000 communists and communist sympathizers would be thrown into specially-built concentration camps, authorized by the McCarran Act. The show trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were carried out as a warning that the U.S. ruling class would stop at nothing to suppress the working class movement.<sup>11</sup>

The electoral arena, of course, was not excluded from this repressive campaign. Even before the onslaught that followed the war, there had been a continual effort to bar communists from using the electoral arena. For example, during the 1940 elections many methods were used towards this end: the arrest and fingerprinting of petition canvassers who were

gathering signatures to put the party on the ballot; vigilante attacks on canvassers; indictment of petition signers and canvassers; the filing of petition signers' names with the FBI; the publishing of petition signers names in newspapers as a convenient blacklist for employers, the firing of petition signers from their jobs; the intimidation of petition signers by the so-called House Committee on Un-American Activities; injunctions brought by the American Legion to prevent the party from being placed on the ballot; newspaper editorials calling for the party to be outlawed; and the refusal of state authorities to place the party on the ballot when all legal requirements had been met. In Pennsylvania, 28 workers were imprisoned for collecting petition signatures. In Oklahoma, 18 workers carrying out routine election activities were arrested under an anti-syndicalism law and two were sentenced to 10 years in prison. In West Virginia, the communist candidate for governor was sentenced to 15 years in prison for collecting signatures on election petitions.<sup>12</sup>

By 1956 these various forms of suppression were unnecessary. The Communist Party had been virtually outlawed and was banned from state ballots for openly political rather than technical reasons.

These periods of systematic repression should not be seen as "abberations" in an overall "democratic" system, as the liberal like to present them. They are completely consistent with the practice of bourgeois democracy, which is based on the subjugation of the exploited classes. The episodes we have described are, more accurately, the most intense periods in an ongoing bourgeois effort to suppress all the revolutionary activities and struggles of the masses of people. Suppression is a constant part of bourgeois rule. The government continues to deploy police and soldiers to violently crush the worker' strikes. Every year strikers are killed on the picket line by scabs, vigilantes or police. The police and national guard have been sent to slaughter hundreds of people in the rebellions of the Afro-American people from Harlem to Miami. Many others have been killed by the police and national guard in other political demonstrations against imperialist aggression, national oppression and government abuse. The FBI, the CIA and the local police "red squads" continue to spy on, infiltrate, disrupt and persecute the revolutionary movement. The Ku Klux Klan and other

para-military groups are employed as extra-legal arms of state terror. The assassination of Fred Hampton and other leaders of the Black Panther Party by the police and the FBI and the assassination of five leaders and members of the Communist Workers Party by Klansmen and Nazis under the direction of police agents stand out as savage examples of this ongoing bourgeois terror.\*

Today, the U.S. bourgeoisie is sharpening its claws for another assault on the revolutionary movement. In addition to the repressive laws which have been enacted over the years, virtually all of which are still in force, new laws are being devised. Under the guise of fighting "terrorism" the ruling class is seeking to enact a series of draconian measures which would make it a felony for workers in the U.S. to support national liberation movements opposed to U.S. imperialism. The response of the bourgeoisie to the exposure of the crimes of the FBI, the CIA and other police agencies has been to make all of these activities "legal" under bourgeois law, giving them virtual carte blanche to spy, infiltrate, disrupt and assassinate.

The terror inflicted by the U.S. bourgeoisie against the revolutionary working class and national movements represents the fundamental premise upon which the U.S. imperialist system is based: wage slavery and the subjugation of nations. The imperialists are conducting themselves precisely as they must in order to maintain their rule. When they are required to do so, they will not hesitate to send in federal troops to remove duly-elected revolutionary candidates from their positions, prohibit working class parties from fielding their candidates, imprison revolutionaries, declare martial law, suspend elections and carry out "pre-emptive strikes" against "terrorists." All of this is permitted by bourgeois law and bourgeois democracy. This is its true face: democracy for the few and repression for the vast majority.

#### WEALTH, THE NEWS MEDIA AND THE ELECTIONS

"All talk about universal suffrage, about popular will and about equality at the polls

[is] sheer fraud", wrote Lenin, "for there can be no equality between the exploiter and the exploited, between the owner of capital and property and the modern wage slave."<sup>13</sup> The wealth and power of the bourgeoisie completely dominates the electoral process in every capitalist country, and nowhere more than in the United States.

First, the monopoly bourgeoisie controls the state machinery which organizes and carries out the elections. As we have shown, this state machinery ensures the domination of the principal bourgeois parties and restricts and suppresses proletarian parties.

Second, the bourgeoisie owns the major means of communication. Under modern conditions of bourgeois society, the press, radio and television are the main channels through which political candidates are presented to the people. The news accounts and commentaries of these bourgeois organs are the main source of information that the people have about political events, election campaigns and political candidates. These organs are in no way "neutral" in the elections, they are tools of the bourgeoisie. The major newspapers, magazines and television and radio networks are owned by some of the most wealthy of the monopoly bourgeoisie: the Cowles, Knights, Mayers, Annenbergs, Coxes, Fields, Hearsts, Gannets, Paleys, Rockefellers, Pulitzers, Murdochs, Scripps, Sulzbergers, Wallaces, etc. They are organs of bourgeois propaganda and without exception support the parties, programs and candidates of the bourgeoisie. Revolutionary parties and candidates are, naturally, slandered or blacked-out entirely.

Third, the wealth of society being concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie, gives them incomparable advantage over the propertyless working class, as regards campaign resources.

The candidates of the bourgeoisie spend millions of dollars flying from city to city, buying television, radio and newspaper advertisements, renting halls and offices, hiring campaign workers and printing and mailing out literature. The average campaign expenditure for a victorious candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1982 was \$228,000. The average cost

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\*The Black Panther Party was a revolutionary nationalist organization which played a leading role in the upsurge of the Afro-American liberation movement of the 1960's. The Communist Workers' Party was an inconsistent petty-bourgeois revolutionary organization that grew out of the student and national movements. Both organizations have since degenerated into completely liberal and reformist organizations partly as a result of petty-bourgeois wavering in the face of bourgeois terror.



for a Senate candidate was \$1,781,803.<sup>14</sup> Carter and Reagan each spent over \$40 million to run for president.<sup>15</sup> Under capitalism, the proletariat cannot raise even a fraction of the money that the bourgeoisie can to run political campaigns.

Numerous liberal proposals have been made to reform electoral financing in order to allegedly "reduce the influence of the moneyed interests." In the mid-1970's, two of these were put into effect: 1) limitations on the amount of individual campaign contributions and the channeling of most contributions through registered committees, and 2) public financing of election campaign. Neither of these proposals has had the effect of "reducing the influence of the moneyed interests" in any way whatsoever. The money of the bourgeoisie still flows into the politicians coffers unchecked, and still decides who is able to wage a large-scale campaign and who is not. Each major corporation, trade association and bourgeois organization has set up dozens of registered "political action committees" to distribute money among the politicians they favor. "Public financing", as we have shown, is nothing but a trick to subsidize the two major bourgeois parties.

The sham reforms initiated by the liberal bourgeoisie (Common Cause, Ralph Nader, etc.) are worthless. But even the best, most effective reforms can not alter the basic conditions of bourgeois elections. As long as the bourgeoisie owns the means of production their candidates will be well-financed and will continue to have the exclusive monopoly of the bourgeois media. As long as the proletariat remains propertyless its candidates will have little money and will be defamed and blacked-out by the bourgeois media.

#### **BOURGEOIS POLITICIANS: MASTERS OF DECEPTION**

The bourgeois news media dedicates thousands of hours of television and radio time and thousands of pages of print to coverage of elections. It covers every event with great fanfare and pretends to analyze every aspect from every angle, but never addresses the fundamental questions: what class do the various candidates represent?; what class do their political programs defend? Everything is done to avoid these questions and conceal the answers to them. The people, of course, do not want to be ruled by their exploiters and they would not vote for a political candidate who openly

stated that he or she stood for the supremacy of the monopolies and for the exploitation and oppression of the people. So the capitalists and their politicians have become masters of deception. They write their platforms and speeches to appeal to the masses of people and conceal their true political programs and intentions.

"All of the bourgeois parties," wrote Lenin, "that is, those which uphold the economic privileges of the capitalists, are advertising themselves in the same way as individual capitalists advertise their goods. Look at the commercial advertisements in any newspaper - you will see that the capitalists think up the most 'striking', bombastic and fashionable names for their merchandise, which they praise in the most undisguised manner, stopping at no lie or invention whatsoever."

"The names of some parties, both in Europe and in Russia, are chosen with a direct eye to advertisement, and their 'programmes' are quite often written for the sole purpose of hoodwinking the public."<sup>16</sup>

Bourgeois political parties and candidates typically hire advertising and public relations agencies (lie factories) to design all aspects of their campaigns from the candidate's dress and mannerisms, to slogans, speeches, promises and advertisements. In notable instances actors have been chosen as the political representatives of the bourgeoisie because of their talent for presenting just the image desired by their sponsors.

Because of the current political weakness of the U.S. proletariat and the suppression of its political activity, the bourgeoisie now exercises a virtual monopoly over activity in the electoral arena, using it to conduct "spectacular and meaningless duels" to fool the people. Generally the questions discussed during election campaigns are only of trivial concern. When the political and economic concerns of the working class are addressed it is only in a reformist manner which defends the bourgeois order. The fundamental reasons for the capitalist economic crisis, the suffering of the people, the oppression of the national minorities, the outbreak of imperialist wars, etc., are never addressed. Serious political

questions are many times pushed to the background. Campaign slogans are chosen which have little or no political meaning. Instead of their political positions, the personalities of the various bourgeois candidates are advertised as the principal concern of the electoral contests. The people are asked to vote for a political candidate because he or she is allegedly "youthful" or "experienced", "handsome" and "charming", "a family man", "honest and compassionate", "close to the people", "intelligent", a "charismatic leader", etc. Never mind that he or she is the representative of your exploiters, pledged to protect their interests and crush any resistance on the part of the people.

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In each election, the bourgeoisie selects, grooms, finances and promotes its principal candidates. The real process through which

government officials are selected begins in exclusive meetings of top bourgeois power brokers. Potential candidates are interviewed and discussed. Those selected are given special training, introduced to the proper circles and given the financial backing necessary for a victorious campaign. Only the final steps of the process take place in public, and only then are the mass of people invited to choose among the various candidates hand-picked by the bourgeoisie.

This is not to say that the bourgeoisie is united in its choices or that the election results are predetermined. The elections are, many times, the arena of bitter struggles among various groups of the bourgeoisie, and among other classes in society as well. But these elections take place only under conditions tightly controlled by the bourgeoisie, assuring the victory of candidates it selects.

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#### NOTES

All citations to "LCW" refer to V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 3rd ed., Moscow (1972). "v." refers to the volume.

<sup>1</sup>LCW, v. 18, p. 402, "The Results and Significance of the U.S. Presidential Elections"

<sup>2</sup>Simon Gerson, "Does the U.S. Have 'Free Elections,'" *Political Affairs*

<sup>3</sup>Congressional Quarterly (CQ), *Dollar Politics*, 3rd ed. (1982), p. 36

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-2

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel Mazmanian, *Third Parties in Presidential Elections*, Brookings Institute, (1974)

<sup>7</sup>F. Engels, *Marx and Engels on the United States*, "Letter to Frederick Sorge,"

<sup>8</sup>Pompers, *The Elective Process*, p. 42

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 74; U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 841-844

<sup>10</sup>William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States*, Greenwood Press (1968); Boyer & Morais, *Labor's Untold Story*, United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America, 3rd ed. (1972); Robert W. Dunn, ed., *The Palmer Raids*, Int'l Publ.

Zinn, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Boyer & Morais, op. cit.; Foster, op. cit.; Zinn, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Labor Research Ass'n, *Labor Fact Book #5*, Int'l Publ. (1941), pp. 195-7

<sup>13</sup>LCW, v. 28, p. 414, "Report at the Second All-Russian Trade Union Congress"

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Mann, ed., *The American Elections of 1982*, Amer. Enterprise Inst. (1983)

<sup>15</sup>*Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1982-83*, Census Bureau, (1983), p. 494

<sup>16</sup>LCW, v. 18, p. 44, "Political Parties in Russia"

# THE REACTIONARY HISTORY AND NATURE OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN PARTIES

Both the Democratic and the Republican parties are committed to bourgeois rule, the exploitation of the working class, the subjugation of peoples and nations within the U.S., and the expansion of U.S. imperialism. On these fundamental questions there is not a whit of difference between the two parties. The differences between them lie only in their approach to achieving the goals they share.

Today the Democratic Party, for the most part, plays the role of the "liberal" bourgeois party, the party that is "more responsive to the demands of the masses." It poses as the "party of the common people" and has long cultivated an alliance with the reformist leaders in the trade unions and the movements of the oppressed nationalities. The Republican Party, on the other hand, plays the role of the "conservative" bourgeois party. It more overtly represents the monopoly bourgeoisie and open reaction.

Both the Democratic and Republican parties have mass memberships. According to the government, 43% of the electorate are registered as Democrats and 30% as Republicans.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, massive numbers of working people, both petty bourgeois and proletarian, are tricked into supporting the bourgeois parties. The thousands of subordinate positions in both of the bourgeois parties are staffed by members of the upper petty bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy. The class character of these parties, however, is not determined by the class make-up of the majority of their membership, but rather by who **controls** the parties and what ideology, programs and policies they promote. Based on these criteria, there is no question that both parties represent **exclusively** the monopoly bourgeoisie.

## HISTORY

The current political contours of these parties are the result of their history and of the present-day class struggle. The Democratic and Republican parties emerged as the two principal parties of the U.S. ruling class in the years preceding

the Civil War. At that time, the Democratic Party was the main party of merchant and banking capital and the slavocracy in the South. It was the open party of reaction, the foremost champion of slavery and it represented reaction on every question.

The Republican Party was organized by the growing industrial bourgeoisie in the North which opposed the expansion of slavery because it was a fetter on the development of capitalism. Allied with the industrial bourgeoisie, and providing the mass base of the Republican Party, were the great mass of small farmers and proletarians in the northern states. The Republican Party was divided from the beginning into a radical abolitionist wing and a conservative wing. The latter, which represented the most powerful sections of the industrial bourgeoisie, was dominant from the beginning.

The Democratic Party was the main organizing center of the Confederate secessionists in the South and their sympathizers in the North. The victory of the Union in the Civil War resulted in the supremacy of the Republican Party throughout the country. Because the Radical Republicans had played the leading role in prosecuting the war against the slaveowners, they emerged from the war as a powerful force. They captured the majority of seats in Congress and, on the basis of the new power of the freed slaves and the poor white farmers in the South, they established Radical Reconstruction governments in the southern states.

The Radical Republicans were American Jacobins - the most radical bourgeois democrats. Their program called for the destruction of all remnants of the feudal-slave system and the establishment of a bourgeois regime based on small property. The future, however, belonged not to the radical petty bourgeoisie, but to the large-scale industrial bourgeoisie, represented by the conservative wing of the Republican Party. The conservative wing was soon able to win hegemony over the party and it weakened, and finally expelled, the radical wing.

The industrial bourgeoisie, which was rapidly converting itself into a monopoly bourgeoisie, transformed the Republican Party from a progressive bourgeois-democratic party into a reactionary imperialist party. The northern industrialists came to agreement with the defeated southern planters, allowing them to recapture political power in the South under the overall economic and political domination of the industrial bourgeoisie.

The Republican regime of Rutherford Hayes (1877-1881) marked the turning point in the new alignment of class forces. Two critical events demonstrated the new class alignment. The first was the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, which allowed the reactionary Democratic Party to violently reestablish its hegemony throughout the region. The second was the deployment of federal troops to suppress the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, which was the first great test of strength between the growing proletarian movement and the bourgeoisie.<sup>2</sup>

The agreement between the southern planters and the northern industrialists ensured the survival of the reactionary Democratic Party. The party remained the instrument of oligarchic rule by the plantation owners in the South. The official party slogan in the South remained "white supremacy." The overall leadership of the party, however, now passed to the economically dominant industrial and financial bourgeoisie, which was evolving into monopoly capital. Every Democratic administration since the regimes of Grover Cleveland (1885-1889, 1893-1897), the first Democratic president after the Civil War, has been marked by the dominant position of a segment of monopoly capital.<sup>3</sup>

Up to the turn of the century, both the Democratic and Republican parties were mainly concerned with the problem of the development of capitalism. "The struggle between the parties was over the question how best to expedite and facilitate this development."<sup>4</sup> After the turn of the century, the two parties concerned themselves fundamentally with the problem of defending capitalism against socialist revolution.

At the turn of the century, these "twin parties" switched poles. The Republican Party was quickly transformed into an open representative of monopoly capital, a party of the most savage imperialism and reaction. The Republican regimes of William McKinley (1897-1901) and

Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) inaugurated the era of imperialism in the U.S. with rabid chauvinism and military aggression that resulted in the colonization of the Philippines, Guam, Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Panama Canal.

The predatory imperialist tradition of the Republican Party continues today under the Reagan regime which has bombarded the Lebanese people, brazenly occupied the island of Grenada and is waging war on the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador. The Republican Party has also been the most aggressive in waging war on the U.S. proletariat, calling out troops to suppress strikes and demonstrations and engaging in the most perfidious methods to suppress the communist movement.

The Democratic Party, on the other hand, covered its defense of monopoly capitalism and reaction with the cloak of bourgeois liberalism. At the turn of the century, in response to the massive populist and labor movements, leaders of the Democratic Party like William Jennings Bryan and Woodrow Wilson began to use anti-monopoly slogans to win the confidence of the people.

The liberal trappings of the Democratic Party were expanded under the regime of Franklin Roosevelt (1933-1945), which responded to the tremendous upsurge in the workers' movement with reforms like social security, unemployment insurance and trade union legislation. Under Roosevelt, the alliance between the Democratic Party and the reformist misleaders in the trade unions and national movements was cemented.

The fact that the Roosevelt regime instituted reforms did not change its nature as the representative of the monopoly bourgeoisie in the least. Roosevelt's reforms were concessions by monopoly capital to the workers' movement calculated to divert the movement from revolution. The reform legislation was directly formulated by the leaders of monopoly capital themselves, i.e. by the chief executives of U.S. Steel, General Electric and others who served on the Business Advisory Council, which was an official link between the largest corporations and the Roosevelt regime.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE REACTIONARY NATURE OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERALISM

The liberalism of the Democratic Party is expressly counterrevolutionary. "Give the people a few reforms in order to divert them

from the path of revolution" is the motto of the Democratic liberals. They combine these reforms with fierce suppression of the revolutionary movement.

The Democratic liberals have presided over savage periods of repression against the revolutionary movement in the U.S. The liberal Wilson regime (1913-1921) carried out the first systematic campaign to suppress the revolutionary workers' movement, which culminated in the Palmer Raids of 1920. The liberal Roosevelt signed the Smith Act into law, which outlawed communist political activity. His successor, Harry Truman (1945-1953), presided over the rabid attack on the revolutionary workers' movement that followed World War II. The Democratic Party platform of 1948, on which Truman ran, explicitly declared the objectives of this reactionary campaign:

"We condemn Communism and other forms of totalitarianism and their destructive activity overseas and at home... We reiterate our pledge to expose and prosecute treasonable activities of anti-Democratic and un-American organizations which would sap our strength, paralyze our will to defend ourselves, and destroy our unity, inciting race against race, class against class, and the people against free institutions."<sup>6</sup>

This campaign of repression was carried out jointly by the Democratic and Republican parties. Not only were the conservative elements in the Democratic Party mobilized in the reactionary offensive; the liberals played the critical role. Robert Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey helped lead the Congressional witch hunt, and even the reformists of the CIO unions and the Socialist Party (which has traditionally allied itself with the Democratic Party) were called upon to do their part in "exterminating the communist menace."

The liberal Johnson regime (1963-1969), while enacting reforms to pacify the Afro-American national movement, deployed federal troops to slaughter the heroic fighters in the urban rebellions of the 1960's and unleashed the FBI to persecute the revolutionary leadership of the movement.

The Democratic liberals have also presided over the most barbarous imperialist wars carried out by U.S. imperialism. The liberal regime of Woodrow Wilson was responsible for U.S. intervention into the first imperialist World

War. Harry Truman obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki with nuclear bombs and launched the U.S. invasion of Korea. The liberal regimes of Kennedy and Johnson carried out the monstrous invasion and occupation of Vietnam, as well as invasions of Cuba and the Dominican Republic. The Carter regime began the recent war mobilization by sharply increasing the military budget, creating the Rapid Deployment Force and reinstating military draft registration.

The entire Democratic leadership collaborated with Reagan's military occupation of Beirut and the invasion of Grenada. The Democrat-controlled House of Representatives continues to provide funds for the war in El Salvador. The current candidate of the Democratic Party for president, Walter Mondale, has made it clear that he would continue U.S. aggression in Central America. This is the liberalism of the Democratic Party.

As further proof of the reactionary essence of the Democratic Party today, one has only to look to the South, where it is still tied to the most putrid, reactionary remnants of chattel slavery. To this day the Democratic Party remains the principal instrument of the rule of the plantation owners and capitalists in the southern states. The party is therefore the home of some of the most reactionary and chauvinist elements in the entire country. The "northern" and "southern" wings of the Democratic Party have always depended on each other and worked in tandem. Petty bourgeois philistines consider this a curious anomaly, but anyone who understands the class basis of liberalism and its reactionary nature knows that this is neither curious nor abnormal, but inevitable.

### FINANCING

Both the major parties are financed by the monopoly bourgeoisie. On the whole, the monopoly bourgeoisie gives more to the Republican than to the Democratic Party. The greater financial resources of the Republican Party help make up for its smaller base of electoral support and assure that a generous supply of overtly reactionary politicians will be available to fill the halls of government. At the same time, the monopoly bourgeoisie recognizes the great value of its Democratic politicians and gives generously to them as well.

Particular families and individuals among the monopoly bourgeoisie have been identified

with one or the other of the two parties. The Democratic Party has traditionally received large sums from the Fields, Lehmans, Hochschilds, Kennedys, Roosevelts, Harrimans, Reynolds, Meyers, Browns, Murchisons, Engelhards and Kerrs, among others.<sup>7</sup> Major Republican financiers include the Rockefellers, Mellons, Pews, Gettys, Olins, Annenbergs, Danforths, Heinzes, Coors, DuPonts and Watsons.<sup>8</sup> But most monopoly bourgeois families are not highly partisan. One study of the 1972 campaign contributions by members of twelve prominent monopoly bourgeois families (the DuPonts, Fields, Fords, Harrimans, Lehmans, Mellons, Olins, Pews, Reynolds, Rockefellers, Vanderbilts and Whitneys) showed that all but one gave to both parties.

#### OPPORTUNISM AND THE JACKSON PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Reformists of all kinds, from William Winpinger to Tom Hayden and Jesse Jackson, promote the idea that the workers and oppressed people must "push the Democratic Party to the left." The Democratic Party, they say, must be "forced" to represent the interests of its mass base. All kinds of strategies are put forward to "infiltrate" the party, to win delegates and fight for reform platforms at its conventions, to advance reform candidates for Democratic nomination, and so on. The presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson this

year was a major effort in this vein.

The revisionists, such as the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), League for Revolutionary Struggle (LRS) and the Communist Workers Party (CWP), typically follow in the wake of the reformists, rushing to do the flunky work of the most liberal of the Democratic candidates. All this activity is critical to the bourgeoisie, which wishes to divert the more advanced sections of the workers from the path of political activity independent of the two bourgeois parties. The bourgeoisie loves to see the revisionists mobilizing the masses to help build its political party.

Contrary to the false hopes promoted by the reformists and revisionists, the Democratic Party will always exclusively follow the dictates of the bourgeoisie. The monopolists' massive financial, political and organizational resources control the party from top to bottom. All the efforts to divert the political activities of the proletariat into helping to build this bourgeois party only serve to weaken the class ideologically, politically and organizationally. **The proletariat can only build its political power by building its own independent, revolutionary political party.** Until this is accomplished, the working class will continue to stumble along, relegated to a subordinate position in the left wing of the bourgeois Democratic Party.

#### NOTES

All citations to "LCW" refer to V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 3rd ed., Moscow (1972). "v." refers to the volume.

<sup>1</sup>New Orleans Times-Picayune - The States Item (May 6, 1983), p. 32

<sup>2</sup>Readings on this period include James Allen, *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy (1865-1876)*, Int'l Publ. (1937); W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, Russell & Russell (1966)

<sup>3</sup>Philip Burch, Jr., *Elites in American History*, vols. II & III, Holmes & Meier (1981)

<sup>4</sup>LCW, v. 18, pp. 403

<sup>5</sup>William Domhoff, *The Higher Circles*, Vintage Books (1971), pp. 186-200; Kim McQuaid, *Big Business and Presidential Power*, Wm. Morrow & Co. (1982), pp. 18-122

<sup>6</sup>Donald Johnson, ed., *National Party Platforms*, Univ. of Ill. Press (1978), pp. 435-6

<sup>7</sup>Domhoff, *Fat Cats and Democrats*, Prentice-Hall

<sup>8</sup>Herbert Alexander, *Financing Politics*, CQ Press (1976), pp. 82-4

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

# THE CAPITALISTS RULE THE GOVERNMENT

The bourgeoisie rules the government from top to bottom. Bourgeois control is complete, and scarcely disguised. All we must do is lift the thin veil provided by the bourgeois elections to see the machinery of bourgeois dictatorship. First, we will examine the social composition of the top officials in the federal government and then we will describe briefly how the government operates and for what purposes.

## THE CONGRESS

The social composition of the U.S. Congress clearly illustrates that it is an instrument of bourgeois rule. Of the 535 members of Congress in 1978, 432 (81%) were lawyers, businessmen or bankers. Another 25 were "farmers," which in most, if not all, cases meant wealthy landowners. Six members of the House of Representatives (less than 1% of the total) described themselves as "labor leaders" but, as we have pointed out, the leaders of the reactionary trade unions do not belong to the working class either socially or politically because they live like small capitalists and petty bourgeois managers and they carry out the policies of the bourgeoisie.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that most members of Congress are capitalists is indicated by several other criteria. Studies have shown that of the 100 members of the Senate, 40 are directors or major stockholders in banks;<sup>2</sup> over 20% of the House and 33% of the Senate have interests in oil, gas and electric companies;<sup>3</sup> and at least 60% of the House have substantial financial interests in companies which do business with the federal government or are regulated by federal agencies.<sup>4</sup>

Virtually all members of Congress are very wealthy. The Senate is known as the "millionaires' club." At least 33 Senators and 70 Representatives are millionaires according to their financial disclosures.<sup>5</sup> These reports understate their true wealth because the reporting requirements are so lax they are a joke. Senator Edward Kennedy, for instance, who is known to be a multi-millionaire, reported holdings of less than \$10,000.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of class origin, the halls of Congress are filled with capitalists and members of

the upper petty bourgeoisie (well-to-do small business operators and professionals). The proletariat and the lower petty bourgeoisie together make up over 85% of the population and yet not a single member of these classes sits in the halls of Congress.

In terms of class stand, all members of Congress, regardless of their class origin, represent the bourgeoisie. Every Senator and Representative is selected to represent a section of monopoly capital and their political futures are determined by how successfully they represent those interests.

## THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE

"The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." - Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.<sup>7</sup>

The real locus of power in the federal government does not lie in Congress but in the federal executive, the governing machinery centralized under the President. This is typical of bourgeois states, which concentrate power in a centralized executive apparatus largely independent of the parliament.

"Take any parliamentary country from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth," wrote Lenin, "in these countries the real business of 'state' is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries and General Staffs. Parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people.'"<sup>8</sup>

Of the officers of the federal executive, only the President and Vice President are selected through elections. These positions are generally occupied by wealthy representatives of the ruling class, who form a hereditary clique. George Washington was the owner of a vast plantation worked by hundreds of slaves and was the wealthiest man in the county at the time of his election. Franklin Roosevelt was related by birth or marriage to eleven other presidents.<sup>9</sup> In fact, 60% of all U.S. presidents have been related to other presidents.

Among the recent presidents, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter and Reagan were all millionaires when they took office.

The members of the cabinet and their top deputies, who command the executive apparatus of the state, are carefully chosen from among the most able of the monopoly bourgeoisie and their representatives. In the article "Social Classes in the United States," we listed the connections between the top officials in the last seven administrations and the monopoly bourgeoisie.<sup>10</sup>

A much more exhaustive and detailed examination of class composition of the top officials in the federal executive was undertaken by the liberal sociologist, Philip Burch. In his three-volume study entitled *Elites in American History*, he examines the social backgrounds of the entire cabinet, as well as the major diplomatic officials and the justices of the Supreme Court during every administration from Washington to Carter.<sup>11</sup>

Burch divides these officials into "elite" and "non-elite" categories, identifying members of the "elite" as persons associated with a large financial or industrial firm and/or persons with great personal or family wealth. He excludes from his "elite" category, which he calls the "core of America's upper class," the capitalists of more modest means who are associated with small or medium-sized corporations of purely regional significance. This definition of "elite," in modern times, roughly corresponds with the Marxist-Leninist definition of monopoly bourgeoisie.

Of the 682 major cabinet and diplomatic appointees between 1789 and 1980, he identifies 537 (79%) as members of this "economic elite." Likewise, 74% of the Supreme Court justices have belonged to this "elite." The proportion of "elite" appointees was roughly the same in both Democratic and Republican administrations.

The overwhelming predominance of top officials who are **directly** connected to the monopoly bourgeoisie only illustrates the complete hegemony that this class wields over the government - it does not measure the limits of its authority. The entire state is the property of the monopoly bourgeoisie and appointment to a top post in this state is in itself indicative that the appointee is a representative of monopoly capital. Indeed, most of those officials who are not **directly** connected with the monopoly bourgeoisie (through family or corporate ties) are indirectly connected

with that class either through positions in the bourgeois universities (which are also **directly** controlled by the monopoly bourgeoisie) or through service in the military or the government apparatus.

### THE "PARTNERSHIP OF GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY"

Bourgeois control over the government apparatus can be seen not only in the class background of its officials, but by the manner in which it operates. At all levels and in all spheres there is constant and close collaboration between the government apparatus and private industry and finance.

The various departments and agencies of the federal executive are tied by a million strings, both formal and informal, to the branches of the economy which they are supposed to regulate.

Thus, the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve Board are filled with officials who go back and forth through a "revolving door" between the private banks and the government. The Secretary of the Treasury is, as a rule, selected from among the chief executives of the largest commercial and investment banks. The Treasury Department is formally advised by official committees such as the American Bankers Association Government Borrowing Committee.

Further, the banks, the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve Board work closely together to protect the interests of monopoly capital in the sphere of monetary circulation. They jointly control the money supply, establish monetary policy and distribute the money. The major banks own most of the federal debt and are the main depositories for the government's financial assets.

The ties between the "Defense" Department and the armaments industry are well known and have been described in numerous essays about the "military-industrial complex." The civilian personnel in the "Defense" Department are drawn largely from the armaments industry and it is common, when they retire from the military, for generals and admirals to be awarded executive positions with arms manufacturers. The "Defense" Department is formally advised by committees of manufacturers of every conceivable weapons system. During war time, the collaboration of the arms industry and the "Defense" Department takes the form of a war production board vested with tremendous authority.



Likewise, the Interior Department is run by the oil, mining and timber industries, the Agriculture Department represents the largest agribusiness enterprises, the Department of Transportation is the province of the auto companies, the Civil Aeronautics Board and the Federal Aviation Administration are charged to the airlines, the Interstate Commerce Commission is the dominion of the railroads and the trucking industry, the Federal Power Commission is directed by the major utilities and so on. These federal departments and agencies serve as the executive committees for entire industries, where disputes are resolved and the industries regulated - for the benefit of the most powerful sections of the owners of these industries.<sup>12</sup>

The close collaboration between the government and monopoly capitalists in all branches of production is required by the massive size and complexity of the modern monopoly capitalist economy. Any liberal reform that proposes to relieve the suffering of the workers by "breaking" this collaboration and somehow putting the "public" in charge of regulating the monopolies is a sham and an absurdity. As long as the bourgeoisie owns the means of production it will control the government and "regulate" itself solely to protect its own interests.

It is the private ownership of the means of production maintained through the bourgeois state (and not collaboration between industry and government) which is the "problem," the underlying contradiction, in bourgeois society. The solution to this problem is, therefore, not "public control" of private industry under a bourgeois dictatorship, but the smashing of this dictatorship and the building of a new government controlled by the majority, the working class. The interests of the working people can only be protected by the establishment of a proletarian state, the seizure of the means of production by that state and the organization of production by it for the benefit of all the working people.

### CORRUPTION

Besides the "legitimate" means that the bourgeoisie has of controlling the government, it regularly resorts to less legitimate means, i.e. corrupting government officials. These "less legitimate" means of exercising influence are the focus of most of the liberal exposes about the "influence of the moneyed interests." Actually, bribery, kickbacks and all the other

illicit wheeling and dealing that goes on in the halls of government are only auxiliary to the principal methods, described above, through which the monopoly bourgeoisie controls the government.

Bribery is used mainly to obtain special favors for one particular company or industry at the expense of the others. Thus, when the oil industry wants a special tax break, when the dairy industry wants higher price supports, when a military contractor wants a lucrative contract, when an exporter wants federally-subsidized loans for a particular customer, when the textile industry wants import restrictions, etc., bribery is the method of choice. And even if it is only an auxiliary method of influence, bribery runs rampant in all capitalist governments, and particularly in the U.S.

Engels explained in 1892 that the diversity of interests among the different sections of the possessing class in the U.S. provided "the splendid soil for the corruption and exploitation of the government that flourish over there so extensively."<sup>13</sup> Lenin again pointed out, several decades later, that "nowhere is the power of capital, the power of a handful of multimillionaires over the whole of society so crude and openly corrupt as in America."<sup>14</sup>

Most of the bribery that goes on is officially deemed legal and legitimate. In this category belong the millions of dollars of campaign contributions, many of the gifts, "considerations" and "tokens of esteem" provided by lobbyists, most of the salaries, commissions, stock options and bonuses provided by past, present and future employers, the millions of dollars in honoraria (speaking fees) doled out by trade associations, and so forth.

These sources of income have long been accepted as a way of life on Capitol Hill. Obtaining positions on key Congressional committees opens up whole new sources of revenue and this is part of the reason why the struggle among members of Congress to win these lucrative positions is so sharp. One liberal study of election campaign funding in the mid-1970's showed that banking and financial interests gave \$525,000 in campaign contributions to members of the House and Senate Banking Subcommittees on Financial Institutions, dairy industry interests gave \$487,000 to members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, arms industry interests gave \$136,000 to members of the House Armed Services Committee, shipping industry interests gave

\$211,000 to members of the House and Senate Maritime Committees, etc.<sup>15</sup> Campaign contributions are described as "investments" by the capitalists and, in fact, one corporate executive won a legal ruling to that effect. Clearly, these "investors" expect to reap some return.

When the corruptness of this well-established system is occasionally pointed out the politicians are indignant. For instance, when Representative

Edward Garmatz, the former Chairman of the Merchant Marine Committee, was questioned about his accepting large campaign contributions from the shipping industry, he replied:

"Who in the hell do you expect me to get it from, the post office people, the bankers? You get it from the people you work with, who you helped some way or another. It's only natural."<sup>16</sup>

#### NOTES

All citations to "LCW" refer to V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 3rd ed., Moscow (1972). "v." refers to the volume.

<sup>1</sup>CQ, *Electing Congress*, (1978), p. 61

<sup>2</sup>Parenti, op. cit. p. 182

<sup>3</sup>Common Cause, *How Money Talks in Congress*, p. 23

<sup>4</sup>Berg, et. al., op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>CQ, 12/3/83, p. 2563 & 12/10/83, p. 2631

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

<sup>8</sup>LCW, v. 25, p. 428, "The State and Revolution"

<sup>9</sup>Tom Christoffel, et. al., eds., *Up Against the American Myth*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston (1976), p. 105

<sup>10</sup>Mark Evans, Roosevelt Washington & Rosie O'Connell, "Social Classes in the United States," *Workers' Herald*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Oct., 1983) pp. 7-8

<sup>11</sup>Burch, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 374-5

<sup>12</sup>The connections between capitalist enterprises and the government are documented in the following books: Domhoff, *The Higher Circles*, Vintage Books (1971) & *Who Rules America Now?*, Prentice Hall (1983); Grant McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy*, Alfred Knopf (1967); Burch, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup>F. Engels, *Marx and Engels on the United States*, p. 327

<sup>14</sup>LCW, v. 29, pp. 485-6, "The State"

<sup>15</sup>Common Cause, op. cit., pp. 50-58

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

# THE PROLETARIAT CANNOT CAPTURE STATE POWER THROUGH BOURGEOIS ELECTIONS

Any idea that the proletariat might be able to come to power through elections is an illusion. The entire state structure and the system of elections are designed to maintain the capitalist order and preclude revolutionary change. Moreover, if proletarian electoral victories ever threatened the role of capital, the electoral system would be thrown aside and the military would intervene on behalf of the bourgeoisie. Once the question of state power is contested the electoral struggle will give way to armed struggle. The bourgeoisie will never concede power peacefully; revolution means civil war. It strips away all of the democratic trimmings of the bourgeois state and exposes its essence - armed force commanded by the bourgeoisie to suppress the exploited classes.

"When the bourgeoisie and reaction", wrote Enver Hoxha, leader of the Party of Labor of Albania, "see that their power is in jeopardy as a consequence of the mounting prestige and strength of the communist party and the revolutionary movement of the masses, they play their last card: they set the armed forces into motion, organize pogroms in order to smash and liquidate the revolutionary movement and the communist parties..."

"The bourgeoisie and reaction allow the activity of revolutionaries just so long as it does not endanger the class rule of the bourgeoisie. When this role is endangered, or when reaction finds the opportune moment, it suppresses those democratic freedoms and employs every means to crush the revolutionary forces, with no moral or political scruples."<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. bourgeoisie has demonstrated numerous times that, despite all of the demagoguery about democracy, it will discard any pretense of democracy when required. The experience of Reconstruction in the South following the Civil War is a most dramatic example of this.

Radical Reconstruction was an exceptional event in U.S. history in that, for a short time, the poorest and most downtrodden had the opportunity to actively participate in the affairs of the state. The newly freed slaves and the poor white farmers not only voted in massive numbers, but served in office and in the popular militias. The short-lived Radical Reconstruction governments in a number of southern states were popular revolutionary governments faced with the revolutionary task of completely reorganizing the economic and political structure of the region on the basis of bourgeois democracy. This was bourgeois democracy in its revolutionary form, in battle against the remnants of slavery. This democracy, however, was dangerous to the ruling bourgeois class, which was rapidly taking on the characteristics of monopoly capital. Democracy was cut short and drowned in blood, through the collaboration of the southern planters and the northern capitalists. The democratically elected Radical governments were violently overthrown and their supporters slaughtered. The entire Afro-American population and the majority of the Anglo-American population (the exploited classes) in the South were disenfranchised. Democracy was replaced by a planter-bourgeois oligarchy which ruled through open violence, the lynch rope.<sup>2</sup>

The low regard that the U.S. bourgeoisie has for democratic forms is also illustrated by its intervention in foreign countries to overthrow democratically elected governments. In Iran in 1952, Guatemala in 1954, Brazil in 1964, Indonesia in 1966 and Chile in 1973 the U.S. government organized military coups to overthrow elected governments which the U.S. bourgeoisie deemed to be dangerous to its interests. In 1964, the U.S. Marines were sent into the Dominican Republic to prevent the democratically-elected government of Juan Bosch from taking power.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly there is nothing sacred about democratic forms for the U.S. bourgeoisie. The violence that the U.S. bourgeoisie employs to dismantle

democratic forms in oppressed nations will only be magnified if the very heart of its empire is threatened. The apparent stability and perpetuity of bourgeois democratic forms in the U.S. only reflects the relatively low level of the class struggle in this country at this time. Since the 1930's the proletariat has not had its own genuine Marxist-Leninist Party. It has not stood up as an independent class and challenged the rule of capital. Once it does, the U.S. bourgeoisie will not be hindered by democratic forms in its efforts to suppress the challenge. "The more highly developed a democracy is," wrote Lenin, "the more imminent are pogroms or civil war in connection with any profound political divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie."<sup>4</sup> Lenin was addressing the revisionist theses of Kautsky, who sang praises about the wonders and stability of bourgeois democracy. The most terrible confirmation of Lenin's warning took place in Kautsky's native land of Germany when the German bourgeoisie discarded all democratic forms in favor of Hitlerite fascism.

#### THE ILLUSION OF "PEACEFUL TRANSITION"

Bourgeois elections cannot be an instrument with which the proletariat can abolish bourgeois rule. This truth is lost on the modern revisionists, however, who, in the traditions of Kautsky, insist on perpetuating illusions about a "peaceful transition" to socialism. The revisionist Communist Party, USA (CPUSA), for instance, paints a scenario of a great electoral victory of its "anti-monopoly coalition", which it claims will lead the way to the triumph of socialism. The CPUSA cautions its followers, however, that victory will not be a simple matter.

"The electoral victory of a peoples' anti-monopoly party most likely would not produce a drawn out period of equilibrium between an anti-monopoly administration and a capitalist economy in which the monopolies retained positions of strength."<sup>5</sup>

The people must dislodge the monopolies and "take control of the commanding heights of the economy" says the CPUSA, but it cannot be foretold whether this struggle might involve violence or not.

"Whether the democratic will of the people can be fulfilled by relatively peaceful means or whether the ruling class will be able to inflict violence on the country can be answered precise-

ly only in terms of the total political situation prevailing at the time of such a transition.

The best guarantee for averting violence is the creation of a peoples' majority. If this majority is sufficiently overwhelming, firm of purpose and united in command of decisive sectors of power, it will be able to restrain and minimize monopolies' capacity to use force. The Communist Party works unceasingly to strengthen the leading role of the working class and weld its firm unity with its allies in order to create the most favorable relationship of forces against the monopolies and make possible a peaceful transition to socialism."<sup>6</sup>

What fainthearted garbage! Is there any question but that the ruling class will be able to inflict violence on the country? Will its army, its police forces and its fascist para-military gangs, all of which have been organized specifically to inflict violence on the people, surrender without a fight? Not a chance. The leaders of the CPUSA are not fools, even if they think their readers are. They know that the bourgeoisie will fight to the death; they have simply chosen to accommodate themselves to the bourgeoisie out of fear of the class struggle. The most important requirement for this accommodation is the renunciation of revolutionary violence, and this is the only meaning of all of the theories about the "peaceful transition" to socialism.

The most dramatic exposure of the theories about "peaceful transition" in recent times was provided by the bourgeoisie in Chile in 1973. In 1970, the Chilean people elected to the presidency Salvador Allende, the candidate of an electoral coalition which included the revisionist Communist Party, the Socialist Party and various other parties. Allende only proposed to carry out sweeping democratic reforms including measures to weaken the power of the landed oligarchy and U.S. imperialism such as land reform and the nationalization of the copper mines and other U.S. interests. He proposed that this program be carried out by strictly "constitutional" means, assuring the working people that this could be done because they were the majority. The reactionary bourgeoisie, the landed oligarchy and U.S. imperialism had no intention of limiting their struggle against the Allende government to

purely "constitutional" means. They still had economic power in their hands, along with most of the state apparatus including, first and foremost, the armed forces. They did not intend to surrender power to a president who was elected against their will. For three years they fought to weaken and overthrow the Allende regime, using all forms of struggle from economic sabotage and parliamentary opposition to political assassination. When all other methods failed to dislodge Allende they resorted to their ultimate weapon. The military seized power and imposed a state of terror on the country. The great majority of the people, who had believed the revisionists' lies about peaceful and "constitutional" victory, were completely unprepared for armed struggle. They were slaughtered. At least 30,000 people, including President Allende, were murdered and thousands were imprisoned and tortured.<sup>7</sup>

The leaders of the CPUSA and other revisionist parties are thoroughly familiar with the Chilean experience. But they still shamelessly promote illusions about the "peaceful transition". As we have said, they are not stupid, they have simply given up all revolutionary intentions. For the sake of illusion they argue that the Chilean experience should not discourage people about the "electoral path to socialism". Allende did not have a "sufficiently overwhelming majority", they argue. The working class had not "sufficiently united its allies", they continue. But these arguments do not address the questions that the Chilean experience brings so sharply into focus: How can the working class, no matter how united and well organized and no matter how well supported by its allies, win power without arms? As long as it is unarmed will it not always be at the mercy of the armed forces commanded by reaction? Is there any way to disarm reaction without violence? The Chilean experience once again dramatically confirmed the Marxist-Leninist answers to these questions. "The whole history of the international communist and workers movement," wrote Enver Hoxha, "has proved that violent revolution, the smashing of the bourgeois state machine and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, constitute the universal law of the proletarian revolution."<sup>8</sup>

Some revisionists admit that only armed struggle can overthrow bourgeois rule but they are still so enamored with bourgeois elections and parliaments (and so fearful of revolution) that they proclaim that **before** the proleta-

rian party seizes power it must first demonstrate popular support for the revolution by winning the majority in the bourgeois parliament. This "prerequisite" accomplishes nothing more than holding back the revolution. Bourgeois elections and all of bourgeois society are structured to maintain bourgeois control over the parliament (or Congress). There is no need for us to use a yardstick designed to favor the capitalist order as the ultimate measure of the revolutionary readiness of the masses. When the masses of people are ready to take power this readiness will be expressed in many ways - in the streets, mass demonstrations, political strikes, rebellions, and the breaking up of the bourgeois armed forces. As Lenin expressed it:

"Only scoundrels or simpletons can think that the proletariat must first win a majority in elections carried out **under the yoke of the bourgeoisie**, under the **yoke of wage-slavery**, and must then win power. This is the height of stupidity or hypocrisy; it is substituting elections, under the old system and with the old power, for class struggle and revolution.

The proletariat wages its class struggle and does not wait for elections to begin a strike, although for the complete success of a strike it is necessary to have the sympathy of the majority of the working people (and, it follows, of the majority of the population); the proletariat wages its class struggle and overthrows the bourgeoisie without waiting for any preliminary elections (supervised by the bourgeoisie and carried out under its yoke); and the proletariat is perfectly well aware that for the success of its revolution, for the successful overthrow of the bourgeoisie, it is **absolutely necessary** to have the sympathy of the majority of the working people (and, it follows, of the majority of the population).

The parliamentary cretins and latter-day Louis Blancs "insist" absolutely on elections, on elections that are most certainly supervised by the bourgeoisie, to ascertain whether they have the sympathy of the majority of the working people. But this is the attitude of pedants, of living

corpses, or of cunning tricksters.

Real life and the history of actual revolutions show that quite often the "sympathy of the majority of the working people" cannot be demonstrated by any elections (to say nothing of elections supervised by the exploiters, with "equality" of exploiters and exploited!). Quite often the "sympa-

thy of the majority of the working people" is demonstrated **not** by elections at all, but by the growth of one of the parties, or by its increased representation in the Soviets, or by the success of a strike which for some reason has acquired enormous significance, or by successes won in civil war, etc., etc.<sup>9</sup>

#### NOTES

All citations to "LCW" refer to V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 3rd ed., Moscow (1972). "v." refers to the volume.

<sup>1</sup>Enver Hoxha, *Selected Works*, vol. 4, 8 Nentori Publishing House, Tirana (1982), pp. 22-3, "The Fascist Coup in Indonesia and the Lessons Communists Draw From It"

<sup>2</sup>See Ch. 6, Note 2

<sup>3</sup>Juan Bosch had been elected on a reform platform in 1963. A U.S.-backed military coup d'etat removed his regime from power after only seven months. In 1965, a revolt by radical military officers led to a mass, popular insurrection which demanded reinstatement of the Bosch government. Thousands of U.S. Marines were sent in to suppress the rebellion and prevent Bosch from resuming office.

<sup>4</sup>LCW, v. 28, p. 245, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky"

<sup>5</sup>*New Program of the Communist Party USA*, New Outlook Publishers (1982), p. 51

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 55-6

<sup>7</sup>The events in Chile are documented in: Jorge Palacios, *Chile: An Attempt at "Historic Compromise"*, Banner Press (1979)

<sup>8</sup>Hoxha, *op. cit.*, p. 860, "The Tragic Events in Chile - A Lesson for the Revolutionaries of the Whole World"

<sup>9</sup>LCW, v. 30, pp. 58-59, "Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists"

# CONCLUDING NOTE

In this article we have exposed the farce of "equal" and "democratic" elections in the U.S., and have shown how these elections are completely controlled and manipulated by the bourgeoisie in order to maintain its rule. We have done this in order to dispel any illusions about the possibility of achieving proletarian power by means of bourgeois elections.

We have shown that the very nature of the bourgeois-democratic republic is that of the class dictatorship of the rich, of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois dictatorship is used to suppress the working class, to keep it in chains to the capitalist class. We cannot forget that the bourgeois-democratic state, with its elections, parliaments, bureaucracy, army, police is still a machine for the suppression of the workers and exploited classes. Remember Lenin's words:

"(E)very state in which private ownership of the land and means of production exists, in which capital dominates, however democratic it may be, is a capitalist state, a machine used by the capitalists to keep the working

class and the poor peasants in subjection; while universal suffrage, a Constituent Assembly, parliament are merely a form, a sort of promissory note, which does not alter the essence of the matter."

We have pointed out the essence of bourgeois democracy. We have exposed in detail all the forms and methods of domination of the U.S. bourgeoisie over the bourgeois-democratic state.

We do not intend, however, for our readers to conclude that the revolutionary proletariat cannot or should not participate in these elections. Our view is the direct opposite - the revolutionary proletariat **can** and **must** use these elections as one arena for its political struggle against the bourgeoisie. In this article we have spelled out the limitations of these elections. In the next article we will set forth the Marxist-Leninist objectives and tactics which must guide our use of the bourgeois elections.

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# THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT: THE ONLY PATH TO SOCIALISM

Every state apparatus is designed to meet the requirements of the class in power. It is a dictatorship of that class and the democratic forms attached to it are structured to perpetuate the rule of that class. Just as it is impossible to achieve proletarian power through bourgeois elections, it is impossible to maintain and develop proletarian power by using the bourgeois state apparatus.

The state form peculiar to proletarian rule is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"Socialism can be implemented only through the dictatorship of the proletariat," wrote Lenin, "which combines violence against the bourgeoisie, i.e., the minority of the population, with the full development of democracy, i.e., the genuinely equal and genuinely universal participation of the entire mass of the population in all state affairs and in the complex problems of abolishing capitalism."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, in the sense that it is the instrument for the suppression of one class by another, the proletarian dictatorship is the same as the bourgeois dictatorship that it has supplanted. But it differs in the fundamental fact that it is no longer a dictatorship of the exploiting minority over the vast majority. It is, rather, the rule of the majority of society over the exploiting classes.

The dictatorship of the proletariat arises out of the necessity to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie. After the initial seizure of power by the proletariat, the bourgeoisie will mount fierce attempts to regain their lost power. Lenin described this situation:

"...the exploiters will inevitably cherish hopes of restoration, and this hope will be converted into attempts at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters - who had not expected their overthrow, never believed it possible,

never conceded the thought of it - will throw themselves with tenfold energy, with furious passion and hatred grown a hundredfold, into the battle for the recovery of their lost 'paradise,' on behalf of their families, who had been leading such a sweet and easy life and whom now the 'common herd' is condemning to ruin and destitution (or to 'common' work)..."<sup>2</sup>

The dictatorship of the proletariat must organize an entirely new state apparatus for the administration and organization of socialist construction. One of the major tasks of this new state is to rally all of the laboring people to the leadership of the proletariat and to carry on this work in preparation for the abolition of classes. "The proletariat," wrote Lenin, "cannot simply lay hold of the ready made (that is, bourgeois) state machine and wield it for its own purpose... (It must smash it, break it up."<sup>3</sup> "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a persistent struggle - sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative - against the forces and traditions of the old society."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to suppressing the old exploiting classes and internal enemies of the revolution, the new proletarian state must organize the army of the revolution for defense against external enemies, for the struggle against imperialism. So long as the proletariat holds power in only one, or a few countries, this will remain one of the main duties of its dictatorship.

The dictatorship of the proletariat opens up the exercise of democracy to the masses of people as opposed to a handful of wealthy exploiters. For the first time in history the state becomes the property of the working people and its affairs become the affairs of the masses. Bourgeois democracy drives the masses of people away from the governing



process, objecting to any interference by the "unruly mass." In contrast, proletarian democracy draws the masses of people into the governing process, and organizes the process so that it is dependent upon and under the control of the people. Let us examine how proletarian democracy works in Albania, the only genuine socialist country in the world today.

### PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY IN ALBANIA

In Albania the highest organ of state power is the People's Assembly which is composed of 250 deputies who are elected directly by the people every four years. Below the People's Assembly, at the district and local levels, People's Councils are elected every three years. The People's Assembly elects the Council of Ministers which supervises the administrative apparatus and is directly subordinate to the People's Assembly. The People's Assembly also elects the Supreme Court. All other judges are elected directly by the people.<sup>5</sup>

The marked difference between the People's Assembly and all bourgeois parliaments can be seen not only in its functions and its class stand, but in its class composition. Of the 250 members of the People's Assembly who were elected in 1982, 95 are of worker origin and status and 73 are from the cooperativist peasantry, while 82 are from the intelligentsia. Thus, over two thirds of the deputies were working with their hands in the country's factories and fields when they were elected to the People's Assembly. Among the deputies to the district and local People's Councils the percentage of workers and cooperativist peasants rises to 78%. Women make up 30% of the deputies to the People's Assembly and 46% of the deputies to the district and local People's Councils.

The people participate in the selection of the candidates to the People's Assembly and the People's Councils. Their participation takes place in the Democratic Front. The Democratic Front is a mass organization which embraces all sectors of the Albanian population; it is the direct successor of the National Liberation Front which was built during the revolutionary war. The candidates selected by the Democratic Front are then submitted to the entire electorate to be voted up or down. The people can recall the deputies from their districts at any time when they act counter to the interests of the people, and deputies have been

recalled on occasion. But the participation of the masses of people in state affairs is not limited to the election of representatives. The people are encouraged and mobilized to actively back up and check up on the work of their deputies and all state cadres, to criticize their mistakes and control all of their activities. This final aspect is the most important aspect of mass democracy in Albanian society, and the aspect which most clearly distinguishes it from bourgeois democracy.

No important law is adopted and no major measure is taken by the Albanian government without the thorough consultation and thrashing out of opinions among the working people. Countrywide mass discussions are regular events in Albanian life, taking up political and ideological problems, such as the emancipation of women, educational reform, the promotion of science and atheism, family relations (and specifically, new laws in these areas), and economic problems including, first and foremost, the five-year economic plans. All measures are discussed at length beforehand in all of the mass organizations (the Democratic Front, the trade unions, the Womens Union, the youth organizations, etc.) and in special meetings held in each locality, workplace and school.

The largest mass discussion of this kind was organized around the draft of the new Constitution which was adopted in 1976. Over 1,500,000 people took part, nearly three quarters of the population. In the discussion of the draft of the 7th Five-Year Plan (1981-1985) workers and cooperativist peasants in every sector of the economy participated in some 24,000 commissions and working groups. Altogether over 1,000,000 people took part in these groups. They made some 69,000 different proposals, of which 58,000 proved useful and were incorporated into the final draft of the plan.

Workers are encouraged to keep up with, criticize and exercise control over the entire state apparatus and all of its leaders. The leaders of all institutions, whether political, economic, military or cultural, are required to render account of their activities before mass meetings. Special workers and peasants control commissions have been organized to involve masses of workers and collectivists in ongoing work to control the activities of all administrative cadre. This type of working class democracy is so foreign to workers in bourgeois society that a brief explanation

can only begin to describe its purpose and the way it functions. Therefore, we will ask you to read and consider a rather long passage about workers control, written by the leader of the Party of Labor of Albania, Enver Hoxha:

The general road to the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the entire socialist order is the development of mass democracy. Without socialist democracy there is no dictatorship of the proletariat, just as there can be no real democracy for the working people without a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The broadest possible drawing in of the masses into running the country has been and remains the unwavering line in the whole activity of our Party of Labor and our proletarian state for the building of socialism. We consider this participation as the main direction of the deepening of socialist democracy in action, as an indispensable condition to secure the experience of the broad working people ever more conscious that they multiply the strength of the state apparatus of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to make the working masses in the building of socialism, to themselves are the absolute masters of the country, that they ought to have the decisive say about everything.

The arming of all the citizens with such an understanding of their role and place in political and social life, training them to play this role properly, has required and continues to require, in addition to a great educative and explanatory effort on the part of the Party, many practical measures in order to create the necessary conditions for the working people to take part on the broadest possible scale in the exercise of state power, so that the adoption and implementation of decisions should come more and more under their direct judgement and control.

From this viewpoint the implementation of the method of consulting the masses, of listening to them, of relying on them, which has already become an integral part of our practice, must be developed and deepened unceasingly. It would be a mistake to slip into complacency with ourselves and remain at the point we have reached. It is indispensable to continue our efforts even more persistently to overcome any obstacle that restricts the effective participation of the masses in the management of the affairs of society, that curbs their creative initiative. We must invigorate and further enrich the forms of democracy. In particular we must enhance the role of the mass organisations as important centers of the organisation of the working people, as tribunes of their voice and their revolutionary self-action.

Reliance on the masses for the verification of the correctness of decisions in the vivid practice of life is especially important. The continuous verification, the uninterrupted critical and self-criti-

cal re-examination of all previous work and experience in every sphere of activity, with a view to preserving and developing what is soundly based, and changing what is not justified by practice or that life has passed and left behind, with a view to finding new ways and means for the solution of problems, — this constitutes a law of the socialist revolution, which, as Karl Marx used to say, is invincible because it continually criticizes itself.

This method is incompatible with the bureaucratic and conservative tendency to make a fetish of everything issued by the apparatus, with petrified schemes and practices which no longer respond to the new tasks and conditions, which do not conform with the great revolutionising ideas of the Party and become obstacles in the way of their implementation in practice. To this question we must give serious attention, because, as Lenin teaches us, the contradictions between the new and the old in the development of the revolution manifest themselves with special force and are preserved for a long time in this field.

*«In the whole field of social, economic and political relations, — Lenin writes, — we are «terribly» revolutionary. But in the field of hierarchy, of observing the administrative forms and procedure our «revolutionism» is nearly always replaced by the mouldiest routine. Here a very interesting phenomenon can often be observed: how in social life the greatest leap forward is associated with the most monstrous fear of the smallest of changes»*

The Party organisations, cadres, and all the working people must always be dialectical revolutionaries, they must look reality in its uninterrupted development, right in the eye, they must canonize nothing, they must not fear changes, but must courageously overthrow everything obsolete in the concepts, methods, laws, forms of organisation and management.

The check up by the masses from below, as a question of principled importance and one of the main aspects of the development of socialist democracy, has been continually in the center of attention of the Party. But its deepening and improvement in the most suitable forms always remains a current, primary task.

The direct control of the working class is decisive in this. The worker control from below is a necessity and a basic principle of social life during the whole historic period of socialism. This control, which is carried out under the leadership of the Party, is one of the concrete expressions of the leading role of the working class and of proletarian democracy in action. It constitutes a sharp

weapon in the fight against bureaucracy and alien influences in social life and in the consciousness of the working people, a very effective form of the proletarian education of the working class itself, and is a powerful incitement to carry socialist construction forward. We regard the worker control as one of the fundamental guarantees to avert the danger of revisionism and turning back to capitalism.

Our practice of the direct control by the working class is being confirmed by life. In the period following the Party's 5th Congress the implementation of the worker control led to a further growth and enlivenment of the revolutionary activity of the working class in all fields. The role of the working masses in the solution of various problems, has increased appreciably, their concern and feeling of responsibility for the affairs of the enterprise and for the country's life in general has greatly increased and the spirit of criticism and self-criticism towards alien manifestations has been strengthened.

The worker control is a long process of struggle against various bureaucratic trends which strive to restrict it, curb it and place it under tutelage, against fear, doubts, and equivocation in its application. Its further perfection requires that it be understood by everyone as an indisputable right of the working class to preserve and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist order. It is the control of the working class over the entire activity of their party, state and economic organs and organisations, of the apparatus and cadres, which extends over everything and everybody, in both town and countryside. The worker control is not an administrative check up on minor, superficial matters of the moment. It is an expression of the opinion and stand of the working class on the key political, economic and social problems.

The party organisations, the trade unions, the workers themselves ought to be continually seeking out ways of enlivening the existing forms and finding new ones, swift and effective in the exercise of the worker control. Rigid frameworks and petrified forms mutilate and paralyze it.

The aim of the worker control is, not only to observe and note, but to settle and carry through to the end the questions it raises. It is a duty of everybody, of the party organisations, of the state organs and of the mass organisations to fight persistently for the application of the remarks and proposals made by the workers, to solve the problems which emerge from the worker control rapidly and with the greatest seriousness. This is indispensable for the very development of the ideas, revolutionary action, and active participation of the workers in the affairs of the state, for the encouragement of their initiative and for the further development of the worker control itself.

It is of special importance to the working class that it itself should understand in the first place, not only its role as the decisive productive force, but also its political role as the vanguard class in our society. With its struggle, stand and example, it draws in behind it the whole mass of the rest of the population, induces in everybody the proletarian spirit, discipline and culture in work and life. In order to live up to this mission it is indispensable that the worker control should develop as self-control of the working class also, as criticism and self-criticism in its ranks, as a persistent struggle against manifestations of self-complacency, indifference, and of running after narrow personal interest, against any spirit of becoming reconciled to the phenomena which hinder our forward march.

The worker control is part and parcel of the check up of the masses on the activity of the state organs, of the economic, cultural and educational organisations of town and countryside. The exercise of this check up is a right and a duty of everybody: of the peasant on the cooperative farm, the student at school, the intellectual in his sphere of activity, of every citizen in the whole of social life.

With a view to opening a wide vista to the control by the masses and creating the most suitable conditions for it, it is necessary that the working people should be continually informed of the activity of the state and social bodies and institutions. Control by the masses becomes possible and is facilitated the more the struggle is waged against the tendencies of the state and social apparatus and organs to forms of work behind closed doors, and the more the publicity given to their activities, which must be as open as possible and easily controllable by the working people. The ever better acquaintance of the broad masses of the working people with the mechanisms of socialist social life, with the laws of the state, coming before the masses and rendering accounts, as a permanent method of the functioning of the whole of our system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, also constitute indispensable conditions for the exercise of control by the masses. It is up to the press, which is duty-bound to keep the masses well abreast of the situation and the problems, to play a more active role in this respect, to promote criticism, to become to a more pronounced extent a tribune for the rigorous thrashing out of ideas, of the deep reflection and summing up of the experience of the masses in the socialist construction.

This is proletarian democracy, a type of democracy unimaginable in the petrified, aristocratic institutions of the bourgeoisie. It stands in sharp contrast not only to the bourgeois-democratic system in the U.S., but also to the revisionist system in the Soviet Union and other

formerly socialist countries. In these latter countries the dictatorship of the proletariat has been overthrown and replaced by a new bourgeois dictatorship. Although many of the forms of socialist democracy have been maintained (the Soviets and other assemblies of people's representatives, the mass organizations, etc.), these forms have been bureaucratized and have lost their popular and democratic character. The control by the masses of workers over their party and state organs has been destroyed and a top strata of privileged and bureaucratized officials have converted themselves into a new exploiting class.

### PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY VERSUS BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

In proletarian democracy the bourgeoisie cannot see anything good. "Under communist totalitarianism", they cry, "there is no freedom and only one party rules." Well, lets examine these bourgeois complaints.

"There is no freedom". What kind of "Freedom" is the bourgeoisie talking about? Under the dictatorship of the proletariat the working class is free to pursue socialist revolution, but the bourgeoisie is not free to pursue capitalist counterrevolution. The Albanian Constitution guarantees that all citizens "enjoy freedom of speech, the press, organization, association, assembly and public manifestation." And the countries press and meeting halls, which are now owned by the people as a whole rather than a handful of capitalists, are opened up to wide-ranging debates and discussions by the masses of the people about all of the affairs of socialist society. Here the people are free to raise their opinions and voice their criticisms of any public official. In addition, the entire population of Albania is armed and trained in the use of weapons and is organized into popular militias. This is a sharp contrast to U.S. society, in which the government is attempting to completely disarm the people and assure that only the military and the police have arms.

Freedom in Albania, however, has a definite class character. The Albanian Constitution specifically makes anti-socialist, counterrevolutionary activity and propaganda illegal.<sup>8</sup> Counterrevolutionary activity has been relentlessly suppressed. This suppression of counterrevolution is absolutely necessary in order to avoid the restoration of capitalism. As Lenin said, the

proletarian state "suppresses the 'freedom' of the exploiters and their accomplices, it deprives them of the 'freedom' to exploit, 'freedom' to batten on starvation, 'freedom' to fight for the restoration of the rule of capital, 'freedom' to compact with the foreign bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants of their own country".<sup>9</sup> This is the lost "freedom" that causes the capitalists to despise proletarian rule.

We must remind the bourgeoisie that it is not only the proletariat that makes laws to suppress its class enemies and prevent the overthrow of its state. The bourgeois state also has laws outlawing revolution and protecting state security. The difference between the two systems is not that one system is characterized by freedom and the other by suppression because both the proletarian and the bourgeois systems are characterized by **both** freedom and suppression. The difference lies in **who** enjoys freedom and **who** is suppressed. Under the bourgeois state a small minority-the wealthy capitalists and their allies - enjoy complete freedom while the vast majority of society - the proletariat and the rest of the working people - are the object of repression. Under the proletarian state it is the small minority - the remnants of the bourgeoisie and new bourgeois elements - who are the object of repression, while the vast majority are free to participate in proletarian democracy.

According to all of the bourgeois textbooks the U.S. bourgeois state is "democratic" because it is based on a "two-party system", while the proletarian state is "undemocratic" because it is based on a "one-party system". This is pure sophistry. Both types of states are, in essence, dictatorships because they are ruled by just one class, in the first case by the bourgeoisie and in the second by the proletariat. In both systems the key elements for the maintenance of class rule - the means of production, the means of communication, and the state apparatus including the armed forces, are concentrated in the hands of the class in power. In both systems the class in power violently suppresses the efforts of the opposing class to overthrow its rule. Both types of states are one-class dictatorships in this sense. But which of these states is more democratic? What should be our gauge of democracy? Should it be the number of parties which exercise state power? No, this is a useless gauge, one

that tells us nothing about the essence of the matter, one that is irrelevant to the question. It makes no fundamental difference whether the class in power exercises its rule through two parties or one (or whatever number). The true gauge of democracy is established by this question: are the masses of people isolated from the governing process, or do they actively participate in this process and exercise control over it? Using this measure of democracy, proletarian democracy is clearly the more advanced of the two, the type of democracy which opens the road to the future.

But we must still discuss the question of party leadership. Should the proletariat be led by one party or by several parties? Anyone who has any experience in class struggle understands the need for the unity of all combatants around one central leadership which enjoys the trust of the masses. This unity and leadership ultimately means the difference between victory and defeat. If this is true for carrying out a strike, which is a relatively simple and low level form of the class struggle, then it is

a thousand times more true for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the most complex and highest form of the class struggle. The proletarian party leads every aspect of the construction of socialist society, and it must do so in order to prevent bourgeois counterrevolution from capturing any foothold of authority. The proletarian party leads the organs of state power from above, and it leads the masses in criticising and controlling these organs from below. The democratic participation of the working class is helped and not hindered by the fact that this participation is organized and led by the proletarian party, which is nothing other than its own class leadership that expressly fights for its highest class interests. Furthermore, the proletarian party is not above the criticism of the masses, and the people are expected to criticize all party members and all actions which run counter to the line of the party and the interests of the working class. This is democratic centralism, the organizational policy of the proletariat and the only guarantee of true democracy.

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#### NOTES

All citations to "LCW" refer to V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 3rd ed., Moscow (1972). "v." refers to the volume.

<sup>1</sup>LCW, v. 23, p. 25, "Reply to K. Kievsky"

<sup>2</sup>J.V. Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, Int'l Publ. (1939), pp. 48-9

<sup>3</sup>LCW, v. 28, p. 369, "Democracy and Dictatorship"

<sup>4</sup>Stalin, op. cit., p. 50

<sup>5</sup>Constitution of the PSRA, Part II, *Albania Today*, No. 1 (1977)

<sup>6</sup>Hoxha, *Report Submitted to the Sixth Congress of the PLA*, Naim Frasheri Publishing House, Tirana (1971), pp. 109-117

<sup>7</sup>Constitution of the PSRA, Part I, Chap. II, Art. 53, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Art. 55

<sup>9</sup>LCW, v. 29, p. 312, "The Third International and its Place in History"