

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; 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."

JOURNAL OF THE BOLSHEVIK TENDENCY

No. 3



Spring 1987



Smash the Contras! Workers to Power!

Nicaragua: An Unfinished Revolution

The Nicaragua/Iran/hostage imbroglio that has engulfed the Reagan government in recent months has provided plenty of material for political columnists and cartoonists. Jimmy Carter's fanatically anti-communist national security man, Zbigniew Brzezinski, commented sourly: "In Western Europe, there is derision at the way

America tried to pursue a would-be Machiavellian policy in a manner more reminiscent of Inspector Clouseau." *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Alice Kahn dubbed the affair the "Ayatollah, Ron & Ollie Show," while right-wing commentator William Safire whines that it is probab-

(continued on page 2)



REININGER

Captured guardsmen 1979

ly the "Gipperdaemmerung" for the previously teflon-coated chief North American state terrorist.

Besides showing the Reagan gang's contempt for the niceties of constitutional checks and balances, the scandal has also revealed that there is little support even among the far right for the contra losers. Administration officials now admit that nearly *all* the "private" money raised for the contras has come directly or indirectly from the U.S. government.

What's more, it turns out that the contra chiefs' commitment to free enterprise is not merely ideological. They are fiscal "pragmatists" and have not passed up the opportunity presented by Reagan's largess to branch out into some lucrative sidelines, like laundering money and smuggling drugs. The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that, of the \$27 million Congress allocated to fund the counterrevolution in 1985, "most of it went to private rebel bank accounts in the Cayman Islands or the Bahamas, to private individuals or corporations in the United States, and to the Honduran armed forces" (*New York Times*, 19 June 1986).

This kind of bad publicity fueled Washington's growing disaffection with Reagan's "freedom fighters" and helped prompt the various Congressional investigations into contra wrongdoing. It also contributed to an open split between the State Department's "human face" contras (represented by Arturo Cruz) and the CIA's operational wing headed by Adolfo Calero. But these are only tactical differences. The American bourgeoisie is fundamentally united on the need to roll back the Nicaraguan revolution, a point underlined by the bipartisan support for the \$100 million voted for Reagan's terrorists last summer.

The Contra War: Squeezing Nicaragua's Economy

The U.S. has so far opted for squeezing the fragile Nicaraguan economy while organizing and arming the contra mercenaries. The Sandinistas' 1979 decision to "turn the other cheek" and free 7,000 members of Anastasio Somoza's murderous praetorian guard proved to be an expensive mistake. These same guardsmen today constitute the backbone of Washington's proxy army. To date they have killed more than 18,000 Nicaraguans and wounded an equivalent number.

In addition to the direct economic damage inflicted by the contras, the cost of fighting the war is an immense

drain on the economy. Some 120,000 people have been forced to become refugees in their own country. Twelve percent of the work force serves in the armed forces. To finance the war, which eats up half of all government expenditure, spending on housing, health care and education has been cut to little more than a third of what it was in 1980-82 (*Barricada Internacional*, 28 August 1986). This erosion of social programs in turn undermines the revolution's popular base.

While the war has seriously strained the Nicaraguan economy, on the battlefield the contras have been chewed up by the effective and highly motivated soldiers of the Sandinista popular army. The 15 December 1986 *New York Times* reported: "With their support in Central America at an all-time low, the contras and their Administration backers are now in an 11th-hour scramble to reverse four years of failure....At this point almost no informed analyst gives the rebels much chance of success."

But the contras don't necessarily need a military victory to fulfill their function. Elliott Abrams, Reagan's top Latin American specialist, reiterated the administration's commitment to the contra strategy and asserted, "if this current U.S. policy is maintained, it seems to me the Sandinistas will not survive. Either they will be forced to compromise, or refusing to compromise, the Nicaraguan people will rise up and get rid of them" (*New York Times*, 9 January). The same article reports that "some senior State Department officials...have expressed concern that the Administration is becoming so tightly locked into an anti-Sandinista policy that if the contras falter on the battlefield, pressure may build up within the Administration to commit American forces on their behalf."

Yet there are serious differences within the bourgeoisie over the advisability of direct U.S. intervention. The Center for Defense Information estimates a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua would cost 5,000 U.S. deaths and \$10 billion in the first four years of what would likely be a prolonged and bloody occupation. The more farsighted elements of the ruling class have a sense that the potential risks of such a military adventure, with two-thirds of the American populace opposed from the outset, far outweigh any possible benefits.

In the event that the U.S. does attack, it is the duty of American revolutionists to ensure that the Pentagon's worst fears come true. That means mass mobilizations in the streets, on the campuses and particularly in the black and Hispanic communities. But the most important task will be to agitate in the unions for political strikes against the invasion. The American working class has the social and economic power to do more than just break a few

1917

Editorial Board: B. Collis, C. Nason, T. Riley

Signed articles or letters do not necessarily represent the editorial viewpoint.

Subscriptions: \$3/4 issues

Order from/Pay to: P.O. Box 31796
Oakland CA, 94604

windows--it can stop U.S. intervention in its tracks by interrupting production, communications and transportation.

A Revolution Cannot Serve Two Masters

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) came to power in 1979 with a program of egalitarian, petty-bourgeois nationalism garnished with a sprinkling of Marxist rhetoric. The political parameters of the revolution were recently reiterated by Comandante Humberto Ortega: "This historical stage we are going through in Nicaragua is fundamentally one of national liberation. We cannot address national liberation and social liberation at the same time, it would be too difficult" (*Barricada Internacional*, 31 July 1986).

This is exactly wrong. Nicaragua had its own flag, postage stamps and seat in the United Nations under Somoza. If by "national liberation" Ortega means freedom from neo-colonial dependence on the United States, this cannot be won until the revolution cuts off the imperialist connection at its roots--private ownership of the productive wealth of society. The Nicaraguan capitalists are both the agents and the partners of the American multinationals. To liberate Nicaragua from its historic relationship of neo-colonial dependency, it is necessary to eliminate the "free enterprise" system that consigns the masses of the region to desperate poverty.

The entire history of the Nicaraguan revolution to date underlines this fundamental point. From the very beginning the FSLN's attempts to enlist the support of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie in a struggle for "national liberation" have met with disdain. Since 1979, the capitalists have been decapitalizing as fast as they can, and sending the proceeds to Miami or investing them in the black market.

The FSLN's *Barricada Internacional* (27 March 1986) described the dilemma of the "mixed economy":

"...why not stabilize the economy by keeping profit margins, prices and salaries at a level that would assure reduced consumption and public investment needed to offset the increase in defense spending?"

"This cannot be done because 60 percent of Nicaragua's economy is in private hands and its borders are open to commerce with neighbors. Although the government establishes prices and salaries, there are businesses and products that either are not affected by government regulation or simply violate the law....

"These inflated prices make it very attractive for both private and state businesses to siphon off some of their production for sale on the parallel market. As a result, products selling at government controlled prices become more difficult to find and real wages deteriorate....

"Nicaraguan goods are also being exported illegally for sale in neighboring countries. In Costa Rica one can still find medicines and canned goods that were donated to Nicaragua and quickly disappeared from store shelves; the products were bought up to be sold in neighboring countries at prices ten times higher."

The "magic of the marketplace" has translated into food shortages and rationing. Last summer Vice President Sergio Ramirez Mercado remarked: "We are experiencing the worst moments since the triumph of the Sandinista revolution, a crisis so profound that even supplying foods is very difficult" (*New York Times*, 14 August 1986).

BOYD — GAMMALIASON



On guard against contras

The growth of the black market is disintegrating the proletariat. Thousands of Nicaraguan workers have quit their jobs to become peddlers in the black market because they cannot survive on the wages they earn. Skilled workers who leave the factories to go into business for themselves can make ten times as much as those who stay. The absorption of hundreds of teachers, doctors, engineers, middle-level administrators and other vitally necessary professionals and skilled laborers into the "parallel economy" is putting a tremendous strain on an already overburdened social and economic infrastructure. *NACLA Reports* (April/May 1986) commented, "The black economy...originally seen as a safety valve, has become a gaping hole that threatens to overwhelm the whole economic fabric."

Even many left-liberal Sandinista well-wishers are slowly coming to realize that the Nicaraguan revolution is in deep trouble. Here is how Paul Berman summed up the current situation in the December 1986 issue of *Mother Jones*:

"The war must be won. Therefore the government enforces a military draft. Labor productivity must rise. Therefore the government squeezes the workers. Profitable sectors of the economy must be encouraged. Therefore the government grants as many favors as it can bear to the big capitalist cotton and coffee farmers. A government that enforces a draft, squeezes the workers, favors the capitalists, and does all this in the name of socialism, so that workers and capitalists both feel betrayed--such a government is bound for trouble....

"The quandary, then, is: the government must act, and powerfully. It needs more support than ever. But it does not have more support. It has less. Something must give."

The workers are neither blind nor stupid. They know that the concessions to the bourgeoisie come directly at

the expense of their living standards. The success or failure of every revolution ultimately hinges on its ability to "deliver the goods" for the social strata whose interests it represents. But instead of defending the interests of those with a stake in the revolution, the FSLN devotes the lion's share of the country's meager resources to those most hostile to it. The working people of Nicaragua bore the terrible costs of ousting the Somoza gang in the mass insurrection of 1979. They did not do so in order to see a deterioration in the conditions of their lives.

The attempt to discover a "third road" between capitalism and socialism is not working. It cannot work. The current social and economic crisis will be resolved, the only question is: *which class will pay?* This is something the mushy "solidarity" milieu prefers to close its eyes to. But the true friends of the Nicaraguan revolution are those who are prepared to tell the truth--that the road of Sandinismo is the road to disaster. If the revolution is to survive, it must go forward to expropriate the capitalist parasites and establish a planned economy and a state monopoly of foreign trade.

Class-Collaborationism Internationally: Contadora

The FSLN's appeasement of Nicaragua's large landholders and capitalists is paralleled by its willingness to pursue the chimera of peaceful coexistence with Washington and its Central American clients. Fearing that Reagan's gunboat diplomacy might ignite an explosion which could shatter the rickety capitalist regimes throughout the region, leaders of four Latin American countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Panama and Colombia) met on the Panamanian island of Contadora in 1983 to propose a "peace initiative." The "Contadora" accord would obligate the FSLN to "immediately promote national reconciliation," i.e., open negotiations with the contra terrorists. It would also bind Nicaragua to cut off aid to leftist "irregular forces or subversive groups" in the region and to enter into negotiations to reduce its armed forces by as much as half.

In essence, Contadora is an attempt to secure through diplomacy what the contras have been unable to win on the battlefield. Yet the Sandinistas, in a display of defeatist commitment to "political pluralism," endorse the plan as a "bold initiative" and have called it the "only instrument that can and should bring about a rapid and effective settlement" (*Barricada Internacional*, 3 July 1986). At this point though, Contadora is pretty much a dead letter as Reagan refuses to settle for anything less than bloody counterrevolution.

When United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar toured Central America in January to promote "the peace process," Honduran President Jose Azcona Hoyo "said at a news conference that the question of peace in Central America could not be resolved while Nicaragua lacked a democratic form of government" (*New York Times*, 22 January 1987). Hoyo was not just speaking for himself. Honduras, which now gets 15 times as much U.S. military aid as it did in 1980, is a country with the best air force in Central America and the second highest poverty rate in the Western Hemisphere. It is also the main U.S. proxy in the region.

Hoyo's masters in Washington want a "rollback," not a deal.

The FSLN's Pro-Capitalist Constitution

The FSLN's determination to reach an accord with the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie is codified in the new constitution approved in November and signed into law by President Daniel Ortega on January 9th. The document reflects all the contradictory class-collaborationist utopianism which is "Sandinismo." The preamble contains a clause lauding those who overthrew Somoza "through their faith in God." It fulsomely condemns "all forms of subordination and exploitation of the human being," and promises "to push forward the material and spiritual progress of the nation, and to guarantee that the interests and rights of the popular majority prevail." After denouncing all "forms of domination and colonial and imperialist exploitation," the very next section (Article 5) "guarantees the existence of political pluralism, mixed economy, and non-alignment." A mixed economy is defined as "the existence of different forms of property, both public and private, and associative, cooperative, and communal."

By institutionalizing the preservation of capitalist property relations, the Sandinistas declare their intention to consolidate another down-at-the-heels, third-world "revolutionary" nationalist regime like those of Algeria, Angola or Ethiopia. To do so, they will have to decisively turn on the labor movement, the poor peasants and those who represent their interests. Yet, in attacking their popular base, the Sandinistas risk opening the door for a massive counterrevolutionary mobilization. In that event, President Ortega and the rest of the FSLN tops could find that, for them, the "third road" ends up in front of a firing squad.

The PMLN-FO: Left Stalinism in Nicaragua

The left-Stalinist Marxist Leninist Party of Nicaragua (PMLN), which originated as a Maoist split from the FSLN in the early 1970's, was apparently the only party in the National Assembly to vote against the new constitution. The Sandinista boosters who publish the American *Militant* complained that the PMLN "argued that this [the section guaranteeing a mixed economy] 'establishes capitalism' and that by including it in the constitution, the FSLN 'renounced the construction of socialism in Nicaragua'..."

Like the Marxist-Leninist Party of the U.S., with which it maintains fraternal relations, the PMLN broke with the Chinese in the late 1970's and adopted Albania as its "socialist fatherland." Its armed wing fought as an independent force during the 1979 insurrection. Today the organization has its own small union (Frente Obrero--FO) of several thousand workers. In the first year of the revolution, the FSLN suppressed the PMLN, closing its press and arresting dozens of FO cadres for the "crime" of suggesting that the FSLN government should be replaced with one more committed to the defense of the interests of the workers, and less inclined to conciliate the capitalists.

(continued on page 21)



Lenin and
Trotsky

BT/LTT Conference Success **Trotskyists Fuse!**

In a major step forward for revolutionaries in North America, the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) and the Left Trotskyist Tendency (LTT) fused at a joint national conference held in Oakland, California last November. The comrades of the LTT, who split from the Internationalist Workers Party (IWP) last June, include three former central committee members of that organization. The fusion substantially augments both the BT's ability to intervene in the workers movement and its political authority in the left. It also represents tangible progress toward stabilizing the Bolshevik Tendency as a fighting propaganda organization.

The BT-LTT fusion stands as a powerful confirmation of the strategy of revolutionary regroupment. This perspective is counterposed to the primitive, gradualist notion that a proletarian vanguard party can be created by simple linear recruitment of raw individuals. It is also sharply at odds with those who seek to create revolutionary organizations by amalgamating existing formations on a lowest common denominator basis and an agreement not to disagree--pending the next split.

The regroupment strategy is predicated on the fact that centrist and even reformist organizations are internally contradictory. They are not homogenous groupings of conscious class traitors. People generally do not join small supposedly-revolutionary organizations with the deliberate intention of betraying and misleading the working class, but rather out of a sense of identification with the ideals of socialism. Consequently, even thoroughly rotten pseudo-socialist formations periodically develop internal oppositions composed of people whose subjective impulses conflict with the real politics of the outfits they belong to. Political regroupment is the process of sorting out such contradictions by recomposing the preexisting formations along clear programmatic lines and uniting

the revolutionists in a single organization.

A Programmatically Based Fusion

The BT-LTT fusion is solidly based in a common struggle for a correct programmatic understanding of the tasks facing Trotskyists in this period. The key positions which the LTT developed in the course of its fight against the centrist leadership of the IWP (represented in the excerpts reprinted from their documents) closely paralleled those of the BT and provided a starting point for the discussions which laid the foundations for the fusion.

One of the issues taken up in the pre-fusion discussions was the Trotskyist attitude toward the Polish Solidarnosc movement, particularly in reference to the counterrevolutionary threat it posed. The contemporary application of the Permanent Revolution, particularly in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, was another major question considered. Other topics included the history of the Fourth International and revolutionary continuity, the national question, workers democracy, the black question in America and special oppression in general, and the tactics and strategy of revolutionary trade-union work. The discussions were intensive, with comrades from both organizations assigned to do research and make presentations. In the course of this political process, it became clear that there were no substantive programmatic differences between the two groups. The firm political basis of the fusion is contained in the documents and motions adopted at the conference, several of which are published in this issue.

The LTT split represented a serious blow to the fake-mass pretensions of the IWP. The LTT was the second factional opposition within the IWP in as many years.

The first, the Collective Leadership Faction (CLF), originated in Los Angeles in 1985 as a rank-and-file revolt against the IWP's horrendously bureaucratic internal regime and the frantic treadmill of endless paper sales and phony "mass work" demanded by the leadership.

The CLF, currently known as the International Socialist League (ISL), was eventually recognized by the International Workers League (IWL--the IWP's international leadership headquartered in Argentina) as a sympathizing section. So for over a year, the IWL has had two affiliates in the U.S., with no known programmatic differences, each swearing allegiance to the same international while assiduously ignoring each other.

The Organizational Question in the IWP

The fight of the Left Tendency (LT--which changed its name to the Left Trotskyist Tendency when it left the IWP in June, 1986) did not center on the bureaucratic regime, but went to the root of the gangrene: the IWP's congenital centrism. Nonetheless, the organization question did play a role in the fight, as the leadership desperately attempted to counter the LT's political criticisms by restricting internal discussion. Brad Anderson, a leadership hack, leveled the following accusation at an LT comrade:

"In the C.C. [Central Committee] meeting of June 6th, 1986 comrade Christine proposed an amendment to a proposed 'Declaration of the C.C. on Unity of the Party and the restoration of Full Democratic Centralism' which revealed this comrade's true hostility to this traditional Leninist method of organization. The comrade proposed that during the preconvention discussion period members of leadership bodies could discuss their differences in 'any body of the party, or, quote,'...during the preconvention period, there shouldn't be any limitations on bringing differences to the rank and file...'--as if the party were a trade union!"

--"The True Nature of the Tendency"

Not only was the communist minority supposed to keep its differences from the ranks (a measure designed to make sure that it stayed a minority), but the leadership asserted that the LT could not meet without first inviting representatives of the majority! In a bizarre bit of doublethink, Anderson accused the LT of "bureaucratism" for daring to argue for the right to hold its own internal meetings:

"...there is already enough evidence to enable us to draw the outlines of an emerging bureaucratism, beginning, once again, with the birth of the Tendency, when comrade Dov voted against the C.C. resolution regulating the Tendency, on the grounds that he wanted to have some 'closed' Tendency meetings."

The LT's Fight for Trotskyism

One of the overriding themes of the fusion discussions between the LTT and the BT was the centrality of the struggle to create (and regroup) Trotskyist cadres. In centrist organizations like the IWP, this task is ignored in order to get on with the "more urgent" business of pursuing this month's get-rich-quick scheme. The frantic search for short-term gate receipts inevitably leads to programmatic adaptation to the backward consciousness

of those being pursued, as the pervasive liquidationism of the IWP illustrates.

The LT originated as a political opposition to the IWP's programmatic adaptation to the petty-bourgeois Peace and Freedom Party (P&FP) milieu. From this, it broadened its critique to attack the IWP's parallel capitulation to the reformist illusions prevalent in the campus-based anti-apartheid/divestment movement. The IWP initially labelled the divestment strategy "utopian" but when it saw masses of students in motion, it quickly adopted "Full Divestment Now" as its slogan. This political opportunism was complemented by organizational sectarianism. At Berkeley, where the student movement was centered, the IWP chose not to participate in the existing non-exclusionist anti-apartheid student group and instead launched its own reformist front group, the stillborn "International Solidarity Committee." The LT argued that the duty of communists was to expose the "divestment strategy" for what it was--a demoralizing dead end which would divert the movement into Democratic Party pressure politics.

The cynics of the IWP leadership adopted a similar centrist approach to the so-called peace movement. In this arena they raised the pacifist/utopian slogan of "Unilateral Disarmament of the U.S." As the LT pointed out, Marxists stand for the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the armed working class and ruthlessly combat pacifist illusions about getting the imperialists to disarm themselves. In attacking the IWP's unilateral disarmament slogan, the LT posed the question of what attitude revolutionists should adopt toward the peace movements that flank every war drive. They cited Lenin's and Trotsky's denunciations of such movements as a model. The IWP majority countered by triumphantly hauling out a resolution adopted by the IWP's Argentine mentors in 1983 which argued that the Leninist position on pacifism was outdated!

"Today however, there is a qualitative difference we must establish between the petty bourgeois and reactionary peace movements that existed before 1945 and the ones that exist today....In [today's] circumstances the peace movement in the imperialist countries plays a progressive role because it is oriented towards stopping the imperialist war efforts.

"The IWL(FI) should participate in or support these peace movements. Moreover, every peace movement that raises slogans about limiting or freezing nuclear arms should have our support because it is always imperialism which is pushing for an escalation in the arms race."

Resolution of the International Executive Committee of the International Workers League (FI)

This explicitly revisionist capitulation to bourgeois pacifism puts the IWL in bed with the Democrats who want to "freeze" nuclear spending in order to allocate more for conventional armament. There is no "progressive dynamic" here--merely a tactical difference within the U.S. ruling class over how to get the most bang for the buck.

The LT also criticized the leadership's anti-Leninist conception of the "revolutionary united front." For the IWP, a "united front" is a propaganda bloc with reformists in which criticism is suspended and banners are mixed. The model for these opportunist maneuvers is Ar-

(continued on page 10)

LTT's Struggle in IWP Against the Stream

(The following has been excerpted from factional documents produced by the Left Trotskyist Tendency during its political struggle inside the International Workers Party from April to June 1986. Corrections have been made for style and grammar.)

Revolutionary Platform? Or Adaptation to Centrism?

The party program contains elements of adaptation to the backwardness of the Peace and Freedom Party (P&FP) registrants. The first alarm on the direction of the party came when comrade Perez declared in a San Francisco branch meeting that we planned to get 400,000 votes (no more, no less!) for Trotskyist candidates. He added that this campaign was the big chance for the party to break its isolation and become a major left organization in the USA. In order to achieve such a huge undertaking, the party started to manifest opportunistic tendencies in its bloc with the "progressive" taste of P&FP registrants. In the article we published on Emma Mar, for example, we didn't mention the programmatic and other principled differences we have with her and the other centrists. We didn't mention the "small" fact that she ran in 1984 as a vice-presidential candidate with Sonia Johnson, whom we characterized as a petty-bourgeois candidate. She was really the candidate of the Citizens Party for which she ran openly on an anti-working class capitalist program. Instead, however, the reader gets the impression that Emma Mar is a principled socialist who is part of our own slate of candidates....

But why don't we support the centrists *critically*? Why don't we make a clear distinction in our paper between our program and theirs, as has always been the tradition in the Leninist movement? In order to guarantee winning the primaries, the leadership of our party counts on all the votes that the Mars and the Conditis can get for us through their delicate intrigues and connections in the P&FP. We counted on their numerous phone calls to their friends and registrants, etc. But when one starts to mix one's banners with the centrist banners, one doesn't stop with hiding criticisms. In order to receive the maximum number of votes, we adapted to the platform of the centrists and the sectors of the registrants who are not by any means committed to vote for us in advance. In other words, we didn't only conduct an unprincipled bloc with the centrists; but we also bent our electoral platform to the backward mentality of the registrants....

The opportunist likes to say what sounds good to the workers' ears. He (or she) "agrees," of course, with the need for fundamental changes, but only the gentlemen of the bourgeoisie and their institutions (courts, different agencies of the state, etc.) are allowed to implement them. The opportunist "forgets" that the bourgeois institutions cannot be reformed, but must be destroyed by the independent mobilization of the working class.

The Left-Wing of the Peace and Freedom Party Advances in 1986 Primaries

On June 3, primary elections were held in six states. Most of these primaries were simply a process of selecting which Democratic or Republican Party candidate will represent the different factions in big business in the November general elections. But in California, one primary election was different — the Peace and Freedom Party's. The Peace and Freedom Party, a ballot-qualified socialist coalition party, staged a different kind of political battle between left-wing forces aligned with the Democrats and the Republicans in the November general elections, and a right-wing bloc that included the Communist Party, the New Alliance Party, the Socialist Workers League, and a small group called the "Revolutionary" Party. These forces, together with a number of individual activists, all oppose for different reasons the emergence of a strong state of revolutionary candidates in the November general elections. Together they ganged up against the supporters of the International Workers Party and their allies. In this effort they failed.

GAINS OF THE LEFT-WING

The supporters of Working Class Opposition won one statewide office plus six Congressional and State Assembly positions. In addition, dozens of WCO supporters were elected as delegates to the Peace and Freedom Party state convention to be held in August. This marks a major advance for the left wing of the Peace and Freedom Party, which in 1984 was able to elect only 7 delegates to the convention, and won only three seats for local office. The primary election shift, and a political electoral from left to right.

with 5,030. Gloria is a strong supporter of the newspaper. Clyde Kulis, a candidate strongly supported by the Communist Party, won the nomination for Lieutenant Governor with 4,453 votes, while John Haag, one of the leaders of the right-wing bloc supported by the CP, won the nomination for State Controller with 4,218 votes.

Working Class Opposition supporter Emma Mar and Sonia Johnson received 2,543 votes in the primary election. The nomination of the Peace and Freedom Party for State Controller was lost to the right wing of the party.

Some independents. Smith won with 3,378 votes.

In the 16th Assembly District in San Francisco, the left-wing candidate Meg Watson (nominated the candidate of the right-wing bloc, Joyce Schen, Schen, a supporter of the "R-R-Revolutionary Workers League", engaged in some of the most gutter-level campaigning seen in the slandering sheet that accused the IWP of being "anti-gay" and "anti-Latino" and falsely charging that the IWP bent up a gay Latino supporter of the IWP.

SLANDERS AND FABRICATIONS DID NOT WORK

While the use of these kind of tactics...

Three IWP electoral candidates joined LTT

Our electoral platform (*Working Class Organizer* No. 22) adapts to such opportunistic tendencies....The program calls for "Outlawing the use of court injunctions, the police [!] and the National Guard [!] against strikes and demonstrations." But in order to "outlaw" the police and the National Guard, it is necessary to arm the workers. If we don't call for worker and minority armed defense guards against the police, the National Guard and the scabs, we give the workers illusions in the bourgeois courts. And precisely on the question of defense guards, the platform is very weak....

...when I read the proposal for "eliminating all tax loopholes for the rich, corporations etc.," I was truly appalled. The whole question is not how to make the capitalists pay the minimal taxes that their government gently "imposes" on them, but rather who should control the corporations: the capitalists and their government, or the workers? Don't even Reagan and the Democrats promise to enforce the laws against "loopholes"? What do we propose? A stricter law?....

Unfortunately some of the opportunistic tendencies to bend to the registrants are exhibited strongly in the mailing. For the reader, the mailing (in particular Meg's letter) sounds like radical social-democratic rhetoric against the Democrats and the Republicans. We committed some serious mistakes. First our party name is not even mentioned....Were we afraid to lose votes? Furthermore,

the whole presentation of the candidate (Meg) is false. She is presented as an advocate of reforms against the Democrats and the Republicans and not as a revolutionary socialist. For example, the letter reads: "All of the money and resources that the State Assembly is presently pouring into police funding and into subsidies for big business should be directed toward the public educational system instead. In addition, these proposals and others will require a dramatic restructuring [!] of the tax system, shifting the burden [!] onto big business"...."Restructuring" and "shifting the burden" is the logical conclusion of "closing loopholes," etc. Just the language itself implies something other than the class struggle....

In a polemic on the platform, the comrades of the secretariat have claimed that a revolutionary party can have several platforms (they make a distinction between a platform and a program); one for the electoral arena (that is, to get votes) and the other for the class struggle. In a sharp discussion in the Political Bureau and the branch meeting in San Francisco, they argued that this is just an electoral program, and that it doesn't have everything that our full program calls for....

We have to start from the objective situation and the objective needs of the class struggle and not the expectations and mentality of P&FP voters. This was in essence the methodology used in the Transitional Program. And this is why Trotsky explained, when he combatted tendencies within the SWP which adapted to the mentality of the workers: "I say here what I said about the whole program of transitional demands. The problem is not the mood of the masses but the objective situation, and our job is to confront the backward material of the masses with the tasks which are determined by objective facts and not psychology." I believe that the tendency not to start with the objective needs of the class struggle is reflected in the party positions on the questions of disarmament and divestment.

Pacifism and Communism

What is a minimal demand? Is it anything that will produce a mass movement? Let's take the demand for a [nuclear weapons] "freeze" and negotiations for peace [in Central America]. On the surface they both look like good minimal and democratic demands. If "peace" and "freeze" can be achieved through negotiations, then it seems that there will be money for jobs and it will improve the standard of living of the masses. If tomorrow, for example, there is a big movement within the university for the "freeze," will we change our *international* perspectives on the freeze to adapt to the students? Or will we always start with what the slogan means in the international arena of the class struggle?....Although both demands ("peace negotiations" and "freeze") have in the past produced mass movements...we didn't support them because in the larger international context they meant betrayal of the Central American revolution and the defense of the USSR.

Calling for disarmament (and it doesn't matter whether its unilateral or bilateral) is giving grand illusions to the masses. This is exactly what Lenin and Trotsky said dozens of times in their writings. Trotsky wrote:



SOVPHOTO

Bolshevik workers militia disarmed bourgeoisie

"Marxists irreconcilably reject the pacifist slogans of 'disarmament,' 'arbitration' and 'amity between peoples' (i.e., between capitalist governments), etc., as opium for the popular masses. The combinations between working class organizations and petty-bourgeois pacifists (the Amsterdam-Pleyel committee and similar undertakings) render the best service to imperialism by distracting the attention of the working class from reality with its grave struggles and beguiling them instead with impotent parades."

--"Open Letter for the Fourth International," 1935

Anybody who is a serious Marxist, who claims that today it is correct to call for disarmament, must show what has changed in the material world, or more accurately, in the character of the imperialist system, to abandon the principled understanding of Marxism that the slogan of disarmament is "opium for the popular masses." I think that nothing has changed and in fact the slogan of disarmament is used today by pacifists, Stalinists, reformists and centrists in the same way it was used by their peers in the 1930's....

Perhaps imperialism has changed its character and can disarm itself? Or maybe the reformist, pacifist, and centrist parties changed their character and today are using the "freeze" and "disarmament" [slogans] not as a means of sowing illusions...but as a means to mobilize the

workers to take power? Or perhaps a combination of both makes the slogan of disarmament more progressive?....

The call for unilateral disarmament (as a "left" version of disarmament) is wrong, in particular if it is used without a call for arming the proletariat (the way we did in the 1984 elections, for example). It really becomes a pacifist position with a left face. Anybody with such a position is more likely to bend before the more openly reactionary pacifist position ("Freeze and Reverse the Arms Race") because, in reality, both positions give the illusion that disarmament can occur without a socialist revolution....

Trotsky wrote: "To the enervating slogan of 'disarmament' they [Marxists] counterpose the slogan of *winning the army* and *arming the workers*. Precisely in this is one of the most important dividing lines between Marxism and centrism drawn."

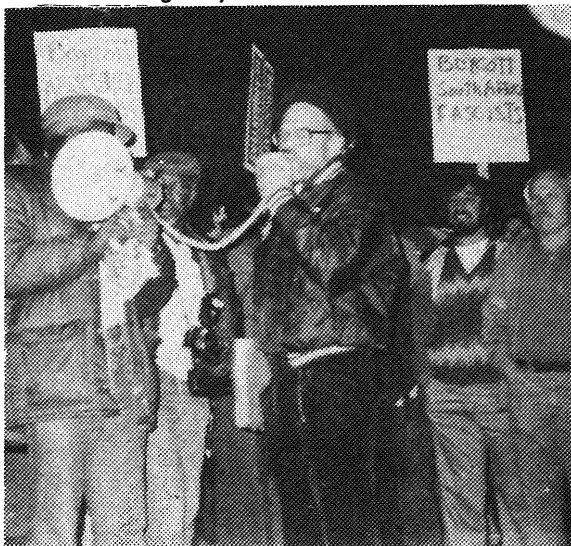
On Divestment and Sanctions

Marxists, in examining a demand, first ask themselves how the demand reflects in the international arena of the class struggle. What class is using it and for what? Is it used to help or to retard the revolutionary process? Only after these questions are answered, do Marxists deal with how to use a demand in the "concrete" situations of the different regions and universities. These are secondary and tactical questions. First we have to decide if the demand is progressive or not from the objective international perspective of the class struggle--not from the present consciousness of the students, which is regional and subjective.

Those who start with the "concrete" regional and fragmented expression of the class struggle will always end up adapting to it. Perez's real methodology is adaptation to the consciousness of the students....

The call for sanctions is wrong in principle. It gives nothing but illusions and opium to the masses that the "good" democratic imperialist states can teach the dic-

November 1984: Longshoremen rally at Pier 80 San Francisco to begin South African cargo boycott



1917



American business divests

tatorships "a lesson" and be on the side of the *struggling* masses....The Stalinists and the reformists, by restricting the anti-apartheid movement to a one-point program movement (divestment), diverted the masses' energy toward pressuring the capitalists and the imperialist state--without giving the masses a program to fight that would link the struggle against apartheid to the struggles here in the U.S. (i.e., seriously organizing solidarity strikes and actions with the South African workers, linking them to the U.S. working class struggles against concessions, etc.)....

What was Trotsky's position on supporting imperialist sanctions while asking the working class to go beyond sanctions by the bourgeoisie (our party's left version of "critical" support for full divestment)?....

"Most dangerous of all, however, is the Stalinist policy. The parties of the Communist International try to appeal especially to the more revolutionary workers by denouncing the League (a denunciation that is an apology), by asking for 'workers' sanctions,' and then nevertheless saying: 'We must use the League when it is for sanctions.' They seek to hitch the revolutionary workers to the shafts so that they can draw the cart of the League. Just as the General Council in 1926 accepted the general strike but behind the curtains concluded a deal with the clergy and pacifist radicals, and in this way used bourgeois opinion and influence to 'discipline' the workers and sabotage their strike, so the Stalinists seek to discipline the workers by confining the boycott within the limits of the League of Nations. "The truth is that if the workers begin their own sanctions against Italy, their action inevitably strikes at their own capitalists, and the League would be compelled to drop all sanctions. It proposes them now just because the workers' voices are muted in every country. Workers' action can begin only by absolute opposition to the national bourgeoisie and its international combinations. Support of the League and support of workers' action [by the Stalinists] are fire and water; they cannot be united."

--"Once Again the ILP," November 1935

Fusion...

(continued from page 6)

gentina, where the IWL's flagship section has spent the past year in a minimum-program "Peoples Front" with the Communist Party. In neighboring Chile, the IWL "warmly" supports the Civilian Assembly--a replication of the multi-class Unidad Popular which led to the bloody defeat of 1973. When the LT tried to raise this anti-Trotskyist betrayal, the IWP leadership simply refused to discuss it!

LTT Investigates the "Left Trotskyist" Spectrum

After exiting the IWP, LTTers began reading the documents of a variety of self-proclaimed Trotskyist tendencies and held preliminary discussions with several. The most substantive exchanges occurred in September with the British centrists of the Workers Power grouping. Over the course of these meetings, it became clear that there was a process of internal differentiation occurring within the LTT.

Several LTTers gradually moved closer to Workers Power, particularly to its position on the national question. (Workers Power believes that it is necessary to support petty-bourgeois nationalist movements like the IRA even when they carry out anti-working class attacks on civilian targets.) The LTT majority characterized this position as guilty liberalism and came out firmly for an anti-sectarian, class-struggle solution in situations where two or more peoples are interspersed throughout the same piece of territory (e.g., Ireland, Cyprus or Lebanon). The question was thoroughly discussed both within the LTT and in joint meetings with the BT in the following weeks. In the end, it was not possible to politically resolve the difference and the comrades of the LTT minority concluded that they could not be a party to the fusion.

We Go Forward!

A central task of the fusion conference was to organize the work for the coming year. To this end an Editorial Board was elected to oversee production of *1917*. The report of the out-going Ed Board noted with satisfaction that the first two issues of our journal had been widely circulated and generally favorably received. The conference reaffirmed the decision taken in 1985 to produce an intelligent, polemical Trotskyist press demarcating our programmatic positions from the rest of the international "far left." We do not intend to publish another of the fake-agitational organs cranked out by our centrist competitors.

The conference also elected a commission to direct our trade-union activity. In the years to come, one of the key strategic tasks for the BT will be to construct communist nuclei in key sectors of the proletariat. The draft Tasks and Perspectives document prepared for the conference noted that at the present juncture:

"There is a burning need for some kind of alternative in the labor movement. Thousands of working people fear for their

jobs and have absolutely no confidence in the willingness or ability of the union leaderships to deliver anything or to even protect what has been won in the past. The ideological obstacles to some good, hard, old-fashioned class struggle--the belief that moderation and "pragmatic" tuxedo unionism would deliver the bacon--are all but gone. The stage is set for a radical-led resurgence of North American labor. All that is missing is the radicals."

With our small forces we are unable to pose a quantitatively significant opposition to the current pro-imperialist misleaders of the union movement in North America. We are fortunate, however, to have a few small footholds in the working class and several comrades with decades of experience as communist trade unionists. In the past years BT supporters have played central roles in a number of significant trade-union struggles, most notably the anti-apartheid actions on the San Francisco waterfront. We are determined to maintain and pursue exemplary communist trade-union work in accordance with our modest capacities and to seek, where possible, to intervene directly in the class struggle.

For International Trotskyist Regroupment!

The newly fused organization also discussed perspectives for international work. In recent years there has been considerable upheaval in many of the world's larger ostensibly Trotskyist currents. The most spectacular was the fissuring of the British Workers Revolutionary Party and the ouster of its former *lider maximo*, Gerry Healy. The United Secretariat (USec) has suffered significant reverses in the past few years. Its sizeable Australian section renounced Trotskyism in favor of Third World Stalinism in 1984 and its American affiliate, the Socialist Workers Party, is charting a similar trajectory today. The turn of the USec in Europe to the social democracies has been accompanied by splits and defections in a number of its sections. The French Parti Communiste Internationaliste, a deeply social-democratic formation, has had several splits in the past period and the workerist/economists of Lutte Ouvriere have also been experiencing internal difficulties.

An authentically Leninist international tendency can only be forged through a series of programmatically-based splits and fusions. We intend to be part of such a process. To this end we want to actively pursue political discussions, polemics and debates with other currents in the left; in the first instance with the ostensibly Trotskyist groupings, to achieve the political clarification necessary to push forward the process of revolutionary regroupment.

Revolutionary organizations, like their cadres, are created through the struggle for the Marxist program in political combat with revisionist tendencies in the workers movement. The LTT's fight against centrism in the IWP was just such a struggle. As Trotsky noted in "Centrism and the Fourth International": "The new International can develop principally at the expense of the now prevailing tendencies and organizations. At the same time, the revolutionary International cannot form itself otherwise than in a consistent struggle against centrism." The Bolshevik Tendency is dedicated to this struggle and through it to the rebirth of the Fourth International. ●

Poland 1981: Acid Test for Trotskyists

Theses on Solidarnosc

(The following theses were adopted by the fusion conference of the Bolshevik Tendency and the Left Trotskyist Tendency.)

1. Prior to its September 1981 Congress, Solidarnosc could not be characterized definitely; although the absence of a genuine Marxist leadership rooted in the proletariat, the identification of "socialism" with the policies of the discredited, privileged and anti-socialist Stalinist regime and the concomitant growth of clerical-nationalist sentiment, prepared the basis for its subsequent consolidation around a program and leadership committed to capitalist restoration.

2. The conduct of the leadership of Solidarnosc in preparation for the September 1981 Congress indicated its pro-capitalist character.

a) The draft program presented by Walesa & Co. in the 17 April 1981 issue of *Solidarnosc Weekly*, in effect, proposed to substitute market relations for centralized planning. This program was seemingly contradictory because the counterrevolutionary leadership had to take into account the aspirations of millions of Polish workers and Communist Party members who wanted to reform or smash Stalinism and keep the planned economy. Therefore the program was decorated with a bit of socialist rhetoric. It called for "workers control" (against the Stalinists) together with free market economics, clericalism and Polish nationalism;

b) The main programmatic document produced by the September Congress called for an end to the monopoly of foreign trade;

c) Lane Kirkland, head of the overtly pro-imperialist AFL-CIO and Irving Brown, a notorious CIA labor operative in Western Europe, were invited to the Congress while the Stalinist unions of the Eastern bloc were snubbed; and

d) The Congress deliberately adopted the transitional slogans of imperialist counterrevolution in Eastern Europe: for "free elections" and "free trade unions" (i.e., anti-communist unions).

3. Taken in conjunction with the predominant influence of the anti-communist Catholic hierarchy within Solidarnosc; the growth of reactionary-nationalist, and even openly anti-Semitic currents; the pro-capitalist sentiments expressed by leading elements (e.g., Walesa's comment that Reagan's election in 1980 was a "good sign" for Poland) and the support extended to the demands of the small capitalists of Rural Solidarnosc; the September 1981 Congress must be seen as a confirmation of the political transformation of Solidarnosc into an organiza-



Priests hear confessions of striking shipyard workers

tion openly supporting capitalist restoration. The question of defense of the working-class property forms, upon which the Polish economy rests, was therefore directly posed. The attitude of revolutionists toward Solidarnosc changed accordingly, i.e., to recognize that it had become necessary to suppress the restorationist leadership and its counterrevolutionary followers.

4. This is not to suggest that Trotskyists would wish to suppress the ten million workers affiliated to Solidarnosc—a large section of whom did not wish to return to the conditions of capitalist "free market" wage slavery, unemployment, etc. A Trotskyist organization in Poland in the fall of 1981 would have opposed intransigently the pro-capitalist course of Walesa & Co. while continuing to intervene in mass workplace meetings of Solidarnosc and in every other arena where it would be possible to get a hearing from the working class in order to crystallize a pro-socialist, anti-Stalinist opposition to the Solidarnosc tops.

5. It is an axiom of Marxism that social and political movements must be judged by their leadership, program, trajectory and class composition—not by the illusions of

Democratic Rights & Political Revolution

(The following motion was adopted by the BT/LTT fusion conference.)

We support the right to assemble and strike by workers in the deformed and degenerated workers states as preconditions for the political revolution because this would allow the Trotskyist vanguard to intervene and mobilize the workers against the bureaucracy in the direction of the political revolution. However, the defense of the democratic rights of the workers to strike and assemble is subordinate to the defense of collectivized property. We fully endorse comrade Trotsky's formulation that:

"the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution."

--In Defense of Marxism

the base. The mass mobilizations against the Shah of Iran in 1978-79 provide a case in point. Despite the hopes and intentions of many thousands of Iranian workers and leftists who participated (as well as the sundry fake-Marxist currents which hailed this supposedly "objectively revolutionary" movement), the fact was that the leadership was firmly in the hands of the theocratic reactionaries around Ayatollah Khomeini. The objective contradiction between the base and the top indicates that a key task of Marxists was to struggle to shatter the illusions which the masses had in the eventual outcome of a movement with such a leadership and program and to rally the workers in opposition to the mullahs, as well as the Shah. Just as in Iran, revolutionary Marxists could not determine their orientation to events in Poland simply on the basis of hostility to those who currently hold power--it is also necessary to evaluate the positive program and direction of those leading the opposition.

6. The counterrevolutionary intention of the Solidarnosc leadership was unambiguously revealed for those not willfully blind by the events of the period immediately preceding Jaruzelski's counter-coup:

a) the attempts to extend Solidarnosc into the military and police;

b) the open discussions of the necessity to overthrow the state at the meeting of Solidarnosc's top leadership at Radom on December 3; and

c) the 12 December meeting in Gdansk of Solidarnosc leaders which proposed "holding a national referendum on their own on a vote of confidence in General Jaruzelski and for establishing a temporary non-communist government and holding free elections" (*New York Times*, 14 December 1981).

7. The fact that Solidarnosc was consolidated around a pro-capitalist leadership and program is eloquent testimony to the complete political bankruptcy of the anti-working class Stalinist parasites who, in over three decades of administering "socialism" in Poland, only succeeded in driving a large chunk of the working class into the arms of nationalist/clerical reaction. While Trotskyists took an attitude of critical support to the 13 December military suppression of the counterrevolutionary threat posed by Solidarnosc, it was necessary to maintain an attitude of irreconcilability toward Jaruzelski and the rest of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

8. Had the USSR intervened (as was widely projected) in the fall of 1981, Trotskyists would have critically supported this for the same reason they critically supported the actions of the Polish Army in December of that year. We would have supported only the Soviet Army actions directed against Solidarnosc's restorationist leadership and their base--not the entire Polish working class.

9. Our support to the suppression of Solidarnosc by the bureaucrats extends only to those blows aimed at the counterrevolutionary sections of the union, particularly the pro-capitalist cadres of the leadership. Had there been meetings of anti-restorationist workers, we would oppose their suppression in the course of the crackdown. Bolsheviks would have no interest in supporting measures which would make it more difficult for the Polish working class to assemble, discuss politics and recompose politically. The hold of religious obscurantism, poisonous nationalism and pro-capitalist ideology over a large chunk of the membership of Solidarnosc can only be eradicated by the political intervention of genuine Marxists--not by Stalinist police measures. To this end, after the counter-coup, Trotskyists would have sought to preserve the limited political space won by the strikes of 1980-81.

10. The privileged bureaucrats of the Polish United Workers Party are chiefly interested in preserving and extending their own caste interests at the expense of the working class. In September 1939 Trotsky proposed that the Fourth International defend the Soviet Union against the impending Nazi attack under the slogan "For Socialism! For the World Revolution! Against Stalin!" With the immediate danger of counterrevolution posed by Solidarnosc, it was the duty of Trotskyists to defend the socialized property upon which the deformed workers state is based while making it clear "just *what* we are defending, just *how* we are defending it, against *whom* we are defending it." Despite the fact that they are obliged, in the last analysis, to defend the organism upon which they are parasites against restorationist currents (which their bureaucratic misrule inevitably engenders), the Stalinist bureaucrats pose a mortal danger to the preservation of working-class property forms in Poland and in every other country they rule. The defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states is thus inextricably linked to the necessity of *proletarian political revolution* to smash the bureaucracy and police apparatus by revolutionary mass action. ●



BT/LTT Fusion Document For Trotskyism!

(The following document was adopted by the fusion conference of the Bolshevik Tendency and the Left Trotskyist Tendency as a codification of the programmatic agreement reached by the two organizations.)

1. Party and Program

"The interests of the [working] class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party.

"The class, taken by itself, is only material for exploitation. The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class in itself it becomes a political class for itself. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious."

--L.D. Trotsky, "What Next?" 1932

The working class is the only thoroughly revolutionary class in modern society, the only class with the capacity to end the insanity of capitalist rule internationally. The fundamental task of the communist vanguard is to instill in the class (particularly its most important component,

the industrial proletariat) the consciousness of its historic role. We explicitly reject all stratagems put forward by centrists and reformists, lifestylists and sectoralists which see in one or another non-proletarian section of the population a more likely vehicle for social progress.

The liberation of the proletariat, and with that the elimination of the material basis of all forms of social oppression, hinges on the question of leadership. The panoply of potential "socialist" leaderships are in the final analysis reducible to two programs: reform or revolution. While purporting to offer a "practical" strategy for the gradual amelioration of the inequities of class society, reformism acts to reconcile the working class to the requirements of capital. Revolutionary Marxism, by contrast, is based on the fundamental antagonism between capital and labor and the consequent necessity for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat as the precondition for any significant social progress.

The hegemony of bourgeois ideology in its various forms within the proletariat represents the most powerful

bulwark to capitalist rule. As James P. Cannon, the historic leader of American Trotskyism, noted in *The First Ten Years of American Communism*:

"The strength of capitalism is not in itself and its own institutions; it survives only because it has bases of support in the organizations of the workers. As we see it now, in the light of what we have learned from the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, nine-tenths of the struggle for socialism is the struggle against bourgeois influence in the workers' organizations, including the party."

The key distinction between a revolutionary organization and a centrist or reformist one is found not so much in abstract statements of ultimate goals and objectives, but in the positions which each advances in the concrete situations posed by the class struggle. Reformists and centrists tailor their programmatic response to each new event in accordance with the illusions and preconceptions of their audience. But the role of a revolutionary is to tell the workers and the oppressed what they do not already know.

"The program must express the objective tasks of the working class rather than the backwardness of the workers. It must reflect society as it is and not the backwardness of the working class. It is an instrument to overcome and vanquish the backwardness....We cannot postpone, modify objective conditions which don't depend upon us. We cannot guarantee that the masses will solve the crisis, but we must express the situation as it is, and that is the task of the program."

-Trotsky, "The Political Backwardness of the American Workers," 1938

We seek to root the communist program in the working class through building programmatically-based caucuses in the trade unions. Such formations must actively participate in all struggles for partial reform and improvements in the situation of the workers. They must also be the best upholders of the militant traditions of class solidarity, e.g., the proposition that "Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross!" At the same time they must seek to recruit the most politically conscious workers to a world view that transcends parochial shopfloor militancy, and addresses the burning political questions of the day in a fashion which points to the necessity of eliminating the anarchy of production for profit and replacing it with rational, planned production for human need.

Our intervention in the mass organizations of the proletariat is based on the Transitional Program adopted by the founding convention of the Fourth International in 1938. In a certain sense there can be no such thing as a "finished program" for Marxists. It is necessary to take account of historical developments in the past five decades and the need to address problems posed by specific struggles of sectors of the class and/or the oppressed which are not dealt with in the 1938 draft. Nonetheless, in its essentials, the program upon which the Fourth International was founded retains all its relevance because it poses socialist solutions to the objective problems facing the working class today in the context of the unchanging necessity of proletarian power.

2. Permanent Revolution

Over the past five hundred years, capitalism has created a single world economic order with an interna-

tional division of labor. We live in the epoch of imperialism--the epoch of capitalist decline. Experience this century has demonstrated that the national bourgeoisies of the neo-colonial world are incapable of completing the historic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. There is, in general, no path of independent capitalist development open for these countries.

In the neo-colonial countries the accomplishments of the classical bourgeois revolutions can only be replicated by smashing capitalist property relations, severing the tentacles of the imperialist world market and establishing working class (i.e., collectivized) property. Only a socialist revolution--a revolution carried out *against* the national bourgeoisie and big landowners--can lead to a qualitative expansion of the productive forces.

We reject the Stalinist/Menshevik "two-stage" strategy of proletarian subordination to the supposed "progressive" sectors of the bourgeoisie. We stand for the complete and unconditional political independence of the proletariat in every country. Without exception, the national bourgeoisies of the "Third World" act as the agents of imperialist domination whose interests are, in a historic sense, far more closely bound up with the bankers and industrialists of the metropolis than with their own exploited peoples.

Trotskyists offer military, but not political, support to petty-bourgeois nationalist movements (or even bourgeois regimes) which enter into conflict with imperialism in defense of national sovereignty. In 1935, for example, the Trotskyists stood for military victory of the Ethiopians over the Italian invaders. However, Leninists cannot automatically determine their position on a war between two bourgeois regimes from their relative level of development (or underdevelopment). In the squalid 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war, where the defense of Argentine sovereignty was never at issue, Leninists called for both British and Argentine workers to "turn the guns around"--for revolutionary defeatism on both sides.

3. Guerrillaism

Our strategy for revolution is mass proletarian insurrection. We reject guerrillaism as a strategic orientation (while recognizing that it can sometimes have supplementary tactical value) because it relegates the organized, politically conscious working class to the role of passive onlooker. A peasant-based guerrilla movement, led by radical petty-bourgeois intellectuals, cannot establish working-class political power *regardless* of the subjective intent of its leadership.

On several occasions since the end of the Second World War it has been demonstrated that, given favorable objective circumstances, such movements can successfully uproot capitalist property. Yet because they are not based on the mobilization of the organized working class, the best outcome of such struggles is the establishment of nationalist, bureaucratic regimes qualitatively identical to the product of the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Revolution (i.e., Yugoslavia, Albania, China, Vietnam and Cuba). Such "deformed worker states" require supplementary proletarian political revolutions to open the road to socialist development.

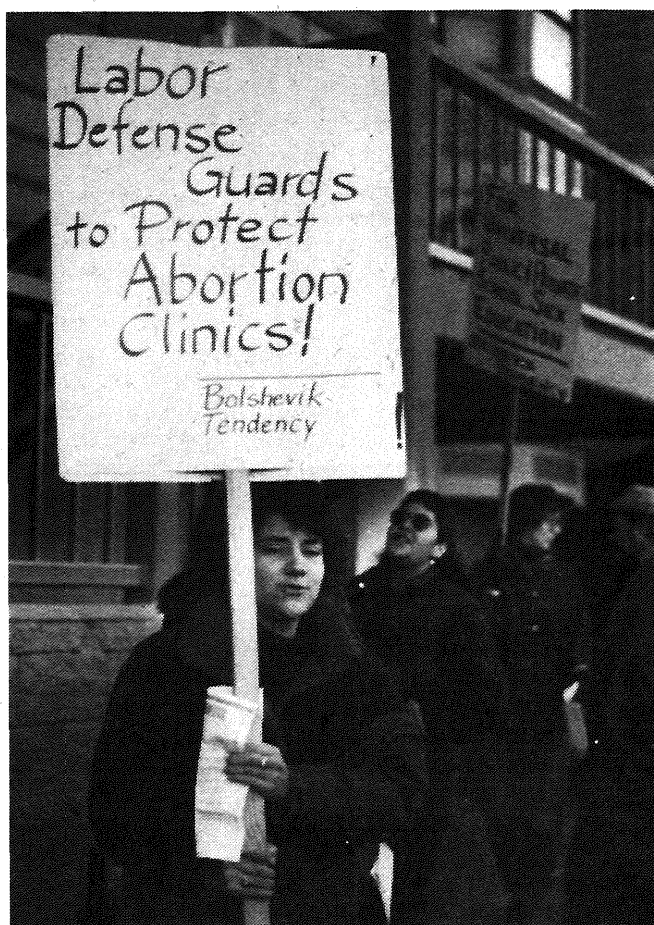
4. Special Oppression: The Black Question, The Woman Question

The working class today is deeply fractured along racial, sexual, national and other lines. Yet racism, national chauvinism and sexism are not genetically but rather socially programmed forms of behavior. Regardless of their present level of consciousness, the workers of the world have one crucial thing in common: they cannot fundamentally improve their situation, as a class, without destroying the social basis of all oppression and exploitation once and for all. This is the material basis for the Marxist assertion that the proletariat has as its historic mission the elimination of class society and with that the eradication of all forms of extra-class or "special" oppression.

In the United States, the struggle for workers power is inextricably linked to the struggle for black liberation. The racial division between black and white workers has historically been the *primary* obstacle to class consciousness. American blacks are not a nation but a race-color caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of society and concentrated overwhelmingly in the working class, particularly in strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat. Brutalized, abused and systematically discriminated against in the "land of the free," the black population has historically been relatively immune to the racist imperial patriotism which has poisoned much of the white proletariat. Black workers have generally proved the most militant and combative section of the class. The fight for black liberation--against the everyday racist brutality of life in capitalist America--is central to the construction of a revolutionary vanguard on the North American continent. The struggle against the special oppression of the other national, linguistic and racial minorities, particularly the growing Latino population, is a question which will also be key to the American revolution.

The oppression of women is materially rooted in the existence of the nuclear family: the basic and indispensable unit of bourgeois social organization. The fight for complete social equality for women is of strategic importance in every country on the globe. A closely related form of special oppression is that experienced by homosexuals who are persecuted for failing to conform to the sexual roles dictated by the "normalcy" of the nuclear family. The gay question is not strategic like the woman question, but the communist vanguard must champion the democratic rights of homosexuals and oppose any and all discriminatory measures directed at them.

In the unions communists campaign for equal access to all jobs; union-sponsored programs to recruit and upgrade women and minorities in "non-traditional" fields; equal pay for equivalent work and jobs for all. At the same time we defend the seniority system as a historic acquisition of the trade-union movement and oppose such divisive and anti-union schemes as preferential layoffs. It is the historic responsibility of the communist vanguard to struggle to unite the working class for its common class interests across the artificial divisions promoted in capitalist society. To do this means to advance the interests of the most exploited and oppressed and to struggle relentlessly against every manifestation of discrimination and injustice.



1917

BT supporters protest anti-abortion terror

The oppressed sectors of the population cannot liberate themselves *independently* of proletarian revolution, i.e., within the framework of the social system which originated and perpetuates their oppression. As Lenin noted in *State and Revolution*:

"Only the proletariat--by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production--is capable of being the leader of all the toiling and exploited masses, whom the bourgeoisie exploits, oppresses and crushes often not less, but more, than it does the proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an independent struggle for their emancipation."

We live in a class society and the program of every social movement must, in the final analysis, represent the interests of one of the two classes with the potential to rule society: the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. In the trade unions, bourgeois ideology takes the form of narrow economism; in the movements of the oppressed it manifests itself as sectoralism. What black nationalism, feminism and other forms of sectoralist ideology have in common is that they all locate the root of oppression in something other than the system of capitalist private property.

The strategic orientation of the Marxist vanguard toward "independent" (i.e., multi-class) sectoralist organizations of the oppressed must be to assist in their internal differentiation into their class components. This implies a struggle to win as many individuals as possible to



British soldier searches Belfast citizen

the perspective of proletarian revolution and the consequent necessity of an integrated vanguard party.

5. The National Question and "Interpenetrated Peoples"

"Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the 'most just', 'purest', most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism...."

--V.I. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question"

Marxism and nationalism are two fundamentally counterposed world views. We uphold the principle of the equality of nations, and oppose any privileges for any nation. At the same time Marxists reject all forms of nationalist ideology and, in Lenin's words, welcome "every kind of assimilation of nations, except that founded on force and privilege." The Leninist program on the national question is primarily a negative one designed to take the national question off the agenda and undercut the appeal of petty-bourgeois nationalists, in order to more starkly pose the class question.

In "classic" cases of national oppression (e.g., Quebec), we champion the right of self-determination,

without necessarily advocating its exercise. In the more complex cases of two peoples interspersed, or "interpenetrated," throughout a single geographical territory (Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Palestine/Israel), the abstract right of each to self-determination cannot be realized equitably within the framework of capitalist property relations. Yet in none of these cases can the oppressor people be equated with the whites in South Africa or the French colons in Algeria; i.e., a privileged settler-caste/labor aristocracy dependent on the superexploitation of indigenous labor to maintain a standard of living qualitatively higher than the oppressed population.

Both the Irish Protestants and the Hebrew-speaking population of Israel are class-differentiated peoples. Each has a bourgeoisie, a petty bourgeoisie and a working class. Unlike guilty middle-class moralists, Leninists do not simply endorse the nationalism of the oppressed (or the petty-bourgeois political formations which espouse it). To do so simultaneously forecloses the possibility of exploiting the real class contradictions in the ranks of the oppressor people and cements the hold of the nationalists over the oppressed. The proletarians of the ascendant people can never be won to a nationalist perspective of simply inverting the current unequal relationship. A significant section of them *can* be won to an anti-sectarian class-against-class perspective because it is in their objective interests.

The logic of capitulation to petty-bourgeois nationalism led much of the left to support the Arab rulers (the embodiment of the so-called "Arab Revolution") against the Israelis in the Mid-East wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973. In essence these were inter-capitalist wars in which the workers and oppressed of the region had nothing to gain by the victory of either. The Leninist position was therefore one of defeatism on both sides. For both Arab and Hebrew workers the main enemy was at home. The 1956 war was a different matter; in that conflict the working class had a side: with Nasser against the attempts of French and British imperialism (aided by the Israelis) to reappropriate the recently nationalized Suez Canal.

While opposing nationalism as a matter of principle, Leninists are not neutral in conflicts between the oppressed people and the oppressor state apparatus. In Northern Ireland we demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops and we defend the blows struck by the Irish Republican Army at such imperialist targets as the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the British army or the hotel full of Conservative cabinet ministers at Brighton. Similarly, we militarily side with the Palestinian Liberation Organization against the forces of the Israeli state. In no case do we defend terrorist acts directed at civilian populations. This, despite the fact that the criminal terrorism of the Zionist state against the Palestinians, like that of the British army and their Protestant allies against the Catholics of Northern Ireland, is many times greater than the acts of communal terror by the oppressed.

6. Immigration/Emigration

Leninists support the basic democratic right of any individual to emigrate to any country in the world. As in



Striking truck drivers, led by Trotskyists, disperse cops: Minneapolis, May 1934

the case of other democratic rights, this is not some sort of categorical imperative. We would not, for example, favor the emigration of any individual who would pose a threat to the military security of the degenerated or deformed worker states. The right of individual immigration, if exercised on a sufficiently wide scale, can come into conflict with the right of self-determination for a small nation. Therefore Trotskyists do not raise the call for "open borders" as a general programmatic demand. In Palestine during the 1930's and 1940's, for example, the massive influx of Zionist immigration laid the basis for the forcible expulsion of the Palestinian people from their own land. We do not recognize the "right" of unlimited Han migration to Tibet, nor of French citizens to move to New Caledonia.

The "open borders" demand is generally advocated by well-meaning liberal/radical muddleheads motivated by a utopian desire to rectify the hideous inequalities produced by the imperialist world order. But world socialist revolution--not mass migration--is the Marxist solution to the misery and destitution of the majority of mankind under capitalism.

In the U.S., we defend Mexican workers apprehended by *La Migra*. We oppose all immigration quotas, all roundups and all deportations of immigrant workers. In the

unions we fight for the immediate and unconditional granting of full citizenship rights to all foreign-born workers.

7. Democratic Centralism

A revolutionary organization must be strictly centralized with the leading bodies having full authority to direct the work of lower bodies and members. The organization must have a political monopoly over the public political activity of its members. The membership must be guaranteed the right of full factional democracy (i.e., the right to conduct internal political struggle to change the line and/or to replace the existing leadership). Internal democracy is not a decorative frill--nor merely a safety valve for the ranks to blow off steam--it is a critical and indispensable necessity for the revolutionary vanguard if it is to master the complex developments of the class struggle. It is also the chief means by which revolutionary cadres are created. The right to internal factional democracy, i.e., the right to struggle against revisionism within the vanguard, is the only "guarantee" against the political degeneration of a revolutionary organization.

Attempts to gloss over important differences and blur lines of political demarcation internally can only weaken



Bayonets fixed, National Guard attacks blacks, Detroit 1967

and disorient a revolutionary party. An organization cohered by diplomacy, lowest-common-denominator consensus and the concomitant programmatic ambiguity (instead of principled programmatic agreement and the struggle for political clarity) awaits only the first serious test posed by the class struggle to break apart. Conversely, organizations in which the expression of differences is proscribed—whether formally or informally—are destined to ossify into rigid, hierarchical and lifeless sects increasingly divorced from the living workers movement and unable to reproduce the cadres necessary to carry out the tasks of a revolutionary vanguard.

8. Popular Fronts

"The question of questions at present is the Popular Front. The left centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver, so as to be able to peddle their wares in the shadow of the Popular Front. In reality, the Popular Front is the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism."

--Trotsky, "The POUM and the Popular Front," 1936

Popular frontism (i.e., a programmatic bloc, usually for governmental power, between workers organizations and representatives of the bourgeoisie) is class treason. Revolutionaries can give no support, however "critical," to participants in popular fronts.

The tactic of critical electoral support to reformist workers parties is premised on the contradiction inherent in such parties between their bourgeois (reformist)

program and their working-class base. When a social-democratic or Stalinist party enters into a coalition or electoral bloc with bourgeois or petty-bourgeois formations, this contradiction is effectively suppressed for the life of the coalition. A member of a reformist workers party who stands for election on the ticket of a class-collaborationist coalition (or popular front) is in fact running as a representative of a *bourgeois* political formation. Thus the possibility of the application of the tactic of critical support is excluded, because the contradiction which it seeks to exploit is suspended. Instead, revolutionists should make a condition of electoral support the breaking of the coalition: "Down With the Capitalist Ministers!"

9. United Fronts and "Strategic United Fronts"

The united front is a tactic with which revolutionaries seek to approach reformist or centrist formations to "set the base against the top" in situations where there is an urgent felt need for united action on the part of the ranks. It is possible to enter into united-front agreements with petty-bourgeois or bourgeois formations where there is an episodic agreement on a particular issue and where it is in the interests of the working class to do so (e.g., the Bolsheviks' united front with Kerensky against Kornilov). The united front is a tactic which is not only designed to accomplish the common objective but also to demonstrate *in practice* the superiority of the revolutionary program and thus gain new influence and adherents for the vanguard organization.

Revolutionists never consign the responsibility of revolutionary leadership to an ongoing alliance (or "strategic united front") with centrist or reformist forces. Trotskyists never issue common propaganda--joint statements of overall political perspective--with revisionists. Such a practice is both dishonest (as it inevitably involves papering over the political differences separating the organizations) and liquidationist. The "strategic united front" is a favorite gambit of opportunists who, despairing of their own small influence, seek to compensate for it by dissolution into a broader bloc on a lowest-common-denominator program. In "Centrism and the Fourth International," Trotsky explained that a revolutionary organization is distinguished from a centrist one by its "active concern for purity of principles, clarity of position, political consistency and organizational completeness." It is just this which the strategic united front is designed to obliterate.

10. Workers Democracy

Revolutionary Marxists, who are distinguished by the fact that they tell the workers the truth, can only benefit from open political confrontation between the various competing currents in the left. It is otherwise with the reformists and centrists. The Stalinists, social democrats, trade-union bureaucrats and other working-class misleaders all shrink from revolutionary criticism and seek to pre-empt political discussion and debate with gangsterism and exclusions.

We oppose violence and exclusionism within the left and workers movement while upholding the right of everyone to self-defense. We also oppose the use of "soft-core" violence--i.e., slander--which goes hand-in-hand with (or prepares the way for) physical attacks. Slander and violence within the workers movement are completely alien to the traditions of revolutionary Marxism because they are deliberately designed to *destroy* consciousness, the precondition for the liberation of the proletariat.

11. The State and Revolution

The question of the state occupies a central place in revolutionary theory. Marxism teaches that the capitalist state (in the final analysis the "special bodies of armed men" committed to the defense of bourgeois property) cannot be taken over and made to serve the interests of working people. Working-class rule can only be established through the destruction of the existing bourgeois state machinery and its replacement with institutions committed to the defense of proletarian property.

We are adamantly opposed to bringing the bourgeois state, in any guise, into the affairs of the labor movement. Marxists oppose all union "reformers" who seek redress from bureaucratic corruption in the capitalist courts. Labor must clean its own house! We also call for the expulsion of all cops and prison guards from the trade-union movement.

The duty of revolutionists is to teach the working class that the state is not an impartial arbiter between competing social interests but a weapon wielded against them by the capitalists. Accordingly, Marxists oppose reform-

mist/utopian calls for the bourgeois state to "ban" the fascists. Such laws are invariably used much more aggressively against the workers movement and the left than against the fascistic scum who constitute the shock troops of capitalist reaction. The Trotskyist strategy to fight fascism is not to make appeals to the bourgeois state, but to mobilize the power of the working class and the oppressed for direct action to crush fascistic movements in the egg *before* they are able to grow. As Trotsky remarked in the *Transitional Program*, "The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory--and ends in the street."

Leninists reject all notions that imperialist troops can play a progressive role anywhere: whether "protecting" black schoolchildren in the Southern U.S., "protecting" the Catholic population in Northern Ireland or "keeping the peace" in the Middle East. Neither do we seek to pressure the imperialists to act "morally" by divesting nor by imposing sanctions on South Africa. We argue instead that the "Free World" powers are fundamentally united with the racist apartheid regime in defense of the "right" to superexploit black labor. Our answer is to mobilize the power of international labor in effective class-struggle solidarity actions with South Africa's black workers.

12. The Russian Question

"What is Stalinophobia? Is it hatred of Stalinism; fear of this 'syphilis of the labor movement' and irreconcilable refusal to tolerate any manifestation of it in the party? Not at all....

"Is it the opinion that Stalinism is not the leader of the international revolution but its mortal enemy? No, that is not Stalinophobia; that is what Trotsky taught us, what we learned again from our experience with Stalinism, and what we believe in our bones.

"The sentiment of hatred and fear of Stalinism, with its police state and its slave labor camps, its frame-ups and its murders of working-class opponents, is healthy, natural, normal, and progressive. This sentiment goes wrong only when it leads to reconciliation with American imperialism, and to the assignment of the fight against Stalinism to that same imperialism. In the language of Trotskyism, that and nothing else is Stalinophobia."

--James P. Cannon, "Stalinist Conciliationism and Stalinophobia," 1953

We stand for the unconditional defense of the collectivized economies of the degenerated Soviet worker state and the deformed worker states of Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, China, North Korea and Cuba against capitalist restoration. Yet we do not lose sight for a moment of the fact that only proletarian political revolutions, which overthrow the treacherous anti-working class bureaucrats who rule these states, can guarantee the gains won to date and open the road to socialism.

The victory of the Stalinist faction in the Soviet Union in the 1920's under the banner of "Socialism in One Country" was crowned with the physical extermination of the leading cadres of Lenin's party a decade later. By counterposing the defense of the Soviet Union to the world revolution, the Stalinist usurpers decisively undermine both. The perspective of proletarian insurrection in order to reestablish the direct political rule of the working class is therefore not counterposed but inextricably linked to the defense of the collectivized economies.

The Russian question has been posed most sharply in recent years over two events: the suppression of Polish Solidarnosc and the intervention of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. We side militarily with the Stalinists against both the capitalist-restorationists of Solidarnosc and the Islamic feudalists fighting to preserve female chattel slavery in Afghanistan. This does not imply that the Stalinist bureaucrats have any progressive historical role to play. On the contrary. Nonetheless, we defend those actions (like the December 1981 suppression of Solidarnosc) which they are forced to take in defense of the working-class property forms.

13. For the Rebirth of the Fourth International

"Trotskyism is not a new movement, a new doctrine, but the restoration, the revival, of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practised in the Russian revolution and in the early days of the Communist International."

--James P. Cannon, The History of American Trotskyism

Trotskyism is the revolutionary Marxism of our time--the political theory derived from the distilled experience of over a century-and-a-half of working-class communism. It was verified in a positive sense in the October Revolution in 1917, the greatest event in modern history, and generally negatively since. After the bureaucratic strangulation of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern by the Stalinists, the tradition of Leninism--the practice and program of the Russian Revolution--was carried forward by the Left Opposition and by it alone.

The Trotskyist movement was born in a struggle for revolutionary internationalism against the reactionary/utopian conception of "Socialism in One Country." The necessity of revolutionary organization on an international basis derives from the organization of capitalist production itself. Revolutionists on each national terrain must be guided by a strategy which is international in dimension--and that can only be elaborated by the construction of an international working-class leadership. To the patriotism of the bourgeoisie and its social-democratic and Stalinist lackeys, the Trotskyists counterpose Karl Liebknecht's immortal slogan: "The Main Enemy is At Home!" We stand on the basic programmatic positions adopted by the 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International, as well as the first four congresses of the Communist International and the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky.

The cadres of the Fourth International outside of North America were largely annihilated or dispersed in the course of the Second World War. The International was definitively politically destroyed by Pabloite revisionism in the early 1950's. We are not neutral in the 1951-53 split--we side with the International Committee (IC) against the Pabloite International Secretariat (IS). The IC's fight was profoundly flawed both in terms of political framework and execution. Nonetheless, in the final analysis, the impulse of the IC to resist the dissolution of the Trotskyist cadre into the Stalinist and social-democratic parties (as proposed by Pablo) and its defense of the necessity of the conscious factor in history,

made it qualitatively superior to the liquidationist IS.

Within the IC the most important section was the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It had also been the strongest section at the time of the founding of the International. It had benefited by the most direct collaboration with Trotsky and had a leading cadre which went back to the early years of the Comintern. The political collapse of the SWP as a revolutionary organization, signalled by its uncritical enthusing over Castroism in the early 1960's, and culminating in its defection to the Pabloites in 1963, was therefore an enormous blow to world Trotskyism.

We solidarize with the struggle of the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP (forerunner of the Spartacist League/US) to defend the revolutionary program against the centrist objectivism of the majority. We stand on the Trotskyist positions defended and elaborated by the revolutionary Spartacist League in the years that followed. However, under the pressure of two decades of isolation and frustration, the SL itself has qualitatively degenerated into a grotesquely bureaucratic and overtly cultist group of political bandits which, despite a residual capacity for cynical "orthodox" literary posturing, has shown a consistent impulse to flinch under pressure. The "international Spartacist tendency" today is in no important sense politically superior to any of the dozen or more fake-Trotskyist "internationals" which lay claim to the mantle of the Fourth International.

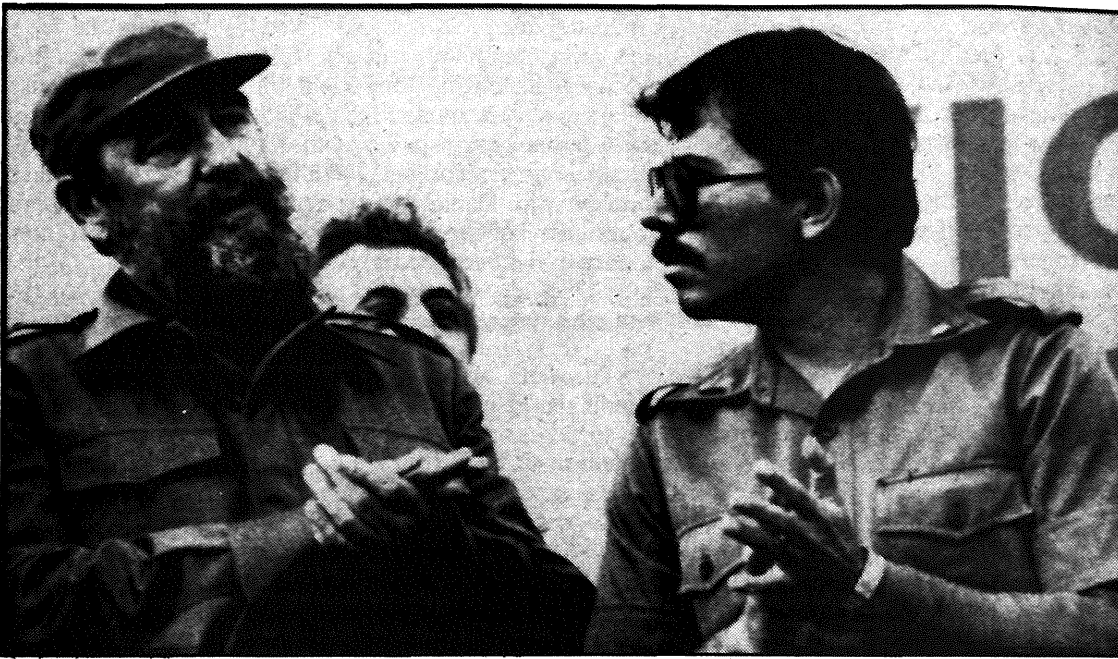
The splintering of several of the historic pretenders to Trotskyist continuity and the difficulties and generally rightward motion of the rest opens a potentially fertile period for political reassessment and realignment among those who do not believe that the road to socialism lies through the British Labour Party, Lech Walesa's capitalist-restorationist Solidarnosc or the Chilean popular front. We urgently seek to participate in a process of international regroupment of revolutionary cadres on the basis of the program of authentic Trotskyism, as a step toward the long overdue rebirth of the Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution.

"On the basis of a long historical experience, it can be written down as a law that revolutionary cadres, who revolt against their social environment and organize parties to lead a revolution, can--if the revolution is too long delayed--themselves degenerate under the continuing influences and pressures of this same environment..."

"But the same historical experience also shows that there are exceptions to this law too. The exceptions are the Marxists who remain Marxists, the revolutionists who remain faithful to the banner. The basic ideas of Marxism, upon which alone a revolutionary party can be constructed, are continuous in their application and have been for a hundred years. The ideas of Marxism, which create revolutionary parties, are stronger than the parties they create and never fail to survive their downfall. They never fail to find representatives in the old organizations to lead the work of reconstruction.

"These are the continuators of the tradition, the defenders of the orthodox doctrine. The task of the uncorrupted revolutionists, obliged by circumstances to start the work of organizational reconstruction, has never been to proclaim a new revelation--there has been no lack of such Messiahs, and they have all been lost in the shuffle--but to reinstate the old program and bring it up to date."

--James P. Cannon, The First Ten Years of American Communism



Fidel Castro and
Daniel Ortega

(continued from page 4)

The two members of the PMLN in the Nicaraguan National Assembly have generally acted as a left opposition to the Sandinistas. They have avoided compromising themselves in the fashion of the two pro-Moscow parties (the Nicaraguan Socialist Party and the Nicaraguan Communist Party), both of which signed a joint statement with three bourgeois parties opposing, from the right, the FSLN's "hegemonism" and demanding "real political pluralism [and] respect for the mixed economy" (quoted in *International Viewpoint*, 29 September 1986). The PMLN representatives' wobbles seem to tend in the direction of political support to the petty-bourgeois Sandinista regime. According to *El Socialista*, (newspaper of the ostensibly Trotskyist Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores) last July the PMLN voted for a law that restored formal ranks to the army and vested the right to make senior appointments in the president. This is tantamount to a vote of confidence in the FSLN.

The Necessity of Workers Councils

The PMLN complains that FO workers are often fired and replaced by members of the Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST). Despite this harassment, the FO is slowly picking up support among workers disenchanted with the FSLN. PMLN cadres have also reportedly undertaken limited, semi-clandestine activity in a few Sandinista unions and have supported the struggles of the odd dissident CST local. But their strategy centers on conquering the masses by gradually building their own small trade-union federation into the hegemonic organization of the class. This is a serious political mistake. Apart from anything else, there is not enough time.

The Nicaraguan working class is divided up among a half dozen union centrals, each of which is aligned with a political party. The CST, with 100,000 members, is by far the largest union. In this situation, the correct application of the united front tactic is critical. It is necessary to

coalesce the workers *across* union, party and craft lines to defend proletarian political rights and living standards and to combat capitalist sabotage.

Localized united fronts could lay the foundation for the creation of ongoing workers councils constituted on the basis of direct workplace representation. Such councils (or soviets) would represent what Leon Trotsky called "*the highest form of the united front* under the conditions in which the proletariat enters the epoch of fighting for power" ("What Next?" January 1932). By linking workers regionally and nationally, and branching out to organize parallel formations among the peasants and soldiers, these councils could constitute the broad, authoritative organizational framework necessary to make working class rule possible. In the meantime, they would provide an arena within which revolutionaries could struggle to convince the Sandinistas' proletarian base to abandon the "third road" and strike out for workers power.

To the best of our knowledge the PMLN/FO does not call for the creation of such formations. This is perhaps to be expected of a political tendency which regards the sectarian isolation of the Comintern's "red unions" in the Third Period as the high point of communist trade-union tactics (see "The Myth of the Third Period" in this issue), but it is contrary to the Leninist tradition that the PMLN claims to represent.

The PRT: Nicaragua's Ostensible Trotskyists

The only other consequential "far left" organization in Nicaragua today is the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT) which is affiliated with the fake-Trotskyist International Workers League (IWL). A resolution of the IWL's International Secretariat (published in the October 1986 issue of *Working Class Opposition--WCO*) reported that last May Day, the PRT put forward a six-point program which called for expropriating American corporations, cancelling the foreign debt and nationalizing large companies and farms under workers control. These demands are fine as far as they

go, but who is to implement them? The recently deceased Nahuel Moreno, the IWL's historic *lider maximo*, made it pretty clear that they are addressed to the Sandinista comandantes: "...in Nicaragua, we must criticize the government because it does not expropriate the entire bourgeoisie, which in fact supports the *contras*. We must demand from the Sandinistas that they carry out that expropriation measure, indispensable for ending imperialist aggression" (WCO, December 1986).

The Morenoites cast the PRT in the role of a left pressure group on the Sandinista bonapartists, not as a Leninist opposition. The IWL resolution on Nicaragua concludes: "These proposals would guarantee the best defense of Nicaragua, while, at the same time, would open the door to transforming Nicaragua into a new Cuba, that is to say, into the second free territory of America." This is their maximum program--a bureaucratically deformed workers state on the Cuban model.

Trotskyists seek to mobilize the proletariat for power through its own class organizations to establish a state ruled by the workers *directly*--not via the agency of petty-bourgeois formations like the FSLN or Castro's July 26 Movement. The whole orientation of the pseudo-Trotskyist objectivists like the IWL is to look for some substitute for a Leninist vanguard as the agency of historical progress. The comrades of the PRT would do well to contemplate the fate of the Cuban Trotskyists when Castro came to power: their leaders were jailed, their newspaper suppressed and the printing plates for a Spanish edition of Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* were smashed.

This same mistaken orientation toward the FSLN leadership is evident in the September 1986 motion put forward by the Political Commission of the PRT which addressed the new constitution. While opposing the inclusion of "the triangle of bourgeois principles known as 'mixed economy, political pluralism, and non-alignment'" and reiterating the demands advanced in the May Day statement, the PRT calls for a national assembly of recallable delegates from workplaces, farms, native communities and military units. This is in place of the urgently necessary call for the creation of workers councils.

This is no mere terminological fine point. Without the independent organization of the proletariat, it will not be possible to transcend the FSLN's nationalist program of multi-class alliance. The PRT's program proposes: "The President of the Republic must not have more powers than the unions and organizations of the masses. On the contrary, the President of the Republic...must consult and apply the decisions of the National Assembly of workers, peasants, soldiers and native representatives." Instead of rule by the independent organizations of the class, extending from each factory and hacienda through regional and national bodies, the PRT proposes a more democratic parliament to *share* power (and political responsibility) with the FSLN president.

The struggle for workers power in Nicaragua requires a hard political break with the FSLN--and this is something the IWL is loath to do. Any attempt to establish independent organs of working-class power would soon meet with the resistance of the FSLN bonapartists in the National Palace. A regime which has indefinitely suspended the right to strike and has repeatedly cen-

sored the left press is hardly likely to welcome the creation of autonomous organs of proletarian rule. Yet without challenging the right of the FSLN to rule Nicaragua, it is impossible to move the revolution forward, to safeguard the gains to date and to crush the internal counterrevolution. While standing shoulder to shoulder with Daniel Ortega against the *contras* and their imperialist backers, Trotskyists place no political confidence in the petty-bourgeois FSLN leadership.

For A Leninist Party in Nicaragua!

The duty of Nicaraguan Bolsheviks is not only to defend the gains of the revolution to date and complete the social revolution by expropriating the *contra's* fifth column in COSEP (the main employers' federation), but also to spread the revolution beyond Nicaragua's frontiers. The geo-political realities of a single small state, integrated as a dependent and agrarian-based component in the international capitalist economic order, are such that even the elimination of market relations within Nicaragua would represent only a first step toward the liberation of the masses from the poverty and backwardness imposed on them by imperialism. The fate of the Nicaraguan revolution is inextricably tied up with the victory of the workers and peasants throughout the rest of Central and Latin America. In the final analysis, the Nicaraguan workers can only safeguard their revolution against imperialist attack by spreading it throughout the whole of Central America and linking up with the powerful Mexican and South American proletariats.

Both the PMLN and the PRT stand qualitatively to the left of the Sandinistas. Yet each, in its own way, is the prisoner of a flawed political tradition. Both criticize the FSLN, but neither is prepared for a definitive break with the Sandinistas in the fashion of Lenin's break with the Provisional Government in Russia in April 1917. Lenin insisted: "The masses must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies are the *only possible* form of revolutionary government." His governmental slogan was: "Not a parliamentary republic--to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step--but a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Laborers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom" ("The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," April 1917). This hard political opposition was the precondition for the Bolshevik October.

The triumph of the workers and oppressed masses of Nicaragua depends above all on the existence of the subjective factor--a firm party with a correct program. As Trotsky wrote of the Bolshevik insurrection of 1917: "One can say with certainty, however, on the basis of all the lessons of history, that had there been no Bolshevik Party the immeasurable revolutionary energy of the masses would have been fruitlessly spent in sporadic explosions, and the great upheavals would have ended in the severest counterrevolutionary dictatorship" ("Lessons of October," November 1935). Despite the undoubted heroism and dedication of militants in the PMLN, PRT and the mass organizations of the FSLN, there is no such party in Nicaragua today. The most urgent task for Nicaraguan revolutionaries is to create one. ●

Down With Slander and Hooliganism

Defend Workers Democracy!

Workers democracy--the commitment to full and free discussion within the labor movement and the resolution of differences through rational argument and political debate--is for Marxists a question of principle. Revolutionary consciousness cannot be taught by rote, nor can it be imposed on a reluctant or passive working class. The attempt to do so is a profound departure from the Marxist program. Revolutionaries can win political hegemony in the working class only through the patient and pedagogical political exposure of all variants, however sophisticated, of bourgeois consciousness in the workers movement.

The requirements of the existing reformist leadership of the working class are just the opposite. Their influence depends on the class remaining passive and confused. They therefore cultivate faith in capitalist legality, "proper channels" and the parliamentary road to socialism. They deal with criticisms from their left by expelling or otherwise silencing their opponents. Those who resort to such apolitical and irrational methods acknowledge implicitly their inability to win on the terrain of politics.

The twin tactics of slander and violence and/or reliance on the bourgeois state were pioneered by the social-democratic bureaucrats of the Second International in their attempts to suppress left-wing minorities. In 1917 Lenin, Trotsky and the other Bolshevik leaders were branded as hirelings of the Kaiser by their Menshevik opponents. Noske's and Scheidemann's murderous "critique" of Luxemburg and Liebknecht represented the ultimate counterrevolutionary logic of political bankruptcy.

The Legacy of Stalinism

The Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International extended and "enriched" these practices (for which, among other things, Trotsky aptly dubbed Stalinism the "syphilis of the workers movement"). Freedom of expression was abolished within the Stalinized Communist Parties. Slander, lies and hooliganism replaced argument in dealing with political opponents, whether internally or publicly. This reached its pinnacle in the infamous Moscow purge trials of the 1930's in which the majority of Lenin's Central Committee was exterminated.

The members of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International fought long and hard against Stalinist slander and violence. Among nominal Trotskyists in the English-speaking world, such practices have, until recently, been associated almost exclusively with the followers of Gerry Healy. Yet attempts to circumvent discussion and debate with administrative measures are increasingly common within the "Trotskyist" left in North America. This is ultimately a product of the rightward drift of left organizations and the theoretic and programmatic regression which inevitably accompanies such political motion.



"He seeks to strike not at the ideas of his opponent, but at his skull" (Trotsky on Stalin)

Both wings of the United Secretariat in North America (Jack Barnes' Socialist Workers Party and Ernest Mandel's adherents in the Alliance for Socialist Action) bar leftist critics from their public meetings, as do the American followers of the late Nahuel Moreno. Other organizations, like the International Socialists, resort to a less blatant form of anti-communism and restrict political opponents to a single speaker during the discussion period at their events.

Spartacist League: Trotskyist Rhetoric/Stalinist Tactics

In recent months the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) has been the target of a series of vicious attacks--both in the form of physical violence and slander--by the ex-Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL). The most serious incident occurred on 19 September, 1986 at the University of California's Berkeley campus. Comrades of the BT who attended an SL forum were roughly pushed out the door after the formal conclusion of the meeting and two were

shoved to the ground. When they protested this unprovoked hooliganism, several of the SL "ushers" went completely berserk and began a violent assault on the BT. (Two female comrades of the Left Trotskyist Tendency, who were attending their first Spartacist forum, received a few whacks when they attempted to stop the assault.)



Stalinist cartoon portrays Bukharin, Trotsky as Nazi dogs

Singled out for attack were two former SL trade-union supporters whose adherence to the BT the SL tops find particularly galling. Howard Keylor, a high-profile class-struggle militant in the San Francisco longshoremen's union, was thrown out into the lobby where SL goon Pete F. began to savagely bang his head on a bench. Bill S., well-known in Spartacist circles as the trade unionist who made a six-figure contribution to the SL from money awarded to him as a result of a serious industrial accident, was knocked to the floor and brutally kicked by Peter W. At this point the BT supporters began to retaliate.

The altercation ended when the SLers broke off their attack and went back to their room. Shortly thereafter a bunch of Berkeley campus cops turned up, presumably summoned by one of a roomful of horrified Christians meeting across the hall.

Even Slander Should Make Some Sense!

In a demonstration of what Stalin meant when he observed that paper will take anything written on it, the 26 September 1986 issue of the SL's *Workers Vanguard* (*WV*) glibly reversed the charges and portrayed the SL goons as innocent victims. For good measure, *WV* added the absurd smear that the fact that the campus cops turned up a few minutes after the whole thing was over, somehow "indicated a prearranged ambush" by the BT. This requires a considerable leap of faith, even for the dwindling number of devotees of SL founder/leader James Robertson, as the timing of the conclusion of the forum was determined by the SL itself. As Trotsky once

remarked, even slander should make some sense!

In a follow-up item *WV* devoted a full page article in its 5 December 1986 issue to the fact that we chose not to attend the next SL event in Berkeley. We had, in fact, planned to attend and asked a variety of left organizations to send observers with us in the hope that the presence of independent witnesses would forestall more SL gangsterism. Representatives of the Revolutionary Workers League, Workers Socialist League and Chile Solidarity Network as well as several unaffiliated leftists agreed to accompany us. So on 21 November, equipped only with newspapers, pencils and notebooks, we went to the SL meeting for a political debate.

When we finally found the hall (the location had been changed at the last minute for "security" reasons), we didn't much like the look of it. It was a church basement in a semi-deserted middle-class neighborhood with the only access down a narrow flight of concrete stairs. A knot of SL goons stood at the top of the stairs brandishing heavy police flashlights while more lurked at the bottom inside the door. We don't know what they had in mind, but it looked like it might have been more than political debate. Given the SL's increasingly erratic and violent behavior and their obsessive and fanatical hatred of the BT, we decided that it wasn't worth risking serious injury to find out. So we went home.

The attack at the 19 September forum had been preceded by a series of increasingly rabid and apolitical "polemics" in the pages of the Spartacist press over the past year or so. Last April, for example, *Workers Vanguard* printed a grotesquely falsified attack on Howard Keylor for supposedly supporting drug testing on the waterfront. Anyone who reads what Keylor actually wrote can quickly determine for themselves that the SL attack was a lie. (In the interests of elementary political sanitation, we have assembled a packet of materials, available for two dollars to interested readers, documenting the pattern of unprincipled and frenzied attacks on ourselves and other leftists by these political bandits.)

"Security and the international Spartacist tendency"

One of the articles of faith for the residents of "Jimstown" (as the SL is referred to by many of its members) is the belief in a gigantic web of intrigue connecting most of the organized left to various police agencies in a sinister conspiracy aimed at--what else?--the Spartacist League. Like the Healyite smear campaign against Joseph Hansen as a GPU/FBI agent, the SL's paranoid ravings are so patently absurd and self-serving that they have only discredited the organization among most of those who know or care about the North American "far left."

According to the 5 December 1986 *WV*, "the fake-Trotskyist, third-camp social-democratic swamp in which the BT has so deeply ensconced itself" ranges from "the Slaughter wing of the British WRP to Harry Turner to Sy Landy's LRP." (In earlier versions it has included the Communist Party and the Marxist-Leninist Party, among others.) All these organizations are supposedly united by "the perfect unity they have on opposing the communists of the SL."

The absurd notion that all the rest of the left is united

in a grand alliance with the police against the SL is *necessary* to the maintenance of the Robertson cult. It doesn't matter that such slanders don't make sense. The purpose is to cut off the SL ranks from any contact, even political argument, with people outside of their own closed milieu and bind them more closely to their degenerate leaders.

IWP & SL: Not-So-Strange Bedfellows

The Spartacist League is pretty well known on the left for shrill breast-beating, slander and a willingness to stoop to just about anything against its opponents. Most leftists who read the conflicting accounts of the 19 September attack concluded that the SL was guilty as charged. To our knowledge, only one organization rallied to the defense of the Robertsonites' "right" to brutalize its critics--the International Workers Party (IWP). At first glance, this may seem a bit odd as the IWP is led by one Nicholas Perez, whose name rarely appears in *Workers Vanguard* without mention of his 1982 hammer attack on several SLers who were excluded from an IWP "public" meeting in Los Angeles.

The IWP's newspaper, *Working Class Opposition (WCO)*, reported that at the end of the SL meeting, the "BT was invited to leave by the Spartacists, who then proceeded to push and shove the BTers out of the room...." Perez & Co. see nothing wrong with this, nor with the ensuing attack--after all, it is roughly how they treat opponents who dare show up at IWP events. *WCO* explains that: "Whoever sends a large number of people into a small forum with hostile political intentions--whether it is the SL, the BT, or anyone else--is looking for a fight, not a political debate and discussion." In other words, any left group that turns up at an IWP "public" meeting can expect pretty rough treatment.

But there is more to the IWP's defense of SL gangsterism than a shared contempt for workers

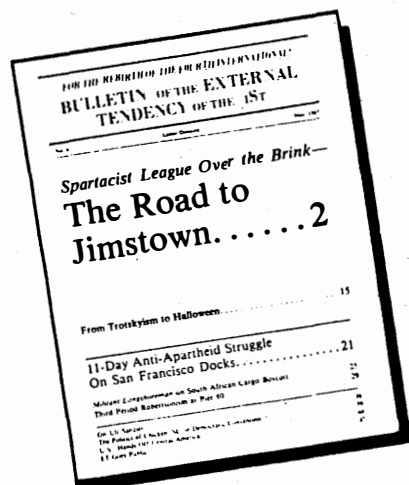
democracy. The Morenoites' "solidarity" with the SL is also fueled by antipathy toward the Left Trotskyist Tendency (LTT) which *WCO* refers to disingenuously as "a previously unheard of grouplet." In fact the comrades of the LTT were all well known to the IWP--they included three former members of its central committee and a third of its candidates for public office in the 1986 elections! Perez has not suddenly gone soft on James Robertson's nasty, contracting political cult. He has simply concluded that after the recent LTT/BT fusion, the Bolshevik Tendency is more politically dangerous to the IWP than the SL.

The IWP gave a graphic demonstration of its concept of workers democracy in San Francisco on 2 November when it announced arbitrarily that the SL and the black nationalists of Uhuru House were to be excluded from a public debate (ostensibly sponsored by the Peace and Freedom Party) held at the IWP office. All organizations which Perez & Co. considered to be to their left were either excluded or restricted, while social democrats, Stalinists and miscellaneous reformists were welcomed with open arms. We protested these politically motivated exclusions and demanded that the meeting be conducted in accordance with the norms of workers democracy. In response, the IWP added the BT and LTT to the list of banned organizations. On the night of the debate, twenty-five people (including supporters of the Freedom Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Workers League, the Workers Socialist League and various unaffiliated leftists) joined us in protesting the IWP's anti-communist exclusions.

For Workers Democracy!

Political differences among leftists must be dealt with *politically*. If a particular organization resorts to slander or falsification, the appropriate response is political exposure, not suppression. Invariably in the history of the workers movement, exclusions, physical suppression of opposing points of view and slander have been the weapons of reformists and bureaucrats against Marxists. This is not accidental, for they are the means of *destroying consciousness* and avoiding political debate.

We do not subscribe to the centrist interpretation of "non-sectarianism" as peaceful coexistence with everyone purporting to espouse Marxism. We seek to politically destroy revisionist formations in the labor movement--but our only weapon is trenchant Marxist criticism. At the same time, we have a consistent record of defending the democratic rights of *all* tendencies in the labor movement to participate in left meetings and demonstrations on an equal basis. The attempt to substitute lies and violence for reasoned argument and conviction weakens and demoralizes the workers movement and hampers unity in action against the class enemy. As revolutionists, we have confidence in our ideas and the historic capacity of working people to understand and act in their own rational self-interest. We are committed to the unconditional defense of the democratic rights of everyone in the labor movement, because we know that only through the full and free airing of all points of view in the left can the political vanguard of the proletariat come to embrace the Marxist program. ●



*A history of the degeneration of the SL/U.S.
from Trotskyism to political banditry. . . . \$1*

Order from/Pay to: BT, P.O. Box 31796,
Oakland, CA, 94604

SL Absence Marks End of Era

Keylor Upholds Class-struggle Program in ILWU

For the first time in over a dozen years, the Spartacist League (SL) will have no supporters on the Executive Board of San Francisco Local 10 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). Stan Gow, a supporter of the SL and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Tendency (a faction in the Socialist Workers Party), did not file for reelection last January, giving up a post he had held for 13 years. Gow's surrender of an elected post in the most political local of this strategic union marks the end of an era for the SL.

During the 1970's the SL, alone among the ostensible Trotskyist organizations, built class-struggle caucuses based programmatically on the Transitional Program in a number of important industrial unions. In the Communication Workers of America (CWA--telephone workers) and the ILWU, SL-supported caucuses became the recognized opposition to the class-collaborationist trade-union bureaucrats. Both caucuses had a stable and growing base of support with members elected consistently to local executive boards and as convention delegates.

In 1981 the SL-supported Militant Caucus (MC) held three executive board posts in warehouse Local 6 and two more in longshore Local 10. Today it holds none. This is directly attributable to the SL leadership's loss of political confidence in its ability to implant the Trotskyist program in the working class and its decision to withdraw its cadre from the unions. SL guru James Robertson feared that trade unionists who succeeded in building even a small mass base might some day pose an effective opposition to his increasingly bureaucratic control of the organization. To forestall such a development, the SL tops turned on their leading trade-union supporters (e.g., Jane Margolis, Bob Mandel and Howard Keylor). In almost all cases they were driven from their elected union posts and often from their jobs.

Keylor, a founding member of the MC in 1974 and co-editor of the *Longshore Militant*, came under fire from the SL leadership in 1981 because of his opposition to SL members flying during the air traffic controllers' strike and his fight against the bureaucratic suppression of political differences in the SL. He was ordered by the Militant Caucus to abandon his elected posts as a local executive board member and as a local convention delegate. He refused to participate in wrecking the work in longshore and so was forced to break with the caucus. When he ran for office on the same class-struggle program which he had upheld in the MC, the SL and its supporters embarked on a hysterical, lying campaign of vilification to try to defeat him.

But it didn't work. Despite the SL and MC slanders, the longshoremen continued to elect Keylor to the Local 10 Executive Board and, in 1984, to the Longshore Division Contract Caucus. In that body Keylor succeeded

in getting a number of class-struggle resolutions on the floor for consideration.

Gow's increasing sectarianism led him to abandon running on a class-struggle transitional program. Instead he campaigned on a maximum program of proletarian revolution while devoting much of his time to slandering Keylor. This bizarre sectarianism reached its height in 1984 when, for six days, Gow *opposed* a longshoremen's boycott of South African cargo. (The reason was that Keylor had been the initiator of the action.) With the connivance of his friends in the SL, Gow knowingly published an account of internal union decisions which provided the waterfront bosses with "Exhibit No. 1" for the federal court injunction used to crush this historic political strike. Gow's shameful behavior led to a drop in his vote in both the 1985 and 1986 union elections.

This year Keylor again won a seat on the executive board. As in the past, he campaigned on a full transitional program. He opposed the employers' demands for concessions (aimed at undermining the hiring hall, eliminating historic gains such as travel-time allowance and deregistering partially disabled longshoremen) and exposed the capitulationist, bureaucratic leadership of the International. He raised calls for international labor solidarity and working-class action to stop Reagan's war drive and opposed protectionist trade sanctions, government-employer strikebreaking and Nazi-Klan terror. The final point of Keylor's program called for a break with the Democrats and Republicans and the construction of a workers party based on the unions to fight for a workers government.

The political bandits who run the increasingly cultist Spartacist League were unsuccessful in driving Keylor out of principled trade-union politics, but the confusion and demoralization they spread among the longshoremen, who had previously supported the MC, set back the work and aborted the coalescing of a class-struggle caucus in longshore. Today the political continuity of revolutionary trade union work in the ILWU is represented solely by Keylor and the *Militant Longshoreman*.●

BT DIRECTORY

P.O. BOX 31796
Oakland CA, 94604, USA
(415) 562-3308

P.O. BOX 332
Adelaide St. Station
Toronto, Canada
(416) 461-8051



Fruits of Stalinist liquidation into KMT: massacre of communists, 1927

(continued from page 32)

paraphrase Marx, the residue of its Stalinist heritage weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the MLP's ideological department. Even on those historical questions where it has gone the furthest, e.g., the Spanish Civil War, it is at best only rediscovering positions put forward more clearly and unambiguously fifty years earlier by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition. (Skeptical MLPers can easily check this for themselves by having a look at any of Trotsky's major writings on Spain, e.g., his December 1937 essay "The Lessons of Spain: The Last Warning.")

The MLP's ingrained anti-Trotskyist reflex is an obstacle to undertaking a serious materialist investigation of the origins of revisionism in the international Communist movement. Its critique of the Seventh Congress is permeated by idealism. Correct policies become incorrect ones as a result of mechanical thinking:

"The Seventh Congress....simply cursed leftism and sectarianism in order to justify abandoning the fundamental Leninist principles that were upheld in the Sixth congress [sic] period. It did not correct rigidities, but gave them a rightist turn--in effect, it took mechanical thinking further and solidified it as engrained rightist views."

--"Between the Sixth and Seventh Congresses," Workers Advocate Supplement, 15 July 1986

This explains nothing. Even Mao Zedong knew that "correct [and incorrect] ideas do not fall from the sky." The adoption of the popular-front line in 1935 was no more the result of a "rigid" application of ideas than the current crawling before the Democrats by so much of the American left is due to a failure to understand Lenin.

The turn of the Seventh Congress which the MLP invests with such significance was an event of primarily symbolic importance. In substance it had been signaled a year earlier by the Soviet Union's entry into the League of Nations in search of "peace-loving" allies against Hitler. In May 1935, two months before the congress opened, Stalin had negotiated the infamous "Laval Pact" with French imperialism as a hedge against a resurgent Germany. The final communique announced: "Mr. Stalin understands and fully approves the policy of national defense made by France in order to keep its armed strength at the level of security." When the Seventh Congress convened, its task was to ratify this repudiation of Leninism on the grounds that "anti-fascism" transcended class divisions.

Dimitrov spelled out the implications of the turn in his closing speech to the congress: "Even some of the big capitalist states, afraid of losing in a redivision of the world, are at the present stage, interested in avoiding war." The popular front was aimed at forging a bloc with those "peaceful" imperialist robbers who were satisfied



KPD propaganda denounces SPD leaders as "social fascists"

with the division of the world achieved at Versailles in 1919.

"What was new in 1934 and 1935 was the recognition that the defence of the USSR could be assured through the support, not of foreign communist parties too weak to overthrow, or seriously embarrass their national governments, but of the governments of capitalist countries exposed to the same external menace as the USSR, and that the best service which parties could render would be to encourage governments to provide that support."

--E.H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern 1930-1935*

This popular front was dictated not by the requirements of the international proletariat but for the purpose of safeguarding "socialism in one country." When the social democrats voted for war credits in August 1914, it signified that they valued the preservation of their organizations above the international solidarity of the working class. In a similar fashion, "socialism in one country" counterposed the partial victory achieved in Russia to the interests of the international revolution. In both cases the defense of the limited advances made by the workers, from which the respective bureaucrats derived their privileges, took precedence over the overall goals of the movement.

The Seventh Congress was not the beginning of political departures from Leninism by the Comintern, but the completion of a process which had been underway for a dozen years. Between the Fifth and Sixth Congresses, the "pragmatic" Stalin leadership had already attempted several disastrous experiments in class collaborationism. The Seventh Congress marked the formal transformation

of the Comintern into a reformist agency not qualitatively different from the social democracy. In August 1935, even before the delegates had completed their deliberations, Trotsky commented: "Even if all its participants do not today recognize the fact, they are all...busy in practice with the liquidation of the program, principles, and tactical methods established by Lenin, and are preparing the complete abolition of the Comintern as an independent organization" ("The Comintern's Liquidation Congress").

Eight years later Stalin dissolved the Comintern as a gesture of good faith in his "democratic" imperialist allies. Who needed a working-class international in an era of peaceful coexistence between classes? The 22 May 1943 statement which announced the dissolution declared that: "In countries of the anti-Hitlerite coalition the sacred duty of the widest masses of the people, and in the first place of foremost workers, consists in aiding by every means the military efforts of the governments of these countries...." Popular frontism in peacetime inevitably translates into social patriotism when war breaks out. We wonder where the MLP stands on World War II: with the no-strike pledge and "national unity"-mongering of Stalin, Browder and the social democrats or the revolutionary defeatism (and Soviet defensism) of Trotsky and the Fourth International?

The Roots of the Popular Front: "Socialism in One Country"

To understand the degeneration of the Comintern it is necessary to understand the degeneration of the revolution which gave it birth. The failure of the revolutionary wave which followed World War I to lift the workers to power anywhere outside the USSR, the exhaustion of the Soviet population after seven years of war and the virtual collapse of the economy had, by 1921, dictated a temporary retreat by the Bolshevik leadership. This policy, known as the New Economic Policy (NEP), centrally involved concessions to market forces to revive production and prevent mass starvation.

The NEP succeeded, but in doing so it created a privileged layer of petty capitalists in both countryside and city (kulaks and Nepmen). These elements constituted a conservative social base for a rapidly developing administrative/bureaucratic layer within the Bolshevik Party itself. The failure of the German Communists to exploit a potentially revolutionary opportunity in the autumn of 1923 made it apparent that the Russian Revolution was likely to remain isolated for some time to come. This further consolidated the position of the ascendant bureaucratic-conservative faction headed by Stalin. For the next five years these "pragmatists," as they fancied themselves, were to pursue a consistently rightist policy at home and abroad under the banner of "Socialism in One Country."

In 1925 the Kremlin initiated an ill-fated bloc with the leadership of the British Trade Union Congress (TUC). Ostensibly organized to oppose British intervention against the USSR, the "Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee" obligated the TUC tops to nothing, while allowing them to cloak themselves in the authority of the Russian Revolution. The British general strike of 1926, which erupted in the midst of a powerful miners' strike,

revealed that the TUC had not been transformed into "the organizatory center that embraces the international forces of the proletariat for struggle" as anticipated, but remained a prop of the capitalist order.

Aid sent by Soviet miners to their embattled British counterparts was indignantly rebuffed by the trade-union patriarchs who announced they wanted no "Russian gold." The cowardly bureaucrats called off the general strike after nine days, just as it was beginning to bite. Trotsky demanded that the Soviets break with the TUC misleaders and ruthlessly criticize their betrayal, but the Comintern chose to maintain its stance of uncritical solidarity with the strikebreakers. A year later, when the British bureaucrats felt they no longer needed a left cover, they simply walked out of the committee.

Class Collaboration and Bloody Disaster in China

In China the results of the Kremlin's rightist course were even more disastrous. Here the Comintern adopted a "strategy" of liquidating the growing communist movement into the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang (KMT). In 1925 Stalin explained the tasks of the Communists in China as follows:

"In such countries as Egypt or China...the Communists can no longer make it their aim to form a united front against imperialism. In such countries the Communists must pass from the policy of a united national front to the policy of a revolutionary bloc of the workers and petty bourgeoisie. In such countries this bloc may assume the form of a single party of workers and peasants like the Kuomintang...."

--"The Political Tasks of the University of the East,"
quoted in Walter Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East

From July 1926 to March 1927 China was swept with a massive revolutionary upsurge. In the midst of this, the Chinese Communists were ordered by Moscow *not* to organize soviets and to check their activity in the peasant mobilizations in the countryside in order to maintain good relations with the national bourgeoisie. Trotsky sharply opposed this rightist liquidationist line toward the KMT and noted that:

"All these recipes and even the way they are formulated are cruelly reminiscent of the old Menshevik cuisine. The way out is to draw the line organizationally as the necessary prerequisite for an independent policy, keeping one's eyes, not on the left Kuomintang, but above all, on the awakened workers....The sooner the policy of the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] is turned around the better for the Chinese revolution."

--"The Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang,"
1926

But Stalin's main interest in China in this period lay in establishing a diplomatic alliance with the bourgeois regime. To promote this the KMT was admitted to the Communist International as a fraternal party. Trotsky alone among the Soviet leaders voted against this travesty of Leninism. How would the MLP have voted?

In the spring of 1927, as the KMT leadership moved to behead the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat, the Comintern ordered the Communists to lay down their arms in order not to "provoke" their bourgeois allies. The result of class collaboration in China in the twenties was the same as in Spain in the thirties: tens of thousands of



"Strengthen the Red Front," 1930

the best militants were butchered and the workers movement was shattered.

Stalin Lurches Left: The Third Period

The rightist turn of Soviet foreign policy after the Fifth Congress had its reflection domestically in an orientation to the rich peasants. Stalin's factional ally, Bukharin, told them to "Enrich yourselves" and proposed to move toward socialism in the USSR at a "snail's pace." But the kulaks had no interest in socialism at any speed and by 1927-28 were openly mobilizing for counterrevolution. As befits an advocate of "socialism in one country," Stalin proved much more responsive to challenges to his own regime than setbacks to the international movement. Between the spring and fall of 1928 he moved from a position that the "expropriation of the Kulaks would be folly" to declaring that "We must break down the resistance of that class in open battle" (*Problems of Leninism*).

The result was an abrupt lurch to the left at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928. (The fact that the International had not been summoned for four years--under Lenin it had met annually throughout the civil war--indicates the low regard in which it was held by the insular, nationalist Stalin leadership.) Contrary to the MLP, the decisions of the Sixth Congress did not represent the unbroken continuity of "fundamental Leninist principles," but rather a symmetrical deviation to the previous capitulation to the KMT and British trade-union bureaucrats. From prostration before non-proletarian forces, the "general line" became a flat rejection of the possibility of united action with anyone not prepared to accept communist leadership.

The 180 degree line change was "explained" by the proclamation that the class struggle had entered a "Third Period" of post-war history characterized by the final crisis of capitalism and the inevitability of successful revolutionary upheavals everywhere. The "Third Period" was, in Trotsky's apt phrase, "a combination of Stalinist bureaucratism and Bukharinite metaphysics" which bore no relation to the reality of the class struggle in the period. From 1928 to 1932 no communist party on earth was in a position to seriously challenge the rule of its own bourgeoisie. The theory of the "Third Period" was simply a "world-historic" cover for the Kremlin's zigzags.



Hitler's stormtroopers on the march, 1932

Third Period policies were a direct repudiation of the principles and tactics carefully elaborated in the first four congresses of the International. The Leninist policy of struggling to build communist leaderships in the existing mass workers organizations was replaced by the sectarian separatism of "red unions." Countless tiny communist "unions," many of them little more than paper organizations, were created and amalgamated in dual-union federations. With this tactic—explicitly denounced by Lenin in "Left-Wing' Communism--An Infantile Disorder" as "so unpardonable a blunder that it is tantamount to the greatest service Communists could render the bourgeoisie"--the American Communist Party achieved at one blow what the labor bureaucrats and capitalists had been unable to in the course of the post-war anti-Bolshevik hysteria. It got the reds out of the unions and thereby abandoned the masses of workers to the reactionary business unionists of the American Federation of Labor.

Fruits of the 'Third Period': Hitler Crushes the KPD

The most disastrous results of the "Third Period" occurred in Germany where the Communist Party (KPD) labelled the mass Social Democratic Party (SPD) "social fascist." Stalin pronounced that "The Social Democracy, objectively speaking, is the moderate wing of fascism."

This effectively ruled out an approach to the SPD leaders for a united front against the rapidly growing Nazi movement. Instead the KPD called for "united fronts from below," i.e., for social-democratic workers to "unite" with communists under the leadership of the KPD. This naturally had little appeal to the millions of social-democratic workers who were not prepared to admit that they were either "moderate" or "social" fascists. The KPD lost the opportunity to exploit the profound contradiction between the social democracy and the fascists:

"The Social Democracy without the mass organizations of the workers can have no influence. Fascism cannot entrench itself in power without annihilating the workers' organizations. Parliament is the main arena of the Social Democracy. The system of fascism is based upon the destruction of parliamentarism. For the monopolistic bourgeoisie, the parliamentary and fascist regimes represent only different vehicles of dominion; it has recourse to one or the other, depending upon the historical conditions. But for both the Social Democracy and fascism, the choice of one or the other vehicle has an independent significance; more than that, for them it is a question of political life or death."

--Trotsky, "What Next?" 1932

In August 1917 the Bolsheviks had exploited a comparable contradiction between Kerensky, the pseudo-socialist head of the pro-imperialist Provisional Govern-

ment, and Kornilov, a rightist general who sought to topple him. Lenin did not spend his time calling on the workers and soldiers who still had illusions in Kerensky to unite under the banner of Bolshevism, but instead proposed a united front to the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries and the creation of joint organizations of self-defense against their common enemy. In this way the Bolsheviks mobilized the greatest possible forces to crush Kornilov while at the same time winning over many rank and file among Kerensky's supporters who saw that the communists were the most determined opponents of the counterrevolution.

Trotsky proposed that the KPD approach the SPD for a similar military bloc against fascist terror. He explained how KPD militants should motivate the united front to the SPD rank and file:

"The Bolshevik does not ask the Social Democrat to alter the opinion he has of Bolshevism and of the Bolshevik press. Moreover, he does not demand that the Social Democrat make a pledge for the duration of the agreement to keep silent on his opinion of Communism. Such a demand would be absolutely inexcusable. 'So long,' says the Communist, 'as I have not convinced you and you have not convinced me, we shall criticize each other with full freedom, each using the arguments and expressions he deems necessary. But when the fascist wants to force a gag down our throats, we will repulse him together!' Can an intelligent Social Democratic worker counter this proposal with a refusal?"

--"The United Front For Defense," 1933

Instead the KPD showered the SPD ranks with shrill denunciations, hollow ultimatums and empty boasts. One KPD leader declared in the Reichstag: "Let Hitler take office--he will soon go bankrupt, and then it will be our day." The criminal sectarianism of the KPD was perhaps most nakedly exposed in Prussia in 1931 when it supported a fascist referendum to remove the SPD-led state government. Imagine the impact which the spectacle of the joint campaign waged by the KPD and the Nazis had on the social-democratic workers! Yet the MLP characterizes these literally suicidal tactics as "a generally correct, Marxist-Leninist line."

Marxism and Fatalism

In its major piece assessing the Third Period ("Between the Sixth and Seventh Congresses"), the MLP concludes that: "The CI and its parties made advances in their work in this period....The consolidation of the parties in this period probably had much to do with subsequent successes." What "subsequent successes"--the popular fronts? The MLP is compelled to describe the period of the greatest defeat ever suffered by the working class as one of "advances" and "consolidation" because of its irrational attachment to the Third Period.

The article goes on to acknowledge that: "At the same time, there was also the severe setback of the *Hitler takeover in Germany*, which however *cannot be blamed on errors of the CP of Germany*." (emphasis added). What then *should* it be attributed to? Was the victory of the fascists over the world's most powerful working-class movement and the strongest communist party *inevitable*? Or does the MLP believe that the triumph of fascist reaction can only be averted in cases where the professional class

traitors of the Second International are prepared to offer revolutionary leadership?

The tactics of the KPD were false from beginning to end. Given the profound cowardice and treachery of the social-democratic leaders, who capitulated at every step rather than fight, the impotent sectarianism of the KPD leadership led to the disaster in Germany just as much as the popular-front strategy of the Spanish Communist Party prepared Franco's victory a half dozen years later.

The assertion that the destruction of the powerful German workers movement *without a shot being fired* cannot be attributed to the mistakes of its historic leadership is both objectivist and profoundly pessimistic. For, if the KPD made no important strategic mistakes, the only conclusion is that the victory of Hitler was inevitable. Trotsky might have had the MLP in mind when he noted that: "As a rule, the vulgarizers of Marx, gravitating towards fatalism, observe nothing on the political arena save objective causes." The fatalistic optimism of "after Hitler, us" of the Third Period is transformed by the MLP into fatalistic pessimism.

The MLP may not understand the organic connection between the "leftism" of the Sixth Congress and the capitulationism of the Seventh, but Trotsky did. Four years before Dimitrov's speech, he warned:

"One of those decisive moments in history is closely approaching, when the Comintern, after a series of big but still 'partial' mistakes which have undermined and shaken up the forces accumulated in its first five years, risks committing the capital, fatal error which may erase the Comintern as a revolutionary factor from the political map for an entire historic epoch."

--"Germany, the Key to the International Situation," November 1931

The "capital, fatal error" of which he spoke was the disaster in Germany. It led directly to the popular front which did indeed "erase the Comintern from the political map." The MLP leadership has not undertaken a serious study of the lessons of the German defeat for the same reason that it ignores the lessons of the liquidation of the Chinese CP in 1927--because to do so would shatter the myth of a "Golden Age" of the Stalinist Comintern before the Seventh Congress. This in turn would bring them face to face with the struggle of the Left Opposition against the rightist errors which followed the Fifth Congress and the disastrous "leftism" of the Third Period which preceded and conditioned the craven capitulation of the Popular Front.

One of the mechanisms used by the MLP to dodge a serious political reckoning with Trotsky--the leader of the only communist opposition to the political destruction of Lenin's international--has been to cite the betrayals of a variety of revisionist pretenders to Trotskyism. Many of these criticisms are substantially correct, but they no more constitute a critique of Trotskyism than an equivalent list of criticisms of the Communist Party would refute Leninism. Marx once explained to Weitling that ignorance never did anybody any good. In that spirit serious militants in the MLP owe it to themselves to take off their blinders and read Trotsky. Those who do will discover that the thread of authentic communist continuity after Lenin runs through the Left Opposition and through it alone. ●

MLP's Stalinist Pyrite

The Myth of the 'Third Period'

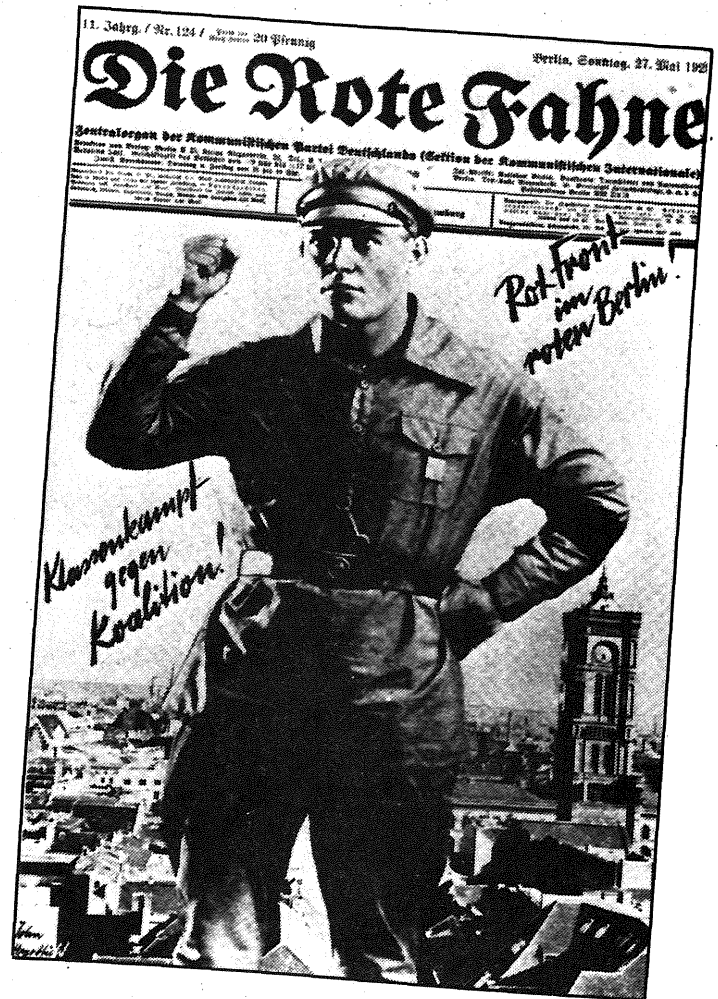
In the summer before the 1984 election that swept Ronald Reagan into the White House for his second term, Michael Harrington and Irving Howe, two prominent American social democrats, commented in the *New York Times Magazine* that "by now practically everyone on the Left agrees that the Democratic Party, with all its faults, must be our main political arena." They exaggerated—but only slightly. Most of the ostensibly revolutionary organizations in America today are indeed oriented to the Democrats. Some, like the Workers World Party, openly throw themselves into black huckster Jesse Jackson's "Rainbow Coalition." The former Trotskyists of the Spartacist League, on the other hand, respond to the gravitational attraction of the Democrats more obliquely—with, for example, a ludicrous offer to "protect" the 1984 Democratic convention in San Francisco against the hallucinated danger of a Republican/Nazi attack.

The ex-Maoist Marxist-Leninist Party (MLP) is one of the very few exceptions to this rightward trend. The MLP was founded 18 years ago as the American franchise of Hardial Bains' reformist/cultist Canadian-nationalist Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist). It followed CPC-ML out of the legion of Mao Zedong thinkers in the mid-1970's but soon had a falling out with Bains and turned to the left. In an attempt to understand the origins of revisionism in the Maoist and ex-Maoist milieu from whence it came, the MLP has undertaken a critical study of the history of the international communist movement. To date it has traced the roots of degeneration back to 1935 when the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) proclaimed that henceforth the duty of the vanguard of the working class was to enter into coalitions (or "popular fronts") with their own bourgeoisies to counter the danger of fascism.

The MLP's Critique of Popular Frontism

The 1 October 1986 issue of the MLP's theoretical journal (*Workers Advocate Supplement*) contained a scathing critique of the results of the popular-front strategy in Spain during the civil war in the 1930's. It argues that the orientation of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the Comintern was "grievously wrong" and specifically criticizes the suppression of the anarchists and the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification—whose leaders included some former Trotskyists) as part of a PCE "propaganda rampage—backed up with police measures—against anything that smacked of the spirit of the class struggle and socialism or that criticized the Republic or the capitalist liberals." The article concludes that:

"Wherever the masses are in struggle against reaction, the Spanish legacy is dredged up to justify bowing before the



liberal capitalists in the name of 'broad unity,' while combatting the 'greatest danger' posed by the allegedly 'ultra-left' ideas about the political independence of the working class, the class struggle, the proletarian revolution and socialism."

This is pretty strong stuff from an organization with a Stalinist patrimony. And it is not simply a matter of discussion articles in a theoretical journal. The MLP's leftist impulse is reflected in its positions on current international questions from Nicaragua (where it is critical of the Sandinistas' attempts to reach an accommodation with the bourgeoisie) to South Africa. But while it exhibits a subjective attraction to the class-against-class orientation of the Comintern under Lenin, the MLP's leftism is partial, confused and contradictory.

The MLP and the Specter of Trotskyism

The MLP's break with popular frontism is flawed by its timidity in confronting the legacy of Trotskyism. To

(continued on page 27)