

1917

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

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ALAIN NOGUES-SYGMA

Maastricht House of Cards Collapses

European Disunity

Since the dawn of the imperialist age at the end of the last century, capitalism on a world scale has been beset by a contradiction it cannot solve. It has created bonds of economic interdependence and a global division of labor that transcend national boundaries. Yet this highly integrated world economy—more closely interlinked than ever before—is divided politically into various competing nation-states and unstable imperialist blocs,

whose mutual antagonisms undermine and threaten to tear apart the international economic bonds capitalism has brought into being.

Capitalist development contains a profound contradiction between the imperatives of international integration and the necessity for each bourgeoisie to find "national solutions" to the moves of its rivals, e.g., "dumping," restrictions of the market and protection-

ism. This contradiction has already resulted in two world wars. Because of the need to maintain unity against the Soviet bloc in the post-World War II era, it was partly suppressed for the past forty-five years. But it was never far from the surface. Now that the Soviet Union is no more, and the once unquestioned economic supremacy of the United States is long gone, rivalries among the major capitalist powers are once again coming to dominate the world stage. Nowhere is this more evident than in the recent travails of the so-called European Community (EC—which changed its name as of November 1993 to the European Union).

Western European capitalism emerged from World War II in a very precarious condition. Industry and agriculture had all but collapsed, and in practically every country the rulers were discredited by their collaboration with fascism. Fearing an angry and resurgent working class, the capitalist rulers found it expedient to attempt to suppress national antagonisms in order to consolidate their rule. U.S. imperialism encouraged moves toward European cooperation, and benignly approved the EC project because it helped shore up a western European capitalist bulwark against the Soviet Union.

As American hegemony waned, the drive toward greater European unity gained momentum. This was fueled by a desire to achieve the efficiencies of operating within a larger economic field, and reflected the renewed ability of Europe's ruling classes to pursue their own imperialist ambitions. The more farsighted capitalists recognized that the tremendous international expansion of production, trade and finance required extensive European economic integration in order to participate effectively in the global competition for markets and spheres of influence. Yet each of the imperialist bourgeoisies simultaneously saw unification as a means to advance their own particular (and often mutually contradictory) national interests.

Thus what began in 1952 as an agreement among France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries to eliminate all barriers to the export and import of coal and steel, became, with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, a blueprint for full-blown European economic and, ultimately, political integration. By 1968 the nine countries belonging to what was then called the Common Market had achieved a complete customs union, a common external tariff and the freer movement of labor and capital within the union. Britain entered the EEC in 1973, and the number of member countries subsequently expanded to the current twelve.

The road to European unity never ran smooth. Britain, clinging to memories of vanished imperial glory, and often valuing its "special relationship" with the U.S. above closer cooperation with its traditional continental foes, kept Europe at arm's length for many years, and even today remains a reluctant partner. The unity drive almost came to a halt during the worldwide economic contractions of the mid-1970s and early 1980s, as EEC member states became preoccupied with managing their own internal crises, often at one another's expense. Yet, during the mid-1980s, the process of integration

revived. The Single Market Act of 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 were aimed at what the authors of the Treaty of Rome envisaged as the step following the creation of a customs union: full European economic integration. With these two agreements, the member states suspended important elements of national sovereignty. The Single Market Act resulted in an expanded role for the European Commission seated in Brussels: whereas any member state could previously veto its decisions, the Commission was now given broad powers to legislate by majority rule in many economic areas. All border controls were slated for elimination by 1993. The Maastricht Treaty laid out a plan for the creation of a single European currency (European Monetary Union, or EMU) by the end of the century. With these two treaties in place, Europe seemed on the high road to the third and final step projected by the Treaty of Rome's architects: the merger of the member countries into a federated super-state, with a single foreign policy, parliament and army.

Today that vision lies in ruins. The insoluble conflicts between the national and international requirements of capital are dissipating the momentum toward European economic and political integration. The Yellow Brick Road has turned out to be paved with landmines, which have their origin in the very nature of capitalism.

Collapse of ERM—Blow to Maastricht

Plans for moving to a common currency (supposed to be a milestone on the road to European Union) were shattered by two monetary crises: in September 1992, and July 1993. To achieve monetary union, it was neces-

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Le Pen Rally Aborted in Montreal

No Platform for Fascists!



1917 PHOTO

On 22 September comrades of the Bolshevik Tendency participated in an important anti-fascist mobilization in Montreal. The protest was a response to an attempt by local fascists to organize a public rally featuring Jean-Yves Le Gallou, a senior official of Jean-Marie Le Pen's French National Front (who was in Montreal to attend an international conference of municipal officials).

Faced with a thousand militant demonstrators, the fascists decided to cancel their provocation. This led to some bitter recriminations between Le Pen's supporters and local Ku Klux Klan thugs. Michel Larocque, Quebec's self-styled KKK Imperial Wizard, denounced the Front as "bourgeois sellouts," and complained that: "When it was starting up in France the Front National had to rely on strong-arm types like us to do their work for them. Now that they've gotten a bit bigger, they're trying to dissociate themselves from people like us" (*Montreal Gazette*, 23 September 1993). The same article also reported:

"Later he [Larocque] told a half dozen Klan supporters: 'I don't have to hide who I am. I don't understand why he [Le Gallou] is trying to hide who he is....'"

"Larocque said he was angry because he and his fellow racists had been called upon by Roger Alacoque, the Front's representative in Quebec, to provide security at

the news conference—only to be denounced by other Front members."

The Front National (FN) is the largest and most "respectable" ultra-rightist organization in the world today. It is a good thing that its initial attempt to establish a beachhead in North America was blocked. The 22 September demonstration was therefore a victory for the left and all potential victims of the fascists, but it was a very limited victory, and one gained *despite* the political leadership of the "Coalition contre la présence du Front national et la montée de l'extrême droite" which repeatedly appealed for the state to take the initiative against the fascists.

"Anti-racist group wants [Montreal mayor Jean] Doré to stop visit here by extreme-right politician" announced the headline in the 24 August *Gazette*. On 18 September, an article headlined "Doré praised for decision to exclude rightist," reported that: "Heather Howard, of the Coalition to counter the Front National in Canada [sic], praised Doré for his decision to exclude Le Gallou from the reception," which the city threw for the municipal conference attendees.

Howard was not the only one to praise the mayor for snubbing the FN. The coverage of Doré in the October 1993 issue of *Socialist Worker*, published by the International Socialists (IS), reads as if it had been written by a

city hall publicist:

"The mayor of Montreal, Jean Doré, had faced a barrage of demands from the anti-Nazi coalition in Montreal. Doré, apparently embarrassed by the invitation extended to the FN without his knowledge, arranged to introduce the Metropolis '93 conference.

"Doré stated to delegates proudly that Montreal 'is a city of immigrants.' He said that the most important task for mayors of cities such as Montreal is 'to combat any manifestation of racism which by definition is a perversion of democracy.'

"While calls from the coalition to bar the FN reps from the conference were rejected, Le Gallou and his cronies were forbidden from attending the welcoming cocktail party at Montreal's city hall, and all city staff were ordered not to rent any city facilities to the *Front National*."

In theory *Socialist Worker* would probably agree that anyone who really wanted to "combat any manifestation of racism" in Montreal might start with the racist, trigger-happy police force that carries out Doré's commands. But this notion did not make it into the article. Nor did the IS mention a recent speech by Doré in which he characterized blue-collar city workers as "martians" for refusing to accept a wage freeze. On 13 September civic workers arriving at Montreal's city hall for a demonstration found all the doors locked. To register their protest, they were obliged to smash their way inside with a battering ram. A number of their leaders have since been charged with a variety of offenses.

This is the kind of labor militancy that revolutionaries want to harness in the struggle against the fascists, but it seems that the IS has trouble identifying the class line. Their upbeat presentation of Doré suggests that they may consider criticism of this labor-bashing capitalist politician to be divisive. Instead of exposing the contradiction between Doré's charade of "opposition" to the FN while Montreal police were assigned to protect the fascist rally, *Socialist Worker* uncritically reprinted his remarks about combatting racism. The other leftist groups in the coalition (the Communist League, Mobilisation and Action Socialiste) who went along with the calls for banning the FN were at least able to resist the temptation to laud the mayor.

The objective of Marxists in doing anti-fascist work must be to mobilize the power of the working class and the oppressed against the racist pogromists. This cannot be done by prettifying the enemies of working people. The tactic of alternately praising and pressuring Doré pursued by the anti-FN coalition was not one with much appeal to the militant workers locked in class struggle with "hizzoner." Like the black and minority youth victimized by cops, these workers see the civic authorities as their enemies, not their friends.

The attempt to build "broad anti-fascist unity" with elements of the ruling class is a prescription for defeat. Those would-be revolutionaries who put a higher value on building a "mass movement" than on promoting revolutionary politics, usually find themselves setting up the chairs and microphones for people whose pro-capitalist policies they ostensibly oppose. This is exactly what happened at the 22 September rally, as the coalition's MC vainly appealed for a representative from the

reactionary Zionist B'nai Brith to come to the microphone. But B'nai Brith, which places its faith in Mayor Doré and the cops, had publicly disassociated itself from the demonstration in advance, and refused to address the crowd. Of course none of the "revolutionary" groups in the coalition had anything to say—they were all too afraid that a mention of socialism might alienate the liberals they wanted to draw in.

This abject political capitulation to liberalism must seem a bit incongruous to those members of Action Socialiste (AS) who take their politics seriously. For much of the last year, AS has been vigorously defending the Peruvian Maoist Sendero Luminoso's policy of assassinating liberals (as well as union leaders, social workers and rival leftists). In Montreal, however, these Sendero boosters work along different lines. Combatting reformism and illusions in the state is fine in theory, but at the moment the AS leadership apparently sees its job as "broadening" the movement by limiting its politics to what liberals find tolerable. In the Marxist movement this approach is called liquidationism.

Revolutionaries are not sectarians. We do not stand aside from the concrete struggles of the moment, but neither are we prepared to become the "best builders" of, or take political responsibility for, formations preaching reliance on the state against the deadly threat of fascism. The Communist International, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, developed the tactic of the united front as a means for revolutionaries to overcome such contradictions and achieve principled unity with other forces in pursuit of common, practical objectives. "March Separately, Strike Together!" was the Comintern's united-front slogan: each organization retains the right to argue for its own politics (including the right to criticize its partners) while joining forces to carry out a common action. Unfortunately, the initiators of the 22 September demonstration, including the ostensible revolutionaries among them, chose to organize on a lowest-common denominator basis and ended up adapting to the illusions of the least militant elements in the coalition.

Reprinted below is a translation of a leaflet distributed by the Bolshevik Tendency in Montreal:

On 22 September in Montreal Jean-Marie Le Pen's racist, xenophobic National Front (FN) plans to make its first public appearance in North America. Jean-Yves Le Gallou, a senior Front official described by the *Montreal Gazette* as Le Pen's "right-hand man," is billed as the featured speaker. Working people and all others threatened by fascist terror (women, Jews, Asians, blacks, gays and lesbians, immigrants, native people and leftists) must answer this provocation with a massive and militant counter-mobilization. The best time to confront the fascists is *now*, before they can grow.

The FN meeting is being organized by Roger Alacoque, leader of the "Cercle National des Français à l'étranger," a local group of Le Pen supporters. Alacoque is a buddy of Quebec Ku Klux Klan leader Michel Larocque, whose violent crimes against immigrant youth, gays and leftists are a matter of public record.

Alacoque describes Larocque as a "good boy" and an "occasional ally," but, like Le Pen, he aspires to move beyond the lumpen fringe and make far-right politics "respectable."

Alacoque has been a member of Quebec's governing Liberal Party since 1984. Using the platform of the Orford riding association, he has described Quebec as a "garbage can for the Third World," and called for tighter controls on non-white immigration. Alacoque's local Liberal MNA, Robert Benoit, openly defends his fascist supporters on the grounds that, "The Liberal Party has always been a very broad coalition of different viewpoints" (*Gazette*, 26 August [1993]).

Officials of the Montreal Urban Community (MUC) take a similarly benign attitude to the fascists, and have instructed the cops to protect the 22 September meeting. Meanwhile, anti-racist activists, organized in the "Coalition to Counter the National Front and the Rise of the Far-Right" have, according to press reports, been appealing to MUC Chairman Michel Hamelin to prevent the Le Gallou meeting from taking place. While the call for a ban on the FN meeting has not been specifically endorsed by any of the leftist groups in the coalition, neither, to our knowledge, has it been disavowed.

Calling on the civic authorities to ban the fascists may seem like a smart tactic to some, but relying on the bourgeois-democratic state promotes dangerous illusions. The state is not neutral—it is a tool of the capitalist rulers of this society. Political bans are inevitably used far more aggressively against anti-fascists and the left than against the right. Democratic rights and freedoms are all very well, but the function of the state, and its armed thugs, is primarily to safeguard private property.

Fascism: Vanguard of Imperialist Reaction

The victory of capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet bloc produced neither the democratic freedoms nor economic benefits that capitalist propagandists promised. Instead, living standards have plummeted and there has been an explosion of ethnocide, xenophobia and all manner of social reaction. Emboldened by the imperialist triumph, the ultra-right is on the rise throughout Europe. In country after country, fascist terrorists launch murderous attacks...while the police and state authorities turn a blind eye.

While the Soviet Union existed, the capitalists found it expedient to provide a social "safety net" for some of the victims of their profit-driven economy. Today, with the working class in retreat and the "communist menace" vanquished, these programs are being systematically dismantled as the ranks of the jobless and homeless swell. Employers are aggressively attacking wages and working conditions, while the struggles of workers, ethnic and racial minorities, immigrants and the unemployed are increasingly met with repression.

In this New World Order, where the very idea of socialism has been pronounced dead and all aspirations for a humane, egalitarian international social order are supposed to be forgotten, reaction and oppression rule



LELOUP—COLLECTIF/B. PICTURES

FN campaigns to bring back death penalty

supreme. Workers forced to leave their homelands in search of a better life are treated as criminals and hounded by the state's repressive apparatus. Immigrants are scapegoated for the irrationalities of the capitalist business cycle. Class-conscious workers in Quebec and the rest of the "developed" world must firmly oppose the xenophobic hysteria of their rulers and fight for full and equal citizenship rights for all immigrants.

Racist and fascist groups such as the Heritage Front, White Power, the Ku Klux Klan and Le Pen's National Front seek to spearhead the bourgeois offensive, either as vigilantes or auxiliaries to the armed bodies of the bourgeois state. Their attacks on homosexuals, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, refugees and other victims of capitalist oppression are aimed at galvanizing and misdirecting the anger of backward layers of the working class, lumpens and pauperized petty entrepreneurs who are themselves being crushed beneath the wheels of "free enterprise."

Labor Bureaucrats Blind to Fascist Threat

Rather than organizing to sweep the fascists from the streets, the nationalists who head the powerful Quebec labor movement have helped create the political climate in which they can grow. The union misleaders are quite willing to unite with xenophobes and Quebec Français demagogues in defense of the French language supposedly "threatened" by immigrants. Le Pen's followers are consciously seeking to recruit francophone ultra-nationalists to create a cadre of ready-made strikebreakers and company goons which will eventually be turned against the organized labor movement.

Quebec's cultural elite in the 1930s and 1940s was riddled with anti-Semites and fascist sympathizers. Organizations such as Jeune Canada and Action Nationale had a broad following, and the Theatre Monument National on St. Laurent Boulevard—owned by the reactionary Société St. Jean Baptiste—was the setting for the racist rantings of Lionel Groulx and Quebec fascist leader Adrien Arcand. Racist demagogues such as Groulx are still revered and honored by today's political elite, school-children are still taught to pronounce his

name with respect, and he even has a metro station named after him. The leftist "indépendantistes" of Gauche Socialiste prefer to downplay the contemporary significance of these earlier advocates of Quebec nationalism, but the fact remains that the labor bureaucracy is in a political bloc with Groulx's heirs, not with Gauche Socialiste.

For United Labor/Minority Action to Smash Fascism!

Le Pen's fascist supporters in the Cercle National are not a collection of social theorists with a slightly skewed, oddball or backward point of view. Theirs is not a literary discussion group. They seek to recruit a vanguard

of reaction through terrorist attacks on the most vulnerable and isolated sectors of the oppressed. They want to build a movement committed to organizing much larger-scale attacks in the future.

The FN meeting on 22 September is an attempt by the fascists to test the water in Montreal. If they are successful, their activity will increase, wavering elements will draw closer, and they will be harder to stop the next time. Crushing the fascists before they can grow is a matter of elementary self-defense. It is a task that cannot be left to the capitalists' democratic state, whose representatives have historically been far more sympathetic to the fascists than to their opponents. Unity in action by the left, the organizations of the oppressed and militant trade unionists can inflict a crushing defeat on the nascent fascist movement in Quebec. ■

European Disunity...

continued from page 2

sary to ensure that the currencies of all member states serve as a reliable pan-European measure of value. This, in turn, required stable rates of exchange among the various national currencies. This was the aim of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), which prescribed a narrow range in which the values of EC currencies were permitted to fluctuate in relation to one another (for most countries this was 2.25 percent above or below a predetermined "central rate"). But the relative values of currencies fluctuate in accordance with the condition of the national economies that back them. These economies have different rates of growth and investment, different levels of development, and are consequently driven by different and often mutually conflicting imperatives. The rates of inflation, interest and levels of state indebtedness vary from country to country, yet the EC's Council of Ministers insisted that the ERM could only be maintained if all these factors were stabilized through strict fiscal controls.

The senior partner in the EC is Germany, whose economy is the powerhouse of Europe, and whose deutschmark is consequently the bedrock of the monetary union. But swallowing the DDR (East Germany) proved far costlier than the West German rulers ever imagined. In its haste to gain immediate control over the DDR's economy, the West German state (BRD) decreed that, from 1 July 1990, all exports had to be paid for in deutschmarks, which resulted in a catastrophic decline for the ex-DDR's foreign trade. It was also announced that the debts of state-owned companies (which turned out to be a vast sum) were payable in deutschmarks. Keeping social peace in eastern Germany, whose economy was gutted by the Western bourgeoisie, cost billions more in unemployment payouts. (According to the 26 January 1993 *Financial Times*, manufacturing jobs in the former DDR had declined 77 percent since unification.) The costs of sustaining the population, reconstructing the infrastructure and liquidating the majority of existing enterprises is estimated to have run up a total accumulated debt of 400 billion

deutschmarks as of January 1993.

To prevent rampant inflation, the German government had to drain out at least some of the money it had pumped into the economy. Kohl knew that raising enough taxes to balance the budget would be political suicide, so instead he opted for a range of measures designed to put the major burden on the backs of the working class: raising direct and indirect taxes, cutting social services, arbitrarily cancelling union contracts for East German workers and imposing long-term substandard wages. Not to be outdone, the West German metal employers' association has unilaterally cancelled the wage and vacation provisions of the industry-wide contract, and massive layoffs have taken place in all branches of industry. In spite of the combativity shown in several big strikes and plant occupations, German workers' attempts to defend their standard of living have been undermined by the betrayals of the social-democratic trade-union bureaucrats.

One of the methods used by the German bourgeoisie to dampen inflation has been jacking up interest rates, through the agency of the Bundesbank, the German state's quasi-independent monetary arm. The interest rate charged to commercial banks jumped 4.75 percent between 1989 and 1992 (*Financial Times* [London], 5 February 1993), and in September the international financial markets went into a frenzy, as speculators sold off other European currencies. To remain within ERM bands, other Community members had to spend vast amounts of their foreign cash reserves to prop up the value of their own currencies, and impose high interest rates to maintain the comparative value of their own currencies against the deutschmark. But higher interest rates spelled disaster for the weaker EC economies, most significantly Italy and Britain. Thus the monetary crisis of September 1992 resulted in the exit of Italy and Britain (temporarily, they said) from the Exchange Rate Mechanism and the devaluation of the Portuguese, Spanish and Irish currencies.

But if the September 1992 crisis left the European Community in a gravely weakened condition, the events of the following July struck at its very heart: the Franco-German alliance. During the Cold War, it was a cornerstone of imperialist policy to prevent a recurrence



REGIS BOSSU—SYGMA

French Prime Minister Balladur and Germany's Kohl

of hostilities between the continent's two traditional rivals. Conflict was avoided by allowing France to exercise a military and political influence out of proportion to its economic strength. With the downfall of Stalinism, the suspicion grew among the French bourgeoisie that a reunified Germany, in the absence of the Soviet "threat," and sensing its new-found power, might be more inclined to throw its weight around at the expense of its less powerful neighbor.

France's strategy was to use the EC to check German power. Paris has always been at pains to remind Bonn's rulers to act as the heads of a European Germany rather than in the role that many justifiably suspect they aspire to: the masters of a German Europe. In early 1993 France's new right-wing coalition government was under pressure to take some measures to stimulate the economy. But this would have meant a devaluation of the franc, and all the governing parties were pledged to maintain the *franc fort* (strong franc), i.e., the prevailing exchange rate with the deutschmark. Paris could not both jump-start the economy and maintain the exchange rate of the franc unless the Bundesbank could be persuaded to cut interest rates and devalue the mark. But German ruling circles showed little ambivalence when forced to choose between Euro-rhetoric and cold cash: despite constant pleas from Paris that it live up to its larger "continental responsibilities," the Bundesbank scoffed at the idea of letting the almighty deutschmark be dragged down with the franc. They responded to French entreaties with a few cosmetic gestures, but, at the end of July, flatly refused to lower one of the Bun-

desbank's key lending rates.

Seeing blood in the water, the piranhas of the financial markets began dumping francs in anticipation of a possible French devaluation. But everyone knew that removing the franc or the deutschmark from the ERM would doom the Franco-German alliance, Maastricht, and the whole project of European union. Unstable exchange rates would alter existing European trade patterns in unpredictable ways, and tend to inhibit new capital investment. Too many dreams of renewed European imperial grandeur, too many political careers and promises, and too much business rode on Maastricht for the rulers of Bonn and Paris to sign its death certificate so hastily. Instead, they tried to put it on a respirator.

At the beginning of August, the finance ministers and leading bankers of the EC countries conferred in Brussels, and announced that the margins of currency fluctuation would be raised from 2.25 percent above or below the established central rate, to 15 percent—a margin so wide that this move was seen as a face-saving way to announce the end of the ERM. As an afterthought, the member states also announced their intention to bring their currencies back into the old ERM ranges as soon as possible. But it is precisely the possibility of the ERM, and a single European currency, that the July 1993 crisis called into question.

Economic Integration and 'Actually Existing Capitalism'

The European unity project was first of all an alliance driven by the economic interests of the major continental powers, and secondly an anti-Soviet expedient. Yet it was more than these things. It also reflected the real supra-national economic bonds that had multiplied over the past several decades, the ambitions of the ruling classes of Europe for a larger role in the world, and, for the bourgeoisie's "best and brightest," a hope for the continent-wide renovation and rationalization of the capitalist order. But the financial paroxysms of the past year sounded the death knell of these high hopes; they revealed the chasm between utopian/idealist bourgeois daydreaming and "actually existing capitalism."

Despite decades of growing economic interpenetration, the ruling classes of Europe are unable to transcend the limits of the nation-state, and bring the political organization of capitalist society into conformity with the requirements of its increasingly integrated economic foundations. Nothing short of the elimination of private property in the means of production, and the organization of the world economy on the basis of conscious planning, can resolve the contradiction between the global scale of contemporary productive forces and the narrow political limits within which they are confined—a contradiction that has already caused untold destruction in the twentieth century, and once again threatens the human race with catastrophe.

The attempt to construct a unitary Europe has produced serious differences within and among the continent's ruling classes. It created a rift in the leadership of Britain's ruling Conservative Party; more than any

other single issue, this dissention was responsible for the replacement of the Euro-negative Margaret Thatcher by the more Euro-friendly John Major as party leader and prime minister. France's neo-Gaullist party, the Rally for the Republic (RPR), headed by Jacques Chirac, is known to be lukewarm in its support for Maastricht; two of its leading politicians, Philippe Séguin and Charles Pasqua, campaigned openly against the treaty. In the Socialist Party (PS), Mitterand's former defense minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, is an outspoken Maastricht opponent.

Even Jacques Delors, the French Euro-bureaucrat who personifies the EC, is losing hope in the possibility of realizing Maastricht. In Germany, where support for European unification has historically been strong, open dissent is growing. German ratification of the Maastricht Treaty was held up for months by challenges before Germany's highest court. Kohl's designated candidate for president, Steffen Heitmann, and Edmund Stoiber, Bavarian Ministerpresident of the Christian Social Union, have recently come out in open opposition to further European integration. Stoiber's opposition, which cuts across his party's national government partnership with the Christian Democrats and the Liberals, is obviously intended to undercut the appeal of the ultra nationalist Republikaner campaign against Maastricht.

Differences over political and economic integration will continue to figure prominently in European politics for some time to come. The Maastricht Treaty was put to a popular vote in three countries in 1992. In Denmark, the treaty initially failed by a narrow margin (although this verdict was reversed in a subsequent referendum); in the Republic of Ireland it was endorsed by 70 percent; and in France, Maastricht gained approval by the slenderest of margins in September 1992. These referenda presented the left and workers' movement with an immediate practical question: how to vote on Maastricht, or whether to vote at all.

Choice of Poisons: Rampant Nationalism or Inter-Imperialist Integration

The controversy over Maastricht is exclusively a dispute over how European capitalism should be organized. The duty of Marxist revolutionaries is to represent the long-term, historic interests of the working class, which has no stake in either model of capitalism. Yet most of the left failed to adopt a position of "a plague on both your houses." Even self-styled revolutionary and Trotskyist groups joined left-reformist currents in advocating a "no" vote, arguing that a win for the "no" side would have represented some kind of victory for the working class.

This position seems to derive in some measure from the current reactionary political climate. Fifty years ago, few workers' parties would publicly deny that the ultimate goal was the elimination of private property in the means of production and its replacement by socialism. The debate within the workers' movement centered on how best to attain that goal: by reform or revolution, through the popular front or the political independence

of the working class, through "socialism in one country" or the spread of revolution internationally.

Today, the grounds of the argument have shifted entirely. The social democracy for the most part officially abandoned the socialist goal many years ago. Since the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern European regimes, the remnants of the Stalinist parties have recast themselves as left social democrats, and have also renounced socialism in word as well as in deed. Nearly all mass workers' organizations and parties now openly proclaim that the working class can set itself no higher goal than to preserve and expand the limited social gains wrested from the capitalists in the past. The permanence of capitalist society is taken for granted; the only relevant question concerns what kind of capitalism we should have. Contemporary public debate, in short, takes place almost entirely within the framework of bourgeois ideology. It is therefore easy to see how many ostensibly Trotskyist groups instinctively feel that to reject the bourgeois framework is to abstain from mass electoral politics altogether and, rather than be marginalized, strain to discover some kind of leftist, working-class pole in the Maastricht controversy.

Such a pole never emerged. It is true that the majority of the bourgeoisie and their political representatives were pro-Maastricht. But the main articulate opposition came not from those who rejected Maastricht because they opposed a capitalist future, but rather from a right-wing nationalist bourgeois minority. Thatcher and Séguin were against the treaty because they feared that their own bourgeoisies might have to sacrifice some of their traditional prerogatives to what they perceived as a German-dominated Council of Ministers in Brussels. And behind these "mainstream conservatives" stood Enoch Powell and Jean-Marie Le Pen, who have based their entire political careers on stirring up chauvinist hatred against immigrants.

In the French referendum, the Communist Party (PCF) and a minority of the Socialists (PS) were also in the "no" camp, and warned from time to time that Maastricht would mean greater unemployment and austerity. But this is the same PCF that has been capitulating for years to growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the working-class suburbs of Paris and other cities, where it has been losing votes to Le Pen's National Front, and the same PS minority that has been imposing austerity on the French working class for the last ten years. It is also true that the September vote was roughly divided along class lines, with affluent districts voting heavily in favor of Maastricht, and the majority of workers and small farmers voting against. Working France's repudiation of Maastricht reflects profound discontent with a worsening economy and the politicians perceived as responsible for it. But, beyond that, the political implications of this "no" vote remain unclear. The working class and the small farmers have also been prey to growing chauvinism and xenophobia. Their discontent never rose above the level of a vague and inchoate protest against prevailing conditions. The implicit choice—from beginning to end—was between greater European unity and the status quo. Revolution-



DER SPIEGEL

Protest by German Daimler autoworkers

aries refuse to choose between these bourgeois poisons, and call for opposition to both capitalist "options" for intensifying exploitation.

The USec Votes 'No'

Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) advocated a "no" to Maastricht in the French referendum. The 12 October 1992 issue of *International Viewpoint* (IV) asserted that:

"The underlying question in this referendum was: 'do you wish to rationalize the means of capitalist restructuring and to further the coherence of austerity policies throughout Europe' and the obvious socialist answer to this was of course 'no'."

And, indeed, Maastricht represented the European bourgeoisie's preferred method of conducting the current global offensive against the working class. But the problem with the USec's approach is that it implies that a capitalist class standing apart from the EC would somehow be immune to the imperatives of international competition and rationalization, and need not resort to austerity and strikebreaking. This is a point we took up in 1988, during the "Free Trade Election" in Canada:

"Whether 'free trade' or Canadian protectionism triumphs, the capitalists will attempt to ensure that the workers pay the price of intensified international competition. If Mulroney's deal falls through, and the Canadian capitalists end up 'independent' of all the major international trading blocs, the *first* thing they will do is try to further slash labor costs (i.e., working-class standards of living) on the grounds that they are locked into a small domestic market.

"Alternatively, if free trade goes through, it becomes an excuse to cut living standards and social services in or-

der to stay competitive with the U.S.

"In either case the capitalists are going to want concessions on wages and working conditions while further reducing government services and social benefits. Whether or not they get away with it will depend on the response of the unions. The limited gains won in the past—like unemployment insurance, old age pensions and medicare—were won by hard class struggle. And it is class struggle—not a renegotiation of capitalist tariffs—which will determine what happens to working-class living standards in the future."

If, for example, Britain were to withdraw from the EC, should we expect capitalist pressure on the working class to ease? Would the unions gain leverage? There is no reason to think so. A successful campaign to leave the EC would be followed by an advertising blitz with "There Will Always Be an England" as its theme song. The Thatcherites would urge the population to "buy British," tighten their belts and increase productivity to preserve the priceless traditions of their free island nation.

IV regretted that both the PCF and PS waged "no" campaigns based on chauvinist, nationalist appeals:

"One of the main points around which opposition crystallized was that of the nation. At first this... manifested itself in denunciations of the 'European Unity' process for its threat to 'French identity'. This was the keynote of the National Front as well as of the RPR's Pasqua; *nor was this theme entirely absent in the speeches of Chevènement and the Communist Party.*" (*op cit*, emphasis added)

The LCR (French USec section) apparently had considerable difficulty differentiating its "progressive no" from the plain old regular "no" of the chauvinists and protectionists. This is not simply a product of tactical ineptness. The USec's practised opportunism dictates that

it discover a "progressive side" to just about everything that occurs, from the victory of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, to the restoration of capitalism in Poland and the former Soviet Union.

Class Politics and the 'No' Campaign

Joining the USec in the "no" camp is the International Communist League (ICL), dominated by the Spartacist League (U.S.). The Robertsonites' propaganda on Maastricht has a somewhat tentative tone, which reflects the difficulties of presenting a hard left case for a "no" vote. Still, their major article on Maastricht in the wake of the French referendum (*Workers Vanguard*, 2 October 1992), presents several arguments worth taking up.

First, *Workers Vanguard* asserts that the majority of the French working class voted "no" out of solid class instinct:

"Maastricht became a symbol of the arrogant European ruling elites—the jet-setting bankers and corporate executives, the high government officials with their bodyguards and limos, staying in posh hotels as they made the rounds of endless EC conferences."

"While there was certainly nationalistic sentiment motivating the 'no' vote, this was combined with an instinctive recognition that the European Community is an agency of the Paris *bourse* and Frankfurt bankers."

"The Maastricht referendum gave unemployed steel workers and dockers a small opportunity to defy the masters of Europe."

"The most striking thing about the referendum was the clear and overwhelming class division between 'yes' and 'no,' with the working class voting 60 percent against."

It is of course a good thing when the working class acts instinctively in its own interest. We have no right to assume, however, that genuine class interest informs every instinctive reflex of the working class. What "class instinct" impels the American workers to support the Democrats/Republicans or Russian miners to follow Yeltsin?

There was undoubtedly an undertone of class resentment in the French workers' rejection of Maastricht. They were angry with the Brussels bureaucrats, the financiers and corporate executives as well as the "beautiful people"—movie stars, artists and litterateurs—paraded before the media to drum up support for a "yes" vote. Yet whatever implicit class resentment may have informed the French workers' "no," in the existing political configuration it could only be subordinated to the dominant nationalist "no."

It is possible, especially in periods of heightened class struggle, for questions that would ordinarily be seen as intra-bourgeois disputes to acquire a class significance. For example, in January 1919, the removal of the left social-democratic chief of police in Berlin, as part of a bid to restore capitalist hegemony, sparked an abortive revolt by the most militant sections of the working class. In such a situation it would indeed be both obtuse and sectarian for Marxists simply to tell the workers not to take a side.

Unlike voting for a candidate in an election, voting "no" in a referendum could also be a purely negative

act. But a "no" vote in the Maastricht referenda had a political meaning determined by the larger context in which they took place. Small propaganda groups cannot alter that context or that implied meaning. The Maastricht referenda were essentially attempts by majority bourgeois factions to enlist popular support to overcome the resistance of the bourgeois oppositions to the deal. There was no reason why the attitude of the working class should have been any different in this case: workers should support neither the policy of the majority nor of the minority of the exploiters.

Reasoning like the USec, *Workers Vanguard* argued that Maastricht represented a consciously anti-working class strategy:

"...class-conscious workers recognized that the proposed currency union was intended to hold down and slash wages and social benefits."

"...the men who run the European Community are not scapegoats; they really and truly exploit and degrade the working people of France and the rest of Europe. They are responsible for the unemployed steel workers of Lorraine and dockers of Marseilles."

Quite true. But it is equally true that the bourgeois opposition to the treaty was led by individuals no less hostile to the workers. *WV* admitted as much when it noted that the leftist social democrat Chevènement (to whom the Pabloist LCR was orienting) had a "program of economic autarky and inflationary finance [that] will not reduce unemployment one whit...."

The most militant-sounding argument advanced by the Robertsonites was that a defeat for Maastricht would deal a blow to the current rulers and could ignite working-class struggles. The September 1992 issue of their French journal, *Le Bolchévique*, proclaimed:

"We call for a no vote...knowing that a victory of the 'no,' by weakening a little more this anti-working class, anti-immigrant and anti-Soviet regime, would open a breach which the working class could take advantage of."

The idea that revolutionaries should automatically vote no, hoping to "weaken" the existing capitalist government and "open a breach" is foreign to Marxism. Revolutionaries have no interest in destabilization per se. The question is, who would stand to gain from such a development? In a situation where the working class is in a combative mood, and the capitalists are on the defensive, "opening a breach" could be an important step toward challenging the bourgeoisie for state power. But in France at the moment the main beneficiary of such a "breach" would more likely be Le Pen's National Front.

Between Imperialists There Is No 'Lesser Evil'

The Maastricht referenda took place against the larger background of the breakup of the Soviet Union—a major historic defeat for the working class. The vast majority of workers, who equated socialism with Stalinism, concluded from Stalinism's downfall that socialism has failed. A corollary to this—churned out ad nauseam by capitalism's propaganda mills—is that workers have no historic interests or goals independent from those of their rulers. It is of paramount importance

in this period to inoculate the most class-conscious elements of the proletariat against such paralyzing assumptions. This was the principal danger confronting the working class in the Maastricht votes—a danger that made it doubly imperative to take a hard stance of revolutionary opposition to *all* sections of the ruling class.

Unlike reformists, we do not undertake to provide positive proposals for our rulers about how the “national interest” can be advanced. We champion the interests of the downtrodden, and seek to organize opposition to any capitalist measures that will adversely affect the oppressed and exploited. Revolutionaries oppose every attempt to poison the working class with nationalism and protectionism because such sentiments undercut class consciousness, which can only be internationalist. Yet we do not advocate “free trade,” or take positions on how the capitalists should arrange their balance of payments, terms of trade or handle currency fluctuations. We neither advocate a strong dollar/pound/mark/yen nor a weak one, a return to the gold standard or floating exchange rates. These are all intra-bourgeois disputes, and we should follow the advice of Hilferding as quoted by Lenin in *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*: “The reply of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance capital, to imperialism, cannot be free trade [or protectionism] but Socialism.”

Workers Vanguard makes the observation that:

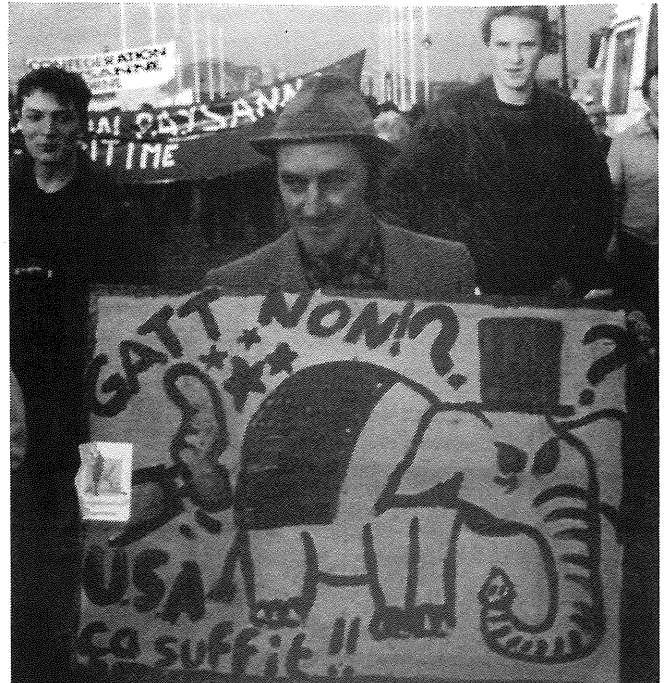
“In the short run, the collapse of the Maastricht project will tend to politically favor America, which can more easily play off the European bourgeoisies against each other. But even if German imperialism emerges...more able to impose its will economically (and militarily), this would point not to an era of harmony and prosperity but to interimperialist war.”

A point well taken, but one which hardly squares with advocating a “no” vote (or a “yes”). If Maastricht collapses, the U.S. gains; if it proceeds apace, German capital will benefit; so which should workers favor, German or American imperialism?

The treaty is an attempt to better equip European capital to compete with North America and Japan. Marxists denounce inter-imperialist economic rivalry as a precursor to open military hostilities. But the defeat of Maastricht, or even the disappearance of the EC, would not terminate such rivalries, it would merely shift the ground for the sharpest conflicts to an *intra*-European level. One or another power would sooner or later forge an alliance with the U.S. or Japan, forcing its regional competitors to seek protection in some other bloc. We oppose imperialism, and we oppose every manifestation of its socially reactionary character, but this does not mean we wish to see the working class drawn into discussions about the pros and cons of one ruling class alliance or another. In a historical sense we favor global economic integration, but recognize that it cannot be achieved in a progressive fashion under imperialism.

LRCI’s “European Constituent Assembly”

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI—led by the British Workers Power group)



PETER TURNLEY

French farmers like their subsidies

published a statement on Maastricht in their *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 2, November 1992, which projected that “Within a decade” the movement represented by Maastricht “could mean the creation of a federal European imperialist superstate.” In light of what has happened since these words were written, the authors probably wish they had been a trifle more cautious. But, unlike the USec or the Robertsonites, the LRCI at least got the bottom line right with their call for a vote against *both* bourgeois camps.

The LRCI position on Maastricht is marred by the introduction of the following demand:

“For the election of a sovereign European Constituent Assembly for all those countries in the EC or who seek to join it, convened and protected by the fighting organisations of the working class.”

The demand for a “sovereign European Constituent Assembly” might suit little-England “socialists” like Tony Benn, who could use it for some internationalist cover. But why would supposed revolutionaries promote such a slogan? Marxists raise the call for a constituent assembly to focus popular resistance to bonapartist dictatorships, and mobilize the masses in an attempt to turn a struggle for bourgeois democracy in a revolutionary direction. But there is no connection between the convocation of a European constituent assembly and the creation of a European workers’ government.

Only opportunists can pretend that current sentiment for a single Europe is an empty shell that can be filled with whatever social and class content may please them. However it is approached, the call for a constituent assembly in Europe boils down to a call for the creation of an institution “convened and protected by the fighting organisations of the working class” to promote



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European unification circa 1940: German soldiers enter Paris

a *capitalist* United States of Europe. The project of a united capitalist Europe belongs exclusively to the bourgeoisie, just as much as the defense of the prerogatives of the imperialist nation-states. The various international alignments of the imperialist powers are reactionary to the core, and no amount of centrist double talk can extract a "revolutionary" content from a tactic based on illusions in the peaceful harmonization of inter-imperialist competition. The LRCI's demand is therefore not merely utopian, it is *reactionary* utopianism, inasmuch as it promotes the reactionary illusion that European unification on capitalist terms can have a progressive content.

Be Realistic: Fight for Socialism!

The questions posed by Maastricht are critically important to defining politics in the post-Soviet era. The Russian question as we have known it will be less a touchstone of revolutionary politics, and instead take its place at the head of the list of historical experiences of the proletariat, along with the Paris Commune, the German Revolution of 1918 and the Spanish Civil War. It will remain the decisive historical example—the highest point yet reached by the international workers' movement—and one which retains incomparable lessons for revolutionaries. But it will not directly intrude into the calculation of every question of global politics, as in the past. Questions posed by relations between one's "own" imperialist rulers and their rivals are therefore now more clearly central to revolutionary politics than before. The race between proletarian consciousness and the next round of inter-imperialist hostilities will determine humanity's future.

Proletarian consciousness may seem to be losing the race. The essential elements of the current situation—economic slowdown, the explosion of ethnic and nationalist hatreds, increasing rivalry among capitalist nations and imperialist blocs—are broadly familiar from the situations preceding the two world wars. One ingredient is, however, missing: a militant, socialist proletariat. Yet, despite the deindustrialization in North America and Britain, and the growth of the "service" sector, the organized working class retains the social weight and economic power to lead all the oppressed in a successful assault on the existing social order. The spread of industrial development into former colonies and neo-colonies has vastly increased the size and social weight of the working class internationally.

The composition of the proletariat in the imperialist heartlands is changing, and its consciousness and political will have been eroded by the countless betrayals of the Stalinists and social democrats, as well as the illusions created by the relative prosperity of post-war decades. But it is precisely that post-war standard of living that is under attack in all imperialist countries today. To fight back, the working class requires the most advanced theory and political practice that the history of the class struggle can supply. That most advanced theory and practice is still Marxism, regardless of its temporary unpopularity due to a false equation with Stalinism. The working class will discover Marxism once again, but only if its most basic premises—first among them the political independence of the working class—are jealously guarded against the unrelenting pressure of bourgeois reaction in an epoch of capitalist decline. ■

October 3 Memo

IBT on Moscow Coup

The following are excerpts from an internal communication circulated by the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) leadership in the midst of the 3 October 1993 attempt by the supporters of the Russian parliament to seize the Moscow television center and topple Boris Yeltsin. An earlier (24 September) internal IBT memo noted: "We take no side. Neither [Yeltsin nor Rutskoi/Khasbulatov] is qualitatively more democratic. And Rutskoi does not represent the prospect of restoring a workers' state, deformed or otherwise."

Marxists adamantly oppose the bonapartist measures pushed through by Yeltsin in the aftermath of his victory. His dissolution of elected councils, imposition of a media monopoly, suspension of freedom of assembly, etc., are entirely reactionary. Yet had the Rutskoi/Khasbulatov forces triumphed, which for a few hours appeared to be a real possibility, similar measures would inevitably have been enacted.

As in the case of Solidarnosc, there is a large element of false consciousness among Rutskoi's base, and a nostalgia for the good old days under Brezhnev. But that is not on offer. The split is between two rival sections of capitalist restorationists, who were united against the August 1991 coup and the Stalinist bureaucracy, but have since fallen out over how their common objective of counterrevolution should be implemented. At the same time as we oppose Rutskoi, we of course continue to oppose the privatization of Russian enterprises. If we had a base, this could obviously put us in a bloc with Rutskoites on some questions at certain points.

We need to watch the situation carefully. Yeltsin has (according to CNN) called for mass support, but so far received little, if any. The Rutskoites, whose popular support has been dramatically underreported by the imperialist media all along have, at least for the moment, been able to mobilize far more. Apparently they broke the blockade of the White House by rushing the troops who had [been] cordoning it off....Now some thousands of them [Rutskoites] with small arms are laying siege to the TV center. So far the military or security services have not intervened.

In general on the political level we should treat this conflict as we [i.e., the international Spartacist tendency of 1978-79] treated the struggle between the Khomeinists and the Shah. At that time we were in favor of a victory for neither, warned the left of the danger of throwing in their lot with the "lesser" evil and called instead for a perspective of independent proletarian intervention. As in Iran, a decisive question [is] what will the army do? Unlike the situation in Iran, the insurgents do not seem to have the active support of the overwhelming mass of the population.

The situation is clearly very fluid and it is possible that developments might cause us to shift our position....[We



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Rutskoi/Khasbulatov supporters break through cops

would oppose] wholesale attacks by the armed forces on the (largely unarmed) populace....

This consideration would clearly not apply if what is involved is confrontations with the relatively small bands (10-20,000) of Rutskoi supporters who have been active to date, but only in the event of a truly mass outpouring of support for the parliamentarians, which seems an unlikely, if theoretically conceivable, scenario. Another, more optimistic, scenario would be the creation of some kind of proletarian councils based in the enterprises, perhaps initiated by the unions, which might seek to intervene in the power struggle by organizing demonstrations or strikes. While such formations could be expected to side with Rutskoi for the most part (because Yeltsin/Gaidar's program is to throw them onto the scrap heap), the emergence of such a factor, even if only semi-independent initially, could also change the configuration and our attitude toward it. It would present an arena in which revolutionaries would seek to intervene to change the course of the activity from support to Rutskoi to a struggle for the independent interests of the workers.

For the moment a first approximation of our program could be something like the following:

- *Neither Yeltsin nor Rutskoi—
Russian Workers Must Rule!*
- *Capitalist Restoration is Strangling the Working Class!*
- *Down with the New Exploiters!
Down with the New Black Hundreds!*
- *For Workers' Soviets from Vladivostok to Leningrad!*

LRCI: From Yeltsin to Rutskoï



DER SPIEGEL

4 October: Army backed Yeltsin

The May 1993 issue of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International's *Trotskyist International* contained a substantial polemic by Keith Harvey, largely directed at the "dogmatism" of the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) for our position of military support to the Stalinist apparatus in its August 1991 confrontation with the capitalist restorationists headed by Boris Yeltsin. The LRCI defends its bloc with Yeltsin, and perversely claims that those who fail to do so "abandon the gains of October." In fact, Yeltsin's triumph over the sclerotic remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy marked the decisive moment in the destruction of the degenerated workers' state created by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, a historical fact which the LRCI still refuses to recognize.

The LRCI polemic got one thing right: there was no middle ground in the Soviet coup. Pseudo-Trotskyist groups like the International Communist League (formerly the international Spartacist tendency) which acknowledge that the coup's defeat signaled the destruction of the workers' state, but nonetheless refused to take sides at the time, only testify to their own bankruptcy.

The LRCI, however, is proud that it sided with the Yeltsinists in 1991. They argue that we are wrong to see Yeltsin's victory as the triumph of the counterrevolution, and criticize us for confusing the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy with the destruction of the workers' state. Harvey's article asserted that the "decisive contest" to determine the fate of the Russian workers'

state lay in the future:

"Those who claim the Russian workers' state is no more have a difficulty in explaining the significance of the events of the last 18 months in Russia. A perpetual and still unresolved battle has taken place between the fast track restorationists around Yeltsin and a broad coalition of chauvinists, conservatives and state capitalists. Many of the latter supported Yeltsin in August 1991 but have resisted him ever since."

The LRCI provided the following summary of the two sides:

"the economic goal of the contending forces in Russia today is control of the Central Bank and its allocation of credits to enterprises. Each side—Yeltsin and Khasbulatov—have their own parallel administrations...Only by resolving the political struggle over which body has sovereignty in Russia will Yeltsin be able to claim the prize and set about forcing the Central Bank to act as a weapon for the restoration of capitalism instead of subverting that process."

It is true that the parliamentarians sought to keep industry afloat by massive subsidies financed by printing banknotes. The problem with this solution is that the Russian and other ex-Soviet governments could not afford to maintain the subsidies, let alone make the investments necessary to modernize the industrial plant. The LRCI was engaging in wishful thinking to imagine that, by maintaining the subsidies, Ruslan Khasbulatov and Aleksandr Rutskoï (ex-chairman of the Supreme Soviet and ex-vice-president respectively) and the parliamentary majority were somehow defending a collectivized economy.

The dispute between parliament and the Kremlin was over how best to establish a market economy. The parliamentary opposition represented a spectrum of local and regional officials, military officers concerned that Russia was losing its "great power" status, and factory managers whose future prospects are tied to the survival of the enterprises they run. The "shock therapy" integration into the world market proposed by the IMF and Yeltsin's former prime minister and chief economic adviser, Yegor Gaidar, would mean the liquidation of huge sectors of Russian industry, the absolute impoverishment of tens of millions of workers and a prolonged period of civil unrest.

In an interview last year Khasbulatov denounced Yeltsin/Gaidar's plans for a rapid transition to capitalism:

"how can one evaluate statements by one of the leading members of the government to the effect that a 50-percent decline in production in the country—that this is normal?...But a person who is at the rudder in carrying out the economic reform declares that a 50-percent decline is a norm. Is he really aware of what a 50-percent decline means? This is a stoppage, a shutdown of production, a destruction of the forces of production. Generally speaking, it is tragic that cadres are still being selected from the ranks of a very narrow contingent, and that a no less narrow circle is doing the selecting....Our

entire press continues to write by inertia about the success of the shock therapy in Poland—when in fact the entire world knows that Poland is experiencing a total collapse and that this conception has been proved totally bankrupt.”

—quoted in *Russian Social Science Review*, July 1993

In the same interview Khasbulatov made it clear that the dispute with Yeltsin and Gaidar is not over whether to resuscitate the planned economy:

“Now, realities are such that there is no returning to the past. I am certainly not one of those people who rejoiced at the collapse of the Soviet Union; let us say it straightforwardly, this was a tragic event. But life is life. As they say, the train has already left the station. And it did not merely leave: the rails behind it were torn up and discarded....But we must understand that life must now be constructed anew, within the Russian state.”

The conflict between Yeltsin and Rutskoi/Khasbulatov came to a head with the armed clash in early October 1993. The eventual decision of the military chiefs to back Yeltsin allowed him to crush his opponents and their defenders (which included both Stalinists and fascists). This was an important episode in the *consolidation* of a capitalist-restorationist regime, but it was never anything but a conflict *within* the camp of the counter-revolutionaries.

LRCI: Choosing Sides Among Counterrevolutionaries

In response to Yeltsin’s dissolution of parliament, the LRCI issued a call to defend the White House and “Fight Yeltsin’s Coup” (*Workers Power*, October 1993). This article, written before the decisive clash, attacks Yeltsin as a bonapartist and says that: “Revolutionary socialists should...nevertheless use the crisis to try and rally the workers against this attack on their democratic rights.” Yet in addressing this long-awaited showdown between Yeltsin and those who have supposedly been blocking his drive to capitalism, *Workers Power* ignored the question of the survival of its purported “workers’ state.”

To its credit, the article did not attempt to prettify Yeltsin’s opponents among the People’s Deputies. They are described as being “in favour of the restoration of capitalism” and opposed to Yeltsin only because they “want guarantees that privatisation will be carried out in such a way that the old bureaucracy can be the beneficiaries of the new capitalism.” Almost as an afterthought, *Workers Power* called for workers to “organise independently to stop the Yeltsin/Gaidar economic programme for the restoration of capitalism,” but failed to call for opposition to the *other* gang of capitalist-restorationists then headquartered at the White House.

After the smoke had cleared, the LRCI published a special supplement to their *Trotskyist International*, which advanced somewhat different arguments. Noting that the differences between Rutskoi/Khasbulatov and Yeltsin “are rooted only in the method and the tempo of the restoration process,” the dispute between Yeltsin and the parliament about when to hold elections is dismissed as:



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Steel plant in Magnitogorsk: at risk

“...squabbling over equally bourgeois constitutional forms [which] could present no real alternative to the population. Revolutionaries should demand the abolition of both the presidency and the parliament....”

The LRCI statement notes that neither side was able to mobilize significant mass support: “Only a few thousand turned out at the rival rallies that Yeltsin and Rutskoi called.” It also speculates that:

“It seems likely that it was the hardline Stalinist[s] and ultra-nationalists who were the real organisers of the abortive insurrection....Their goal was an ultra-nationalist conservative dictatorship. Clearly revolutionary communists could and can have no political solidarity with this reactionary objective.”

Yet after all this, the statement inexplicably concludes that, “in the battle between the parliament and Yeltsin, revolutionaries had to defend the White House and the parliament....” The only justification offered for this conclusion is that: “Since the collapse of Yanayev’s coup in August 1991 Boris Yeltsin has been the main enemy of the workers of the Russian Federation.” But why should workers want to replace one enemy with another?

The *Trotskyist International* text differs from the original piece in *Workers Power* in two respects. First, the claim that Rutskoi/Khasbulatov should be defended because they represented a more democratic alternative is dropped, and instead the article asserts that parliament’s “democratic credentials were no better and no worse than Yeltsin’s.” Secondly, an indirect reference to



Khasbulatov and Rutskol under arrest after Yeltsin's bloody victory

the LRCI's imaginary Russian workers' state is tucked away in the last paragraph of the lengthy statement: "Now we alone consistently and openly fight against all attempts to transform the country into an openly capitalist dictatorship." The LRCI is indeed alone (and evidently more and more uncomfortable) in making the absurd claim that Russia under Yeltsin and the IMF remains any kind of workers' state. It is evident that they would like to edge away from this position without having to offer any serious political accounting.

The defense of the workers' states against counter-revolution has never been anything the LRCI took seriously. In 1991, when the Soviet degenerated workers' state *did* exist, the LRCI supported Yeltsin, the "democratic" capitalist restorationist, against the Stalinist bureaucrats who "hoped by their actions on 19 August to defend their privileges on the basis of post capitalist property relations" (*Workers Power*, September 1991). We sided with the coup leaders and reminded the LRCI that: "the conquests of the October Revolution weighed far heavier than bourgeois democracy in the scales of human progress" (1917 No. 11). We warned that, "The brutal austerity measures required for capitalist restoration will be imposed on the Soviet masses with bayonets, not stump speeches or election-day handshakes." Today that prediction is being borne out.

To reconcile its support to Yeltsin in 1991 with its Soviet defensist posture, *Workers Power* simply denied that a social counterrevolution had occurred. Two years later, as the counterrevolutionaries fall out among themselves over who is to cash in on the dismantling of the planned economy, the LRCI's first impulse was to choose sides on the grounds of who was more "democratic."

The axis of the conflict between Yeltsin and Rutskoï/Khasbulatov was not one of bonapartist authoritarianism versus bourgeois democracy: it was a test of

strength between two factions within the capitalist-restorationist camp. Had the military split between the two camps, and a civil war erupted, the workers' movement should have been revolutionary defeatist on both sides. We oppose Yeltsin's wholesale attacks on democratic rights (media censorship, banning political opposition, suppression of oppositional newspapers, etc.). But had Rutskoï/Khasbulatov emerged victorious at the head of a nationalist coalition of regional bureaucrats, old-time Stalinists, anti-Semites and outright fascists, they would also have sought to consolidate their rule with repressive measures.

Historical Pessimism as 'Smart' Tactics

Supporters of Workers Power would do well to rethink their position on the August 1991 coup in light of recent events. Keith Harvey's polemic reiterated the argument that only a "united front" with the Yeltsinites against the 1991 coup could preserve the democratic space necessary to permit the proletariat to rediscover its own class interests:

"We judge the question of democratic rights from one standpoint only: which rights will assist the working class in attaining class consciousness?"

"...to side with the bureaucracy against the working class and its democratic restorationist misleaders is criminal folly. It is in fact to drag the banner of Trotsky's name in the filth of Stalinism."

At this point it should be clear that the claim that Yeltsin's "democratic" restorationist regime was going to provide an opportunity for the working class to come to class consciousness was really just historical pessimism dressed up as smart tactics. Despairing of any possibility of real working class resistance, the LRCI was reduced to painting a defeat as a victory. The level of class consciousness in the Russian proletariat was low, and there was no organized formation that even roughly ap-

proximated the kind of political direction necessary. Many workers had considerable illusions in Yeltsin and indeed in the whole project of capitalist restoration.

The task of Marxists is not to adapt to the illusions of the mass of more backward workers, but to rally those who at least have a sense of where the class line lies. In August 1991 that meant the necessity to defend collectivized property against counterrevolution. Despite massive illusions in Yeltsin in sections of the proletariat (particularly the miners), other layers of workers were deeply *hostile* to Yeltsin. The job of a revolutionary organization intervening in August 1991 was to seek to lead *these* elements into action against the restorationists, making blocs with sections of the Stalinist apparatus as and where necessary, while sharply posing the necessity of establishing organs of direct proletarian political power.

In the 1993 confrontation, the space created by the falling out between the two wings of the restorationists presented a fleeting opportunity for political intervention by the working class. In this situation of national crisis, a campaign in the unions to convoke emergency gatherings of representatives from factories, unions, collective farms and military units across Russia could have struck a chord in the masses, and opened the door for independent political action by the working class. Within such bodies, Marxists could have sought to cry-

tallize opposition to the entire project of capitalist restoration with an emergency program to reverse the process of privatization and deal with the ravages of unemployment, inflation, the wholesale collapse of health and social services, food shortages and speculation through the direct political intervention of the masses.

To the LRCI leadership, the capacity to swim against the stream is merely "dogmatism" and "sectarianism." From Poland in 1981, to the DDR in 1989 (see 1917 No. 10), to the USSR in 1991, the LRCI has been consistent in its refusal to defend the bureaucratized workers' states against counterrevolution. Rather than face the reality that the victory of the Yeltsinites in 1991, which they eagerly supported, destroyed the Soviet workers' state, the LRCI leadership has sought refuge in idiot optimism and ludicrous assertions that "the gains of October" survive. When the veterans of Yeltsin's 1991 barricades fell out among themselves, the LRCI hastened to choose sides.

These are not the responses of a serious revolutionary organization. The LRCI leadership's record of support to restorationist movements, its congenital inability to say what is and its proclivity to manufacture "Marxist" rationalizations for political adaptation to the mass movements of the moment, mark it as a thoroughly centrist formation. ■

Spartacist League Flip-Flop on Rutskoï

In the aftermath of the October 1993 armed confrontation in Moscow, the Spartacist League (SL) correctly pointed out that: "Rutskoï/Khasbulatov and the fascist-infested 'red-brown' coalition that supported them are no less hostile to the working class than is Yeltsin" (*Workers Vanguard* [WV], 8 October 1993). The article continued:

"The long-running feud between the Kremlin and the White House is generally (and rightly) regarded as a squabble between corrupt and cynical factions. Insofar as Rutskoï et al. are identified with any political line, it is extreme Russian nationalism, which is linked to reactionary social policies.

"For all their red flags the Stalinist 'patriots' are tightly bound to the monarchist/fascist scum and act as lackeys for the corporatist wing of the fledgling bourgeoisie. They are hostile to the independent mobilization of the working class, opposing every strike, from the air controllers last year to the recent Ukrainian miners strike. Their crude mix of Russian chauvinism, virulent anti-Semitism and racism against minorities from the Caucasus and elsewhere has made them despised by all but the most backward, lumpenized elements of the working class."

All very true. But a month later *Workers Vanguard* (5 November 1993) published "A Correction to Our View" which concluded that, "it was necessary to call on the working class to actively resist" Yeltsin, and characterized their earlier position as an "abstentionist blunting of our line." In hindsight the SL leadership

concluded that, "the possibility of a military bloc with the Rutskoï/Khasbulatov forces" was posed because they:

"at that moment were viewed by Yeltsin and his imperialist sponsors as an obstacle to the consolidation of a strong counterrevolutionary regime."

Why should class-conscious workers bloc with racist "lackeys for the corporatist wing of the fledgling bourgeoisie" in a "squabble between corrupt and cynical factions"? If parliament was "an impediment to the consolidation of power in Yeltsin's hands" the presidency was surely no less an impediment to the consolidation of power in the hands of "Rutskoï/Khasbulatov and the fascist-infested 'red-brown' coalition that supported them." In this fight between two gangs of counterrevolutionaries, neither side deserved support.

The SL leadership has been wrong on a series of major developments in the former Soviet bloc—from hailing Brezhnev's Afghan foreign policy, to praising Yuri Andropov and adapting to the East German Stalinists under the guise of pursuing political revolution. In August 1991 when the decrepit Stalinist bureaucracy and the forces of capitalist restoration headed by Yeltsin and Rutskoï/Khasbulatov collided, the SL abstained. There has been no correction on that one. But, a month after the fact, the SL tops decided that they should have taken sides in the 1993 falling out between counterrevolutionaries. It makes no sense.

In Defense of the Revolutionary Tendency Cuba, the LRCI and Marxist Theory



Castro arrives in Havana, New Years 1959

In a recent polemic on the collapse of the Soviet Union (see accompanying article) Keith Harvey, a leading theoretician of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) alleges that the roots of the International Bolshevik Tendency's "anti-Trotskyist method" can be traced to an erroneous position on the Cuban Revolution originally developed by the Spartacist League of the 1960s.

We welcome the opportunity to take up the LRCI's views on this question, since the Cuban Revolution is of particular importance for post-war Trotskyism. The Cuban events helped clarify important aspects of the social overturns in China, Yugoslavia and Vietnam after World

War II. The key question, in the words of the LRCI's leading section, the British Workers Power (WP) group, is:

"...how has capitalism been overthrown in a whole series of countries without the *independent* action of the working class playing the decisive role, and what are the implications of this for *revolutionary strategy*?"

After the overtly counterrevolutionary role played by Moscow in strangling the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s, the Trotskyist movement tended to view Stalinism simply as an anti-revolutionary agency in the working class, not qualitatively different from social democracy. After World War II, the phenomenon of indigenous Stalinist-led insurrectionary peasant movements taking power and liquidating the bourgeoisie *without* the intervention of either the Soviet bureaucracy or the working class, a phenomenon unforeseen by Trotsky, created a "crisis of theory" for his followers.

Pabloism and Post-War Stalinism

The leadership of the Fourth International, headed by Michel Pablo, concluded that the Stalinists could be forced to "roughly outline a revolutionary orientation," and foresaw "centuries" of deformed workers' states on the horizon. The Pablo leadership, anticipating the imminent outbreak of World War III between the USSR and world imperialism, considered that there was no time to forge independent mass revolutionary parties. Instead they proposed a tactic of "entrism *sui generis*" in which the existing Trotskyist cadres should dissolve themselves into Stalinist, social-democratic, and even petty-bourgeois nationalist parties in order to pressure them to the left.

The leadership of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), historically the strongest section of the international, carried out a belated and partial struggle against Pablo's liquidationism, in which they reasserted the necessity for independent revolutionary (i.e., Trotskyist) parties. While this fight represented a defense of Bolshevism against liquidationism, the SWP's "orthodoxy" was flawed and one-sided, and too often amounted to little more than a denial that the post-war social overturns posed any new questions. Joseph Hansen spoke for the SWP leadership when he asserted that Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through, an erroneous characterization which denied that Stalinist formations could spearhead anti-capitalist social overturns. This empirically false assertion, made in the heat of the struggle against Pablo's supporters, both reflected the political disorientation of the SWP leader-

ship and contributed to disarming the party cadres politically.

Castroism vs. Trotskyism in the SWP

When Fidel Castro's petty-bourgeois guerrillas smashed Fulgencio Batista's neo-colonial regime and the bourgeois state apparatus, and then two years later nationalized the economy, the SWP leadership became Fidelistas and began hailing Castro as an "unconscious Marxist." This political capitulation laid the basis for a 1963 reunification with the Pabloists, which launched the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat of the Fourth International, today headed by Ernest Mandel.

Opponents of the adaptation to Castroism within the SWP founded the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) to fight the revisionism of the leadership. In a key document, the RT drew a parallel between the course of the Cuban Revolution and the Chinese Revolution led by Mao Tse Tung:

"The transformation of China into a deformed workers state was instituted, not by the working class of China nor primarily because of great pressure from the working class—it was carried through on top on the initiative of the Maoist bureaucracy itself as a defensive act against imperialism.

"It is now quite clear that Cuba has followed the model of China quite closely. It was primarily the support of the peasantry which pushed Castro into power. The extensive nationalizations were *primarily* initiated by the regime itself in response to imperialist provocation and not by the working class which generally tailed these events.

"Cuba makes this process all the more clear precisely because of the central *unique* feature of the Cuban revolution—that the transformation into a deformed workers state occurred under the leadership of a party which was not even ostensibly 'working class,' by a non-Stalinist petty-bourgeois formation."

—"Cuba and the Deformed Workers States"

The RT argued that the Castroist guerrillas were no substitute for the class-conscious proletariat, and concluded that the road to socialism could only be opened through a political revolution:

"It is a matter of replacing the rule of a petty-bourgeois apparatus with the rule of the working class itself. Changes in the economic structure would not be so profound, and that is why we characterize such a change as a *political*, as contrasted to a *social* revolution."

The RT's essentially correct analysis of the Cuban Revolution cut through many of the theoretical difficulties that had surrounded the post-war social transformations. Moreover, the RT correctly generalized its criticisms of the SWP leadership's capitulation to Castro, and linked them to the whole adaptationist methodology which destroyed the Fourth International. In its 1962 founding document, the RT wrote:

"Pabloism is essentially a revisionist current within the Trotskyist movement internationally which has lost a revolutionary world perspective during the post-war period of capitalist boom and the subsequent relative inactivity of the working class in the advanced countries. The Pabloites tend to replace the role of the working class and its organized vanguard—that is, the world



PARIS MATCH

Cuban troops smashed CIA-backed Bay of Pigs invasion

Trotskyist movement—with other forces which seem to offer greater chances of success."

—"In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective"

The RT defended the centrality of the subjective factor—and the importance of the struggle for the Trotskyist program against those who saw the struggle for world revolution as a semi-automatic unfolding objective "process." In this the RT carried forward the positive aspects of the SWP leadership's earlier struggle against Pabloist liquidationism, and ensured the *political* continuity of the struggle of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International under Trotsky. When the RT cadres were bureaucratically expelled from the SWP in 1963, they launched the Spartacist League (SL) which uniquely upheld the heritage of authentic Trotskyism for the next decade and a half, before its qualitative degeneration into the pseudo-Trotskyist obedience cult it is today.

Workers Power's 'Degenerated Revolution'

The core of the British Workers Power group emerged from the British International Socialists led by Tony Cliff in the mid-1970s. Cliff's group had been expelled from the Fourth International in the early 1950s for its cowardly refusal to defend North Korea against U.S. imperialism. Workers Power retained a version of the IS's nonsensical "state capitalist" analysis of the USSR and the deformed workers' states for some years after leaving the Cliffites. In the early 1980s it began to distance itself from this position, and began projecting itself as a representative of authentic Trotskyism.

Most of the major international claimants to the tradition of Trotskyism at the time (e.g., groups associated with Ernest Mandel, Gerry Healy or Pierre Lambert) could be easily dismissed politically, but the Revolutionary Tendency (and its successor, the Spartacist League) had to be taken more seriously. The British Spartacist operation, whose cadres were already shell-shocked by several years of brutal and apolitical purges, exerted little appeal. Yet, if the RT alone had been essentially correct on the difficult political questions that had bedeviled post-war Trotskyism, then the legitimacy of Workers Power's claim to have uniquely reestablished an authentically Trotskyist tendency, and therefore its historical justification for existence, would be called into



Castro and Soviet sponsor, Nikita Khrushchev

question.

In the early 1980s Workers Power devoted considerable resources to an internal re-examination of the history of the Russian question and the Trotskyist movement. The fruit of this work was the publication in 1982 of a lengthy pamphlet entitled *The Degenerated Revolution*. This was an attempt to analyze the whole phenomenon of Stalinism, particularly the post-war social overturns, and to settle accounts with WP's previous "state capitalist" analysis.

For a small group it was an ambitious undertaking, and much of the history of the post-war period was competently sketched. But the tract's opaque and confusionist theoretical generalizations suggest that the group's leadership was as concerned that Workers Power's insights be original and unique as anything else.

The authors, who had for years mistaken the bureaucratized workers' states for capitalist ones, boldly claimed to be the first people to understand the whole problem of the post-war property transformations. "The plain truth is that the elements of the shattered Trotskyist tradition have never fully understood the real nature of the Stalinist regimes" intoned the WP theoreticians. While they themselves only recently discovered that Cliff's state capitalist theory was "wrong, and that Trotsky's analysis provided a correct alternative" they went on to add: "Correct, but not fully developed...."

In "developing" Trotsky's analysis, WP was particularly concerned to demonstrate that all previous attempts to deal with the question, particularly those of the RT, were inadequate. To launch *The Degenerated Revolution* in 1982, Workers Power invited the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) to participate in a public debate. But the SL/B, itself already badly degenerated, chose to avoid a political confrontation and instead staged a stupid macho provocation (see *Spartacist Britain*, December 1982). This let Workers Power's leaders off the hook politically and reinforced the impression among their fol-

lowers that their critique of the RT's position was unsailable.

LRCI's Critique of the RT on Cuba

In his recent polemic against us Keith Harvey purports to trace the root of IBT errors on the Russian question to the RT/SL's position on Cuba:

"In attempting to analyse the Cuban Revolution the leaders of the Spartacists developed the idea that the Castro bonapartist regime in 1959 and 1960 did not defend either capitalism or any other set of property relations. Rather it was a petit-bourgeois government that was uncommitted to the defence of either...until Castro finally jumped into the camp of Stalinism under the hostile pressure of the USA and turned Cuba into a deformed workers' state."


—*Trotskyist International*, No. 11, May 1993

The LRCI rejects such notions, and argues that a bonapartist petty-bourgeois regime like that of Castroists in 1959-60 "can oscillate under the pressure of more fundamental forces between defending first one and later a different set of property relations..." (*Ibid.*)

We shall come back to the Kautskyist implications of imagining that states can "oscillate" between defending the interests of one social class and another. For the moment we wish to consider the LRCI's charge that our supposed methodological error of "attribut[ing] the class character of the state to the subjective intentions of the office holders." This same criticism is made in *The Degenerated Revolution*, where Workers Power asserts that those who argue that "a state is defined as 'armed bodies of men dedicated to defending a particular property form'" have an "idealist notion of the relationship between property relations and the state machine."

Against such "idealism" WP sagely pronounces that, "We judge the class nature of a state by its actions, not by the 'dedication' of the individuals who make up its apparatus." The question is not one of the personal dedi-

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cation of individual functionaries to the performance of their duties, but the *connection of the apparatus of repression* to the interests of a particular social class, i.e., to the defense of a particular set of property relations. This can only be assessed on the basis of its actions. It is simply an empirical fact that in Cuba for almost two years the Castroite July 26 Movement possessed a monopoly of political and military power, but its *actions* demonstrated that it was neither committed to defending private property nor to expropriating it.

The petty-bourgeois Castroist apparatus, after first establishing a monopoly of armed force, proceeded to organize the administration of governmental functions on the national, regional and municipal level. The bourgeoisie was politically and militarily, but not economically, expropriated. Prior to the massive expropriation of foreign and domestic capital in the autumn of 1960, the July 26 Movement was not definitively committed either to a system of private or collectivized property. The Castroite apparatus at this point was only "committed" to the defense of its political monopoly and could not therefore be considered to constitute a state in the Marxist sense, i.e., an armed body defending a particular form of property.

Trotsky described the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR as a petty-bourgeois caste which grew up within the administrative apparatus of the besieged workers' state and appropriated the role of "gendarme." In Cuba, the Castroist bureaucracy played the role of "gendarme," but it existed *before* the creation of the collectivized economy, and indeed was instrumental in creating it. The July 26 Movement originated as a radical nationalist movement that aspired to rid Cuba of the corrupt, neo-colonial Batista regime and open the road for the free development of the patriotic bourgeoisie. In 1959-60, as the Castroists came into increasingly sharp conflict with the Cuban bourgeoisie and their U.S. godfathers, the July 26 Movement split, and a right wing, led by Hubert Matos, went over to the imperialists. In the end, the Castro leadership refused to knuckle under to Washington and opted instead for collectivizing the economy.

The ability of the July 26 Movement to make such a choice was conditioned by a number of factors: the destruction of Batista's state apparatus, the absence of the working class as an independent political factor, and the existence of the bureaucratized Soviet workers' state which was willing and able to provide military and economic support.

LRCI on Cuban Revolution: 'Predominantly Counter-revolutionary'

According to Workers Power, when the Castroists took power they formed a "popular front" which defended capitalism while presiding over a "nine-month period of dual power." The "fragmentation of state power" in this period "ran through the army *and* the J26M itself." But it is a mistake to talk of "dual power" in Cuba in 1959. The period in which there was a sort of "dual power" ended when the guerrilla army marched



SOVPHOTO

'The state is an organ of the rule of a definite class': Lenin

triumphantly into Havana on New Year's Eve. The July 26 Movement was riven with internal contradictions, but its military and political hegemony was undisputed. There was no dual power in society.

According to Workers Power's chronology, by "November 1959, the popular front had been ended, along with the duality of power." At this point the LRCI claim that the Castroists established a "*bourgeois workers' and peasants' government*" which, in turn, was somehow transmogrified in the summer of 1960 into a "*bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government*" which proceeded to carry out large-scale expropriations of the capitalists. Finally, "From the implementation of the first Five Year Plan in 1962, we can speak of the creation of a degenerate workers' state in Cuba." Their conclusion is that "Castro, who in 1959 was a bonaparte for the enfeebled Cuban bourgeoisie was, by 1962, a bonaparte 'for' the politically expropriated Cuban working class."

Workers Power presented this confused and arbitrary schema as an important contribution to Marxist theory. In fact it contains a profound *revision* of the Marxist understanding of the state as an instrument of coercion used by one class against another. According to the LRCI, in January 1959 Castro headed a Cuban "state" which "defended capitalism," yet which, over the next several years, gradually evolved into a (deformed) workers' state. This is the background to Keith Harvey's doubletalk about how:

"It is well within the Marxist understanding of Bonapartism to recognise that a petit-bourgeois regime can oscillate under the pressure of more fundamental forces between defending first one and later a different set of property relations. It does not mean that the governmental regime becomes detached from the state which it administers. The class character of the state is defined as always by whatever social form of property exists and is actually being defended by bodies of armed men and women."

Clear as mud. You see, we can have "a petit-bourgeois regime" which oscillates between classes without ever becoming "detached from the state which it administers." Harvey thinks the "class character of the state" in the case of such oscillations can be determined by the activity of such a regime at any given instant—when it acts for the capitalists, it is a capitalist state, but, if it takes some action that favors working people, it becomes a workers' state. The kind of "Marxism" that "understands" such notions is called Kautskyism.

Lenin attacked the idea that a bourgeois state can be transformed into an instrument to serve the interests of the oppressed:

"That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which *cannot* be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it), is something the petty-bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand."

—*State and Revolution*

Lenin categorically rejected the idea that an oscillating petty-bourgeois regime (or anything else) can turn a capitalist state into an instrument for social revolution:

"Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the *old* state machine, but in this class *smashing* this machine and commanding, governing with the aid of a *new* machine. Kautsky slurs over this *basic* idea of Marxism, or he had utterly failed to understand it."

The LRCI position on Cuba slurs over this same basic idea. The historic position developed by the RT/SL, which we defend, is the only way in which the genesis of the Cuban deformed workers' state can be explained without doing violence to either the actual historical events or the Marxist understanding of the state as an organ of class rule.

Where the Pabloists identified the Cuban Revolution with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the RT recognized that although the Castroists expropriated the bourgeoisie, the bureaucratic regime they established was an obstacle to the further development of the revolution, and had to be removed through workers' political revolution. At the same time, the RT recognized that the destruction of capitalism in Cuba, China and Vietnam represented historic gains for the international working class *despite* the bureaucratic deformations of the Stalinist regimes that came to power.

The LRCI draws precisely the opposite conclusion. The Workers Power pamphlet baldly asserts: "Whilst gains were made for and by the working class...*the Cuban overturn had a predominantly counter-revolutionary character*" (emphasis added). This echoes the arguments of Tony Cliff and other pseudo-Marxists who renounced the social content of the anti-capitalist overturns because they objected to the character of the bureaucratic Stalinist political regimes that issued from them.

While in theory defending collectivized property, the LRCI has repeatedly in practice ascribed a progressive dynamic to the champions of capitalist restoration, from Polish Solidarnosc in 1981, to the movement for capitalist reunification in East Germany, to Boris Yeltsin's rabble in Moscow in 1991. If some gang of pro-imperialist

gusanos in Havana were to attempt to oust the Castroists and reverse the results of what Workers Power considers a "predominantly counter-revolutionary" social revolution, we suppose that the LRCI will once again throw its support to the forces of capitalist restoration. In that case we will find ourselves, once again, on the opposite side of the barricades from the LRCI and the rest of the centrists and social democrats who inhabit the Third Camp.

The core of the RT's position on the Cuban Revolution is as clear and logically compelling today as it was three decades ago. Fidel Castro led a victorious peasant-based guerrilla insurrection which, in the absence of the working class as an independent political factor, smashed capitalist property relations and established a society modeled on the degenerated Soviet workers' state. The lesson of Cuba is, as the revolutionary Spartacist League stated in 1966, that:

"the petty-bourgeois peasantry, under the most *favorable* historic circumstances conceivable could achieve no third road, neither capitalist, nor working class. Instead all that has come out of China and Cuba was a state of the same order as that issuing out of the political counter-revolution of Stalin in the Soviet Union, the degeneration of October. That is why we are led to define states such as these as *deformed workers states*. And the experience since the Second World War, properly understood, offers not a basis for revisionist turning away from the perspective and necessity of revolutionary working-class power, but rather it is a great vindication of Marxian theory and conclusions under new and not previously expected circumstances."

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From Lebanon to Bosnia

The Robertson School of Falsification

The 2 July 1993 issue of *Workers Vanguard* (WV) carried a letter from an "active" Spartacist League (SL) supporter opposed to Serbian defensism in the event of an imperialist intervention in the Balkans. The author, identified as Jeff S., pointed out that defending Serbia contradicts the SL's attitude in 1983 during the American military intervention into the communalist conflicts in Lebanon. When the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut was destroyed by a Muslim truck bomb, the SL labeled this an indefensible act, and raised the social-patriotic call for saving the survivors. This flinch was rationalized with a barrage of double-talk about how Marxists are, in general, opposed to social violence and how, in any case, communists could support no side in the communalist conflict underway. A good chunk of the SL's supporters, including Jeff S., were convinced by these arguments.

The situation in the Balkans today is closely analogous to that in Lebanon a decade ago. In both cases Marxists support no side in the fratricidal communalist warfare, while defending *any* faction against imperialist troops. When Bill Clinton was threatening military intervention against the Serbs last spring, a *New York Times* editorial advised him not to, and drew attention to the parallel with Lebanon:

"Senator Ernest F. Hollings of South Carolina made a telling point, too. The Reagan Administration's eagerness to bomb the Bekka Valley and inject marines into the chaos of Lebanon led to a disastrous loss of life."

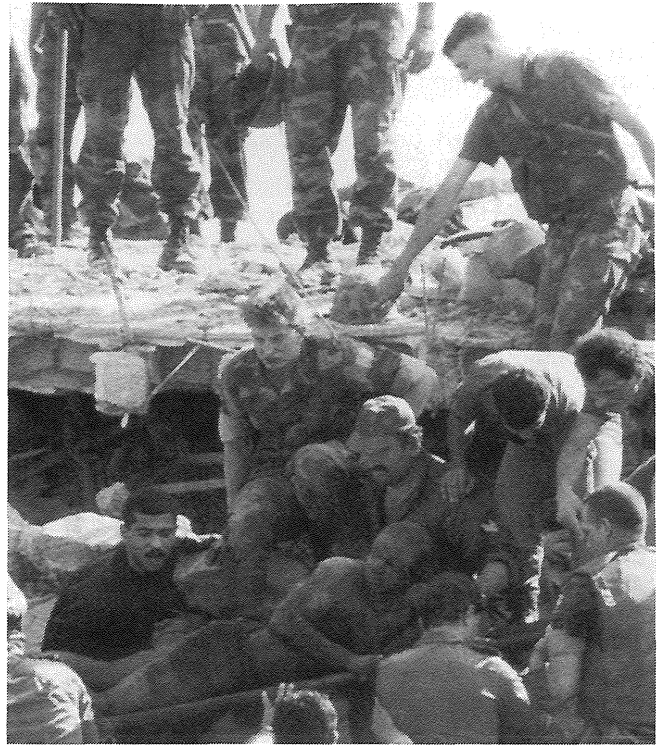
—*New York Times*, 29 April 1993

Jeff S. is quite right that there is no reason for revolutionaries to take a different line today in Bosnia than a decade ago in the Levant. But he does not understand that the SL's position on Reagan's Lebanon disaster was a deliberate opportunist adaptation to the perceived exigencies of the moment. The SL leadership feared that defending the devastating blow struck against the American military in Lebanon might get them into trouble with the Reaganites. So instead they echoed the Democratic Party line and called for getting the marines out "alive."

The SL leadership's disingenuous response to the letter of this miseducated comrade is a cynical mix of obfuscation and outright falsification. Asserting that any comparison of the conflicts in the Levant and the Balkans is a "misapplied historical analogy" WV replies:

"The few hundred U.S. Marines sent to 'guard' the Beirut airport hardly constituted imperialist military intervention in Lebanon's communalist warfare, nor was the fighting in Lebanon at that time primarily a civil war."

—WV, 2 July 1993



ELI REED—MAGNUM

U.S. Marines picking up the pieces: Beirut 1983

Everything is wrong here. Even a "few hundred" U.S. gendarmes setting up a military base in a Third World country constitute an "imperialist military intervention." However, the American military presence was in fact much larger, *as WV itself wrote at the time!* A photo caption in the 23 September 1983 issue (published only weeks before the bombing) described the American intervention in Beirut as the "Biggest display of U.S. combat firepower since Vietnam," while the accompanying article explained:

"...the U.S. is now committed to defending the Phalangist gangsters with an additional 2,000 troops drawn from the American fleet in the Indian Ocean, a total of 14,000 Marines both on shore and off with 12 warships standing off the coast and 100 warplanes."

So much for the claim that only "a few hundred" marines were involved.

The claim that the fighting in Lebanon, at the point the marines were sent in, was not "primarily a civil war," is also false. The marines were initially sent in to remove the PLO fighters. They arrived on 25 August 1982 and left 21 days later on 10 September. In the weeks that followed, the Christian "president" of Lebanon,

Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated, the Israelis moved into West Beirut and the Phalangists carried out the massacres of thousands of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. On 29 September the marines reentered Beirut and took up positions at the airport. At this time the only serious fighting was between the Phalangist "Lebanese Forces" headed by Amin Gemayel, who assumed the title of president, and the various Muslim militias, principally the Druze (see: *Peacekeepers At War*, Michael Petit).

In seeking to "explain" retroactively its 1983 policy, *WV* (2 July 1993) asserted that, "The Marines were a token force sent in to legitimize the *Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon*" (emphasis in original). The article continued:

"Yet the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982 is a quite good analogy to the recently threatened U.S./NATO military intervention into Bosnia. For the Israelis did intervene in support of one of the contending factions in the interminable communalist bloodletting, installing the Gemayel clan of the Christian Maronites as a puppet government in Beirut."

This attempt to minimize the role of the marines, to depict them as a mere "token force," fits with the attempt to falsify the size of the contingent. But it does not fit with the facts. The 15 October 1982 *WV* accurately described the role of the U.S. forces: "They are there to shore up the new Gemayel regime which is based on the Phalange killers who carried out the Sabra and Shatila massacre." The article also made the point that:

"By sending in the Marines on an open-ended mission in the Near East, Reagan has brazenly reasserted U.S. imperialism's role as world gendarme....The U.S. forces in Lebanon are a beachhead for large-scale military intervention in the region...."

A year later, the 23 September 1983 issue of *WV* expanded on this theme and reported that U.S. secretary of state Alexander Haig saw the opening in Lebanon as:

"... 'a great strategic opportunity' for 'redrawing a new political map for the region.' Lebanon was going to become the beachhead for Pax Americana in the Near East. The U.S. thought it could rush in, find the most unsavory and reactionary gangster among the competing feudalist chieftains, and create a viable puppet government. The Gemayel clan was supposed to be the Pahlavi dynasty [U.S. client regime in Iran] of Lebanon."

The article went on to quote a *New York Times* report that the Reagan administration "'saw the survival of the [Gemayel] Government as essential to American interests, even if this meant moving more American forces into the region.'" *Workers Vanguard* further observed that:

"The Pentagon has abandoned the pretense that U.S. forces fire only when fired upon. A few days ago U.S. warships shelled positions deep in Syrian-controlled territory in retaliation for anti-Phalange forces bombarding the defense ministry in Beirut. U.S. forces are now routinely providing artillery cover for the Lebanese army....

"The U.S. is now much more heavily involved militarily in Lebanon than in Central America both in the number of troops and the direct role they play. And that role is rapidly expanding."

Pulitzer prize winner Thomas L. Friedman reported that:


"Early on the morning of September 19 [1983], the guided missile cruisers *Virginia*, *John Rodgers*, and *Bowen* and the destroyer *Radford* fired 360 5-inch shells at the Druse-Syrian-Palestinian forces, to take the pressure off the beleaguered Lebanese troops."

—*From Beirut to Jerusalem*

A few short weeks later, when one of the "anti-Phalange forces" hit back and leveled the marine barracks, the U.S. military lost more men than they had on any day since the Viet Cong's 1968 Tet offensive. The SL leadership suddenly began calling for getting the survivors out "alive." Today that social-patriotic flinch is rationalized with a string of absurd lies: 1) there were hardly any troops there, 2) they "hardly constituted imperialist military intervention" because they were merely "guarding" an airport, and 3) the U.S. was not intervening "in support of one of the contending factions." Every one of these falsehoods is contradicted by the reports printed at the time in *WV* itself!

Just as revolutionaries today have a duty to oppose any imperialist intervention in the Balkans or Somalia, a decade ago we had a duty to oppose the imperialist intervention in Beirut. Former SL members in New Zealand (who later helped launch the Permanent Revolution Group, the New Zealand section of the International Bolshevik Tendency [IBT]) wrote an open letter denouncing the SL's flinch. The "External Tendency of the iSt," the progenitor of the IBT's North American section, made parallel criticisms and engaged the SL leadership in a series of polemical exchanges on the question. This debate is reprinted in its entirety in our *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 2. Comrade Jeff S. (and others who mistake the contemporary SL for a revolutionary organization) should ask themselves why, a decade after the event, *WV* can only defend its 1983 position on Beirut through wholesale falsification. ■

TROTSKYIST BULLETIN No. 2



Marxism vs. Social-Patriotism

In October 1983, when the US Marine barracks in Beirut was blown up, the Spartacist League/US immediately called for saving the survivors. The External Tendency of the iSt labeled this as social-patriotic cowardice.

External Tendency of the iSt

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CWG: Little League Mensheviks

In the spring of 1993, another set of initials was added to the alphabet soup of ostensibly Trotskyist organizations in North America when the Communist Workers Group (CWG) announced its debut. The CWG traces its origins to a dispute within the Bay Area Bolshevik Tendency (BAPT). In the premier issue of *Revolutionary Theory* (which features a view of earth from outer space on its cover), the CWG announces that, "the IBT [International Bolshevik Tendency] now suffers from an organizational malaise qualitatively similar to that of the Spartacist League [SL]." It would be unavailing, and certainly unnecessary, to respond to the advent of the CWG as the SL responded to us, i.e., hysterically. Needless to say, we reject the CWG's allegations, and note that they are long on accusations but short on substantiation.

One of the strands of the BAPT dispute was the dissatisfaction of two leading Bay Area comrades—Fred Riker and Gerald Smith—with the perspective of a polemical press. This difference, which they unsuccessfully argued for at two conferences, was itself a reflection of their disappointment with the difficulties of making progress in the current reactionary period. Riker, who initially joined the Trotskyist movement in 1963, had announced internally his intention to retire from organized politics on the thirtieth anniversary of that event. Smith remains active, but over time his desire to break out of isolation led him to opportunist experiments with trimming bits and pieces of the Trotskyist program.

These comrades also evinced a growing unease over the BT's fusions with the Gruppe IV. Internationale (Germany) and the Permanent Revolution Group (New Zealand). They apparently feared that the recent international fusions would diminish their influence. Although Smith was a member of our International Executive Committee (IEC), he and Riker became increasingly distant from our leadership collective, and participated less and less in the internal political life of the IBT. Instead they turned their attention to production of a local publication—*1917 West*—in the Bay Area.

The IBT leadership agreed to let the branch publish an experimental issue of their projected paper, subject to the political and financial control of our International Secretariat (IS). Our two dissidents found this normal democratic-centralist procedure intolerable. Smith deliberately eliminated substantive political changes made by the IS in an article. Riker, with Smith's support, defied a directive from the IS to submit a proposal on the financing and production methods of the magazine, and made unauthorized expenditures of organizational funds to print it.

When called to account for these actions, Smith and Riker defended their breaches of organizational discipline by stating, in effect, that they were prepared to follow only those directives that they found agreeable. Their declaration of local autonomy was diametrically

opposed to democratic centralism—the guiding principle of Leninist organization. The main tenet of democratic centralism is the subordination in action of the minority to the majority. Individuals or groups may advocate whatever views and positions they wish, and seek to win a majority for them. But once the membership has considered all sides of an issue, and decided upon a course of collective action, minorities must act in accordance with that decision regardless of their views. Between national and international conferences, the majority is represented by a democratically elected leadership, with full authority to make decisions for the group. It was this fundamental principle that Smith and Riker rejected.

After several failed attempts to persuade Riker and Smith to consider the liquidationist implications of their position, the IBT executive decided that the BAPT, under their "leadership," was no longer a viable branch. The BAPT was therefore reduced to the status of an Organizing Committee (OC), reporting directly and regularly to the leadership. This decision caused Riker to resign. Smith remained a nominal member for another several months, but became more and more estranged from our politics and given to explosions of temper.

Opportunist tendencies were evident in Smith's activities throughout the period of the dispute over *1917 West*. The BAPT had been active in Copwatch, a loosely organized Berkeley group aimed at combatting police brutality. Copwatch was composed mainly of anarchists and liberals. Although we do not share their worldview, we are also opposed to police brutality, and can participate in such single-issue groups in good faith, provided we are permitted full freedom to advocate our revolutionary program. Smith, however, showed a clear tendency to capitulate politically to liberal attitudes in Copwatch. Thus he submitted an article to the *Copwatch Report* containing a rewrite of our statement on the 1992 Los Angeles upheavals, in which he "edited" out every mention of socialism, Marxism and the need for a vanguard party. We were hardly surprised therefore to read Smith quoted by the Communist Party's West Coast paper, *People's Weekly World*, as saying, on behalf of Copwatch, that "We are not anti-police."

While Riker's and Smith's antics won them not a single supporter within the IBT, they found support among elements of our periphery. These were individuals who professed to support the IBT politically, but, for one reason or another, chose not to include themselves among its members. These sympathizers concluded that Smith and Riker had been the first victims of bureaucratic and hyper-centralist tendencies within the IBT. They then formed themselves into a grouplet called the Working Committee (WC), and, assuring us of their full programmatic agreement with the IBT, collectively applied for membership.

We conducted a brief correspondence with the WC in which their attitude toward the BAPT fight figured

prominently. The WC seemed to think our demand that they give a political accounting of themselves was in itself proof of our degeneration, and denied that democratic centralism was the main issue in the BABT dispute. This indicated to us that the WC's assurances of programmatic agreement could not be taken seriously. We therefore rejected their application, noting that "there is little to be gained—and much to be lost in terms of time and energy—by pursuing these differences inside a common organization." Shortly thereafter, the WC surfaced, calling itself the Communist Workers Group. Smith immediately joined the newly founded CWG, while Riker drifted into political retirement.

The CWG immediately published a selection of materials from our struggle against Smith and Riker's low-level Menshevism under the title, *Bureaucratic Centralism in the International Bolshevik Tendency*. Their voluminous compilation allows a reader to grasp the general outline of the dispute, although, in an attempt to put Riker and Smith in a better light, it omits several key items (e.g., the IS directive they chose to ignore). Our principal opponents indicated a certain disappointment that there were not more "juicy" bits. The New Zealand Workers Power group asserted that the whole business was somehow the result of our "sectarian and pro-stalinist politics" (*Workers Power* [NZ], August 1993). They complained (with considerable justification) that the CWG's publication was "extremely tedious" and provided the following summary:

"Basically they [BABT dissidents] wanted to publish their own publication, '1917 West', without the IBT/International Secretariat controlling it. A minor organisational difference became the pretext for the split."

The gentle souls who run the Spartacist League have taken great interest in our recent contretemps, and have reprinted the CWG pamphlet as the eighth in their *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League* series (half of which feature the IBT). The SL's introduction is a typical specimen of their polemics against us: a composite of bile, bombast and prevarication. They characterize the materials they reprint as "apolitical, personalist and grotesque," which "we nonetheless thought...could be instructive to others." We would not suggest that our internal dispute with two demoralized individuals was a high point in the history of the Marxist movement, but even if the issues were posed at a low level, they were no less clear. This is evident in the SL's own sketch of the

major issue in the fight:

"Riker was a lead element of the BT opposition in the Bay Area which went into revolt over the question of producing their own local journal *1917 West*. Met with resistance from the BT's 'International Secretariat,' Riker simply took the money, ran to the printers and had his newspaper run off."

The only charge worth answering in the SL's screed is that we put up with Smith and Riker for too long:

"Even Smith and Riker's supporters recognize them as pigs. The 'defense' is that the leadership never minded...until the *1917 West* power struggle erupted."

In fact the behavior of these ex-comrades (both of whom made valuable contributions to building the BT) had been a subject of considerable attention over the years. For the SL, which had its last factional struggle in 1968, the idea of attempting to struggle with comrades to try to change their behavior may seem peculiar. Certainly our organizational methods stand in marked contrast to those of James Robertson, the SL's top banana, who has little difficulty purging anyone who rubs him the wrong way from the ranks of his servile personalist cult.

The Regime Question Revisited

We do not wish to exaggerate the importance of this fight. It originated out of frustration and demoralization which found expression in a great deal of pettiness and personalism. But it was not entirely without political significance. When all incidentals are left aside, the Riker/Smith opposition, and the new organization it has spawned, have serious differences with the IBT. First, Riker and Smith were highly uncomfortable with democratic centralism. As we noted in our letter of 17 April 1993 breaking off discussions with the WC:

"In the BABT fight...we were compelled to defend democratic centralism against an internal opposition that attacked its centralist component, i.e., the obligation of a minority to abide by the decisions of the majority and its elected representatives."

Second, there was a pattern of programmatic departures (most of which are deliberately omitted from the CWG's compilation) in a rightist, opportunist direction. These were products of a desire to find a shortcut to recruitment through rounding off the hard edges of the Trotskyist program.

In social-democratic organizations, the politics of the rank-and-file is a matter of indifference to the leadership. Individual members can be "loony leftists" if they like, so long as the party's press and parliamentary wing (if it exists) continue to pursue a slavishly reformist course, dictated by a small group of bureaucrats at the top. In a democratic-centralist organization, on the other hand, the political line of the organization is determined by majority rule. Individual members are greatly concerned that the correct political line be adopted because they must defend it in public. Democratic centralism, in short, forces members to argue their positions internally.

On the external side, polemics against other currents in the left are necessary for the development of a serious

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cadre organization. If an organization finds that it is in substantial agreement with another grouping, it is necessary to unite. On the other hand, if the politics of a "Marxist" formation are seriously flawed, it is necessary to point this out in order to correct it, or win over a section of the supporters of the organization in question, or at least to make clear to everyone exactly where one stands.

Those who wish to avoid polemical struggle tend to de-emphasize what is programmatically sound in the long run, in favor of what is personally and politically convenient in the short run. This is called opportunism. What is most convenient, especially in a reactionary period like the present, typically involves accommodation to the existing social and political order. The road of least resistance inevitably leads to the right.

We have strong reason to believe that this is the path the comrades of the Communist Workers Group have embarked upon. The initial issue of their *Revolutionary Theory* is critical of our comment that:

"the road to human liberation lies only through consciousness....The role of the Leninist vanguard is to develop and struggle for the revolutionary program against the myriad forms of pseudo-socialist false consciousness...."

The elipse in the middle of the quotation marks the omission of the following sentence: "This is what Marx meant when he said that the working class must emancipate itself—it cannot be freed by some group of leaders, however well-intentioned and sincere." In a particularly comical touch, the CWG equates the Leninist emphasis on the necessity of political struggle to transform the "class in itself" into the "class for itself," (i.e., the struggle for socialist consciousness) with the idealism of the Young Hegelians which Marx and Engels ridicule in *The German Ideology*. This sophomoric confusion of Leninism and idealism provides a hint as to the CWG's political direction.

It seems, from the first issue of its "popular" journal, *The Worker*, that the CWG does not intend to devote a lot of time to arguing with opponents on the left. By avoiding the arcane "sectarian" squabbles that divide small leftist groups from one another (over the Russian, black and party questions, for instance); by emphasizing issues of greater momentary popular interest over those of greater intrinsic political importance, the CWG may hope to reap quick membership dividends. But many leftist organizations have gone this route before. The results are rarely what they expect. Such organizations either fall apart due to disappointment when the anticipated pay-off fails to materialize, or, if they meet with some initial success, wind up adapting to the politics of the milieu from which they recruit. Organizations constructed in this fashion are built on sand.

The CWG is a new group. Many of the tendencies that we discern from our close familiarity with its members are still only tendencies. At this relatively early stage they have not yet clearly manifested themselves in the group's public work. But the early signs are there. We can only advise anyone skeptical of our ability to predict the CWG's trajectory to stay tuned. ■

Free Mordechai Vanunu!



On 30 September 1993 the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) participated in a demonstration in front of the Israeli consulate in Toronto, demanding the release of Mordechai Vanunu. Vanunu has spent the last seven years in jail for the "crime" of revealing the extent of the Zionist nuclear arsenal. The demonstration, marking the anniversary of Vanunu's imprisonment, occurred a few weeks after representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Israeli state signed a "peace" agreement, an event alluded to by a number of speakers. A speaker for the BT made the following remarks to the rally:

The Bolshevik Tendency joins with you in demanding the immediate, unconditional release of Mordechai Vanunu who, for the past seven years, has been the prisoner of the Zionist state of Israel. Mordechai Vanunu is no criminal. He was jailed for acting in the interests of all the workers and oppressed peoples of the Middle East, both Jewish and Arab, as well as in the interests of working people around the world. He is a victim of capitalist injustice, and one of the many victims of Zionist state repression.

Of course the main historical victim of the Israeli state has been the Palestinian people who were forcibly driven from their homes and scattered about the region more than forty years ago. The so-called 'peace plan' signed a few weeks ago is a travesty of justice and represents a new betrayal of Palestinian national rights.

On this day, as we honor Mordechai Vanunu and call for the release from jail of this heroic man, we of the Bolshevik Tendency remember that peace and justice for the Palestinians and all others oppressed by the Israeli state can only come through working-class unity and a united revolutionary struggle to explode the Zionist citadel from within.

NZ Socialist Students' Conference



1017 PHOTO

More than 60 leftists from around New Zealand gathered in Wellington for the country's second annual Socialist Students' Conference in mid-May 1993. The event was organized by the Bolshevik Club, the campus group affiliated to the Permanent Revolution Group (PRG), New Zealand section of the International Bolshevik Tendency. It featured three days of lively discussion and debate, and was one of the largest and most representative gatherings of the New Zealand far left for several years.

In addition to many unaffiliated socialists, there was a sizeable contingent from Workers Power (New Zealand/Aotearoa), an affiliate of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. Also present were representatives from the Communist Party of New Zealand, until recently an Albanian-line Stalinist formation that is now moving in a social-democratic direction. Members from the Communist League, adherents of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, also attended.

Conference sessions addressed such issues as the situation of South Africa's black working class, the rise of fascism in Europe and the oppression of women. However, the central question discussed was the collapse of Stalinism and the victory of counterrevolution in the former Soviet bloc. Our comrades' hard defensive position provided a focus for sharp debate.

Most of those who attended the conference found it enlightening and educational. While there were no dramatic shifts in the immediate political terrain (no splits or fusions were announced), the exchanges contributed to raising the level of debate within the left. The conference demonstrated the value of the left coming together,

not to paper over differences with ambiguous "unity" doubletalk, but to engage in the kind of frank and open programmatic confrontation and political struggle which sharpens, rather than blurs, the line of demarcation between Marxism and revisionism. Such a process can make an important contribution to the education and development of revolutionary cadres and the creation of a vanguard for the working class. It is an example worth emulating. ■



The Bolshevik, journal of the Permanent Revolution Group U.S. \$1/issue

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Pornography...

continued from page 32

the range of images of sexual behaviour which are available in this society. In recent decades there has been a tendency in most advanced capitalist countries for the dominance of the traditional nuclear family—the central institution in the oppression of women—to be undermined; the single parent family, for example, usually with a woman at its head, is becoming increasingly common, as are other non-traditional forms. The National Government's anti-porn bill is one part of the state's drive to shore up the male-dominated nuclear family and the ideology which surrounds it as crucial props to the capitalist system.

In addition to its ideological function, this bill will be an instrument of abuse and harassment, like the drug laws. The bill includes provisions for searches where there are "reasonable grounds" to believe there is "objectionable" material on the premises, and for conviction, even if the material is not classified as "objectionable" until *after* it has been found by the police. And it will be no defence if you "had no knowledge or no reasonable cause to believe that the publication to which the charge relates was objectionable"!

So, what is "objectionable"? The bill defines the word as meaning any material which "deals with matters of sex, horror, crime, cruelty, or violence in such a manner that...is likely to be injurious to the public good." And in deciding whether, for example, a sex video is likely to be "injurious to the public good" the Classification Office is required to take into account such entirely subjective matters as whether a publication "degrades or dehumanises any person."

New Bill to be Prop for Women's Oppression

The Chief Censor, the Deputy Chief Censor, and the members of the Board of Review will all be appointed by the Minister of Internal Affairs, acting with the concurrence of the Minister of Women's Affairs and the Minister of Justice. In the present government the Minister of Internal Affairs is the anti-gay, anti-abortion fanatic, Graeme Lee; the Minister of Women's Affairs is the benefit-gouger Jenny Shipley herself; and the Minister of Justice is the pretentious patrician snob, Doug Graham. There is not much question that the appointments *they* make will be tailored to suit the political requirements of the government of the time, the state and the ruling class.

The function of the state is to make sure that the capitalist system functions for the benefit of the bosses. The restrictive nuclear family unit, dominated by the husband, is vital to that functioning. Capitalism needs the family to provide domestic services and childcare, to train people to live and work within the capitalist system, and to form an ideological environment in which people see capitalism and the ways in which it works as "normal" or "natural."



MARK PERLSTEIN—PICTURE GROUP

Anti-porn bigots protest *Penthouse* and *Playboy*

The central purpose of this legislation is to strengthen the power of the state to determine what printed and audio-visual representations of sexuality we are allowed to see. But in its appropriation of further power to control what we read and see about sex, the state is extending its power to reinforce the sexual stereotypes which help hold the family system together. This is bound to *increase* oppression, both of women and of anyone whose sexuality differs from the idealised family-centred norms. So with this new legislation the government doesn't intend to protect *women*; the government intends to protect the *family*.

Anti-pornography legislation is simply *not a reform*, not a concession. The point is not that it doesn't go far enough—which is what Women Against Pornography and Patricia Bartlett's anti-sex crusaders all believe—it's that it goes in the wrong direction completely. It does not give us more power over our lives, it takes power away from us and gives it to the reactionary capitalist state.

Feminists Ally with Bartlett's Moral Right

Contrary to the beliefs of many feminists, there is nothing inherently progressive about the social and political action of women. In this society women have traditionally been assigned the role of the custodians of "moral standards," of "God's police." After the great



H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS

1950s TV family: women's oppression idealized

strikes of the 1890s women played an important role in the service of capitalism in taming a wild colonial working class.

The "Women's Christian Temperance Union", for example, campaigned for women's right to vote, but also campaigned for years against liquor. Only the votes of the troops in Britain prevented prohibition in 1919. The WCTU actually succeeded in establishing many dry areas, and also six o'clock closing of pubs, which was a central feature of New Zealand social life until 1967. Many women, with very few choices in sight, were persuaded that they had an interest in using the state to protect the family from the evils of the local pub.

The Christian-moralist Patricia Bartlett clearly comes out of this tradition—but so also does the *feminist*-moralist Women Against Pornography. The New Zealand women's movement has always had a right wing, and today that right wing is WAP. The latter's alliance with the mainstream political right is disturbing and ironic, for it puts feminists into bed with those who oppose abortion, birth control, childcare, homosexuality and solo-parenthood.

WAP and 'Correct' Sex

WAP wants to limit portrayals of sexual activity to what it calls "erotica": clean, tender and soft-focus. Some of WAP's statements have suggested that what they consider to be "acceptable" sexual material should neither involve men nor be attractive to them. WAP's claim is that "pornography"—by which WAP means the sexually explicit material which *it* doesn't like—is the *cause* of violence against women and of rape. Many people may feel this claim is supported by intuition or anecdote, but it is not supported by research (see: R. Coward, "Sexual Violence and Sexuality," *Feminist Review*, June 1982; "Does Viewing Pornography Lead Men to Rape?" in G. Chester & J. Dickey ed., *Feminism and Censorship: The Current Debate*, 1988).

The central purpose of pornography is to achieve sexual arousal. The problem for WAP and its ideological

inspirers is that they believe that male sexual arousal is inherently dangerous, and that heterosexual feelings and activities are the basic cause of the oppression of women. Having sex with men is not the *cause* of women's oppression; and the domain of sexual activity is not one where the struggle for women's liberation can be fought to a successful conclusion. It is true that sexual life is structured and deformed by the family unit, and these deformities will continue until the family is transcended; but it is not our sex lives which create the twisted social framework, rather it is the capitalist social framework which twists our sex lives.

The WAP cardboard cutout version of human sexuality involves a dichotomy between the aggressive, dominating male and the gentle, nurturing female. The male is said to be physical; the female, spiritual. The male's "pornography" is about lust, power and bodies; the female's "erotica" is about love, gentleness and commitment.

WAP's Victorian conception of gender and sexuality is thoroughly reactionary. There's a strong dose of biological determinism in this outlook. In fact the conditions which shape our sexual lives are created by a social framework which changes as society changes; this current conditioning will only be transcended when the oppressive nuclear family is replaced, when it ceases to be an obligatory ideal imposed by the massive economic and ideological pressures of the current capitalist order and exists instead, for those who want it, simply as one particular mode out of a range of accessible social options.

Sexuality is shaped by history, and historically the sexuality which is "proper" for women has been confined, restricted and limited far more than that which is "proper" for men. Women are not supposed to feel lust, or to enjoy a good bonk for its own sake. This ideology of repression is perpetuated by WAP: for them, as for the anti-sex moral right, promiscuous or emotionally uncommitted sex is a social sin. And so women who even *fantasise* about vigorous, physical sex are not "real" women.

There is nothing at all liberating about WAP politics: they simply aim to be the sex- and mind-police of a new epoch. The resultant standard of "politically correct feminist sex" leads them to condemn not only depictions of heterosexual activity by women (who are "fucking the oppressors") but also certain depictions of lesbian sex (which may be seen as "adopting male role models").

Male supremacist behaviour is not innate—it derives from the complex process of socialisation through which boys and girls assimilate the appropriate behaviour patterns for the roles assigned them by the nuclear family. A man's relative power inside the traditional family unit is often in sharp contrast to his powerlessness at work—home is where he can vent his frustrations and try to maintain some illusion of control over his life. Violence is often the product. And of course it is often difficult for a woman with a violent partner to escape, particularly if she has children—with the economic and social difficulties of raising children alone,



SOVPHOTO

Working women's demonstration, Russia 1917

the existing capitalist system presents important obstacles to independence.

'Pornography' versus 'Erotica'?

The distinction between "pornography" and "erotica" which is at the centre of the WAP worldview is both arbitrary and revealing. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, for example, gives the common meaning for [pornography] as "explicit description or exhibition of sexual activity in literature, films, etc., intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic feelings." "Erotica" is given a meaning which is very similar, but the word as commonly used seems to have a nuance suggesting some kind of artistic dimension. The bottom line of WAP's position is that they object to sex *without the art*, to sexual arousal simply for the sake of being turned on. WAP wants to burn all the tacky, low-budget sex videos with the shoddy lighting; in an ideal WAP world there would be good, clean Film Festival fare, with high production values and a romantic, pro-"commitment" moral.

Much pornographic material violates the canons of literary or cinematic criticism; but they are after all completely irrelevant to its objectives. Pornography is a genre not notable for its subtlety, and many would find much of it tasteless or offensive, particularly when encountered outside the context for which it's intended. But Women Against Pornography should no more be able to impose their own preferences on the rest of the world—in this case, for subtlety, good taste and emotional commitment—than should someone who believes that WAP's favoured "erotica" is cloying, moralistic and boring.

All kinds of images in literature and film, whether popular or "serious," reflect social reality. In a world where the patterns of ordinary domestic lives are cor-

rupted and distorted by the anxiety, insecurity and compulsions of a destructive social order, it is hardly surprising that most representations of human relationships and sexuality are also corrupted and distorted.

The solution to the special oppression of women requires a revolutionary change in the material conditions of life. Until women are freed from the responsibilities of childcare and domestic drudgery, from the economic pressures to remain in bad relationships and the patriarchal nuclear family, they will remain oppressed.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

What is necessary is not a campaign against dirty pictures, but a struggle to build a base for working-class revolution. What is needed is a society in which domestic labour and child-rearing are not seen as an individual responsibility, carried out mainly by women, but rather a social process, for which society as a whole takes responsibility. This isn't a "personal" matter which can be solved by men deciding to do more housework—we need free, twenty-four-hour childcare facilities and subsidised restaurants and laundries. But such enterprises are *impossible* in a society based on the profit motive. Only a society in which production is based on need and not profit can create the material conditions for an end to the oppression of women.

The battle against women's oppression is not one of women against men. What is necessary is not a women's organisation against pornography, nor women organised "autonomously" around any other list of "women's issues." Nor can women be organised on their own against capitalism: in the first place, some women are themselves part of the capitalist ruling class and, despite their oppression as women, oppose the creation of an egalitarian social order. Moreover, women cannot destroy capitalism and build a classless society on their own, but only through participation in a united revolutionary party of the working class, with a strong component which centres its activity in the struggle against the oppression of women.

Leninists have always sought to furnish "the most revolutionary appraisal of every given event" and to intervene "in every sphere and in every question of social and political life," as Lenin argues in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902); Lenin even gave the example of the German Social Democrats intervening "in the matter of the law against 'obscene' publications and pictures."

The vast majority of men would benefit from putting an end to a profit-based society too. The only force which has the potential social power—and the interest—to lead such a revolutionary overturn is the working class, both male and female. The working class must unite around a programme for the overthrow of this irrational and corrupt social system and its replacement by a new *socialist* order which provides women with what this society cannot: free childcare, free abortion on demand, relief from the crushing burden of domestic labour, and equal access to education, to jobs—to life itself. ■

WAP Feminists Line Up with Anti-Sex Right Wing Pornography, Capitalism & Censorship

The following is an abridged version of an article that originally appeared in *The Bolshevik No. 2*, journal of the Permanent Revolution Group, the New Zealand section of the International Bolshevik Tendency.

When Jenny Shipley, the Minister for Women's Affairs, introduced the "Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Bill" into Parliament last year, she said: "The bill will send some very clear messages about the society we want, and the types of behaviour which are totally unacceptable." That's not so surprising. What's surprising is that the bill's feminist supporters are promoting the same kind of society as Jenny Shipley and her various parliamentary colleagues.

What Shipley and the National and Labour Governments want and have been administering is a society of mass unemployment, benefit cuts and health charges. This latest anti-sex drive, given a leftist, "pro-women" cover by its feminist backers in Women Against Pornography (WAP), is all part of Shipley & Co.'s reactionary agenda.

The pornography debate has generated considerable heat. In defending themselves against their critics on the left, the feminist proponents of anti-porn censorship frequently cite "snuff" movies—sex murders staged for commercial profit, a sickening criminal activity which must, of course, be suppressed. But snuff movies are not the issue; they are only introduced into the debate to blur the real question. The campaign of Women Against Pornography, like that of the traditional right, is *broadly* targeted; it is directed at the preponderance of sexually explicit material which is available—indeed WAP recently called for Parliament "to be bold and brave" and to ban not just "extreme" forms of pornography, but *all* forms (*Dominion*, 14 April 1993).

No to Censorship!

The left has traditionally taken a strong stand against state censorship, and for good reason. The power of censorship has been used around the world to muzzle political opposition—by suppressing dissenting views, shaping the presentation of the day-to-day class struggle, and reinforcing the mechanisms of ideology in a thousand ways.

During the 1951 waterfront lockout, which saw one of the most significant defeats in the history of the New Zealand working class, a key ruling-class weapon was a ban on working-class political literature. And during the 1950s and '60s, cultural life in this country was



stunted by a series of bans on such well known works as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Lolita*, and *Portnoy's Complaint*. There were some bizarre twists to this anti-sex, anti-culture regime: as things started to liberalise a little in the 1960s they allowed the showing of the film *Ulysses*—but to gender-segregated audiences only!

From time to time the capitalist class and its representatives update their censorship legislation; and the last Labour Government and the current National Government have both pushed towards tougher censorship laws. Labour sought to use its advocacy of censorship to maintain some kind of left face. And today Jenny Shipley too is trying to use the issue to appear supportive of women's rights, occasionally adopting some of the language of the feminist anti-pornography movement.

Ruling Class Centralises Censorship Tools

As part of their plan to broaden the capitalist state's repressive powers, Shipley & Co.'s new bill will centralise the censorship of all films, videos and printed publications into a single Classification Office, with a single Review Board. Its purpose is to limit as far as possible

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