

1917

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

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Stalinists/Solidarnosc/IMF Attack Workers

Polish Powderkeg

On August 19, the Polish Stalinist regime handed over governmental responsibility to its avowed enemies in Solidarnosc, inaugurating the first non-Stalinist government in the Soviet bloc since the beginning of the Cold War. The event was hailed in all the imperialist capitals as the beginning of the end of "Communism" in Eastern Europe. In an August 22 interview with the Italian paper

Il Messaggero, Lech Walesa candidly described the new government's main task as taking the country: "from a Communist system of ownership to capitalism. Nobody has previously taken the road that leads from socialism to capitalism. And we are setting out to do just that, to return to the prewar situation when Poland was a capitalist country" (*New York Times*, 24 August).

But the road to capitalist restoration will not be a smooth one. Polish workers got a taste of market "rationalization" in August when the Jaruzelski regime, in its last significant act before abdicating, lifted price controls on food. The cost of milk, meat and cheese immediately soared by as much as 500 percent. From Gdansk in the north to Krakow in the south, workers replied with warning strikes and strike alerts. Only the restraining hand of the Solidarnosc leadership, which still enjoys immense authority among the Polish workers, has so far prevented a social explosion. But the authority of an organization dedicated to imposing capitalist austerity cannot long endure.

Solidarnosc's advocacy of restoring capitalism in Poland is not new. At its national congress in 1981, it adopted a program which openly declared: "It is necessary to sweep away the bureaucratic barriers which make it impossible for the market to operate." What has changed in the Polish equation since 1981 is the Stalinist bureaucracy's embrace of the "free market" as the solution to Poland's seemingly intractable economic crisis. The Polish economy today is a disaster. The \$39 billion foreign debt is five times as great as total annual hard-currency earnings. In the past decade, real income per capita has fallen by a quarter, and today inflation is edging up to 1000 percent.

The Soviet bureaucracy, which put the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) in power in the first place and stands as its ultimate guarantor, is itself enamored of "market miracles." Less willing than ever to underwrite the Polish economy, the Kremlin gave Jaruzelski the green light to privatize the means of production and abandon centralized economic planning. Yet everyone knows that Solidarnosc is far better situated to lead Poland in a capitalist direction than the thoroughly discredited Stalinist regime. When Polish voters massively repudiated the PUWP in favor of Solidarnosc in the elections last June, the stage was set for a round of parliamentary jockeying, which concluded with the appointment of a long-time Catholic activist, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, as prime minister of a Solidarnosc-led coalition government.

Today Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, and other prominent Solidarnosc figures, imprisoned when the PUWP imposed martial law in 1981, sit beside their former jailers in parliament, while PUWP ministers sit in Solidarnosc's cabinet. But the Stalinist-Solidarnosc rapprochement is profoundly unstable, and is already exacerbating the tensions within and among every stratum of Polish society. In the PUWP, divisions between the leading Jaruzelski-Kiszczak-Rakowski "reform" wing and the more conservative or "hardline" elements of the bureaucracy are deepening. The conservatives, concentrated in the middle and lower echelons of the party bureaucracy, have their base in the tens of thousands of managers who hold patronage jobs in the smokestack industries slated to be shut down. They also enjoy considerable support within the state security apparatus.

Market "reforms" will necessarily pit workers in Solidarnosc against their erstwhile peasant allies in Rural Solidarnosc, who stand to gain at the workers' expense from the decontrol of agricultural prices. Most impor-

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Defend Sri Lankan Left!

Sri Lankan leftists are currently the victims of a vicious wave of political killings initiated by the Sinhala-chauvinist JVP (Peoples Liberation Front). Over 200 leftists have been killed to date. This includes three members of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), affiliated with David North's U.S.-based Workers League. On 6 September the RCL's offices were raided and several of its leaders arrested. Protests from trade unions and a couple of larger political organizations (including the Lanka Sama Samaja Party) led to their release.

On 27 August, G.K.R. Perera, a leader of the Workers Marxist League (WML), a group which describes itself as Trotskyist, was shot and killed. The WML's secretary, cde. Andradi, has also been threatened by the JVP. He is therefore in immediate danger of being murdered by these communalist thugs. Despite our political differences with the WML, as well as the other groupings in the Lankan "far-left" (the RCL, RWP, MWT and Spartacists), the Bolshevik Tendency stands in solidarity with these comrades as well as others in the workers movement who face the twin threat of official state repression and continuing JVP terrorism. It is urgently necessary for the socialist and labor movement internationally to act to defend the Lankan left.

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1917

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JARECKE—CONTACT

Down with Deng's Bloody Repression— **For Workers Political Revolution in China!**

The following statement was published by the Bolshevik Tendency in July 1989:

The Bolshevik Tendency condemns the criminal June 4 massacre of protesters in Beijing by the leaders of the Communist Party of China (CCP). Revolutionary Marxists denounce the executions and continuing repression of Chinese workers and students by which the Deng Xiaoping regime seeks to reassert its control. The barbarous actions of the Chinese government and its ongoing vendetta against those who dared to challenge the CCP's political monopoly are violations of the most basic principles of socialism.

The revolution of 1949 brought real gains to the Chinese working people: the rule of the landlords, big capitalists and foreign imperialists was overthrown and the productive wealth of the country was collectivized.

Yet while the revolution uprooted neo-colonialism and did away with many reactionary semi-feudal hangovers from the past, it left the top echelons of the peasant-based CCP with a monopoly of political power. Contrary to popular opinion, the People's Republic of China is not now and never has been a "socialist" society as envisioned by Marx and Lenin. Instead it is a *deformed workers state* ruled by a parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. The task of establishing the direct political rule of the working class in China remains to be accomplished. Revolutionists defend the social gains of the Chinese revolution, but we do so knowing that this defense requires a *political revolution* to shatter the CCP bureaucracy and to lodge political power in the hands of democratic workers councils.

The powerful explosion of protest which rocked China for seven weeks this spring was directed against the in-



PLA soldiers move in on demonstrators

JEFF WIDENER—AP

competent and corrupt CCP bureaucracy. Yet the "democracy movement" never posed a clear alternative to the prospect of continued Stalinist rule. The protests which began with the death of Hu Yaobang—a "liberal" bureaucrat who had been disgraced for handling an earlier wave of student demonstrations too leniently—quickly spread to workers in dozens of cities across China. The participation of millions of workers transformed the character and the significance of the demonstrations. The student leaders had only intended to pressure the government for a bit more political space, a few educational reforms and perhaps a few personnel shifts among the ruling elite. But the social forces aligned behind their movement had the potential to achieve far more fundamental changes in Chinese society. The CCP leadership correctly perceived the mass participation of the workers and unemployed as a potentially revolutionary threat to their rule. This potential was underlined when, for a few short weeks, popular support for the demonstrators neutralized the People's Liberation Army units sent to break up the protests.

What is a Political Revolution?

Various impressionistic self-proclaimed "Trotskyists"—from Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat to the Spartacist tendency—declared that a full-fledged political revolution was underway. While the upheavals were enormous in scope and certainly *potentially* revolution-

ary, they did not constitute what Trotskyists could characterize as a political revolution. First, any serious attempt to replace the CCP would require revolutionary institutions capable of challenging and ultimately replacing the existing bureaucratic state power. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which *was* an attempted political revolution, threw up workers councils, which could have become the main institutions of *state power* had the workers prevailed. But the Chinese "democracy movement," despite the mass enthusiasm it generated, and the panic it created among the doddering old men who rule the Middle Kingdom, created no organizational forms which could have constituted a framework for state power. The aim of the movement was not to destroy but to *reform* the institutions of bureaucratic rule.

Secondly, a political revolution in a deformed workers state would aim to throw out the bureaucracy, while preserving state ownership of the means of production. The "democracy movement" possessed no such clarity regarding its objectives. Due in large measure to the bureaucracy's exclusion of the masses from political life, and the anti-political climate which resulted from the bitter experience of the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, Chinese students and workers battled government troops and tanks without the benefit of a definite program. From beginning to end, the "democracy movement" remained politically amorphous. But if it is premature to label the anti-bureaucratic protests this spring as the "beginning of the political revolution," the claim that they represent an attempt at capitalist restoration is even wider of the mark.

"Democracy" vs. Communism?

Both the western media and the Deng regime falsely depict the conflict between the "democracy" movement and the Stalinist oligarchs as a struggle between capitalism and communism. As part of its attempt to justify the bloody repression, the Chinese bureaucracy has been publicizing the presence of Taiwanese intelligence agents among the demonstrators. While it would be absurd to imagine that the demonstrations were initiated or directed by a handful of capitalist agents, it is highly probable that such elements were present. The politically amorphous character of the "democracy" movement meant that it was open to participation by those who would like to see a restoration of capitalism. A key task of a Marxist intervention in such a situation is to *polarize* the movement between those who wish to democratize political decision-making while preserving the system of collectivized property, and their class enemies whose agenda calls for social counterrevolution.

Although the "democracy" movement was contradictory in its objectives, it was clearly *not* anti-socialist in its overall character. The thousands of students in Tiananmen Square who were hailing a replica of the Statue of Liberty were simultaneously singing the "Internationale," the anthem of communism. By contrast, it is positively perverse that Deng Xiaoping's faction which for a decade has been busy de-collectivizing Chinese agriculture, promoting private enterprise and forging a military alliance with U.S. imperialism should try to portray itself

as the guardian of socialism.

Even though this round of struggle did not reach the level of *dual power*, a characteristic of revolutionary situations, it did represent a profound social crisis. What gave the student-initiated protests their impact was that they tapped widespread resentment and anxiety among Chinese workers at the effects of Deng Xiaoping's market-oriented economic "reform" program. The Chinese leadership refers to this as "building socialism with capitalist methods." But for millions of Chinese working people the erosion of the "iron rice bowl" policy which, since 1949, guaranteed employment and the basic necessities of life, is a matter of life and death. The restoration of market economics has gone much farther in China than in the Soviet Union, and tens of millions of workers and poor peasants are suffering from the widespread unemployment, 30 percent inflation and rampant corruption which the "reforms" have spawned.

"Market Socialism" is Anti-Socialist

The capitalist media contend that the market "reforms" in China and the USSR prove that "socialism" has failed. But Marxists have never believed that socialism could be achieved within the framework of a single backward country. Socialism, as envisioned by Marx, Engels and Lenin, is premised on the elimination of scarcity and thus requires a level of material production which can only be achieved by a *worldwide* division

of labor and the application of the highest existing levels of technology. It is Stalinism, *not* Marxism, which advocates the autarkic and reactionary utopia of "socialism in one country" as a nationalist, anti-Marxist ideological cover for the preservation of the privileges of the ruling bureaucratic elite.

The contradictions and irrationalities of bureaucratic planning within a single country have driven both Deng and Gorbachev to set out on the road of "market socialist" economic reforms. In China these "reforms" have promoted the growth of a layer of some twenty million "self-employed" entrepreneurs ranging from individual craftsmen to commodity speculators and factory owners. Today there are "self-employed" farmers in China who have 500 employees! This "self-employed" stratum, which has benefitted from Deng's reforms, is uneasy with the political power of the party bureaucrats, and looks forward to the "normalization" of capitalist social relations—i.e., full-blown capitalist restoration. The CCP bureaucrats balance between this layer (and their imperialist big brothers) and the restive plebian victims of the growth of market relations.

The Beijing massacre and subsequent crackdown have been portrayed by the bourgeois media as part of an ongoing epic struggle between heroic classless democracy and evil, tyrannical Communism. Yet, while anxious to draw the anti-communist "lessons" of the bloodbath in Tiananmen Square, American policy-makers have been restrained by the fear that an overly harsh reaction could

Workers Join demonstration with banners saying "We've Come!"



PETER TURNLEY—NEWSWEEK



Morning before attack: demonstrators remove soldier ^{AFP}

push the Chinese back toward the USSR, which would represent a major strategic setback for imperialism.

Gorbachev, for his part, has been careful to abstain from any criticism of the CCP rulers and has treated the brutal massacre of students and workers for demanding a little "glasnost" as a strictly internal Chinese affair. Moscow's Cuban allies, perhaps wishing to send a message to potential domestic dissidents, chose to endorse the Chinese leadership's actions. The 18 June issue of *Granma* featured an account headlined "Disturbances were aimed at overthrowing socialism." It asserts that it was "the lynchings and ruthless attacks by antigovernment forces on the troops, which forced the government to order strong measures to stop the chaos."

For the moment Deng & Co. have suppressed the opposition with superior firepower, but the deep social tensions which produced the resistance in the first place remain. Moreover, the widely publicized factional divisions within the CCP leadership over how to handle the "democracy movement" reflect the profoundly unstable character of the parasitic Stalinist ruling caste. The potential for future outbreaks is obvious. Certainly one of the most important casualties of the massacre at Tiananmen Square was the aura of political legitimacy which has traditionally surrounded the CCP and its People's Liberation Army. The Big Lie propaganda barrage on state-controlled radio and television alleging that the demonstrations were violent provocations initiated by counterrevolutionaries will scarcely affect the attitudes of the hundreds of thousands of witnesses and participants.

For a Trotskyist Party in China!

What is vitally necessary in China is the creation of a nucleus of militants fighting for a program of *political revolution* to overturn the rule of the anti-working class CCP parasites while defending collectivized property. An authentically communist opposition to Stalinist rule

would vigorously counter the racist mobilizations against African students that took place this past winter in Nanking at which the slogan, "Kill the Black Devils" was raised. Another component of the program of a genuinely socialist opposition to Deng & Co. would be a repudiation of the anti-communist alliance between the Beijing Stalinists and the U.S. imperialists sealed in the blood of the Angolans/Cubans, Vietnamese and the Afghans.

Without a party consolidated around this perspective to spearhead the anti-bureaucratic struggles, the working class elements in the opposition can become demoralized. Some may even be seduced by pro-capitalist elements, whose program, though counterrevolutionary, is at least clear. The socialist reconstruction of China requires a working-class uprising which breaks the grip of the CCP oligarchs and commits itself to *extending* the social gains of 1949. This means a political struggle against the narrow nationalism of Mao Tse-tung and his heirs, and a recognition that socialism can only be established in China through the extension of workers revolution to the citadels of imperialism—most immediately the powerful industrial economy of Japan.

Chinese workers and leftists must be introduced to the revolutionary alternative to bureaucratic misleadership. The authentically *communist* alternative to Stalinism was led by Leon Trotsky, who, with Lenin, led the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. After Lenin's death, Trotsky waged a heroic struggle against the Stalinist perversion of Marxism. Trotsky consistently exposed the opportunism and political zigzags of the Stalinists, including the disastrous policies which led to the crushing defeat of the Chinese working class in 1927. Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet state retains all its validity today and remains the only coherent analysis of the social contradictions in the degenerated and deformed workers states. The program elaborated by the Fourth International under Trotsky's leadership, for the restoration of the historic revolutionary mission of the Soviet workers state through proletarian political revolution, illuminates the path forward for the workers movement in China. This is the program which the Bolshevik Tendency stands on and fights for—the program of militant international communism.

Down with Deng's martial law! For the immediate release of all pro-socialist political prisoners!

Repudiate Beijing's anti-Soviet alliance with U.S. imperialism! For proletarian political revolution in China to oust the Stalinist parasites!

Down with "market socialism"—For the socialist reconstruction of China within a Socialist Federation of the Far East!

For a Trotskyist party in China! For the rebirth of the Fourth International—World Party of Socialist Revolution!

Interview With Geoff White (Part 1)

From Stalinism to Trotskyism

The following is the first part of an interview with Geoff White, one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the early 1960s. The SWP, whose founding cadres had broken with the Communist Party (CPUSA) in 1928, in opposition to the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International, was the American section of the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky. White and the other leaders of the RT were bureaucratically expelled in December 1963 for their Trotskyist critique of the pro-Castroist liquidationism of the SWP majority. They immediately began to publish a journal, *Spartacist*, and launched the Spartacist League (SL) in 1966.

The SWP's adulation of Fidel Castro as an "unconscious Marxist" in the early 1960s led inexorably to their formal repudiation of Trotskyism twenty years later. In its fight within the SWP, the RT correctly characterized Cuba as a "deformed workers state" ruled by a bureaucratic caste equivalent to those ruling in East Europe and China. The RT's defense of the revolutionary tradition of Trotskyism within the party which had been the flagship section of the Fourth International, constitutes a vital link in the struggle for Marxist continuity in our time.

Geoff White's story is a particularly interesting one. After spending a decade as a Communist Party cadre, White was one of a tiny handful of American CPers who moved left, instead of right, as a result of the crisis of world Stalinism touched off in 1956 by Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes, and Moscow's brutal suppression of an attempted political revolution by pro-socialist Hungarian workers. In 1957 White left the CP and the next year he joined the SWP.

In 1953, the SWP had successfully defeated a revisionist internal opposition which wanted to "junk the old Trotskyism." Led by Bert Cochran and George Clarke, and linked to the International Secretariat of Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, this faction proposed to replace the "old Trotskyism" with a policy of adaptation to the Stalinists and the trade-union bureaucracy. While the SWP's struggle against this new "Pabloist" revisionism was seriously flawed in both conception and execution, the SWP leadership's defense of the historic necessity of the Marxist vanguard in the struggle for world socialist revolution was qualitatively superior to the objectivism and liquidationism of Pablo/Cochran.

Unfortunately, the combination of extreme social isolation and the perceived irrelevance of revolutionary Marxism in America during the Eisenhower years, sapped the revolutionary capacity of the SWP. When Fidel Castro took power in Cuba and began to expropriate the capitalists in 1960, the SWP quickly signed on as uncritical publicity agents for the new regime. This abandonment of independent working-class politics in favor of adulation of the petty-bourgeois guerrillaists of the July



Geoff White: 1965

SPARTACIST

26 Movement signaled the end of the SWP as a revolutionary party. The organization's capitulation to Castroism eventually culminated in the 1963 reunification with the European Pabloists.

The RT's principled defense of the SWP's history and traditions was essential to the survival and development of Trotskyism in North America and, ultimately, internationally. Geoff White played a central role in this political fight, both as the leader of the tendency's largest branch and as the author of the first draft of the RT's founding document, "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective." This fine document remains an important restatement of the fundamentals of Marxism in the imperialist epoch, and the Bolshevik Tendency proudly claims it as part of our revolutionary heritage.

Trotsky observed that revolutions and revolutionary movements have a tendency to devour their children. The difficulty of "swimming against the stream" in bourgeois society wears many revolutionaries out. Some "re-interpret" Marxism to conform to various non-revolutionary appetites. Others just fade away. Today, none of the original leaders of the RT (Tim Wohlforth, Shane Mage, James Robertson and Geoff White) still adhere to the revolutionary perspectives of the RT. Wohlforth was the first. Less than a year after the RT was launched, he engineered a criminal split of the tendency at the behest of Gerry Healy, leader of the British Socialist Labour League. Shane Mage, the group's somewhat erratic theoretician, spun out of the movement a few years later. James Robertson alone has remained active in organized politics but, in the course of transforming the

once-revolutionary Spartacist League into a pseudo-Trotskyist obedience cult, he too has broken with his own revolutionary past. As for Geoff White, he simply dropped out of revolutionary politics in 1968. Yet his contributions, and those of the other RTers, live on.

White's account of his involvement in revolutionary politics, which will be continued in forthcoming issues of 1917, throws considerable light on an important chapter in the history of Trotskyism.

1917: *A good place to start might be with your background, your family, what your parents did, where you went to school.*

GW: Well, I'll try to keep this brief because it's not very interesting. It's sort of a middle-class American background. My family were WASPs, my father was a civil engineer working for the state of New York, which meant that when I was a kid, we moved around a lot in the upstate New York region, so I come from a sort of semi-rural background, although not really a rural life because we weren't farmers or anything like that, even though we did live on farms from time to time.

Politically my father was a Republican and fairly conservative. His ideas came mainly from the 1880s and 1890s which he picked up when he was in college in the first decade of the twentieth century and he hadn't really updated them much when he died in 1981. My mother was somewhat more liberal but not much, so that my family background was fairly conservative. I did my secondary education at a private school of no particular distinction called Northwood in Lake Placid, New York, and that's where I began to get left-wing ideas. Everybody up there assumed that they were somehow destined to be part of the leadership of the future of America, and I didn't have a terribly high opinion of their qualifications.

So I began to ask some questions about by what kind of divine right was this group to become the leadership, and one thing led to another, and I began to get considerably radicalized before I was out of high school, but I had no contact with any groups or really with any ideology. I'd read lots of books by Upton Sinclair and nothing by Lenin and Marx.

I finished high school in 1944, and then I went to Harvard and of course there things were very different, because there were all kinds of groups around. I met a lot of very bright young people from New York City who were involved in radical politics mainly in and around the Communist Party [CP]. Also there were a few Trotskyists there, and for a while I was attending SWP [Socialist Workers Party] forums in New York in the last year I was in high school and my first year in college. Then I went into the Navy and I had a lot of time there to do a lot reading. So I read what, for that period, seemed to be fairly thoroughly in Lenin and Marx and the other Marxist classics. I came out of the Navy after about a year and half feeling that I was a communist.

1917: *What year was this?*

GW: This would be 1946. I went back to Harvard, picked up where I'd left off, joined the Communist Party after a month or two, and was in the CP for about 10 years after

that—I left in February of 1957.

1917: *You mentioned that you helped organize a meeting at Harvard in defense of two of the Minneapolis Trotskyist Smith Act defendants. How large was the meeting?*

GW: I don't know because by the time the meeting actually took place, I was in the Navy. I helped get it set up but I wasn't around for the actual meeting.

1917: *But when you came back from the Navy, you ended up joining the CP instead of the SWP.*

GW: Yes. It seemed to me that the SWP and the Trotskyists were unrelated to the day-to-day struggle. They seemed to have very little influence over the actual course of events, they seemed sectarian, whereas the CP seemed to be able to actually shape the course of events to a limited extent. It seemed to me they were the main line, and they were attractive to me on an empirical basis. It may also be that I had some authoritarian tendencies which responded to the CP's ideological position. I'd say that now in retrospect; I had no feeling of that at the time. My insight is not good enough to really know if that was true but it's a possibility certainly.

1917: *So you spent 10 years in the CP. Those were not easy years to be in the CP, while your organization went from being fairly influential to a group which bore the brunt of a pretty vicious witchhunt. A lot of people deserted under the pressure. What was your sense of that period, and how did it affect you and people that you were close to?*

GW: Well, it felt very embattled. I joined in late 1946, and from then until about 1948 one could maintain a certain degree of optimism. I think 1948 was really the turning point—after that, one's optimism was more historical than immediate. I went to Europe in 1948 to attend the World Congress of Working Youth in Warsaw, and I was also one of the delegates of the American Youth for Democracy to the Executive Committee of the International Union of Students meeting in Paris late that summer. This gave me a lot of contact with people from Eastern Europe and the movement in Western Europe also. I found this a sort of energizing thing. We felt, I think, most of us—and I certainly did—that we were part of the wave of the future and that things in the long run would turn out well for us, but we also felt very much under the gun and under a great deal of pressure domestically.

Our response to this pressure took a number of different forms, one of them was to sort of prepare for fascist oppression. At one point a lot of the leaders of the CP went into a category which we called "unavailable," meaning that they were supposed to be underground. They were running around with false moustaches and false names and so forth, and trying to give leadership to the party from underground. It was a very unsuccessful experiment because, for one thing, the party was heavily infiltrated with FBI and other types of agents so the government by and large knew where these guys were. The other thing was it created an increasingly paranoid atmosphere within the party, disrupted the lines of communication, and made things more difficult. I think it was an error of a fairly serious kind.



Trotskyist Smith Act victims going to jail, December 1943

My role was that for a time I acted as a liaison man between a couple of people who were unavailable and the open apparatus. I was pretty much in the open but I did have these contacts, so there was a certain amount of romantic running around, the FBI tracing and chasing one around in cars.

1917: You were quite aware of the FBI tailing you?

GW: Oh yeah, they were quite open about that. They would hang around in front of the house and whenever I went out in my car, they would be following. They weren't very subtle about their shadowing. In Rhode Island at least, they had license plates which were all in sequence. They'd taken out a list of license plates and we knew what the sequence was, so we knew who these guys were. I got to recognize some of the individuals, and so it had certain game aspects. But it was also a serious matter, since people were being arrested and people were being fired from their jobs and otherwise harassed.

1917: You were in the Communist Party in Rhode Island at this point?

GW: Yes, I joined at Harvard, and I was student secretary for New England for a while. But then I graduated and the party had a policy of industrial concentration—of sending young middle-class proto-intellectuals into factories and industries in which they were interested in having some influence. In New England this meant especially the textile industry, which was dying but still was a good base in the working class. I went to Rhode Island and went to work in a textile mill down there. Economic conditions weren't too good in Rhode Island at that time and so I got laid off and I went to work in a rubber plant. That turned out to be a good thing because it had an active union, and I got to be a shop steward there and the editor of the local's newspaper.

1917: So what years did you work in rubber?

GW: Well let's see, I went to Rhode Island in late 1949 and I think I spent a year and half in textiles, so it must be around 1951 to late 1955 that I was in the United Rubber

Workers down there. I got to be convention delegate and a few things like that and we had a small fraction in this local, Local 103 in Cranston, Rhode Island. But my main activity was that I became the secretary of the Communist Party in Rhode Island, and it was a matter of trying to hold the party together there. During this whole McCarthyite period there was a constant attrition of the party. Looking back on it, I think we did fairly well in holding together as well as we did, but each year we were a little smaller and a little more isolated. We lost almost all of our industrial base, our middle-class members had less and less influence in whatever areas they were working in, if any, and pretty soon it became more and more a matter of just collecting dues and holding meetings and trying to sell a few subs to various publications. We were not able to have any influence in any sector of public life or union life down there even though we did maintain a few trade-union fractions.

1917: How large would the Communist Party in Rhode Island be in that period?

GW: It was a long time ago, and I probably should say this about all these reminiscences that go back that far—they're subject to distortions of memory—but I think we started out with about 50 and I think we ended up with about 20.

1917: Did you have any notable defections from your branch, did people just quit, or did anyone turn up testifying against you?

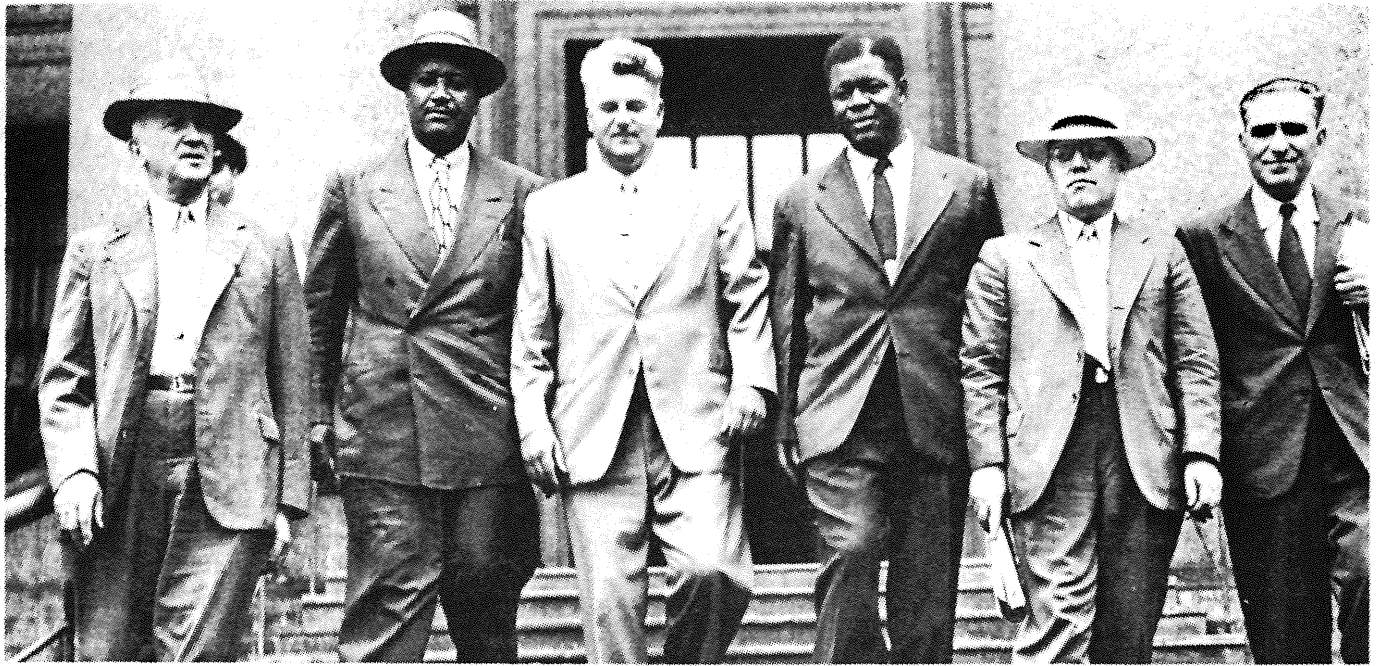
GW: No, nobody, there were no what you would call renegades. We were infiltrated by a guy from New Bedford who had been working for the FBI from the beginning, but that's rather a different thing than defection. This was not a political defection, this was just plain old-fashioned infiltration. To the best of my knowledge, there were no other publicly acknowledged infiltrators in the Rhode Island party. One guy down there was enough to keep track of things.

1917: Did you have any notable defections from your branch, did people just quit, or did anyone turn up testifying against you?

1917: How did you eventually find out about this guy?

GW: That's an interesting story and, looking back on it, it seems terribly improbable. But one of the things you were supposed to do was to sell subscriptions to various publications; there was one labor publication, I can't remember the name of it now. It was actually edited by a guy who had been on the National Executive of the CIO back in the old days, and he'd been thrown out of the CIO, and now he was editing this publication which was supposed to be for left-wing trade unions. They were pushing this pretty hard in the New Bedford, Fall River, Providence areas plus the *Daily Worker*.

At any rate, there was this guy from New Bedford who had a pretty good working-class background. He was



Six of the eleven Communist Party leaders convicted under Smith Act, 1949

CPUSA

working in and around textile mills—he was sort of upwardly mobile so he was out of that a bit, but he knew people in that. Since there was no active group in New Bedford at the time, he was working somewhat independently, under the leadership of people from Providence. It was obvious he got around a lot, and we found out the subs he'd been selling (which he'd done quite well at) were fake, and there were a couple of other discrepancies which made us suspicious of him. Finally we got hold of a dossier of one of our members who was called in and questioned about some things, and the information that was in there was available only to three people. I was one of them, another was a guy who was a functionary of the party, and this fellow from New Bedford. So the suspicion fell on him.

For a while we kept him pretty much at arm's length, but then for some reason—and this was not discussed with me, I believe, and I didn't question it, and at this point the whole thing seems very improbable—we let him back in, and he again became active in things even though we knew one of the three of us was making reports. Well, in 1956 the New England Smith Act indictments came down. I was one of the defendants in that case. There were eight of us, and it was very clear from the bill of particulars in the indictment that this guy had been reporting. So at this point we severed our connections with him and he subsequently testified publicly he had been working with the FBI, not as an agent but as an operative.

1917: You were no longer in New England when the Smith Act indictments came down?

GW: No. In February of 1956, this industrial concentration policy was expanded to include trying to re-establish the party in the South. They were trying to get some people to go down to the South to do essentially the same work I was doing in Rhode Island, but of course condi-

tions were rather different there. If I went to the South, I would not be doing this specific party work because the party apparatus had been destroyed almost everywhere in the South. The last remnant of it had been in Atlanta, and they finally ran the organizer in Atlanta out, so that we were in very bad shape in the South. But we did have some historical roots in Durham, Atlanta, and a couple of places in Alabama, so they asked me and my wife if we would be willing to go into the South. This was a rather large order, so we gave it a lot of thought and finally decided we would, but we didn't really think we could do it in either Georgia or Alabama. So what we ended up with was going to Chattanooga which is right on the Alabama/Georgia/Tennessee border, and has a pretty good industrial base.

We went down there in early February of 1956, and we were then ourselves always unavailable. We were operating under our own names etc., but nobody was supposed to know where we were, although of course everybody did. We weren't to have any contact with the party, except occasionally they would send somebody down to see us. We were to just dig into the community, not engage in any particular political work—just make friends, contacts, get to know the community, get rooted in the community. The idea was that eventually we would emerge with something. There were some contacts down there in that area with a group in either the Church of Christ or the Church of God—seems to me it was the Church of Christ—which was rather a peculiar thing because this was a little fundamentalist church. But there were some contacts there, and there was one minister in Dalton Georgia, which was near Chattanooga, who eventually got run out.

1917: This was a black minister?

GW: No white, white. That was interesting. The CP was trying to re-establish contacts in the white working class

and build some kind of a structure there. The theory at that time was that it was easier to make contacts and even easier perhaps to recruit among the blacks, but you could not really maintain an organization among the blacks in the South unless you had a base among the whites. I think that there was a good deal of truth in this, and the idea of putting the concentration on the white industries like textile and the needle trades and less energy into the black industries which would be steel, food and tobacco made a lot of sense. Because given the pressured situation in the South at that time, having a base among the white working class was I think essential to maintaining a serious base among blacks.

1917: *How do you mean it was essential?*

GW: Well, in the first place, to maintain some credibility with your black contacts. In the opinion of many of the black radicals down there at that time, what was the need for a predominantly black organization unless it could deliver the kind of white support, and liaison with white groupings, that a white-dominated organization could in theory have? If the Communist Party in the South was going to be a black organization, there was no point in it being a Communist Party group—there was already a black structure there which could do that. But the Communist Party could be a bridge, some blacks thought, to supportive sections of the white community. This was perhaps an illusion, but it was a plausible one.

1917: *Did you take any left-wing books to Chattanooga or did you have to have a "clean" house?*

GW: Clean house, clean house. No documents, no nothing.

1917: *Were there many people from the CP dispatched in similar kinds of assignments to get the party going again in the South or were you relatively unusual?*

GW: I think in theory it was a campaign to send a good number of people down there. In practice I think there were very few of us. There was a lot of secrecy around this sort of thing, and I don't know how many other people were sent down there under similar circumstances. My impression was *very few*.

1917: *The contacts that you had down there initially, would they be ex-party members or former contacts?*

GW: We had no contacts, we were not to contact anybody. We were to make our own contacts socially.

1917: *What was the connection with the people in the Church of Christ?*

GW: Well it was simply indicated that there was some kind of a reservoir of leftist sentiment down there, and eventually perhaps we were to make some connections. We knew that they existed—we didn't even know who they were and we weren't to pursue them in any way.

1917: *So this is interrupted.*

GW: This is interrupted by the indictment. It was interrupted by two events actually, the indictment and the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, and it's hard to say which one was more—well, *I can say, I think the Congress*

was more significant. It was now the end of May of 1956, we'd arrived in February. We were doing what we were supposed to do, and we were actually enjoying it, because we didn't spend all of our evenings in meetings. We were making friends and contacts. We joined the hiking club, had friends in the neighborhood and so on and so forth—and it was not bad, actually it was quite good.

1917: *And the people were relatively liberal?*

GW: No, they were just ordinary folk. I could go up to them and be a bit middle class and there were some people who were in there who were engineers from the TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] and I suppose you might say they were more or less "liberal," but liberalism in 1956, it didn't manifest itself much. We tended not to talk much about politics, and it would come up once in a while, but we never were pushing ourselves in any way. The people we met from work and our neighborhood were working-class people, at least they were not middle class. Class reality didn't always conform to our schema.

We were doing this and it's a rather lovely area and we were both very much interested in hiking and outdoor kind of things so we felt here we were doing our job and at the same time we were having a good time. So it was a good time for us. I look back on that with great pleasure. I was learning things very fast about the South—especially about what I call the "dogwood South" as opposed to the "magnolia South." For instance that everyone carried a pistol in his glove compartment, and how to be polite, and even how to understand what people were saying to me. It was a very interesting experience.

At any rate, just before Memorial Day, someone came down from the national office to see how we were doing and make contact, which we expected from time to time, and this woman came down and she told us about Khrushchev's speech, and that there was agony beginning to develop in the party. This came as quite a shock to us. Everybody else in the party knew about it because it was developing after the February Congress, a little rumor comes out and then a little more of a rumor.

1917: *It was reported in the New York Times, wasn't it?*

GW: It was reported, there were some paraphrases and stuff like that—we didn't get that, eventually the full text of the speech appeared in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, but that was after the events which I'm now describing. Perhaps we should have read the papers more carefully, but among other things which it was nice to be free of, was the necessity of reading the *New York Times*. Of course we didn't read the *Worker* because we were supposed to be out of contact, so this one came as a big surprise to us: "How can this be?" We just didn't have time to react except that this kind of indecision, this kind of internal crisis was something we had no experience with in the CP. I mean something like this hadn't gone on in the CP since way back in the twenties. We didn't at first realize the magnitude, what kind of effect it could have. We just thought it's another thing and pretty soon there'll be a directive from somewhere and everything will be straightened out.



Anti-Communists at work: Joe McCarthy and Roy Cohn

But we didn't have much time to think about that because I think it was about two days after this woman went back, I got arrested by the FBI on an indictment which had been handed down in Boston. They sent 4 or 5 guys around to the place I was working, and it was all very dramatic, and they searched me and they found a library card. I heard one of them mutter "check this out"—they were going to check what books I'd taken out of the library. I'd gone on a Civil War binge down there because it's an area which encourages that, so I knew what they'd find: a long list of books on the history of the Army of the Cumberland. And I thought well, I hope you guys have a good time doing this research, because there is nothing on explosives or guerrilla warfare. It didn't seem entirely funny at the time but it did have its humorous aspects.

1917: So you were arrested and taken back to Boston?

GW: Eventually yeah, but I had about 10 days in the county slammer down there.

1917: Did you ever get any feedback from these new roots you were sinking?

GW: As a matter of fact we did, and it was really surprising and a very good thing. Neighbors came round to my wife and said, "gee, we heard about your husband." This was all headline stuff, front-page stuff in the local press because nothing ever happens much in Chattanooga. They said it was the biggest thing since Machine Gun Kelly got arrested around there. So all of sudden I was—famous is not the word, notorious perhaps—but friends, neighbors, acquaintances, came around to my wife and expressed sympathy and said, "gee we wish this would all just get straightened out, is there anything we can do

for you?" When she said, "well, I think my husband is going to be taken back to Boston so I think I'm going to have to go back there," they said, "well, can we help you move?" This sort of thing. And I was worried about what was going to happen because this was a violent area, although McCarthyism was starting to fade at the time, it was still very much around. But my wife, isolated as she was, and I in the county jail, were much better treated in Tennessee than my co-defendants and their families back in Boston. They had a bit of a time in the Suffolk county jail in Massachusetts, but we had no difficulties with fellow prisoners or neighbors or anything like that.

1917: How did they look at it, that this was something in your past that was being dragged out?

GW: I think some people felt it must all just be a mistake because we were nice guys and everybody knew that communists had horns, and so I think that was part of it. I remember one guy in prison saying, "Hey fellas, this guy took on the whole U.S. government!" There is a strong anarchist tendency down there, they've been fighting what they call the big law and the little law (the revenueurs), for a long, long time. There was this business of everybody carrying guns, a feeling that the government and the law were not good things, and so I came into jail and they said, "what are you in here for?", and so I'd tell them, and they'd say, "well, what's your bail?", and I had the highest bail of anybody in the jail, so this won a certain amount of prestige. So instead of being about to be beaten up and thrown off the cell blocks, I had status. It was great, I really wasn't expecting that. I was expecting to be race-baited and there wasn't any of that.

1917: Was it an integrated cell block?

GW: No, no, just well-segregated.

1917: Okay, so you went back to Boston.

GW: Eventually I was taken back to Boston by U.S. marshals. My mother and father bailed me out—they could afford it.

1917: They had been very disappointed in your choice of careers?

GW: Oh yes, they didn't approve of any of this at all, and they knew I was going to disappear somewhere, and they didn't like that either. But they did bail me out, and then they put a lot of pressure on me that now is the time to get out of all this, but I said if you want to take your bail money back go ahead but I'm not going to be influenced by that. When I got out, I was immediately put on the board of the New England District of the CP. I think I was attending meetings once in a while when local issues came up before but now I was co-opted onto the board. I was promoted partly because I was a defendant. We went through a very interesting period in Boston, it was a totally new experience for almost everyone except the oldest-time people in the Communist Party, because of the factions which began to develop. There were three noticeable factions plus all kinds of splinterings and whatnot in the party. The party was paralyzed as far as political work was concerned, and there was a period when the rank and file took revenge.

1917: This is the period after you were brought back to Boston and before you joined the SWP?

GW: Yes, I came back to Boston in the first weeks of June of 1956, and I was then in Boston and still in the CP, and under indictment of the Smith Act, through the spring of 1957. In the spring of 1957 I formally resigned from the CP with some other people. There were a group of us including one other Smith Act defendant. It was informally defined, but there were maybe about a dozen of us more or less thinking along similar lines. Although the degree of unity was somewhat deceptive in that we were against the same things and put off by the same things that were going on in the CP at the time, when we were out and on our own, we all went separate ways. Most of them were trying to re-integrate themselves back into the political mainstream, and I was the only one really in that gang who was at all interested in the SWP and Trotskyism. I didn't join the SWP until I came out here [California], but I was working with them closely, among other things using my position as a Smith Act defendant.

We got back to Boston in the summer of 1956, and we found that the party was in complete disarray, whole branches in New England had simply disappeared. We had a very substantial branch in Lawrence, Massachusetts for example, a working-class branch. It was in the textile industry, it was mainly Italians—the ethnic factor is extremely important in the Communist Party in New England and probably elsewhere, but especially in New England for historical reasons. The Lawrence branch,

which had been one of the most stalwart, reliable and proletarian branches of the whole organization, simply disappeared overnight. They would not answer telephone calls, nobody would talk to anybody from the Boston office, much less the national office. They had just disappeared. They were a group which had been able to stand up through the whole business of McCarthy, and had taken a lot of economic and political pressure of one kind or another, but in the face of Khrushchev's speech, they wanted to have nothing more to do with the organization.

1917: Did they separate as a group or just dissolve?

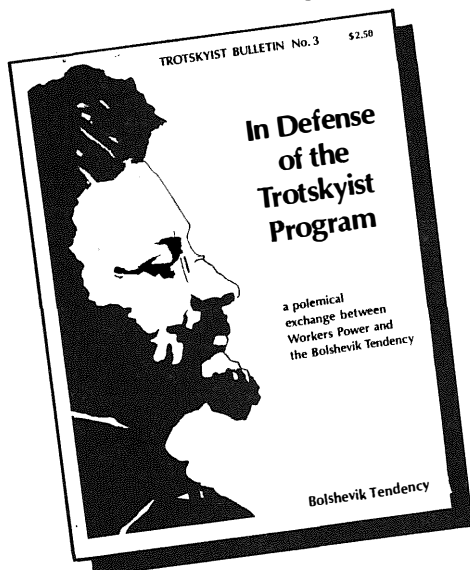
GW: They just dissolved, they went their own ways. There may have been small grouplets of people who would meet—the social ties would remain, at least for a while. So I suspect they were meeting, but they were not meeting in the way Trotskyist split-off groups do. If you're a Stalinist and you break with the CP, that's it. Unless you want to join the bourgeoisie in some way, the dominant tendency is to just stop organized politics. You may work in a lot of secondary organizations, you may join the international league for the suppression of man-eating sharks, but you don't continue a revolutionary career. They disappeared, there were other branches like that which disappeared.

In the Boston area things were a little bit better. Some branches were still functioning, but they were not functioning legally under CP discipline. CP discipline simply stopped. You could do and say any damn thing you wanted and there was a tremendous backlog of grievances and resentments against the cadres, against the full-timers, the functionaries, (that was the term we used). I remember a meeting of the Roxbury branch where it became a "speak-bitterness" meeting. There had been a whole series of these, going on for months, and one night it got particularly rough. People were denouncing the leadership for suppression, for its bureaucratic attitudes, for its highhandedness, and so forth, and they get on the phone and they called these functionaries. By this time it's about midnight and everybody's really worked up—"You get down here right now!"

And these guys who had previously imposed themselves, according to their temperaments, more or less brutally—some of them more brutally, some of them less because they were basically nice guys, and some of them were really nasty—would have to do that. They would have to come down and they'd have to listen. They wouldn't even talk sometimes, just listen to denunciation after denunciation for their rudeness, for their arbitrariness, for their lack of contact with reality, for their brutality to members. In the period from about 1951 to 1955 there had been a lot of brutality because the party thought it was preparing for fascism, so they put a lot of pressure on the members. There had been a big white chauvinism purge around 1954 or 1955, in which people were really savaged, quite unconscionably. All of this came back to roost.

In addition to this, there was an element, I wouldn't say a grouping, because they didn't group, but there was an element in the CP that was desperately waiting for the directive to come, for the national leadership to assert it-

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self, to give the line, to explain what all of this was about, tell us what to do so we can get back to business as usual. No directives came. It was obvious that the national leadership in New York was just as paralyzed as the district leadership in Boston. And these people became increasingly impatient. All their normal expectations of the way party life was conducted, the way the politics of the party worked, were destroyed overnight.

There were people who were saying, "Ah, the Old Man knew what he was talking about—let's not go overboard about this, let's be cautious. This guy Khrushchev, maybe he's one of these guys who's been infiltrated," and so on and so forth. There were a lot of these people, particularly up in one of the industrial towns to the North called Lynn—it was the sort of center of this kind of sentiment. But you couldn't call these what Trotskyists would call "tendencies" because they didn't have that amount of cohesiveness. They were just sort of quirks within the party.

After the 20th Congress comes the revolution in Hungary, so we had a concrete demonstration of Stalinism. People started yelling and screaming about "tank socialism." That caused an even more acute split than the 20th Congress, or at least it exacerbated what was going on, so that the literal screaming and yelling became more severe and more people left: "I can't stand this." No political work was being carried out and nobody was being expelled. And people were doing things that would have got you expelled or denounced on the front page of the *Sunday Worker* a few months before.

As time progressed, it became apparent that there were three basic tendencies within the party both nationally and within New England. One, which looked mainly toward William Z. Foster for leadership, were the hards who wanted to minimize the effects of the 20th Congress, who gave uncritical support to the Soviet intervention in Hungary. Herbert Aptheker wrote a book called *The Truth About Hungary*. Most of us thought that there wasn't much truth in *The Truth About Hungary*. There was another group that looked mainly to Dennis for leadership. These were people who just sort of wanted to get back to business as usual, make whatever concessions were necessary to hold things together and get back selling the *Daily Worker* and infiltrating the Sunday schools and stuff like that.

The third group wanted to fully develop the ideas which were put forward at the 20th Congress and in some cases to develop them further; to get back into the mainstream and join the Democratic Party. This was in some respects a right tendency within the party. These people found their expression through John Gates, who was the editor of the *Daily Worker*. All these groups were co-existing within the party and the main losses were among the Gatesites because they had the least investment in the party as an organization. They were looking for a real mainstream type of politics. They were "progressive" in the rather invidious sense. They were people who were most willing to drop the whole business of the Marxist-Leninist ideological baggage.

1917: Were they in general less working-class in composition?

GW: Yes, I think so. There were many exceptions to that



Stalin and Khrushchev

SOVPHOTO

but in general, yes. There was a higher working-class content among the Fosterites than among the Gatesites. The Dennis people were pretty amorphous. They tended to be the up-and-coming apparatchiks. They didn't have too much to say: "Everybody keep calm, pay the dues and let's not worry about this stuff."

1917: Foster was the classical trade unionist, Gates more a literary...

GW: I wouldn't say literary. He was the publicist, the editor of the paper. He'd been in Spain, I believe. He had a very prestigious background, but because of the type of politics that the Gates people were projecting, the party apparatus and the name of the party didn't mean much to them, therefore they were more and more willing to get out. This difference was reflected among the defendants in the Smith Act case. We were going to trial. We had to *do* something. At least I thought we had to do something, and my closest friend among the defendants, a guy who I had been working with for a long time, also felt that we had to take some steps.

But when we had these endless meetings of the defendants, it was very clear that the other defendants were so demoralized by the political events that they were not able to do anything. We kept pressing on the defendants: "Let's get some action; let's do some political preparation; we've got to find some lawyers for ourselves," and so on, and they just were not able to do anything. Since the party apparatus and the discipline broke down, my friend and I were pretty much identified with the Gates tendency. We said, "Okay, we are going to tell you guys

something: we no longer consider ourselves to be bound by party discipline. We are going to work on the defense in the way we think is best. We'll let you know what we're doing and we'll make a liaison but don't you go telling us what to do and what not to do, because you guys are abdicating and not doing anything."

At that time you could get away with it, and we were in different party branches, and we said the same thing to our party branches. In effect, we were resigning from the party at this point. But we said, we're defendants and we're not going to resign, we're not going to do anything public, but we're going to pursue this thing. So he and I proceeded to work hard on organizing the defense. We went around and got the usual liberal support and tried to raise money. We had some success with that. We contacted the SWP. Some old people in the SWP remembered that I had been involved in getting their defendants on campus and that helped a little bit. But mainly they were looking for any kind of a wedge or opening into the CP so they were delighted to have us come around.

1917: The SWP in Boston?

GW: The SWP in Boston. This was all regional. I didn't have anything to do with New York at this point, but there wasn't any point in going to New York because things were just so chaotic. There was nothing to be gained by that at all. I knew some contacts from my student days, from the days before I went to Rhode Island, so I could go around and see them. The SWP had contact with some of the same sorts of people. A lot of these people had just given up on the CP, and didn't want to talk to the CP, but they were willing to talk to the SWP because they had more respect for them. And the SWP threw itself into this thing. So the SWP was doing more for the defense of the Stalinist defendants than the CP was. The CP wasn't doing a damn thing.

So my personal relations with the SWP became amicable. I was impressed with their hard work. They seemed to be a democratic outfit and I could remember the things that I had learned but rejected back in 1944. So my interest in Trotskyism was revived and also I felt that there had to be some really serious explanation for this disaster which had overtaken the world movement. Not too many people, including my closest friends and associates in the CP, seemed to want to pursue that very far. So I started really seriously studying the critiques of the CP.

1917: This is the first time since you'd been in the CP that it ever troubled you?

GW: It never troubled me. I was a pious member of the CP but I read Khrushchev's speech when I was in handcuffs on the train back to Boston. This was an epiphany—it really had to be. I couldn't believe that anybody who was serious about the ideology and the science of socialism and what socialism was supposed to represent could fail to try to come to grips with these questions. And yet, when I got back to Boston, it was obvious that most people were not prepared to try to come to grips with it on that level. There were a lot of people who wanted to come to grips with "what did we do wrong politically" and "why are we so isolated," but not really to deal with what I considered to be the most fundamental questions.

1917: Like how Stalin had operated in the Soviet Union?

GW: Like how Stalin had operated within the international movement which would give rise to this kind of stuff. What kind of critique could you make of the historical development of Marxism to account for this political disaster and this moral disaster? There *was* a moral side to it. People didn't join the CPUSA for careerist reasons. You had to have a moral commitment. You didn't talk about it much because you didn't like to use those terms, but it was very much there, and this was incompatible with what we were learning from the source of reality, from the source of our ideology, which was Moscow. If anybody else was making that speech, it could have been dismissed, but it was the "pope denouncing the church"—that's a term I learned in the SWP, we didn't phrase it that way. The analogy between religious conflict and the organizational/ideological development of Christianity and of the revolutionary Marxist movement seems to me a fruitful analogy. It has limitations like any analogy, but a lot of this has been gone through before. I always had a tendency to use some of the terminology from the fight against Arianist heresy.

I felt that it was really necessary to make as deep a historic analysis of the situation as we were capable of. I didn't feel very capable of that personally, but I thought there were people around who were interested in that kind of thing and who have got to be committed to doing this, but it was very hard to find them. The person I worked with most closely was a fellow who had been a personal friend of mine. He was willing to go to a certain point but he didn't want to do it the way I did it, so I felt very isolated at the time.

1917: You read The Revolution Betrayed?

GW: Yes, that was one of the first that I read. I don't think I'd read it before in '44, because I didn't read very seriously then. I was too young and too naive. My whole background wasn't in that direction. But by this time I was certainly prepared for that. I also read various other standard works by Trotsky and some of the things by Trotskyists. This theoretical analysis was combined with my organizational experience with the SWP. I could see that they were able to function in a situation which was very important for me—to stay out of jail—in a way that the CP wouldn't. In fact, the CP, even at this point, resented the support that the SWP was giving. We got the SWP to organize meetings on the Boston Smith Act case and they really put themselves into it. There was no great big deal, no roaring thousands, but there were some fairly respectable meetings and there were some fairly respectable people involved. My friend and I were the only defendants and the only spokesmen for the CP that would come there and speak.

1917: Even among the Gatesites?

GW: Even among the Gatesites, because the Gatesites had a double hostility to the SWP. In the first place, they had a political hostility because they saw the SWP as hards, as sectarians, and they didn't want to have anything to do with that kind of stuff; they wanted to get back in the mainstream. Secondly, they had the historic hostility you know, to "spies, saboteurs and wreckers" which all of us

in the CP had. So the Gatesites didn't want to participate.

So, my friend and I would talk and we would speak at these things as defendants and nobody could do anything about that. I made a point at these things of saying publicly that if the CP had given support to the Minneapolis defendants back in 1940, we might not now be in that kind of position, and that we, the CP, had not supported them, but now the SWP was supporting us. They liked that. Most of the CP did not like it, but they couldn't do anything about it.

1917: *Even with that there was no move to get rid of you?*

GW: You couldn't expel anybody for *anything* in the CP of this period. Believe me, for *nothing*. What was happening was, however, that although the Gates group had a clear majority in the New England district in this period, and probably in the whole party, we were losing by attrition, because the Fosterites had a reason for hanging on. The center people had nowhere else to go, whereas we had other alternatives. The result was that gradually we became weaker except that the Russians kept coming to our aid by invading Hungary and by doing other horrendous things. And there were these individuals who would make these dramatic flops. There was one guy who came from Minnesota. He started out as an organizer of the Farmer-Labor Party; he was sent to Moscow to the Lenin school. He was a real old-timer and very hard guy, one of these iron cadre types. He started off by saying, "the Old Man knows what he's talking about," and within one week, shortly after the Hungarian Revolution, he said, "burn the books." There were other people who made that kind of flop. A lot of it became very personal, very subjective, very psychological.

1917: *Did you, as a dissident, attempt to organize any meetings like what we would consider tendency or factional meetings? If you'd been recruited by the SWP and you wanted to come out of the CP with some kind of faction, do you think anything could have been built?*

GW: I doubt it. There was too much disarray and too much lack of any kind of coherence. I heard later on in the SWP that there were some other people elsewhere who were willing to at least talk to the SWP, but as far as I know, I was the only one that felt that Trotskyism had anything to do except cast a certain sidelight on the events.

1917: *You didn't have very much of a base left from Providence or Rhode Island?*

GW: No, I was pretty much cut off from that because in Rhode Island the people I'd been personally closest to, with one or two exceptions, turned out to be Gatesites. They just quit. "The hell with this." They were willing to help me personally, but they weren't going to have anything more to do with politics. One of the leading guys in there who had been a pretty close friend of mine became a very hard Fosterite. When I went down there to talk to him, he told me that I was an enemy of the working class, a renegade and a traitor. There were differences. There was nothing left for me in Rhode Island. I had better contacts in Boston and I had lots of friends up there, but I don't think it would have been possible to

really organize. We made a few attempts to set up some forums to discuss these things but...

1917: *You as a Gatesite, not on behalf of the SWP...*

GW: Working more as a Gatesite. I had my own contradictions because there was a contradiction between the Gatesite politics and the SWP's politics and I became more and more aware of this as time went on, but I was still trying to feel my way through all this kind of stuff and all my stylistic and personal ties were with the Gatesite group. At the same time, it seemed to me that Trotskyism provided the only viable critique historically of Stalinism. And here was the SWP doing all these good things on an empirical basis, and I always have had a tendency, I think, to be perhaps too much influenced by the empirical situation and this keeps manifesting itself and it manifested itself there.

1917: *Was the SWP fairly aggressive in terms of contacting you? Did they have people who were assigned to talk to you?*

GW: I don't know if there were people assigned, but there were people who did it. The main person I knew there was the head of the Boston party—Larry Trainor. He was an old Irishman and a printer, and he was not only not an intellectual, he was anti-intellectual. There were many things he didn't understand but he was a very good man, he had a good political sense and I was impressed with him. I was impressed with most of the people I met in the SWP. On the other hand, I was also unfavorably impressed by what seemed to me to be a certain amount of inefficiency and dithering that they would get into.

1917: *Over what? Just in terms of organizing meetings?*

GW: Taking twice as long to come to some kind of decision to do something fairly simple as it would take in the CP. My subsequent experience with the SWP confirmed it—there was a certain kind of incompetence in the SWP which didn't exist in the CP.

1917: *Is that a function of the lack of democracy in the CP?*

GW: No...well, possibly, but I think mainly it was a function of the historical isolation of the SWP. They hadn't had the experience of mass organizations which the CP had and therefore their main interest was in other things. They didn't know how to run a trade-union fraction the way the CP did. The CP, by god, they knew how to run a trade-union fraction. I was in a couple of them and, the politics might have been bad, but things got done. The SWP was never any match for them. I'm really getting now into a later period which I'd like to come back to.

1917: *In your trade-union experience as a CPer, did you ever confront any SWPers?*

GW: No.

1917: *Okay, so we are at a point now when you're obviously gravitating to the SWP, your connection to the CP becomes more and more tenuous. Did you ever finally go in and hand in a resignation statement, or did you stop going to meetings?*

GW: Yes I did. When the case was dropped. This was the tag end of the whole Smith Act epoch, and after a couple of Supreme Court decisions, actually they were Califor-



GILLHAUSEN—STERN—BLACKSTAR

Budapest 1956: Workers topple Stalin statue

nia decisions, the government decided that they would have to expose too many stoolies, and they would have to prove more than they were prepared to prove, so they dropped the indictments. As soon as they dropped the indictments, my friend and I resigned, formally. Although, we had been de facto out of the CP, that is, out of its discipline, before that. The difference was that we now publicly stated our opposition to the CP and wrote letters, and made some public denunciations of what we saw as Stalinist.

1917: *Did you write letters to the Militant?*

GW: I don't know where exactly, but they ended up in print one place or another. Probably in the *Militant*, and I think we put some leaflets out. At this point we thought we were at war with the CP. We had felt we were before, but because of the Smith Act situation, that had to be muted. But at this point, we were in a political war with the CP.

1917: *You weren't a Trotskyist and your friend was even less of a Trotskyist, so your framework was what, that the CP was hopelessly bureaucratic? What was your critique?*

GW: He and I both wanted to make a fight for control of the CP through the 1957 convention. I think it was in February. We thought that if the Gatesites could takeover the CP, that perhaps it could be transformed into a decent organization. I think, looking back on it, that this was a utopian attitude, and I think we halfway felt that at the time, and therefore we had no success at this. After that convention, the CP began to go back to business-as-usual. They began to get it together, and things began to func-

tion a little more. And we could see the period where this struggle could successfully be carried on was over, so we resigned. We were getting no support from the other Gates people. They wanted nothing more to do with it.

1917: *You and he were sending these letters. Was there anyone else doing this?*

GW: Yes. There were a lot of people doing this sort of thing too. We were in touch with some of them, but it was a very individual thing.

1917: *You separated from your first wife in the middle of all this. Did that have political roots, or was it mainly personal?*

GW: On the surface it had no political roots, it was a personal thing. Actually, since our mutual dedication to the CP and to its politics was one of the things which held us together, it knocked one of the props out from under the marriage.

1917: *She didn't become a hard Fosterite and denounce you?*

GW: No, it was nothing like that. We were pretty much in agreement except that she was through with politics and she knew I wasn't. She could see all the signs that I was going to go on for a while.

1917: *So, you and your friend were out of the CP, and you at least were sort of in the orbit of the Boston branch of the SWP.*

GW: This was the opening of what was called a regroupment period. It began to be possible for different socialist groups, including the CP, to at least talk to other groups. And we participated to an extent in that. Nothing much ever came of this, but this occupied my political energy and also my friend's. We were still pretty close politically. I was making financial contributions to the SWP by this time, which is a form of commitment. But I was still trying to study things. Someone sent me a Shachtmanite piece. I think, from other people, that the FBI was sending these things around, which I don't mean as a criticism of the Shachtmanites. It wasn't their fault, but I believe the FBI was sending these things around. It was a polemic against the idea that the Soviet Union was, in any sense, a workers state. The orthodox Trotskyists were saying, this is a degenerated workers state, and the Shachtmanites were saying, it is bureaucratically collectivist, and the Soviet Union is not part of the solution but rather part of the problem. I really tried to think that one through. That perhaps disturbed me more than anything else that I was getting in terms of the direction I really wanted to go, which was toward the SWP. But I managed to overcome that.

1917: *Did you ever intersect the Shachtmanites?*

GW: No. I didn't know what the Shachtmanites had at the time in Boston, they didn't seem to be around much. Essentially, the regroupment that I recall was a matter of the SWP, various Stalinist and ex-Stalinist groupings and possibly some social democrats. I don't recall ever having any contact with the Shachtmanites other than just a literary thing, until I came out here [California]. Here they were very active.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Poland...

continued from page 2

tantly, the price-hikes, unemployment, speed-up and cuts in social services which must accompany the introduction of a market-oriented economy, will drive a wedge between the Solidarnosc bigwigs around Lech Walesa and the organization's proletarian base. Despite their illusions about the Catholic Church and Western "democracy," Polish workers will soon discover that they are the main targets of the economic restructuring being advocated by the unholy trinity of the PUWP, Solidarnosc and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

For the Rebirth of Polish Marxism!

Ten years of Solidarnosc's clerical-nationalist misleadership has left the Polish working class politically disarmed in the face of this attack. As the chaos deepens, and formerly fixed points on the Polish political map begin to dissolve, it will become increasingly clear to sections of the Polish proletariat that no organized force in the country today represents its class interests. This presents an opening for revolutionaries to point out that there is a tradition in Polish history other than that of the venal and corrupt Stalinist bureaucracy, whose claim to the mantle of communism Polish workers now take at face value; or that of the fascistic interwar dictator, Josef Pilsudski, whose legacy workers embrace as the only alternative to the "communism" they have come to know and hate. The Polish revolutionary socialist tradition is represented by the heroic figures of Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches, who founded the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), and fought at the side of the Polish workers against Czarism during the

Polish women organize to defend right to abortion

JANUSZ ROSIKON



revolution of 1905. The SDKPiL actively supported the Bolshevik workers revolution of 1917, and formed the core of the original Polish section of the Communist International when Lenin and Trotsky stood at the helm of the Soviet state.

A party founded on the revolutionary tradition of the Polish proletariat would be prepared to repudiate the debt to the Western bankers, while unconditionally defending the collectivization of the means of production. It would stand for the abolition of the "right" to exploit labor in town or country. It would strive to link the struggles of Polish workers to those of their class brothers and sisters in the USSR, who recently shut down mines in western Siberia and the Ukraine to protest their own government's attempts to impose market discipline.

A Marxist organization in Poland would aggressively promote the struggle for women's liberation and condemn all attempts by the clerical hierarchy to restrict or prohibit abortion. It would also advocate crushing the fascistic anti-Semitic nationalists of the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) and denounce the viciously anti-Semitic provocations of Cardinal Glemp. Such a party would necessarily adopt the name and the program of Leon Trotsky, who sought to rescue the revolutionary traditions of Bolshevism from their Stalinist falsifiers. The present plight of the Polish working class demonstrates that there can be no substitute for a Bolshevik-Leninist party.

1988 Strike Wave: Turning Point

The current chapter in the Polish drama began with two waves of strikes in the spring and summer of 1988. The summer eruption began in Poland's southern mining region of Upper Silesia and soon spread to the Baltic port cities of Szczecin and Gdansk, both major Solidarnosc strongholds. Government-decreed increases in retail prices provided the immediate spark for the walkouts; but it soon became clear that the leadership of Solidarnosc, with the support of a majority of the striking workers, intended to use the outbreak of discontent for political rather than simply economic aims. Walesa's strategy, which he announced from the outset of the strikes, was to pressure the Jaruzelski government into legalizing Solidarnosc, outlawed since 1981.

After a two-week standoff, the strategy produced results. A series of indirect contacts between Solidarnosc leaders and Communist Party chiefs, brokered by the Catholic Church, quickly led to a meeting between Lech Walesa and General Czeslaw Kiszczak, Poland's interior minister and chief gendarme, who had personally signed the order for Walesa's arrest in 1981. Walesa obtained from Kiszczak a pledge to initiate a series of "round table" discussions between the regime and "all major social forces" (i.e., Solidarnosc) with a view to resolving Poland's political and economic crisis.

With this victory in his pocket, Walesa rushed to the docks and coalfields to persuade the strikers to return to work. He encountered bitter opposition from the more intransigent workers, who thought it foolish to call off the strikes in return for mere promises. But the Solidarnosc chairman prevailed. In exchange for Walesa's

cooperation in ending the strikes, Jaruzelski and his cohorts demonstrated their ability to curb the PUWP hardliners who tried to sabotage the proposed parley.

When the talks concluded last April, Solidarnosc had regained legal status and had also won the right to run for parliament as the first *bona fide* opposition in the recent history of the Soviet bloc. In the Sejm (parliament), it was allowed to contest 161 of 460 seats. The remaining seats were reserved for PUWP and its supposed allies. The regime also agreed to revive the long-defunct Senate and permit Solidarnosc to field candidates for all of its 100 seats. The Senate has the right to veto legislation initiated in the Sejm. When the votes were counted after the June elections, Solidarnosc won an overwhelming mandate, taking all the seats it contested in the Sejm and all but one in the Senate.

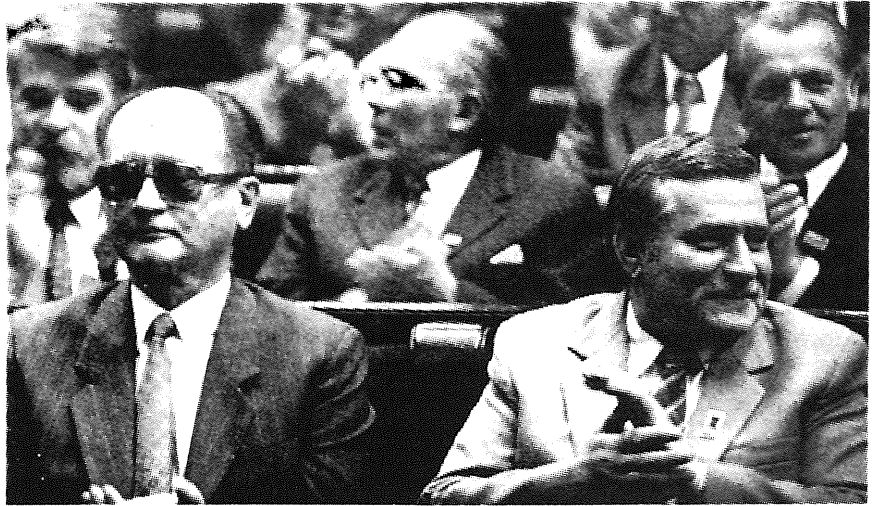
Solidarnosc Forms a Government

Events have since unfolded with a rapidity that surprised the winners as well as the losers. Until the governmental crisis of mid-August, Solidarnosc's leaders were pursuing a gradualist strategy. The round-table agreements of April were designed to allow Solidarnosc only a limited legislative role, while ensuring that a parliamentary majority, the government, and the presidency remained in the hands of the PUWP. Solidarnosc was not supposed to be able to win a parliamentary majority and form a government until the elections scheduled for 1993.

This go-slow approach, however, was out of sync with the political mood that swept the country following the elections. The vote was widely viewed as a resounding repudiation of Jaruzelski and the PUWP. With lengthening bread lines and a rash of strikes against price hikes, it soon became apparent that only a thoroughgoing governmental change could prevent a political upheaval. At that point the United Peasants' Party and the Democratic Party (traditionally PUWP "allies") switched sides, giving Solidarnosc a majority in the Sejm. As part of the deal, Solidarnosc agreed to leave the coercive apparatus of the state (army and police) in the hands of the PUWP, and to permit General Jaruzelski to retain the office of president, with the power to veto legislation and dissolve parliament.

Several considerations figured in this "historic compromise" between the former antagonists. The experience of martial law had cooled Walesa's ardor for direct confrontation with the regime. This reluctance was shared by most Solidarnosc supporters who were old enough to remember the defeat of 1981. The 1988 strikes failed to attain the breadth of the struggles that led to Solidarnosc's birth eight years earlier because active participation was largely confined to workers in their late teens and early twenties who were unbruised by the earlier debacle.

But the 1988 strikes, conducted under the banner of



Jaruzelski and Walesa together in the Senate

"No Freedom Without Solidarnosc," demonstrated the workers' continued allegiance to Walesa, as well as their ability to disrupt the ailing economy. Solidarnosc was not strong enough to contest state power, but the PUWP could not make the economy work. This stalemate forced both sides toward an accommodation, as Jaruzelski reluctantly concluded that the country could no longer be effectively governed without the participation of the opposition.

Solidarnosc and the Kremlin

The Stalinist-Solidarnosc accord was also shaped by the political changes in the Soviet Union since the rise of Gorbachev. The PUWP regime was imposed upon Poland by Stalin after the Second World War in response to the U.S.-initiated Cold War. And it was as antagonists in the Cold War—with Solidarnosc as the champion of "democracy," "free trade unions" and Catholic anti-Communism, versus Jaruzelski as the defender of the political and economic status quo—that the two forces confronted each other in December 1981.

But today, the Kremlin is ruled by a proponent of class peace who has unilaterally declared that the Cold War is over, and has given proof of his sincerity by withdrawing support to third-world liberation struggles, pulling troops and missiles out of Eastern Europe, and promising to exempt the Russian-ruled Baltic republics from economic planning and the monopoly of foreign trade. Walesa was not entirely without justification in observing that the great misfortune of Solidarnosc was that "Brezhnev died two years too late."

U.S. imperialism and its allies have not foresworn their ambition of recovering Eastern Europe; but neither are they unwilling to take advantage of Gorbachev's outstretched hand. After some hesitation and internal wrangling, the Western powers, including the United States, now appear to be de-emphasizing the Reagan posture of maximum military pressure on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in favor of the West German strategy of *ostpolitik*—the reconquest of the lands east of the Elbe through gradual economic penetration. And it is not difficult to see why Poland, which has historically been the

weakest link in Moscow's chain of Warsaw Pact buffer states, should recommend itself as a vulnerable entry point for this mark- and dollar led "drive to the east."

Stalin once quipped that imposing his brand of "communism" on Poland was like putting a saddle on a cow. Poland is the only country in the Soviet bloc where agriculture was never extensively collectivized. Moreover, the stridently anti-Communist Catholic Church retained a special status, with chaplains in the army and the right to conduct religious instruction in the schools.

For almost twenty years the PUWP attempted to avoid the consequences of repeated economic failures by mortgaging the country to the loansharks of Wall Street and the Frankfurt bourse. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Polish Stalinists today find themselves in the "vanguard" of Warsaw Pact rulers descending into free-market chaos.

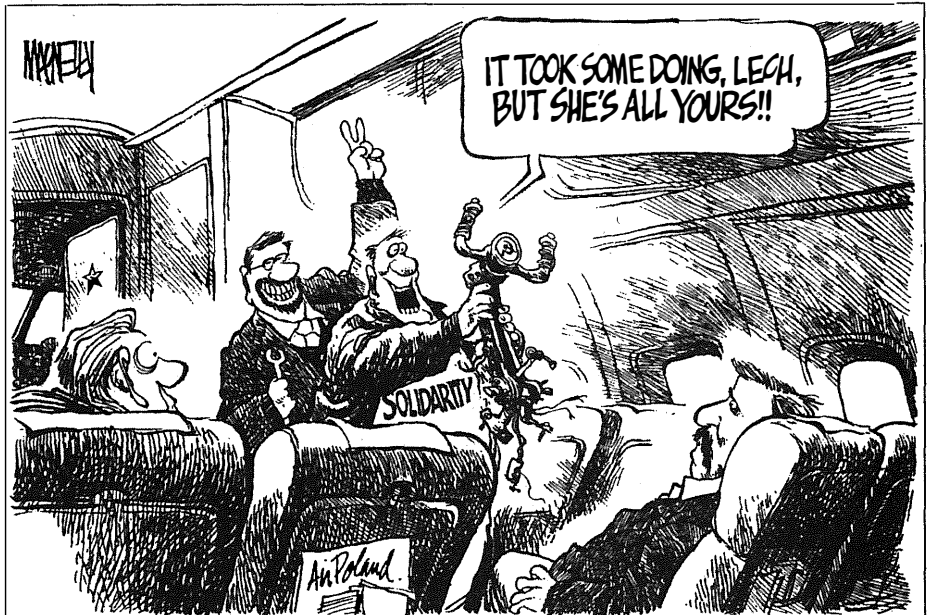
PUWP: Courting Clerics, Kulaks and IMF

Notwithstanding the rapprochement between Polish Stalinism and Solidarnosc, the PUWP is still indispensable to the Kremlin as a guarantor of Poland's adherence to the Warsaw Pact. At least for the time being, the capitalist powers appear content to let Poland remain within the Russian military orbit, so long as the economic and political "reforms" proceed apace. Walesa has joined Bush, Kohl and Thatcher in assuring Gorbachev that he has no intention of exploiting the present crisis for military advantage. Gorbachev, whose credulity concerning imperialism's good intentions seems boundless, appears to accept these assurances at face value. With the question of Poland's military allegiance temporarily on the back burner, the political differences between the Stalinists and Solidarnosc have become more and more difficult to discern in recent years.

Solidarnosc was inspired in part by the elevation of Krakow's own Cardinal Karol Wojtyla to the papacy, and has always worked closely with this itinerant apostle of reaction. But Jaruzelski and the Polish Stalinists have proven almost as anxious to ingratiate themselves with the Holy See. In October of last year, the Polish government offered the Vatican full freedom to operate in Poland if the Pope would agree to make Warsaw the first regime in Eastern Europe officially recognized by the Church.

Since 1981, Solidarnosc has advocated joining the International Monetary Fund, the principal financial agency of world imperialism. In 1986, Poland, on Jaruzelski's initiative, did exactly that. Today both Solidarnosc and the Stalinists agree that the only way out of the country's current economic crisis is to borrow even more money from the West.

The PUWP has also joined Solidarnosc in promoting



MACNELLY—CHICAGO TRIBUNE

a wider role for rural capitalists. Poland's private peasant farmers, who control 75 percent of the arable land, have always been the bane of Stalinist economic planners. While the regime never seriously attempted to collectivize agriculture, it was able, in the early years, to shield the working class from the harsher effects of rural "free enterprise" by exercising state control over trade between the countryside and the cities. The state attempted to ensure that basic foodstuffs remained affordable by fixing the prices it would pay private farmers. But low prices provided no incentive for increased production. In an attempt to increase agricultural output without sparking resistance in the working class through price hikes, the Stalinist rulers began providing hefty subsidies to the peasants, paying farmers more for agricultural products than it charged consumers. The price subsidies were, in turn, financed by borrowing from Western banks.

This short-sighted accommodation to the requirements of the anti-socialist smallholders contributed significantly to the present economic impasse of the Polish economy. While rural living standards increased more rapidly than those of any other sector in Polish society, the peasants never accepted the Stalinist regime. Resenting their dependence on the state for supplies of seed, fertilizer and machinery, they showed their discontent by restricting production and refusing to invest in capital improvements.

The PUWP's attempts to reduce the food subsidies, by bringing prices into line with costs, was a major cause of the strike wave that brought Solidarnosc into being in 1980. In its 1981 program, Solidarnosc proposed to solve this problem by eliminating price controls altogether, leaving the workers completely at the mercy of the rich peasants. In August of this year, the Jaruzelski regime adopted this plank from Solidarnosc's platform, lifting controls on food prices and allowing the farmers to charge whatever the traffic would bear.

There remains the question of Poland's industrial infrastructure: the coal mines, shipyards and factories which are still in the hands of the state. To make Poland

a "going concern" for the international bourgeoisie, collectivized property must be put into private hands, something which Solidarnosc has long advocated. Today, the leading Stalinist faction appears to be prepared to countenance such a step.

Less than two weeks after the legalization of Solidarnosc, George Bush unveiled an economic aid package specifically designed to encourage private foreign investment in the Polish economy. Almost immediately, Barbara Piasecka Johnson, Polish-born heiress to the Johnson & Johnson pharmaceutical fortune, signed a letter of intent to purchase a 55 percent interest in the Lenin Shipyard for \$100 million. She is currently in Poland with a legion of corporate lackeys to consummate the deal. This proposal for the outright sale of a major item of state property to a U.S. capitalist is being presented as the only hope for preventing the government from going ahead with plans to shut down the yard on 1 January 1990. This closure is in line with the PUWP's policy of phasing out heavy industry in favor of light, consumer-oriented enterprises such as electronics, banking services, food processing and tourism.

A story in the July 31 *New York Times* provides an indication of what form of ownership the Stalinists contemplate for these industries. It reports that Mieczyslaw Rakowski, the new PUWP chief:

"appears to have persuaded General Jaruzelski, and through him Moscow, that to remain a viable force, the party must forge a fresh constituency among the managers and workers of industries with a promising future....

"Mr. Rakowski has been at the forefront of a movement within the party to transfer ownership of state companies in these sectors to their party-nominated managers, in what appears to be an effort to compensate them for a loss of security and perquisites and retain their loyalty in the coming struggle with Solidarity." (emphasis added)

The "Enfranchisement of the Nomenklatura"

This policy of converting state enterprises into the private property of sections of the party elite, known as the "enfranchisement of the nomenklatura," did not begin on the morrow of Solidarnosc's electoral triumph; it has been pursued by the Polish Stalinists for the past several years, and is closely linked to the regime's attempts to create a wider role for "free enterprise." In 1986, Jaruzelski attempted to introduce his own version of perestroika under the label of "national renewal." Today, as a result, private companies in Poland are legally entitled to equal treatment with state enterprises. Restrictions on joint-stock ventures with foreign capital have been eliminated and individual entrepreneurs have the legal right to hire as much labor as they can use.

But despite these sweeping juridical changes, little changed in practice. The managers of the powerful state monopolies and the planners in the central ministries remained strong enough to marginalize the new private companies (which accounted for less than five percent of the economy). Jaruzelski's version of perestroika proved to be a colossal failure. The creation of a handful of private enterprises in a bureaucratically regulated economy, with a sullen and uncooperative proletariat, only

How Low Can Mandel Go?

Ernest Mandel and his fake-Trotskyist "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec) have over the past several decades played the role of cheerleaders for a variety of "mass movements," ranging from the Cuban and Vietnamese Stalinists in the 1960s all the way to Khomeini's theocratic "Islamic Revolution" in the late 1970s. In Eastern Europe the "mass movements" championed by the USec have often had an explicitly counterrevolutionary, capitalist restorationist leadership and program. This stands in flagrant contradiction to the Trotskyist position of *defense* of collectivized property against capitalist forces in societies ruled by Stalinist bureaucracies. But this has never posed a problem for the USec. After all, they figure, what are a few Trotskyist principles here or there compared to a chance to climb aboard a genuine "mass movement"?

The September 18 edition of the USec's *International Viewpoint* (IV) takes this wretched opportunism to appalling new depths. IV reprints an article by one Herbert Lindmae of the Estonian Popular Front, praising "The armed struggle against Stalinism in Estonia" by the "Forest Brothers"—Estonia's Nazi collaborators! Lindmae makes no attempt to conceal the fact that in 1941: "In the expulsion of the Red Army from the mainland and islands of Estonia, Forest Brothers' self-defense units participated along with the German armed forces." He continues:

"The armed struggle against Stalinism was fundamentally a struggle of the Estonian people for liberation. In the summer of 1944, more than 90,000 Estonians participated in it. The fact that during the war people involved in it fought on the side of fascist Germany is strictly the fault of Stalinism."

Lindmae complains that a recent ruling by the Estonian government annulling "extrajudicial mass repression" does not cover "traitors to the fatherland and members of nationalist bands and their satellites....Such persons must also be considered rehabilitated."

IV defends this revolting article complaining that, "The Soviet central press continues to cry scandal about any defense of the 'Forest Brothers,' and this is an element in the intensified polemics about the Baltic peoples' movements." The Stalinist press has told many lies over the years but scandalizing these Hitlerite collaborators is surely no crime. By solidarizing with Lindmae's defense of Estonia's anti-Semitic Hitlerites, the USec reveals its complete political bankruptcy.

contributed to the decline.

There are now about 100 private joint-stock enterprises with foreign capitalists in Poland, most of them fairly small-scale. Yet under the PUWP, it has been almost impossible for foreigners to do business in Poland without running into a mass of government restrictions. An account in the Autumn 1988 *East European Reporter* explains how some of the supposed guardians of state

property used their positions to become fledgling entrepreneurs:

"A Polonian firm is subject to blackmail from the moment it is founded. It only receives permission if the security service has no objections against the foreign owners or their Polish plenipotentiaries.... Thus foreign owners often prefer to give the post of plenipotentiary or some other highly paid office to someone who is recommended by the police. In other words they employ people who have contacts in those institutions on which these firms are dependent."

Many retired members of the security apparatus, on full state pensions, initiated small businesses: "These people somehow do not have any problems with getting concessions on the use of premises and other affairs which for a normal Polish private businessman would take up more than half his energy and time."

The "enfranchisement" process acquired momentum in February 1989, as the round-table discussions with Solidarnosc began. The Stalinist-controlled Sejm passed the National Consolidation Plan permitting enterprise managements to "experiment" with private ownership. Typically, managers of state-owned companies, who often ended up as major shareholders of the new private firms, pass along lucrative orders from the "people's enterprise." In other cases, the new company "shares" space, tools and even personnel with the state enterprise. A variant is that the state company itself is privatized by offering shares, many of which are picked up by the existing management at a substantial discount.

PUWP: A Self-Liquidating Bureaucracy?

In the December 1981 showdown between Solidarnosc and the Polish state, we sided militarily with the Jaruzelski regime against the explicitly capitalist restorationist Solidarnosc leadership (see our pamphlet, "Solidarnosc: Acid Test for Trotskyists"). In this confrontation Jaruzelski acted as a defender of a status quo which included state ownership of the means of production. But the trajectory of the Polish Stalinists in the intervening eight years poses new and unavoidable questions: can a regime that has led the country into the IMF, allowed private farmers free reign in setting the prices of food, and which now proposes to sell whole sectors of state industry piecemeal to foreign capitalists while turning other enterprises into the private property of its own members, still be considered a defender of proletarian property forms? Is it possible for a Stalinist bureaucracy, which has up to now based itself upon state ownership of the means of production, to gradually transform itself into a "new bourgeoisie," ruling in combination with elements of native and foreign capital? These questions are profoundly significant not only for Poland, but for the crisis now engulfing the entire non-capitalist world.

In addressing these questions, it is necessary first to consider the internal composition of the bureaucracy. Although the prospect of privatization may indeed be attractive to many factory managers and directors of the more successful state enterprises, this managerial layer does not comprise the top-most echelon of the bureaucracy. The core of the ruling Stalinist caste consists of a



Gorbachev and Kohl: Poland in the balance

DER SPIEGEL

stratum of party apparatchiks who possess the power to direct the economy as a whole, including the appointment and dismissal of enterprise managers and lower-level bureaucrats. This control over economic decision making and personnel constitutes the principal source of the Stalinists' privileges, and hence their very identity as a ruling group. They cannot turn the economy over to private owners without relinquishing their ability to dispense patronage jobs and to (dis)organize production. It is highly unlikely that the Polish Stalinists, as a caste, will prove to be the first ruling group in history to willingly preside over its own liquidation.

The Stalinists have given ground to Solidarnosc as a defensive adaptation to mounting internal and external pressures. According to the *Economist* (12 August), "Mr. Rakowski, Poland's prime minister, told his party recently that it must give up 40% of its power in order to hold on to the other 60%." The PUWP leadership may imagine that by agreeing to power-sharing with Walesa and privatizing the more viable state industries, it can somehow consolidate its position against both its own hardliners and Solidarnosc. But the attempt to maintain the PUWP's increasingly tenuous grip on power by beating Solidarnosc at its own restorationist game is doomed to fail.

Solidarnosc cannot simply take over the existing state apparatus—particularly the "armed bodies of men" which remain under Jaruzelski's control—and use them to defend a system of private property in the means of production. To consolidate the social counterrevolution which they propose, Walesa et al must ensure that their own trusted people hold all the key levers of power, particularly in the army and police. Solidarnosc must break

the power of the PUWP:

"Solidarity has said a major legislative goal will be the dismantling of the so-called system of nomenklatura, under which the Communist Party has retained the right to fill virtually all of the nation's political, economic and social positions, from local government heads through army commanders to hospital and school directors.

"Mr. Geremek [Solidarity's parliamentary leader] said: The main problem is one of principles, and if there is to be the formation of an open government, there must be the end of the Communist monopoly."

—*New York Times*, 18 August

The Stalinists cannot simply negotiate away their power in the economy and state apparatus. There is no question that a large section of the bureaucracy, including most of the "enfranchisees," wish to see Solidarnosc's program implemented. Indeed, many individual PUWP members have already defected to Walesa. Other elements in the party and state apparatus, who stand to lose everything if the PUWP's political and economic monopoly is broken, will, out of a desire to preserve their own privileges, at some point attempt to offer resistance to the proposed "reforms."

The task of defending proletarian property forms cannot be left to any wing of the corrupt and discredited PUWP bureaucracy. As Trotsky noted 50 years ago, the material interests of a parasite do not constitute a sufficient basis for the defense of the host (i.e., collectivized property). The Polish Stalinists are thoroughly demoralized and bereft of even the faintest spark of moral, political or social purpose. In the campaign leading up to the June elections, the traditional Communist red was replaced on PUWP campaign posters by a pale and anaemic blue; PUWP candidates did not run under their own party's name, but chose instead the more neutral-sounding designation of "National List." Even the hammer and sickle was replaced by a symbol more suited to the party's softer line: toilet paper—the scarce commodity with which candidates sought to bribe voters at the hustings.

In appeasing their foes, the Stalinist bureaucrats have become almost indistinguishable from them in terms of their social and economic agenda. This has undermined their own capacity for effective opposition in the future. Any resistance that elements of the PUWP may eventually offer to Solidarnosc will be motivated by fear of losing their bureaucratic privileges. But the capacity of the PUWP to influence events is shrinking as the demoralized apparatus disintegrates.

Solidarnosc: Enemy of Polish Workers

Yet in Poland today the Stalinists are not the only ones in trouble. As long as the PUWP monopolized political power, it was forced to shoulder the blame for the country's economic condition. In the eyes of the masses, Solidarnosc will henceforth share responsibility for the disastrous economic situation. Walesa and the rest of Solidarnosc's leadership know this and they also know that the new government's program for capitalist restoration is not going to be popular with the workers. During the election campaign last May, Solidarnosc candidates

deliberately dodged all questions of economic policy.

To avoid personal responsibility for the anti-working class measures that lie along the road of capitalist restoration, Walesa turned away the coronet of office with the back of his hand. He knows that to have any chance of selling IMF-imposed austerity in the future, he must remain "clean" in the eyes of the workers. In refusing to assume direct responsibility for Solidarnosc in power, Walesa is wiser than the proponents of the various theories of "state capitalism" who hold that there is no essential difference between the societies west and east of the Elbe. The Lenin Shipyard electrician is well aware of the difference.

Despite his renown among pontiffs and presidents, and despite his Nobel Prize, Walesa knows that his authority derives in the final analysis from the workers he led against the regime in 1980, who still comprise the core of Solidarnosc's social base. He also knows that the IMF-prescribed shock treatment which Mazowiecki's government proposes cannot be successfully imposed upon the working class solely through papal incantations or the bromides of "democratic" rhetoric. It means an assault on the workers' standard of living far more massive than anything they have suffered thus far at the hands of the bankrupt Stalinist regime, and this will require large-scale repression which could reach the level of white terror.

Michael Mandelbaum, of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, bluntly summed up the new prime minister's dilemma, "First, he is going to have to stab his adversaries and then he is going to have to stab his supporters" (*New York Times*, 25 August). As well as going after the Stalinist nomenklatura, "he is going to have to shut down inefficient, overmanned state enterprises, such as the Gdansk shipyards, where Solidarity was born, or some mines and steel mills, and that is going to hurt his core constituency." If Solidarnosc successfully carries out the social counterrevolution it advocates, Polish workers will learn that collectivized property represents real gains—the right to full employment, education, low-cost housing and free medical care.

Walesa estimated that: "For half of Polish companies, nothing needs to be done. Just change the organization and you can make money instantly. One-fourth need the addition of some capital, and one-fourth have to be disbanded" (*New York Times*, 7 July). Everyone expects that

Polish Stalinism: empty-shelf "socialism"

B. BARBEY—MAGNUM



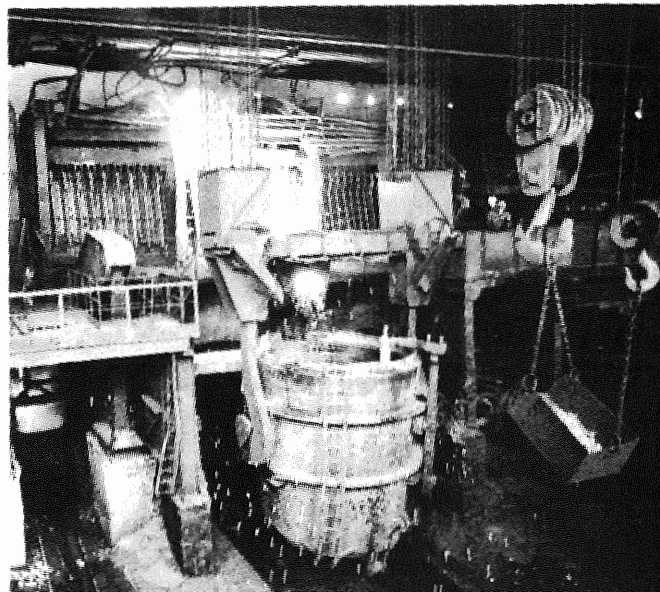
those workers presently employed in the enterprises Walesa proposes to disband, as well as other working people whose living standards will plummet as they watch a handful of pirates get rich, are likely to explode in anger. After meeting with Bush in July, Walesa fretted: "I am sitting on a powder keg, and I have doubts we will be able to do it." Civil war could result, he said, if reforms demanded of Poland brought unemployment and reduced incomes" (*New York Times*, 12 July). In any such future conflict, revolutionaries must militarily bloc with any combination of forces—including sections of the Stalinist apparatus—which resist the assault on the working class and the dismantling of the system of collectivized property.

Solidarnosc's imperialist well-wishers and paymasters are quite conscious of the pitfalls which await any government seeking to reimpose capitalism upon the Polish working class. Since Solidarnosc obtained its governmental majority, there has been much talk in bourgeois political circles about massive Western economic aid, even a "new Marshall Plan," for Poland. George Bush started by offering a paltry \$161 million—a mere drop in the bucket. Under pressure from Congressional Democrats, he is now talking about increasing U.S. assistance as well as funneling larger amounts of money to Poland through the International Monetary Fund. The European Economic Community has pledged an additional \$660 million for Poland and Hungary, with the possibility of more in the future to soften the transition to a market economy. France has pledged a similar amount and West Germany has promised \$1 billion. But the aid proffered so far falls far short of the \$10 billion that Solidarnosc has been requesting.

The queasiness of Poland's prospective buyers is not unjustified. The international bourgeoisie know that a capitalist Poland is in their long-term interests, but they are not philanthropists. They have enough business sense to realize that any government which must take on the job of breaking up the Stalinist state apparatus and subduing the inevitable resistance of millions of workers is a risky short-term investment. In the words of an unnamed senior State Department official quoted in the 14 September *New York Times*: "The economic situation is still a swamp over there. Government unions are trying to be more militant than Solidarity, striking for large wage increases. It's still not clear that hard-liners in the Communist Party are reconciled to the new government and want it to succeed."

The Polish proletariat is giving the imperialists good reason to be nervous. Strike activity has increased since the June elections and a mood of skepticism is growing in the working class toward their Solidarnosc leaders. While Walesa appeals for a six-month moratorium on strikes and the government tries to sell Polish workers on the need to work more and get paid less, the Stalinist unions, initially created by Jaruzelski to compete with Solidarnosc, have been taking a more militant line against government austerity measures and have thus gained some credibility. At the same time, "Fighting Solidarity," the rightist split from Solidarnosc which includes members of the fascistic KPN, is also growing.

In the final analysis, the only force capable of defend-



Krakow steelworks

BOUDIN—COLLECTIF—JBPICURES

ing collectivized property against Solidarnosc, the Western bankers and a Stalinist bureaucracy intent on giving away the store, is the Polish proletariat, led by a conscious Bolshevik vanguard. Only by advocating a clear and decisive break with the reactionary clericalist ideology and leadership of Solidarnosc can Polish Marxists begin the necessary political reorientation of the working class. To coordinate the struggles against the IMF dictated assaults, Polish workers need to form councils of democratically-elected representatives from every factory, linked in a national network. Within such bodies revolutionists would seek to mobilize the proletariat for revolutionary struggle to defeat both the capitalist restorationists of Solidarnosc and the discredited Stalinist parasites. Only on this basis can the enthusiasm necessary to rejuvenate the centrally-planned economy under democratic workers control be generated.

But a revolutionary leadership committed to such a perspective cannot be constructed by the spineless pseudo-leftists who have spent most of the last ten years adapting to, apologizing for and tailing behind the openly pro-capitalists of Solidarnosc. Only those who stand for a clear and decisive break with the leadership and program of imperialism's favorite "union" have the political capacity to lead the workers in the struggle to ensure that the system of capitalist wage-slavery does not return to Poland. ■

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iSt/ICL: "New Name, Same Game"

Cynics Who Scorn Trotskyism

In its 1974 founding document, the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) modestly observed that it had "little extraneous, symbolic drawing power." Fifteen years later, as the group renames itself the "International Communist League" (ICL), it has less international "drawing power" than ever. But this does not seem to bother Spartacist founder/leader Jim Robertson. As the iSt gradually degenerated from a genuinely revolutionary organization into the political bandit operation it is today, its leadership has become highly ambivalent toward regroupments with experienced cadres from other political currents. The Spartacist leaders have found that people without significant prior political experience are much more likely to adjust to the peculiarities of life in "Jimstown."

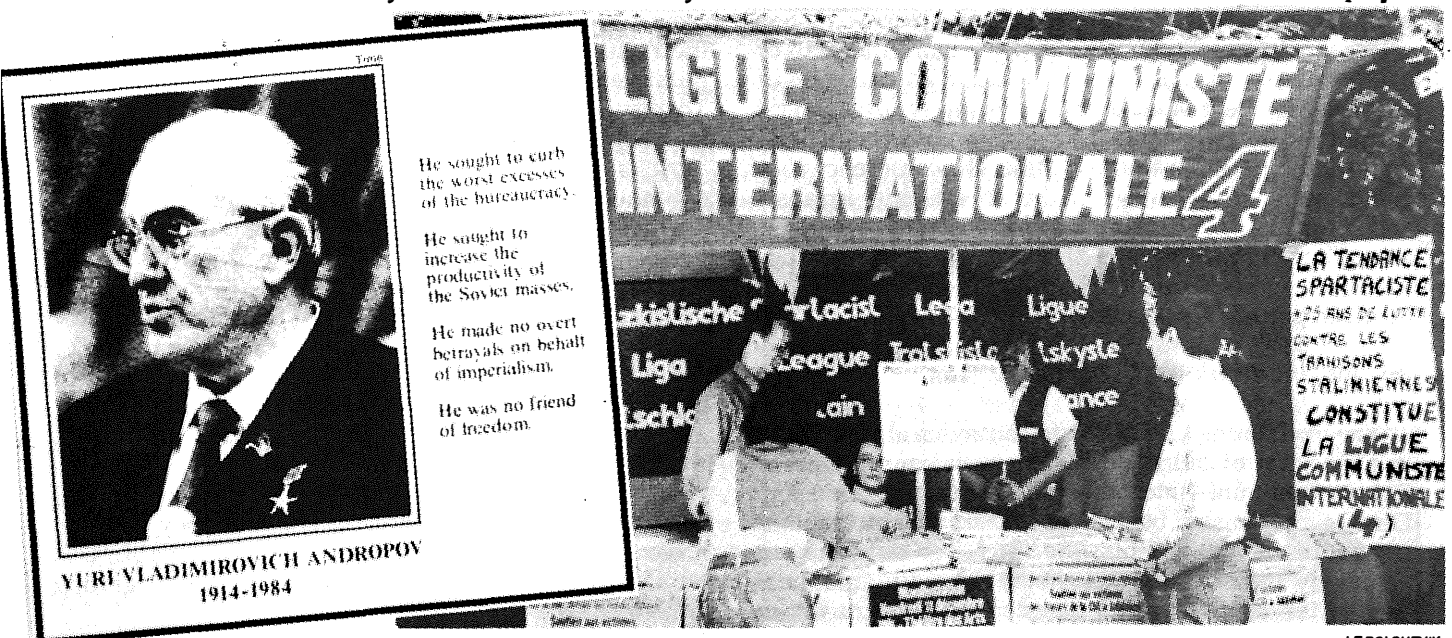
The Spartacist tendency today is appreciably smaller than it was a decade ago. Outside the U.S., only the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), which for the past decade has been something of an anomaly within the iSt, has any political or organizational weight. Besides being the only section to grow appreciably, the LTF maintained a more political approach to its opponents and was also spared the homogenizing purges and witchhunts periodically inflicted on the other iSt groups. To some extent this reflects Robertson's confidence in the personal loyalty of those at the top in Paris. However, the special treatment of the French section is mainly attributable to the political milieu in which it operates. Paris is the unofficial capital of ostensible world Trotskyism, and Robertson always

placed particular importance on having a French subsidiary. The LTF had enough trouble as an organization of a few dozen in direct competition with three ostensibly Trotskyist opponents forty or fifty times its size without being trashed by head office.

French Fusion Explodes

Last year the LTF achieved what appeared to be a major breakthrough when it fused with a handful of cadres of the Tribune Communiste group—descendants of the Pabloist entrists in the French Communist Party (PCF) in the 1950s. Tribune Communiste's gradual evolution to the left entailed a break with the illusion that French Stalinism could ever be transformed into even a blunted revolutionary instrument. Key to the Tribune Communiste fusion with the LTF in 1988 was the latter's positions on the Russian question—in particular, opposition to Solidarnosc and support to the USSR against the Afghan mujahedeens.

Tribune Communiste was the first important circle of cadres to join the iSt for almost a decade. The fusion was particularly significant in the context of the disintegration of the French Communist Party, a development which the LTF's anti-Soviet competitors have been unable to capitalize on. In its 8 April 1988 issue, *Workers Vanguard* (WV), the Robertsonites' literary flagship, hailed the merger as an event of "international significance" and ventured that within the iSt these comrades "will play a



Right: ICL booth at LO fete 1989 featured placard proclaiming, "The Spartacist Tendency—25 years of struggle against Stalinist betrayal constitutes the International Communist League (4)"

Left: WV, 17 February 1984: "in memoriam" box for CPSU chief Yuri Andropov. Andropov was "Soviet overlord" in charge of crushing 1956 Hungarian workers political revolution

LE BOLCHEVIK



Paris, 27 January 1988: joint contingent of Ligue Trotskyiste and Tribune Communiste at anti-fascist protest

LEBOLCHEVIK

leading role, not only in its French section."

But the fusion exploded last spring, when the ex-Tribune Communiste members, joined initially by a half-dozen other LTFers, opposed New York's absurd "offer" to organize a brigade to "fight to the death" under Afghanistan's Najibullah. Having just been won to the necessity of open political struggle against Stalinist treachery, and the importance of speaking the truth to the masses, the former Tribune Communiste members were aghast at what they saw as a cynical gimmick aimed at impressing dissident Stalinists in West Europe.

While most iSt cadres who had similar reservations kept their mouths shut, the former Tribune Communiste members were openly critical of the leadership's chimerical foreign legion. They immediately became the focus of a ferocious internal campaign in which their criticisms of the proposal were branded as "anti-communist." An iSt delegation, flown in for an LTF national conference, turned the gathering into a heresy hunt. The conference concluded with the "victory" of the Robertsonite loyalists and the exit of the former Tribune Communiste members. The net result was an LTF which more closely approximates the norm in the iSt/ICL—smaller, more introverted and less political.

iSt: An "International" That Never Was

The ex-Tribune Communiste comrades are the latest in a long line of cadres who have been bounced out of Robertson's mini-"international" in the past ten years. Despite a promising beginning, and some important international regroupments, the iSt never developed a genuinely international leadership. The "International Secretariat" of the iSt never transcended its origins as an administrative department of the Spartacist League/U.S. (see "The Road to Jimstown").

The announcement of the iSt's name-change first appeared (naturally) in the June 9 issue of Robertson's

American newspaper. This lengthy article (duly translated and/or adapted by the other sections) chiefly consists of a long-winded reprise of the state of the world. The brief discussion of the practical activity of the iSt since its founding concentrates almost exclusively on the Spartacist League (SL), which is also the only section referred to by name.

The accomplishments of the SL's satellites are summed up in a single sentence: "Over the following decade, [since the first and only conference of the iSt in 1979] the development of the sections, particularly in Europe, and their cohering of leaderships has become an increasingly important component in shaping the international tendency." This is an oblique and euphemistic reference to the ruthless purging and repeated humiliation of the putative leaderships of Robertson's European franchises. To ensure continuing fealty to the iSt's New York "center," expatriate SLers occupy key leadership positions in most of the European grouplets. The unfortunate indigenous leaders have generally been "developed" and "cohered" to the point where they have little or no independent political authority within their own sections, much less the tendency as a whole.

The declining importance of the Spartacist tendency outside the U.S. might raise doubts about the timing of the name-change and even the medium-term viability of the whole project. But if the overseas locals are too marginal to deserve a mention in the ICL announcement, they at least come in handy as evidence of Robertson's "internationalism." With tongue firmly in cheek, WV asserts: "we must believe that if our tendency had not achieved significant international extension, the SL/U.S. would have become an eccentric and disintegrating American sect."

Residents of Jimstown must of course pretend to believe whatever they read in WV. But the truth is that the SL/U.S. is a stagnant and increasingly eccentric American sect, and the existence of a half-dozen international

satellites, which together make up barely a third of the total "ICL" membership, doesn't change that. The sections' press consists largely of *Workers Vanguard* reprints or translations. Their every organizational move, right down to the selection of members of local executives, is directed from New York. The idea that these shells exert any control whatsoever in Robertson's American centered obedience cult, is simply laughable.

In its degeneration, the Spartacist tendency has replicated the authoritarian hyper-centralism of Gerry Healy's International Committee, from which the SL was bureaucratically expelled in 1966. A 1966 letter from Harry Turner (then an SL central committee member) to Healy, provides an uncannily accurate description of the norms which Robertson was subsequently to impose in his own mini-"international":

"Your attacks on Robertson were designed to make him knuckle under and adopt an attitude of humble worship for the omniscient British leadership. You were not interested in creating a movement united on the basis of democratic centralism with strong sections capable of making theoretical contributions to the movement as a whole and of applying Marxist theory creatively to their own national arenas. You wanted an international after the manner of Stalin's Comintern, permeated with serenity at one pole and authoritarianism at the other."

The "Henny-Penny" School of Politics

The Healyites routinely invoked an imminent economic "crisis" which was supposed to herald the imminent collapse of capitalism and the advent of socialist revolution. This crisis-mongering was used as a substitute for a Marxist understanding on the part of the group's dues-payers and paper-sellers. The SL tops have recently employed a parallel technique. They have taken to playing "Henny-Penny"—proclaiming that the end of the world is near and that the only salvation lies in the rapid expansion of Robertson's dues-base.

The introduction to a recent SL pamphlet on the Proletarian Military Policy proclaimed: "The threat of nuclear war is real and immediate. We don't have a lot of time left before an imperialist government (or one of its desperate and embattled junior partners) triggers a world cataclysm." *WV's* announcement of the ICL echoes this theme: "we must recognize that the possession of the technology of nuclear holocaust by an irrational imperialist ruling class foreshortens the possibilities: we probably do not have much time." Perhaps feeling that such apocalyptic pronouncements might not impress its politically more sophisticated French audience, the June-July *Le Bolchevik* discreetly dropped *WV's* speculation about timing, and substituted the following truism: "we will probably not have the luxury of seeing a revolutionary upsurge as a result of war."

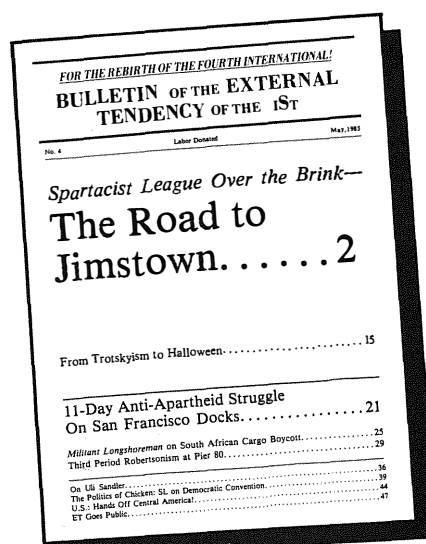
Inter-imperialist rivalries between U.S. imperialism and its German and particularly Japanese rivals are sharpening, but they do not threaten to spill over into nuclear hostilities in the near future. The most probable scenario for nuclear world war remains that of a NATO attack on the USSR. But it is generally estimated that the favorable reception in the West to Gorbachev's perestroika means

that the *immediate* likelihood of an imperialist nuclear first strike is considerably less today than at any point in the past decade.

The Spartacists disagree. The 1 September issue of *Workers Vanguard* asserts, "Gorbachev's appeasement of imperialism, far from easing or ending the Cold War, has *increased* the danger of World War III." The argument runs that by allowing free rein to capitalist-restorationist currents in Poland, Hungary and the Baltics, the Soviet bureaucracy risks creating a situation in which it may be forced to intervene militarily, and that this could lead to a confrontation with the imperialists. But while this scenario can certainly not be ruled out, the emergence of a pro-capitalist government in Poland, and the parallel development of powerful capitalist-restorationist movements among several nationalities within the USSR, has boosted the imperialists' hopes for victory over "communism" *without* nuclear war. This is one reason why the more far-sighted elements of the American bourgeoisie incline toward putting a lid on military spending as part of a program of reversing the economic decline of the U.S. relative to its imperialist rivals.

Even if Gorbachev (or a neo-Brezhnevite successor) were to intervene militarily against one or another East European satellite, the Stalinists are incapable of addressing the profound economic malaise which forced them to grasp at the straw of "market socialism" (and the associated "democratization") in the first place. A military intervention by the USSR might temporarily arrest a drive for capitalist restoration (as Jaruzelski's counter-coup did in Poland in 1981) but, in the long run, it could only postpone the disintegration of bureaucratic rule, while further inflaming anti-Soviet nationalism among the peoples involved.

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The imperialist chieftains, who are well aware of this, would much prefer to see capitalism restored in the Soviet bloc *without* first turning it into a mass of irradiated rubble. Besides, despite Gorbachev's dangerous military cuts, the Soviet nuclear arsenal is still capable of inflicting tremendous damage on the capitalist heartlands. While Gorbachev's conciliationism undermines the military defense of the USSR, it is a mistake to imagine that in this current—perhaps fleeting—period of renewed detente, the immediate likelihood of imperialist attack is *greater* than it was during the preceding period, when U.S. imperialism engaged in a massive build-up of first-strike weaponry and assumed an aggressive confrontationalist posture.

In a historic sense the prospect of nuclear annihilation remains very real and very frightening. It lends new meaning to Frederick Engels' projection that the future of humanity will be either socialism or barbarism. But it does not follow that at every moment the dangers are equally acute. Any would-be revolutionary leadership must be able to distinguish between conjunctural ebbs and flows. Trotsky made this point in 1930 in refuting the idiotic Third Period catastrophism of the Stalinists:

"it is possible to close one's eyes to the actual development and to repeat three incantations: 'contradictions are sharpening,' 'the working masses are turning to the left,' 'war is imminent'—every day, every day, every day. If our strategic line is determined in the final analysis by the inevitability of the growth of contradictions and the revolutionary radicalization of the masses, then our tactics, which serve this strategy, proceed from the realistic evaluation of each period, each stage, each moment...."

—"The Third Period" of the Comintern's Errors,"
January 1930

Stalinism and "Consciousness"

The article announcing the ICL also contains the following "revelation" about the character of the Stalinist bureaucracy:

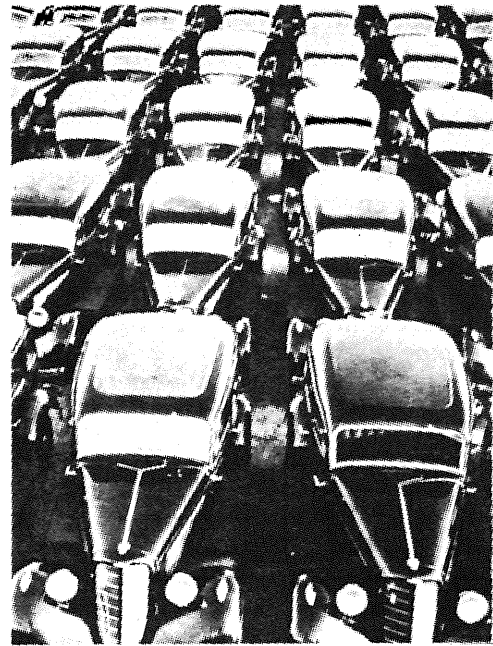
"The false identification of Stalinism with Bolshevism provided Stalin with dedicated political agents throughout the world; *only Stalin and perhaps a half-dozen cronies* (who these were changed over time) *knew what it was all about.*" (emphasis added)

In case anyone missed the point, the idea is reiterated at the end of the article:

"No longer can a *Stalin and his half-dozen conscious accomplices* wield 'monolithic' parties as instruments of class-collaborationist treason in the name of 'building socialism.'" (emphasis added)

It is idle to speculate about exactly how many thousand Stalinist bureaucrats and GPU executioners were conscious of their anti-revolutionary role. Different individuals within the bureaucracy were no doubt characterized by varying degrees of cynicism ("consciousness") about what they were doing. But it is no accident that a good many highly-placed Soviet functionaries in the 1930s had previously sided with the Whites against the Bolsheviks during the Civil War.

Like the trade union bureaucracy in bourgeois society, the ideology of the Soviet oligarchy has a *material basis* in its desire to protect its own privileged social position.



1936 ZIS limousines: produced for more than a half-dozen "conscious" bureaucrats

FREEMAN

Trotsky estimated, in a 13 January 1938 article, "that the bureaucracy devours not less than half of the national consumption fund." He stated that "the big aristocrats, *the very highest stratum of the bureaucracy, live like American millionaires*" (emphasis added). When he talked of the highest *stratum* of the bureaucracy, he was clearly not referring to Stalin's personal clique. In June 1937, Trotsky observed:

"Even from the standpoint of 'vengeance,' terrorist blows cannot offer satisfaction. What is the doom of a dozen high bureaucrats compared to the number and scope of the crimes committed by the bureaucracy?"

Trotsky never considered that the erratic political zig-zags of the Stalinist bureaucracy, its crimes and betrayals, were determined in advance according to some design known only to "Stalin and his half-dozen conscious accomplices." The SL's recent "discovery" that, apart from an inner core of "conscious" Stalinists, the rest of the bureaucratic caste, as well as their international agents, were either hostages or unwitting pawns, has more in common with Khrushchev's self-amnestying denunciation of Stalin's "cult of the personality" than Trotsky's materialist analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy.

In a historical sense, none of the conservative and careerist bureaucrats, *including Stalin*, were fully conscious about what they were doing. Trotsky observed that Stalin was:

"capable neither of generalization nor of foresight....This weakness makes for his strength. There are historical tasks which can be carried out only if one renounces generalizations; there are periods when generalizations and foresight are a bar to immediate success; such are the periods of decline and fall, and reaction."

—"Hatred of Stalin," 4 January 1937

With the criminal idiocy of the "Third Period," the Soviet bureaucracy quite unintentionally facilitated Hitler's victory. Similarly, the Kremlin oligarchs proved to be the Nationalists' most valuable ally in the Spanish Civil War, although they did not deliberately seek to hand victory to Franco. Stalin's murderous purge of the

Red Army officer corps, and his irrational confidence in Hitler's promises, laid the basis for the military catastrophe of the summer of 1941. But again, this was not what he intended.

It is ludicrous to imagine that, apart from a sinister half-dozen who "knew what it was all about," the rest of the cogs in the machine of bureaucratic terror which physically exterminated tens of thousands of revolutionists, were simply "dedicated political agents" of what they mistakenly took to be Leninism. This was certainly not Trotsky's opinion of Stalin's international lieutenants. For example, in May 1937, he referred to the top functionaries of the French Communist Party as, "completely corrupted, without principles, without honor, and without conscience."

So why are the Spartacists suddenly pushing this whole notion in the first place? Is it a Robertsonian metaphor for life in the SL? Perhaps, but it may also have a more immediate practical purpose: to make it easier for disaffected Stalinists to feel at home in the ICL.

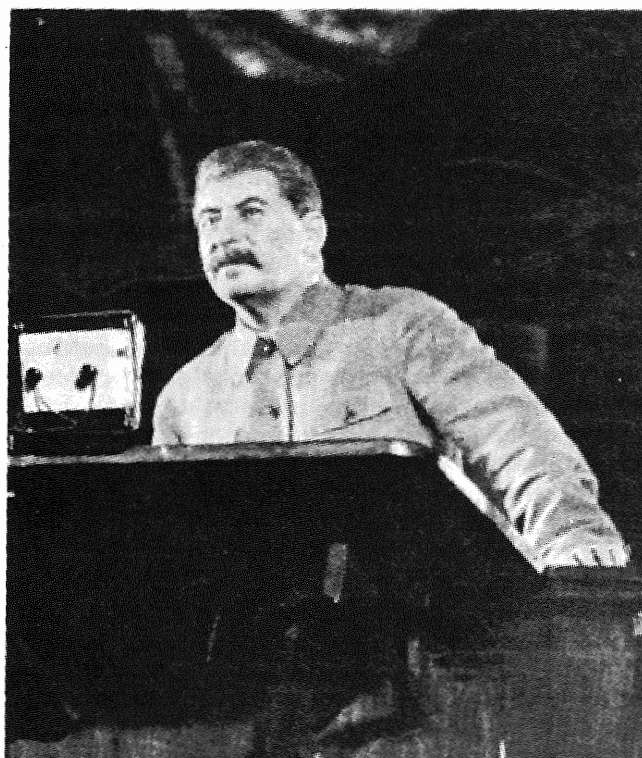
What's In a Name?

The iSt's name-change is intended to create the impression that the group's international work is moving forward in the wake of the collapse of the much-heralded French fusion. It is also apparent that the SL leaders would like to cash in on the crisis of Stalinism by giving "dedicated pro-Communist workers throughout the world" a new "Communist" group to affiliate to. Yet, as the experience with the Tribune Communiste group demonstrates, cadres breaking to the left from Stalinism are unlikely to enjoy the mini-deformed workers state atmosphere which pervades the sections of the ICL.

While the 9 June article announcing the ICL omitted any explanation for the name-change, regular readers of *WV* could find a clue in the midst of a report on SL fundraising for Afghan relief in the subsequent (23 June) issue: "The success and broad impact of our defense efforts for Jalalabad were a key impetus in the decision by the international Spartacist tendency to launch the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)." So "key" was this "impetus" that whoever wrote the 9 June article, while including the fund drive in a list of the iSt's recent activities, did not bother suggesting that it had any particular connection to the "launch" of the ICL.

Workers Hammer, newspaper of the Spartacist League Britain (SL/B), supplied a few more clues about the genesis of the ICL in its July-August issue which, in the introduction to an adapted version of the *WV* article, reported: "On 13 May 1989 the International Executive Committee of the (outgoing) international Spartacist tendency voted unanimously to found the International Communist League." Incoming or outgoing, voting in Robertson's international—which has not had an organized internal factional opposition in over 20 years—is usually unanimous.

What is interesting about the British Spartacist version of the *WV* article is that it *completely omitted* all reference to the imaginary Afghan brigade and the subsequent Jalalabad fund-raising, which had supposedly provided the "impetus" for the name-change in the first place. This



"To find an explanation of the existing regime in Stalin's personal 'lust for power' is far too superficial. Stalin is not an individual but a caste symbol"
—Trotsky, 13 January 1938

discrepancy casts an interesting light on the inner workings of the Spartacist "international." We can categorically exclude the possibility that the deletion could be an expression of political disagreement, implicit or explicit, between London and New York. The British Spartacist League is among the most thoroughly "integrated" of all the Robertsonite satellites. The iSt's Afghan activity was deleted from *Workers Hammer's* announcement of the ICL simply because the 23 June issue of *WV* which revealed the "key impetus" did not arrive in England before the British paper went to print.

If we assume that representatives of the SL/B, one of the few full sections of the iSt, were invited to participate in the International Executive Committee meeting that "launched" the ICL in May, then their ignorance of the impetus for the move suggests that none of the members of that august body had sufficient curiosity (or nerve) to ask why they should change their name. This might seem unlikely, but in Robertson's "international," decision-making is the exclusive prerogative of the guru and his coterie. Members of nominal "leading bodies" are not supposed to ask too many questions. Their job is to automatically (and, of course, unanimously) approve anything Robertson proposes.

For the past decade the Spartacist leadership, in transforming the iSt into a pseudo-Trotskyist obedience cult, has been in the business of *destroying* revolutionary cadres. This won't change with the adoption of a new name. A minor but unavoidable task in the struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International therefore remains the political exposure of the counterfeit Trotskyists of the iSt/ICL. ■

Trotskyist Revolutionary Internationalism vs. Robertson's Bogus Brigade

In our previous issue, we commented on the Spartacist League's (SL) cynical "offer" to dispatch a military expedition to assist Najibullah and his People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). As it turned out, we were not the only ones to look askance at the mock heroics attending the imaginary Spartacist battalion. The eccentric left-Stalinists who publish the British *Leninist*, for example, observed that such expeditions are particularly easy to arrange "when there is not a snowball's chance in hell that the government in Kabul will take them up on the offer...."

Reservations about the advisability of the brigade gambit were widespread even within the Spartacist group itself. In France, dissension over this issue blew apart the group's only significant fusion in a decade (see accompanying article). But even in North America, the ranks were uneasy with the proposal. The SL leadership for its part has staked its prestige on the defense of its fake proposal, and charges that critics can only be motivated by "anti-communism."

In fact, Spartacist guru James Robertson never intended to mobilize anyone for Afghanistan. This is demon-

strated by the glib assertions of a variety of SL cadres that their contingent would have been largely recruited *in Pakistan*, under the nose of the mujahedeen and their quartermasters! Unlike the SL tops, the cadres of the Fourth International were not in the business of trying to impress the uninitiated with pseudo-revolutionary posturing. Had anyone seriously suggested to Trotsky or Cannon in 1935 that the SWP organize a brigade in what was then Italian Somaliland (adjacent to Abyssinia) to intervene on the side of Haile Selassie in his fight against Mussolini, they probably would have been considered to be mentally ill. But the Robertsonites were of course not in earnest and never had any intention of opening a recruiting office in Peshawar or Karachi.

The 23 June issue of *Workers Vanguard* (WV) claimed that the SL's make-believe Kabul brigade "came straight out of our revolutionary heritage" and quoted a message from the 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International saluting the Trotskyist militants who participated in "the first days of the fight against Franco." This attempt to equate the SL's cynical publicity stunt with the heroic intervention of the Trotskyists in Spain is absurd

23 July 1936: Spanish workers commandeer trucks and head for the Madrid front



ALFONSO

and disgraceful. Leaving aside for the moment the disparity between the genuine internationalism of the Trotskyists in the 1930s and the hollow grandstanding of the Spartacist leadership, the political situation in Spain in 1936 was qualitatively different from that of Afghanistan today. Abyssinia would in fact provide a much closer analogy.

During the first days of the Spanish Civil War (the period to which *WV*'s citations refer), the objective conditions existed for the immediate victory of the *proletarian revolution*. In "The Lessons of Spain: The Last Warning," written in December 1937, Trotsky commented: "In its specific gravity in the country's economic life, in its political and cultural level, the Spanish proletariat stood on the first day of the revolution not below but above the Russian proletariat at the beginning of 1917." A revolutionary breakthrough by the Spanish workers could have changed the course of world history. Contemporary Afghanistan, on the other hand, is a country which, as we wrote in 1917 No. 5: "is so monumentally backward that the working class does not exist as a significant social force. In this situation, *some* kind of outside intervention is necessary to emancipate the Afghan masses from quasi-feudal despotism." But the posturing of the Robertsonites is not going to emancipate anybody.

The Trotskyist militants who fought against Franco simultaneously agitated politically within the Republican militias for a break with the class-collaborationist popular front, for the consolidation of working-class power and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. After the initial revolutionary upsurge of the Spanish working class had been derailed by a combination of anarcho-reformist misleadership and murderous Stalinist police terror, Trotsky quite categorically opposed a policy of simple "support" to the anti-revolutionary Republicans:

"Will we, as a revolutionary party, mobilize new volunteers for Negrin? That would be to send them into the hands of the GPU. Collect money for the Negrin government? Absurd! We will collect money for our own comrades in Spain. If we send comrades across the border, it will be conspiratorially, for our own movement."

— "Answer to Questions..." 14 September 1937

However, the Trotskyists were certainly not neutral in the Spanish civil war. While they militarily defended the popular-front government against Franco, they did not for a moment soften their criticisms of the Republicans. Nor did they pledge anything but extremely conditional obedience to their bloc partners:

"We have not the slightest confidence in the capacity of this government to conduct the war and assure victory. We accuse this government of protecting the rich and starving the poor. This government must be smashed. So long as we are not strong enough to replace it, we are fighting under its command. But on every occasion we express openly our nonconfidence in it; it is the only possible way to mobilize the masses *politically* against this government and to prepare its overthrow. Any other politics would be a betrayal of the revolution."

— *Ibid.*

This has an entirely different flavor than the Robertsonites' hypothetical pledge to put themselves under the "control and direction" of the petty-bourgeois Stalinist PDPA of Najibullah.

On Picking Coffee in Nicaragua

The SL leadership has obviously been feeling some political pressure over the question of its phony proposal. Accordingly, a *WV* hack was assigned to crank out a response (of sorts) to our letter of 16 March. This piece, entitled "BT Cringes on Afghanistan Defense," appeared in the July 21 issue of *WV*. It defensively suggested that the SL's Afghan offer was really little different than the participation of Spartacist members on various coffee-picking "brigades" to Nicaragua. *WV* noted, "the BT has not (yet) denounced these activities. Why not?" Well, for one thing, the SLers who went to Nicaragua did so as individual members of the various rad-lib coffee-picking excursions encouraged by the Sandinistas. The Nicaraguan brigades therefore lacked the farcical quality of the Robertsonite offer to Najibullah of an imaginary brigade to "fight to the death." SL members have as much right as anyone to join with the assorted radicals, liberals and Christians picking coffee and having their pictures taken with FSLN soldiers.

We respect the subjective commitment of the thousands of decent individuals who journeyed to Nicaragua in order to take a stand in defense of the revolution against the system of imperialist piracy and human misery. Some of them, like Ben Linder, lost their lives at the hands of Reagan's contra cutthroats. But organizations which purport to represent the revolutionary continuity of Lenin and Trotsky must be judged by a different standard than the thousands of "sandalistas" who travelled to Managua. And by that criterion the SL's Nicaraguan work leaves plenty to be desired.

In 1964, when SL cadre Shirley Stoute joined a brigade to Cuba, she did not simply harvest sugar cane; she attempted to make contact with the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR), the only organization in Cuba which identified itself with Trotsky. Her report, which appeared in *Spartacist* No. 3, was the first to publicize the persecution of these comrades by the bonapartist Castro regime. Stoute's activity, at the height of Castro's popularity in the American left, demonstrated how seriously the early SL took its revolutionary internationalist responsibilities.

A decade later, during the massive popular upheavals in Portugal in 1974-75, *WV* correspondents attentively followed developments of the complex and fluid political situation and paid particular attention to the organized "far left." The SL journalists were not merely interpreting the world but actually struggling to *change* it by seeking to engage, influence and ultimately win over the most advanced elements of the Portuguese left to Trotskyism.

Unfortunately the SL of the 1980s is not the same organization that it once was. The SL leaders no longer believe in the program for which they once fought and to which they still nominally adhere. The various accounts by SL "brigadistas" who visited Nicaragua contained a token sentence or two of leftist criticism, but they generally had the flavor of vapid rad-lib travelogues. *WV* showed little interest in the groups to the left of the FSLN and paid scant attention to developments in the Nicaraguan working class.

WV attempts to cite the SL's Nicaraguan activity to justify its Afghan proposal. Yet the passive and essentially adaptive character of its intervention in Nicaragua demonstrated how far it has moved from the revolutionary internationalism of its past. The Nicaraguan revolution, although it took place in a small country and was beset from the beginning by immense objective difficulties, could have represented a potent revolutionary factor in the increasingly volatile social situation in Latin America, ravaged by Wall Street loan sharks and the IMF. The massive and semi-spontaneous participation of hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguan workers and poor people in the 1979 insurrection which destroyed the bourgeois state gave Nicaragua a special significance for Marxists, and created a political space for working-class politics which did not exist in the aftermath of the revolutions in Cuba, China or Yugoslavia. In Nicaragua, unlike in Afghanistan, a genuinely Leninist organization of even a few score could have gained a significant mass base and become a real factor in the outcome of the revolution.

Of course the SL is not large or powerful, and the impact of any organization is limited by its resources. But the point is, the SL did not make a serious attempt. Dozens of SL members made it down to Nicaragua. But when they got there, instead of attempting to function as Shirley Stoute had in 1964, they confined themselves to the role of leftist solidarity activists. Despite its formal positions, it is clear that the Spartacist leadership no longer believes in the possibility of a political breakthrough by the proletariat in Central America (or anywhere else). Even where their paper positions retain an "orthodox" character, the commitment to struggle for the victory of the Marxist program no longer guides the activity of the group.

Spartacist League in Afghanistan

The same issue of WV which contains the defense of the Afghan brigade stunt also features a report of one Robertsonite's trip to Jalalabad to present funds raised by the SL's Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) for the relief of the victims of mujahedeen terror. Leftists side militarily with the PDPA and their supporters against the imperialist backed tribal reactionaries. But the WV dispatch is written in a style reminiscent of Jack Barnes' *Militant*. Apparently the WV correspondent dashed off the account shortly after dismounting from atop an armored car "at the head of the line of march of today's victory celebration" in Jalalabad, which may account for its breathless style. The article triumphantly refers to a "message of acknowledgement from the Nangarhar Province Defence Council to the PDC." Indeed, according to the WV account, the PDPA did more than just acknowledge the Spartacists, it positively *hailed* them as: "real friends of the Afghan people, supporters of peace and love with human-being." High praise indeed!

Besides riding on an armored car, the highlight of the PDC/SL reporter's visit to Jalalabad seems to have been a meeting with the governor. Unlike the other correspondents, who had to be satisfied with handshakes, the WV representative was *embraced!* This intimacy afforded the



SPARTACIST CANADA

Spartacist "Comrade Jane" poses with Sandinista militia

opportunity for a searching question to Najibullah's deputy: "I asked the governor if the defenders and people of Jalalabad are aware that in many countries of the world, working people are following their struggle with extreme concern." The governor replied in the affirmative and once more thanked the PDC. End of interview.

All very friendly and cordial. But in writing this up, the correspondent (or perhaps the WV editor) decided that it might be wise to project a more critical demeanor, and accordingly tacked on a paragraph chastising the PDPA for conciliating reaction and for its willingness to leave the mujahedeen contras "in control of their fiefdoms." No doubt the correspondent was too busy embracing and exchanging pleasantries with the governor to raise such trifles while actually on the spot.

The SL leadership's gratitude for the "acknowledgement" of the Afghan Stalinists, like its "hailing" of Leonid Brezhnev's military intervention in the first place, derives from its abandonment of the Trotskyist program which it once upheld. This is not an unprecedented development. Those who despair of the historic possibility of the working class, led by a conscious Trotskyist vanguard, successfully intervening to change history, have often sought alternative agencies of social progress.

Some of the SL's leftist critics assert that the Robertsonites have acquired a Stalinophilic character. Certainly parading around as the "Yuri Andropov Brigade," "hailing" the Soviet army and hanging a picture of Polish Stalinist General Jaruzelski in the group's New York headquarters, would seem to lend credence to such an interpretation. But to see the SL as Stalinophilic is to mistake appearance for essence.

The fact is that the SL's much-vaunted Soviet defensism is only skin deep. In the past decade it has often been thrown overboard when a posture of Soviet defensism was likely to incur the displeasure of the American ruling class. When the Soviets downed the KAL-007 spy plane in 1983 as it flew over their most sensitive military installations, the SL rushed to assert that, "If the government of the Soviet Union knew that the intruding aircraft was

in fact a commercial passenger plane," then, "despite the potential military damage of such an apparent spying mission" shooting it down "would have been worse than a barbaric atrocity" (emphasis added). Likewise, when the U.S. shuttle Challenger self-destructed in 1986 during a mission for the U.S. military in conjunction with the anti-Soviet Star Wars program, the SL joined the Reagan administration in characterizing as "tragic" the loss of six Reaganauts.

The primary concern of the SL leadership is no longer programmatic consistency but rather safeguarding the material assets of the group and guaranteeing the creature comforts of the *lider maximo*. This is not to deny that the SL leadership retains an interest in "high Trotskyism," and particularly in archival pursuits related to it. Robertson himself undoubtedly retains residual interest

in things political. Besides, a certain amount of big "P" politics is necessary to hold an ostensibly Marxist group together and ensure that the dues base is regularly replenished.

The SL's initial fake offer of a Kabul brigade, and the necessarily abysmal quality of the arguments advanced to defend it, cannot be attributed to a lack of experience or political sophistication, or even to a skewed perception of reality. Today the overriding characteristic of the political bandits who run the SL is *cynicism*, a quality which marks the once-revolutionary Spartacist League as one of the nastier cultist outfits on the American left. And Robertson's hypothetical brigade for Kabul (which we suggested he might want to name after Leonid Brezhnev whose Afghan policies the SL continues to insist on "hailing") is, above all, cynical. ■

On "Hailing" Brezhnev's Afghan Policy

For well over a year, we have been involved in a continuing polemic with the Spartacists over the political adaptation to the Stalinist bureaucracy implicit in their slogan "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" We counterposed the slogan, "Military Victory to the Soviet Army!" The Spartacist League's latest polemic on this question appears in *Workers Vanguard*, 21 July. In this piece, the SL scribblers claim that, "during World War II the Trotskyists certainly did hail the victories of the Red Army against Nazi Germany." As proof they quote American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon's 1942 remark: "The Red Army that the world hails is an army created by a proletarian revolution." But, as anyone who can read can tell, Cannon was not "hailing" anything. He merely noted that after the Nazi attack on the USSR in 1941, "the world" (or more exactly that section of it that favored a victory of the Allies) was hailing the Soviet army. Cannon had touched on this point earlier in the same speech: "Churchill and Roosevelt pay hypocritical tribute today to 'the great Russian people' and 'the heroic Red Army'."

Cannon did not propose that the Fourth International should begin to "hail" (or pay tribute to) Stalin's military operations as the SL casuists suggest. Instead he adhered to the programmatic perspective laid down by Trotsky:

"During the military struggle against Hitler, the revolutionary workers will strive to enter into the closest possible comradely relations with the rank-and-file fighters of the Red Army. While arms in hand they deal blows to Hitler, the Bolshevik-Leninists will at the same time conduct revolutionary propaganda against Stalin preparing his overthrow at the next and perhaps very near stage. "...Our defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: 'For Socialism! For the World Revolution! Against Stalin!'"

—*In Defense of Marxism*

While the CPUSA and its sister parties were "hailing" the Soviet military, the Trotskyists combined agitation for defense of the collectivized property of the USSR with calls for a political revolution *against* the bureaucracy. Cannon explained this in his speech:

"Our policy is the policy of the Russian section of the Fourth International, which lives and fights. And they

continue at their task—to defend the country, to rebuild the Bolshevik party, to revive the soviets and the trade unions, and to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy."

The question of "hailing" the Stalinist military came up in 1939 during the historic faction fight in the Socialist Workers Party against the revisionist opposition, led by Max Shachtman, which no longer wished to defend the USSR. Shachtman had a different agenda than the contemporary SL, but he shared their interest in blurring the line between political and military support to the USSR in conflicts with capitalist states. Thus he facetiously asked: if the USSR remained a workers state, "why does not the majority propose to hail the advance of the Red Army into Poland...." as revolutionaries had in Lenin's day. In response Trotsky explained quite clearly why the Fourth International did not propose to hail Stalin's Red Army:

"This newness in the situation [as compared to 1920] is the bankruptcy of the Third International, the degeneracy of the Soviet state, the development of the Left Opposition, and the creation of the Fourth International.... And these events explain sufficiently why we have radically changed our position toward the politics of the Kremlin, including its military politics."

—*In Defense of Marxism*

Afghanistan is not Poland. The social and economic integration of Afghanistan into the Soviet Union in the 1980s would have represented greater social progress for the Afghan masses than the incorporation of Poland into the USSR in 1939 would have meant for the Polish workers. But the reason that the Fourth International refused to "hail" the Red Army, while militarily supporting it against Hitler's armies, had nothing to do with Poland's level of economic and social development compared to the USSR—it was, as Trotsky made clear, because of the *political character* of the Stalinist bureaucracy which controlled the army. Fifty years later, Gorbachev's pullout from Afghanistan (a betrayal of Afghan women, leftists and others who placed their trust in the USSR) once again demonstrates the correctness of Trotsky's refusal to hail the "military politics" of the Stalinist ruling caste. ■

Abortion...

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minors can have abortions. Last year there were over a million teenage pregnancies in the U.S.—including some 30,000 amongst youths 14 or younger.

Anyone old enough to get pregnant is old enough to decide whether or not to consult her parents about an abortion. Young women who consulted their parents about having intercourse in the first place will presumably continue to take them into their confidence. Parental notification legislation is aimed at restricting the right of young people to be sexually active. It represents a gross infringement on their right to privacy in medical treatment—not just to terminate pregnancy, but also to have access to birth control and treatment of sexually transmitted disease.

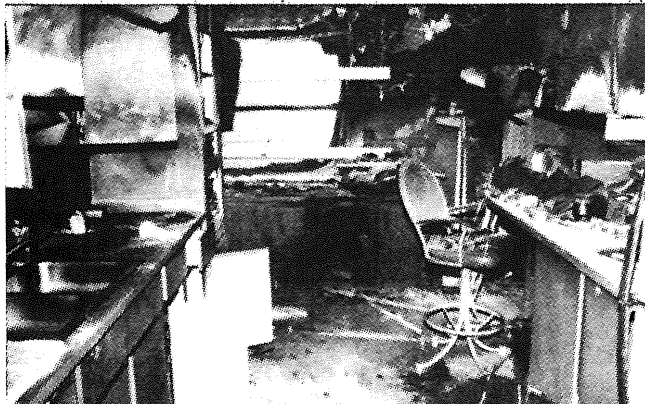
Access to abortion is already severely limited. The Alan Guttmacher Institute, which studies abortion statistics, recently reported that 82 percent of the 3,116 counties in the United States now have no doctors, clinics or hospitals that perform abortions, an increase of 4 percent since 1980. There are only about a half-dozen doctors in the entire state of Montana that still perform abortions and, in Duluth, in Northern Minnesota, there is only one clinic to serve 24 surrounding counties—and the doctor must be flown in from Minneapolis because no Duluth doctor will do the procedure.

The decision to let each state determine the availability of abortion virtually guarantees that in many states women who can not afford private medical treatment will not be able to obtain abortions. Yet the Supreme Court ruling has galvanized pro-choice sentiment against the reactionary anti-abortion offensive. This was reflected by the 11 October vote of the House of Representatives to restore federal funding for abortion in cases of rape or incest (subsequently vetoed by George Bush). That same week, Florida Governor Bob Martinez's attempts to introduce new restrictions on the availability of abortion were rebuffed. "Lawmakers said their action reflected what they were hearing from their constituents: a growing backlash against the recent United States Supreme Court ruling that opened the way for stricter abortion laws" (*New York Times*, 12 October).

Safe abortions will always be available for those who

"Right-to-Life" terror: clinic bombed in Florida

BOB GILBERT



can pay; but for teenagers, poor and working-class women who cannot afford the high fees charged by private doctors, the denial of access to abortion can be a matter of life and death. It would mean a return to the dangerous back-alley abortions of the past.

"Right-to-Lifers": Anti-Choice Reaction In the Service of Capital

The anti-abortion campaign is part of a larger reactionary bourgeois offensive to take back rights won by working people and the oppressed over the past five decades. The Republicans, who led this drive, recognized the importance of establishing an electoral base among lower income voters, many of whom were Catholic and traditionally voted Democrat. The imperialist jingoism of the Reagan White House had a certain appeal to this constituency; but it was opposition to "secular humanism," and the defense of "traditional family values" which cemented the alliance between the Republican right and the religious fundamentalists.

Like most movements of social reaction, the revival of the religious right did not originate with the bourgeoisie. It had its roots in the hysterical reaction of the most ignorant and backward elements of the petty bourgeoisie and the white working class to the social changes of the past quarter century. Yet regardless of their origins, such movements can be extremely useful to the ruling class. Every form of false consciousness, every bigoted notion and obscurantist prejudice which inhibits a rational understanding of society, ultimately serves as a prop for the existing social order. Workers who believe that their increasing difficulty in making ends meet is all part of god's master plan, and that the local abortion clinic is the work of the devil, are far less dangerous to their bosses—and to the state—than those who understand that their declining standard of living is a product of an irrational economic system which puts profit ahead of human need.

In the vanguard of the "pro-family" forces' most recent attacks is "Operation Rescue," an organization devoted to putting obstacles in the path of women seeking abortion. This sinister collection of bible-thumping bigots gained national attention when it staged a series of attempts during the 1988 Democratic National Convention to block access to abortion clinics. The movement of "family"-oriented social reaction not only wants to outlaw abortion, it also opposes equal rights for women, gay rights, sex education, birth control for teenagers, and publication of sexually-explicit materials ("pornography"). For the twisted moralists of the religious right, *all* sexual activity is sinful unless it occurs between married adults and is intended to beget children. Marxists, by contrast, believe that people have the right to do what they want in their personal/sexual lives and oppose all attempts by the state to regulate sexual morality. The right to the "pursuit of happiness" must include the individual's right to engage in the sexual activities of his/her choice, subject only to the informed consent of the other party(ies).

Naturally, the anti-abortion movement overlaps significantly with those who advocate school prayer and the



Born-again bigots: advocates of state-regulated reproduction

MIKE MAPLE—WOODFIN CAMP & ASSOC.

teaching of so-called "creation science." "Pro-lifers" instinctively recognize that they have a natural enemy in scientific and medical progress. This is dramatically confirmed in their frenzied—and unfortunately so far effective—opposition to the RU 486 pill, developed in France, which enables women to terminate their pregnancies in the privacy of their own homes. Some 2,000 French women use this pill every month. If it were available in America, it could make abortion clinics virtually obsolete.

Roussel-Uclaf, the French company distributing the pill, has not attempted to retail the drug outside France. Its North American affiliate, Hoechst-Roussel, in deference to the clout of the anti-abortion constituency, as well as pressure from the federal government, has refused to even seek regulatory approval. For the moment, North American women only have access to the drug on the black market.

The Erosion of the Nuclear Family

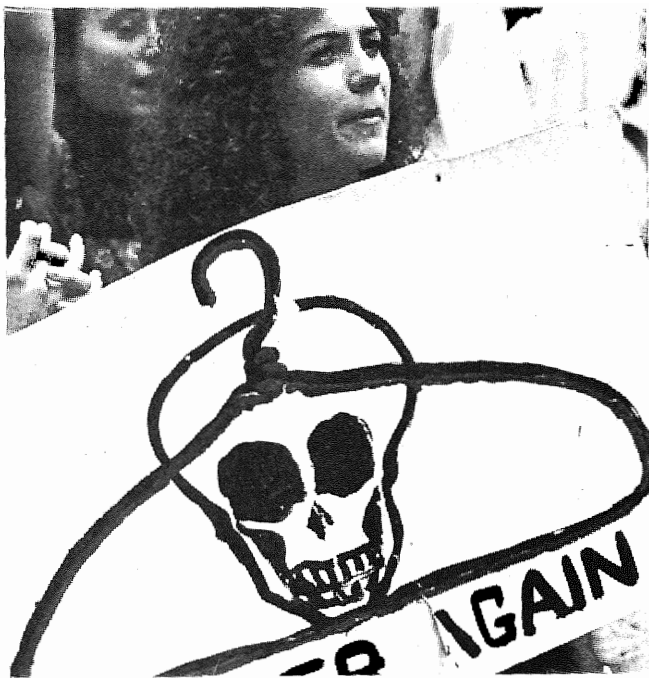
The high-sounding talk about the "sanctity of life" spouted by the anti-choice bigots is only a religious/ideological disguise for what is really at issue: the erosion of the nuclear family over the past several decades. For much of this century, it was possible for ascendant American imperialism to preserve the "traditional" nuclear family: dad went to work, while mom stayed home and raised the kids. In the proletariat the man was a wage slave and the woman was, as Frederick Engels said, "the

slave of a slave," doubly oppressed—first as a member of the working class, and then as a woman.

Trapped and isolated at home, the wife/mother in the traditional nuclear family is responsible for providing psychological and emotional support for the alienated male wage laborer, and a secure and loving environment for their children. But for most women, the home is a prison, not a haven. Marxists have always encouraged female participation in the work force. As housewives, proletarian women are *part* of the working class, but they are atomized and powerless. Only insofar as they participate in production do they participate directly in the class struggle—the only means by which the fundamental conditions of their lives can be changed.

The dilemma of many contemporary working households is that while wage levels have declined to the point that the single-income working-class family is a thing of the past, capitalist society has not provided any replacement for the nuclear family or its traditional division of labor. More and more women today hold permanent, full-time jobs. Freed from the isolation of the home and their dependency on a husband-breadwinner, many women have at least been able to escape oppressive or unhappy marriages. This is reflected in an increase in the rate of divorce. Moreover, for educated, professional women, it is no longer *necessary* to get married; the widespread use of contraception and access to abortion have made it possible for greater numbers of women to pursue careers.

This loosening of women's dependency on men has



CHRISTOPHER MORRIS—BLACK STAR

provoked a frightened reaction by a resurgent religious right which intuitively understands that the patterns of authority and obedience instilled in the family are essential to the preservation of the larger social hierarchy. Hysteria about the demise of the family is the basis for the campaign waged since the mid-1970s by the right-wing fundamentalists in Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, and similar movements, to turn back the tide—to get women out of the workplace and back into the home.

In this society, the woman question also intersects that of race. Black (and other minority) working-class women are triply oppressed—as workers, as blacks and as women. Lack of equal educational opportunity and discriminatory hiring practices have meant generations of chronic unemployment in black neighborhoods, and the resultant poverty has greatly accelerated the breakdown of the black family. Black children are growing up in one-parent, poverty-stricken homes in unprecedented numbers. In 1950, nine percent of black homes were headed by one parent; in 1970 it had risen to a third. Today half of all black families with children are headed by a single parent, usually the mother. The culture of poverty at the bottom of racist America, into which ever greater numbers of black children are born, is a vicious trap with no way out except for a lucky few.

Bourgeois Feminism and the Fake-Left

Last April, the National Organization for Women (NOW), a bourgeois women's organization, sponsored a huge march in Washington in defense of abortion rights. Since the march, NOW's membership has jumped by 40,000 and is now over 200,000. This has caught the attention of various opportunist left organizations, who are always looking for new bandwagons to climb onto. In an article headlined "Will NOW fritter away this opportunity?" in the August issue of *Socialist Worker*, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) declared that:

"Socialists and other supporters of abortion rights should welcome the news of NOW's surging membership...." The supposedly Marxist ISO sees its role as nudging NOW to the left, and is thus offering helpful recommendations like, "If alliances are to be made, they should be made with anti-racists and with trade unionists" rather than the bourgeois politicians and ecology freaks NOW is currently pursuing.

Socialist Action (SA), an ostensibly Trotskyist paper published by a group of the same name, has for some months been featuring speeches and interviews with various bourgeois feminists (including NOW leaders) who are blandly described as "leaders of the women's movement." Indeed Socialist Action members have been joining NOW in an attempt to pressure it from inside. They report that some women in NOW are "suspicious" of their motives and ask, "If you don't think that we can get equality anyway, what are you doing in a group like the National Organization for Women (NOW), which is fighting for equality within the system?" (*SA*, July 1989). *SA* responds that, "We need mass independent feminist organizations like the National Organization for Women," and claims that *SA* has "an important contribution to make to the abortion rights movement and to the National Organization for Women"! At the same time, *SA* timidly ventures that NOW's "single-issue focus in the electoral arena" is a "dangerous flaw."

Despite the wishful thinking of the opportunist left, NOW is not the reincarnation of the radical women's movement of the late 1960s. NOW's whole purpose is to channel women's anger into bourgeois electoralism and pressure politics. NOW is a *bourgeois* organization, with an explicitly pro-capitalist ideology and leadership. The opportunists of *SA* and *ISO*, who hope to win members and influence among women in the pro-choice movement by adaptation to NOW's program and leadership, cannot admit this simple truth.

While it is perfectly principled for socialists to join demonstrations initiated by NOW against reactionary attacks on the right to abortion, it is something else to promote illusions in its bourgeois leadership. The job of Leninists in the women's movement is to help the working class and the oppressed to understand that their real interests are *counterposed* to those of the capitalist class. Proletarian women do not need NOW, or any other vehicles of the racist, sexist Democratic Party—they need a movement committed to fight for their interests: a communist women's movement, linked to a revolutionary workers party.

NOW is an organization with a history of explicit anti-communism. In 1977, after years of thankless donkey-work as the "best builders" for Steinem et al, the reformist Socialist Workers Party, (SWP—from which *SA* is descended) was red-baited out of NOW at its tenth national convention with the following motion:

"...this conference protests attempts by the SWP to use NOW as a vehicle to place before the public the agenda of their organization and to exploit the feminist movement. We bitterly resent and will not tolerate any group's attempt to deflect us from the pursuit of our feminist goals."

The SWP women were reportedly horrified when their

bourgeois "sisters" gave them the boot. In the unlikely event that SA or the ISO make any headway retailing their brand of "socialism" in NOW, they can expect similar treatment.

NOW and the Politics of Women's Liberation

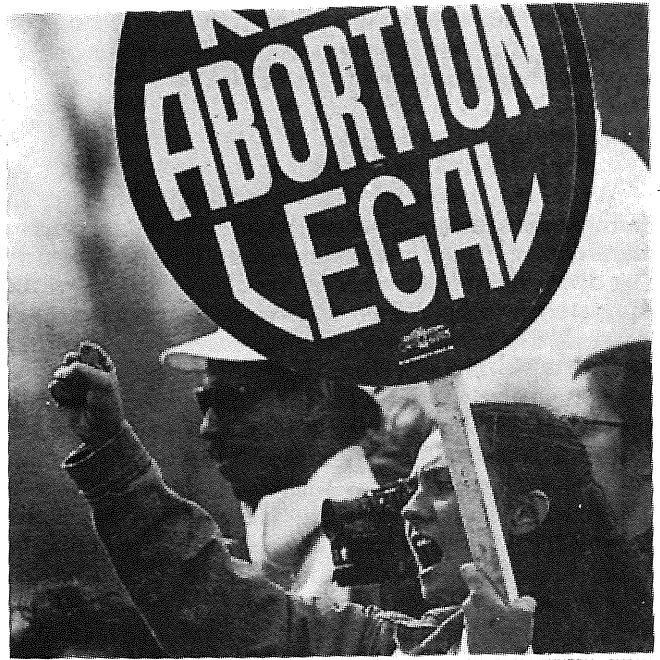
These days, NOW's leadership is concentrating on prospects in the bourgeois electoral arena. In a column in the July issue of *Ms.*, Gloria Steinem wrote: "now is the time to translate pro-choice energy into votes and voter turnout...there is a lot of free-floating anger out there, and it should be channeled into political action." By "political action" Steinem and NOW president Molly Yard mean electing more liberal Democrats to Congress and state legislatures. But the *Webster* decision itself underscores the futility of this approach. The Democratic Party has controlled both houses of Congress for most of the past two decades—yet every one of the conservative justices who ruled in *Webster* was confirmed in this period. Moreover, it was the last Democratic administration, under Jimmy Carter, which took away Medicaid funding for abortion.

While the Republicans have been more forthright in the campaign against abortion rights, it is important for activists to remember that the Democrats and Republicans are *partners* in administering U.S. capitalism. They have *no* fundamental differences. Reliance on the Democrats to fight for the oppressed is a prescription for defeat. The only way that women, blacks or workers have ever won anything is through *social struggle* against the interests of capital—not by the grace of either of the twin parties of racism and imperialist war.

NOW's leadership is currently pushing Malthusian environmentalism. NOW president Yard recently remarked: "There is a direct connection between the environment, population explosion and the need to stabilize population growth....We must have a two-child family worldwide, and to achieve it we must have fami-

NOW president Molly Yard

LARRY DOWNING—NEWSWEEK



CHARLES KENNEDY—SYGMA

ly planning and birth control." However, the problem is not that too many people are being born, but that the production and distribution of food and other necessities under capitalism is determined entirely by the profit motive.

NOW reflects the concerns of its college-educated, professional and semi-professional membership, paying little attention to the burning issues affecting working women. Working-class women in America need access to well-paid, dignified jobs; they need good, affordable housing; they need free, comprehensive health care which not only covers abortion but also pre-natal and post-natal care; birth control and all medical costs; and free, 24-hour child-care centers. Because it accepts the continued existence of racist, class-divided capitalist society, which is rooted in social inequality and oppression, NOW offers little to the majority of women.

Feminists, who limit their perspectives to trying to advance women's interests within capitalist society, inevitably come up with the wrong answers for many of the problems they seek to address. For example, the "take back the night" mobilizations (an attempt to deal with the very real dangers to women walking down American streets) end up demanding more cops. But increasing the number of racist, trigger-happy thugs for the bourgeoisie on the streets is no solution. Marxists understand that only by tackling the problem at its root—the dog-eat-dog system which creates a permanent under-class with nothing to look forward to and nothing to lose—can the growing social pathology within American society be eliminated.

Or take the question of child support. Both feminists and Marxists favor making divorce easier to obtain, but most feminists have also supported draconian legislation for police enforcement of child-support court decrees. This can be traced to an acceptance of the inevitability of the nuclear family as the basic social unit. Marxists uphold the socialist principle that the care and feeding of

the next generation must be seen as a social responsibility; and we therefore advocate that the costs of child support should be borne by the state.

Feminism and the Family

While the bourgeois state attempts to promote the family both ideologically and through state intervention, the workings of the market tend to undermine it by driving down the family wage to the level of an individual subsistence wage. When survival requires two wage-earners, the working-class family faces a host of problems to which those of the professional petty-bourgeoisie are largely immune. Meals are not prepared, domestic chores are left undone, and children cannot be cared for after school. Juvenile crime and family tensions increase. Right-wing demagogues seek to tap this anxiety by preaching a return to traditional "family values" and directing this inchoate anger against "women's liberation" in general, and abortion clinics in particular.

Middle-class feminists who see marriage and child-rearing as a personal rather than a social and economic

matter, cannot understand why the issue of the family is so volatile in the working class. As long as the cause of women's emancipation is associated in the public mind with the aspirations of relatively privileged career women like Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, the religious right will continue to be the principal benefactor of the current crisis of the family. Some liberal feminists sense this and have sought to address it with talk of a "family agenda," to assure working-class women that feminism is no enemy of the nuclear family.

Marxism versus Feminism

The oppression of women cannot be combated by pragmatic adaptations to the current political mood. Marxists, guided by a historical materialist understanding, have always argued that the question of the family stands at the heart of women's oppression in capitalist society. The sexual division of labor within the family, which confines the woman to a subordinate role, is undeniably much older than capitalist society. But the modern nuclear family (which replaced the older ex-

Women and the Russian Revolution

Lenin's Bolshevik Party, which in October 1917 led the only successful proletarian revolution in history, understood that Soviet women would never achieve political and social equality unless they were allowed out of the stultifying isolation of the home and into the workplace. Even in the midst of a civil war and foreign invasion, the early Soviet government did what it could to socialize "women's work" while instituting, for the first time in history, full legal and political equality for women. Free abortion was available on demand; dining halls, laundries and day-care centers were established, and the new regime sought to ensure equality of economic opportunity in the civil service, in industry, in the party and in the armed forces. In his 1936 book, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Leon Trotsky explained the aims of the early Soviet workers state in relation to women and the family:

"The revolution made a heroic effort to destroy the so-called 'family hearth'—that archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labor from childhood to death. The place of the family as a shut-in petty enterprise was to be occupied, according to the plans, by a finished system of social care and accommodation: maternity houses, creches, kindergartens, schools, social dining rooms, social laundries, first-aid stations, hospitals, sanatoria, athletic organizations, moving-picture theaters, etc. The complete absorption of the house-keeping functions of the family by institutions of the socialist society, uniting all generations in solidarity and mutual aid, was to bring to woman, and thereby to the loving couple, a real liberation from the thousand-year-old fetters."

Eventually the revolution succumbed to international isolation and the social backwardness of peasant

dominated Russia; a conservative, parasitic bureaucracy, headed by Joseph Stalin, emerged and usurped the political power of the working class. Under the banner of "building socialism in one country," the newly-privileged bureaucracy acted as the arbiter of a system of generalized want. Many of the gains for women established in the early years of the revolution were reversed. In 1934 homosexuality, which had been legalized after the revolution, was once again criminalized, and in 1936 legal access to abortion was restricted. In the course of the Stalinist political counterrevolution, women were once again relegated to the nuclear family and the provision of free domestic labor and child care:

"It proved impossible to take the old family by storm—not because the will was lacking, and not because the family was so firmly rooted in men's hearts. On the contrary, after a short period of distrust of the government and its creches, kindergartens and like institutions, the working women, and after them the more advanced peasants, appreciated the immeasurable advantages of the collective care of children as well as the socialization of the whole family economy. Unfortunately society proved too poor and little cultured. The real resources of the state did not correspond to the plans and intentions of the Communist Party. You cannot 'abolish' the family; you have to replace it. The actual liberation of women is unrealizable on the basis of 'generalized want.' Experience soon proved this austere truth which Marx had formulated eighty years before."

—*Ibid.*

Despite the legacy of sixty-five years of Stalinist rule, the early years of the Soviet state still stand as a guidepost to the future for women's liberation.

tended family with the rise of the bourgeoisie), preserved the essential male and female roles upon which all family forms are based.

While the economic changes of the last several decades have seriously eroded the nuclear family, capitalism has not and cannot create the conditions for its replacement. The family can only be transcended through socialization of the functions now carried on within the domestic orbit—principally housework and child-raising. Only on a secure material foundation can decisions about sexual partners and/or child-bearing become a matter of choice for all, not just for a privileged minority. But an economic system driven by the necessity to maximize private profit is organically *incapable* of allocating sufficient material resources to provide these services for everyone.

The pervasive sexism of capitalist society places real obstacles in the path of every woman, including aspiring career women. Resistance to the idea of female equality may be more hypocritically concealed in corporate boardrooms or academic departments than it is on the factory floor, but it remains very real. Legal guarantees against job discrimination, programs to promote hiring of women, and legislation enforcing equal pay for equal work, are therefore of great importance for the upwardly mobile woman.

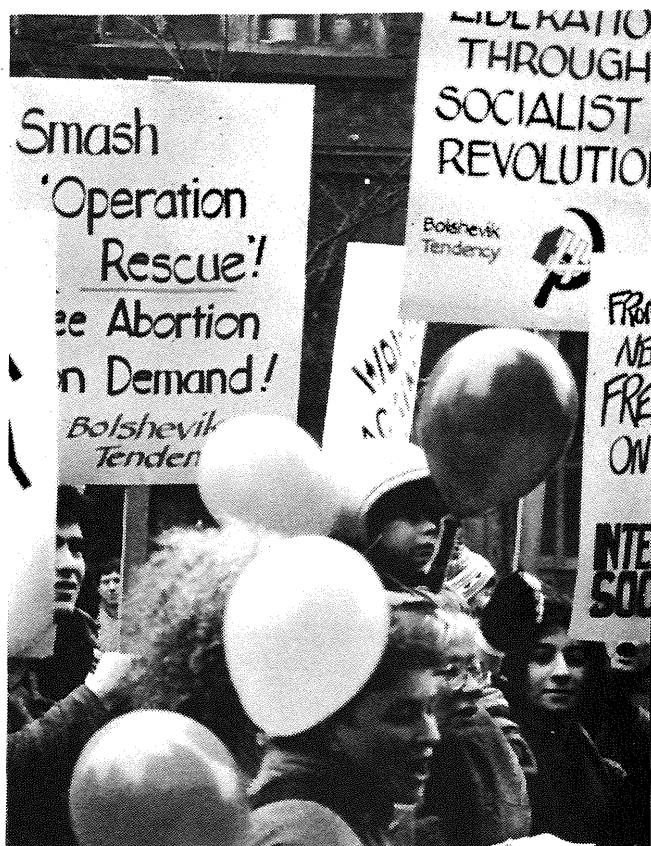
These issues, which have been paramount on the NOW agenda for the last fifteen years, were highlighted in the (unsuccessful) campaign for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). As advocates of sexual equality, Marxists support passage of legislation like the ERA, while warning against the illusion that it is possible to end women's oppression without overturning capitalist property relations.

It is the class struggle, and not any "battle between the sexes," which will ultimately determine the future of humanity. And only the working class, with its diverse sexual and racial composition, has both the social power and the objective interest to eliminate the material basis of all forms of social oppression through the socialist reconstruction of society.

The fight for women's emancipation therefore cannot be separated from the struggle for a new social order governed not by private profit, but by human need—that is, the struggle for socialism. Such a struggle is incompatible with the fundamental premise of feminism in both its liberal and radical varieties, namely, that the emancipation of women is essentially the task of "women themselves." Women belong to different social classes, and thus have different social interests. The more privileged strata lack not only the social power—but also the objective interest—in a radical transformation of the existing social order.

Women workers have a special interest in combating the poison of male chauvinism which pervades society. The working class cannot fight for the socialist future without championing the interests of women and all the oppressed, and it is within the context of the *class struggle* that the fight for women's equality acquires its full power and scope.

The U.S. Supreme Court's green light to the anti-abortion bigots brings to the forefront the defense of abortion rights. The main arena in which this struggle must be



LEFT EYE

fought is not the courtroom or legislature, but the streets. Mobilizing the power of organized labor is key to winning this battle. The organization and deployment of union defense guards, backed by the power of the workers movement at the point of production, could soon send Operation Rescue and the rest of the "right-to-life" fanatics scurrying back to the safety of their bible classes. This requires a struggle for a new, class-struggle leadership in the unions, committed to rallying the workers and oppressed for the defensive struggles of today, and in so doing, cutting across existing racial, sexual and ethnic divisions, thus laying the basis for the revolutionary offensives of tomorrow.

Free abortion on demand! For union defense guards to protect abortion clinics!

Free quality health care for all! Free birth control on demand! Free quality 24-hour child-care facilities!

Immediate divorce on the request of either partner—full, state-funded child support!

Government out of the bedrooms! Full democratic rights for gays! No state intervention in sexual relations between consenting individuals!

Decriminalize prostitution!

For a state stipend available to all young people, to allow them economic independence from the family!

Women's liberation through socialist revolution!

Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! Smash Anti-Abortion Reaction!



Demonstration in defense of Chantal Daigle, Toronto, August 1989

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The right of American women to choose whether or not to have children is under siege. The reactionary July 3rd United States Supreme Court ruling which upheld a Missouri law prohibiting the performance of abortions in publicly-funded medical facilities, represents an ominous step toward outlawing abortion altogether in the U.S. The *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* decision did not overturn the historic 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling which upheld the right to abortion, but, as Justice Harry A. Blackmun noted in his dissent:

"The plurality opinion is filled with winks and nods and knowing glances to those who would do away with *Roe* explicitly, but turns a stone face to anyone in search of what the plurality conceives as the scope of a woman's right under the due process clause to terminate a pregnancy free from the coercive and brooding influence of the State...

"...the signs are evident and very ominous."

The *Webster* decision is only one point on the Reaganite Supreme Court majority's right-wing agenda. The ruling was accompanied by a series of decisions effectively removing the right of women and minorities to legal protection against racial or sexual discrimination. At the same time, the court upheld the "right" of white males to

seek redress for so-called reverse discrimination where women or blacks got jobs through affirmative action programs.

In Canada last summer there were two well publicized cases where men obtained temporary court injunctions to deny their former lovers abortions. In July, Barbara Dodd was denied an abortion for a week on these grounds, before an appeals court overturned the original injunction. (In a pathetic postscript, Dodd was reconciled to her boyfriend and renounced her decision at a press conference organized by the anti-abortion fanatics.) The other case involved a heroic Quebec woman, Chantal Daigle, who was dragged through the courts for a month in a legal wrangle with her former boyfriend over her right to an abortion. Eventually the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in her favor; however, before they did, Daigle publicly announced that she had already obtained an abortion. Daigle's courage and dignity throughout the whole humiliating ordeal inspired a groundswell of popular support for her which prevented the judiciary from citing her with contempt.

In the U.S., the Supreme Court is expected to broaden its attack on women's rights with rulings on the constitutionality of compulsory parental notification before

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