

SPARTACIST



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75 CENTS

Imperialist Frenzy Over Afghanistan



Lochan/Gamma-Liaison

Hail

Red Army!

The American government is talking as if it is about to start World War III over Afghanistan—or at least a vicarious form of it around the Olympic games. In his “state of the union” speech Jimmy Carter openly threatened a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union in the Persian Gulf. Because the USSR came to the aid of its allies in Kabul, Washington has visions of the Soviet army seizing Iranian and Saudi oilfields, of the staid Brezhnev fomenting revolution among the Kurds, Turko-

mans and, above all, Baluchis. It is patently absurd but the American president really believes it.

Behind Washington’s present Cold War frenzy is the fundamental imperialist desire to obliterate the social conquests of the Russian October Revolution. Compared to 20 years ago, however, the United States’ world position is greatly weakened and the role of its imperialist allies much greater. The end of U.S. hegemony was marked by

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Hail Red Army!

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Nixon's 15 August 1971 New Economic Policy, which destroyed the basis for the post-war capitalist international monetary system. Now the U.S. meets indifference from West Europe and Japan when calling for economic boycotts of Iran and the Soviet Union. Carter is certainly prepared to plunge the world into nuclear holocaust, but whether he can mobilize the population at home and imperialist allies abroad to effectively wage a new Cold War is far from clear.

The effective deployment of thousands of Soviet troops in Afghanistan is a stinging humiliation for American imperialism. The Russian high command watched as Khomeini's Iran slipped into near-total chaos, as U.S. aircraft carriers lined up in the Arabian Sea, as the Soviet-allied Kabul government was threatened by a reactionary Islamic *jihād* (holy war). Seeing Washington at an impasse in Iran, the Kremlin bureaucrats seized the time to quell the uprising by the Afghan mullahs and khans, and in the process extended their defense perimeter by several hundred miles around the eastern flank of Iran.

Anti-Soviet opinion around the world—from the White House to the Chinese Great Hall of the Peoples, from "non-aligned" neo-colonies like Zambia to the Spanish and Italian Communist parties—railed against "Soviet expansionism" which allegedly "had trampled on the national

sovereignty and integrity of Afghanistan." The imperialist media pulled out all the stops to build sympathy for "freedom fighters" battling sophisticated tanks and planes with sticks, stones and chants of "allah akbar." But in the military clash between the Soviet soldiers backing the nationalist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and the feudal (and pre-feudal) forces aided by imperialism, Marxists side with the forces representing social progress, now led by Russian tanks. That is why the international Spartacist tendency has resoundingly exclaimed: Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!

Even if the country is incorporated into the Soviet bloc—a tremendous step forward compared to present conditions in Afghanistan—this can today only be as a *bureaucratically deformed* workers state. Only Trotskyist parties armed with the program of permanent revolution can lead the colonial masses to their complete liberation—through proletarian political revolution in the USSR linked to socialist revolutions from Iran to the imperialist centers. But the liberation of the Afghan masses has begun!

"Born Again" Cold War

The pretext of Soviet troops in Afghanistan was exploited by U.S. president Carter and his Dr. Strangelove "national security" adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to translate their anti-Soviet "human rights" rhetoric into action. Washington is now organizing a grain boycott of the Soviet Union in the hope of fomenting social discontent. Carter/Brzezinski's message to the Soviet people: Starve for "human rights"! But we doubt that the Soviet masses, who survived Hitler's siege of Leningrad, will respond favorably to the U.S. imperialist rulers' blackmail.

And food is hardly the ultimate weapon. Carter's pious lies about SALT are a thing of the past as the U.S. embarks on a mammoth arms drive. Now there will be a massive weird subway system in the western U.S. to move around the MX mobile missile, a projected first-strike weapon. Carter demanded that NATO allies, including West Germany, accept 572 nuclear missiles targeted at the USSR. And he committed the U.S. to increase real military spending by 5 percent annually for the next five years. All this *before* the Afghan crisis.

Now the claptrap about "détente," SALT, etc.—by which the imperialists seek to negotiate disarmament of the Soviet degenerated workers state—has been put into mothballs. Of course, this counterrevolutionary diplomat-

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ic farce would not have gotten even this far were it not for the class-collaborationist, pacifistic illusions of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

As a further step in Washington's war drive, Secretary of "Defense" Harold Brown was dispatched to Peking to deepen the anti-Soviet U.S./China alliance, already twice tested militarily: over the South African invasion of Angola and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. Now the Pentagon wants the Peking Stalinists to channel arms to the reactionary Afghan rebels through their mutual client state, Pakistan. With unprecedentedly forthright bellicosity, Brown's toast at a state banquet called on China to join American imperialism "with complementary actions in the field of defense as well as diplomacy."

The Russians are finally fed up with the nuclear loading of NATO, the "modernizing" of China's arsenal, plans for a "rapid deployment" strike force, draft registration and the sky-high Pentagon budget. In a Moscow meeting with

French National Assembly president Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Brezhnev reportedly warned that Russia "would not tolerate" the nuclear arming of Peking by the U.S., declaring: "Believe me, after the destruction of Chinese nuclear sites by our missiles, there won't be much time for the Americans to choose between the defense of their Chinese allies and peaceful coexistence with us."

With the Russians made fair game in Carter's Cold War rampage—détente deals off, promised grain and Aeroflot jets stranded, the attempt by New York air controllers to crash a Soviet plane carrying the USSR's ambassador to Washington—Brezhnev's ultimatum is eminently reasonable.

Indeed, for a wide range of public opinion, Washington is now acting like a mad dog that slipped the leash. George Kennan, who was one of the main architects of the early Cold War, undoubtedly speaks for substantial bourgeois

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Spartacist Britain

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Australasian Spartacist

Internationalism in action: Spartacist demonstrations calling for defense of USSR and victory of Red Army over Afghan reactionaries in London (above), San Francisco (above right) and Sydney (right).

sentiment when he cautions against Carter's "strident public warnings" to military action:

"I can think of no instance in modern history where such a breakdown of political communication and such a triumph of unrestrained military suspicions as now marks Soviet-American relations has not led, in the end, to armed conflict."

—*New York Times*, 1 February

For its part, the Kremlin is still seeking accommodation with "realistic, peace-loving" elements of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Whatever their defensive responses to Carter's Cold War frenzy, the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy remains wedded to "peaceful coexistence" with world capitalism. But their "peaceful coexistence" will not bring peace. As American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon declared during the Korean War:

"The class struggle of the workers, merging with the colonial revolution in a common struggle against imperialism, is the only genuine fight against war. The Stalinists who preach otherwise are liars and deceivers. The workers and colonial peoples will have peace when they have the power and use their power to take it and make it for themselves. That is the road of Lenin. There is no other road to peace."

—*The Road to Peace* (1951)

Hue and Cry Over Afghanistan

Today in Afghanistan U.S. imperialism finds itself in league with the defenders of the bride price and the veil, usury and serfdom, and perpetual misery. Victory of the Islamic insurgents in Afghanistan would mean the perpetuation of feudal and pre-feudal enslavement. For that reason we have called for the military victory of the left-nationalist PDPA regime. Now the direct deployment of Soviet troops and confirmation of the Islamic rebels' imperialist ties changes the terms of the conflict. With the Stalinist rulers in the Kremlin, for defensive reasons, for once taking up a genuinely red cause, defense of the USSR itself is directly posed. The Trotskyists stand at their posts.

Much has been made of "the Afghan right to self-determination"—an obscure question (as well as subordinate to overriding class issues) since Afghanistan is

a state and not a nation. But if this "fiercely independent Islamic people," as Carter put it, is about to suffer such horrendous national oppression at the hands of the Soviets, why can Moscow use Muslim-derived Central Asian troops? Obviously because they know that conditions in Soviet Central Asia are vastly superior to those in mullah-ridden Afghanistan. In particular the position of women is a key index of social progress. As the *New York Times* (9 February) has admitted, "It was the Kabul revolutionary Government's granting of new rights to women that pushed orthodox Moslem men in the Pashtoon villages of eastern Afghanistan into picking up their guns." The bride price was a lifetime's savings or lifelong debt to money lenders who charged usurious rates and gave the mullahs their cut in donations. For women it was chattel slavery; for men without means, no money meant no sex with women.

From a military point of view the Soviet intervention may or may not have been wise, though certainly it is deeply just to oppose the Islamic reactionary insurgents backed by imperialism. There can be no question that for revolutionaries our side in this conflict is with the Red Army. In fact, although uncalled for militarily, a natural response on the part of the world's young leftists would be an enthusiastic desire to join an international brigade to fight the reactionary CIA-connected rebels.

Yet, scandalously, much of the Western left is dancing to Carter's tune. The Maoists, already seasoned drummer boys for the Pentagon, hail the imperialist grain embargo and call on the U.S. to step up aid to the Islamic insurgents. Their anti-Soviet hysteria goes to such lengths that in Frankfurt, West Germany they joined with Afghan ultrarightists in an attempted stabbing murder of a leader of the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands (section of the iSt) on January 25. Even ostensible Trotskyists are joining the imperialist hue and cry, as the British IMG headlined "Soviet Troops Out of Afghanistan." Their comrades in the French LCR waver from week to week between opposing the mullahs and opposing the Soviet army. And the American SWP tries to pretend that "Soviet intervention is not the issue," that calling the tribesmen "Muslim rebels" is

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Afghan Ultra-Rightists, Maoists Seal Anti-Soviet Bloc in Blood

Attempted Murder of German Spartacist

REPRINTED FROM *YOUNG SPARTACUS*
NO. 79, FEBRUARY 1980

FEBRUARY 3—A near-fatal knife wound left German Trotskyist Fred Zierenberg fighting for his life in a Frankfurt hospital. The murderous, premeditated attack occurred on January 25 at a public teach-in on Afghanistan at the University of Frankfurt, West Germany. Reactionary Afghans, Turkish Islamic fanatics and their Maoist lackeys—members of “Fight Back” from the U.S. volunteer army stationed in West Germany—formed a bloc and planned the attack in advance.

The meeting consisted of a series of virulently anti-Soviet speeches and chants of “Death to Trotskyism!” and “Down with the Soviet Union!” During the discussion period a member of the *Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands* (TLD, German section of the international Spartacist tendency) went to the podium to take the time to speak that she had been granted by the chair. At a signal from the “Fight Back” members, the mullah-lovers launched their vicious attack. In the flurry of fists, boots and knives, seven TLD members and supporters received injuries. In addition to Zierenberg, one comrade received a knife wound in the abdomen, another was beaten unconscious, the others got teeth knocked out and serious blows to the ears. The woman who attempted to speak received a series of vicious kicks to the abdomen. It is clear that these right-wing thugs planned to maim and kill.

The Islamic fanatics and their Maoist goons particularly singled out Fred Zierenberg for attack. Zierenberg, a leading spokesman for the TLD and a trade unionist for more than ten years, was immediately surrounded at the “Fight Back” signal and knifed from behind, receiving a potentially mortal wound that resulted in a 30 percent collapse of one lung. He

Fred
Zierenberg

Workers Vanguard



required an emergency operation, was in danger of losing his life and is still recovering in the Frankfurt hospital.

The TLD was targeted for the bloody assault because of its outspoken support for the Red Army in Afghanistan and its well-known opposition to Islamic reaction.

After fighting their way out of the room, the TLD comrades reassembled outside chanting, “Down with NATO! Hail the Red Army!” They announced that a TLD public meeting on Afghanistan scheduled for January 29 would be held as planned, despite threats of disruption from the Afghani reactionaries.

The TLD meeting was held, with substantial defense by members of the *iSt*, and the attempt to impose the norms of an “Islamic Republic” at Frankfurt University was successfully repelled. Members of several other left organizations participated in the defense.

Like the pro-Khomeini Iranian students who last year attempted to disrupt forums sponsored by the Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League of the U.S., the Afghani reactionaries in Germany and their Maoist accomplices will learn that the voice of authentic Trotskyism *will be heard*. Drawing the Russian question in blood, this attack has only steeled the determination of the TLD to win new recruits to Trotskyism. Hail the Red Army in Afghanistan! Smash Islamic Reaction! We Will Not Be Silenced!

a lie. Meanwhile, the pseudo-leftist “Parity Committee” of Morenoites and Lambertists calls for military support to the Afghan reactionaries and even for extending the “Islamic revolution” into the Soviet Union!

One reason for the fake-lefts’ shameful confusion and outright counterrevolutionary backing for the imperialist-aided rebels is that they *all* support the analogous movement—Khomeini’s theocratic, clerical-feudalist regime—next door in Iran. But in Afghanistan the CIA and Khomeini are on the same side of the barricades, and massive Red Army support to the Kabul regime against the American and Pakistani-backed Islamic tribal revolt poses the Russian question pointblank.

By giving unconditional military support to the Soviet Army and PDPA forces, the Spartacist tendency in no way places political confidence in the Kremlin bureaucracy or its left-nationalist allies in Afghanistan. Only a proletarian political revolution in the USSR can truly restore the Red Army and the Soviet state to their internationalist and revolutionary mission. Only the overthrow of the imperialist powers by the working classes, under the leadership of a Trotskyist vanguard party, can lay the basis for the world socialist order which will lift deeply oppressed and backward regions like Afghanistan out of their poverty, isolation and obscurantism, establishing the genuine social equality of all peoples. ■

Rotten Blocs Shatter United Secretariat

REPRINTED FROM WORKERS VANGUARD
NO. 245, 7 DECEMBER 1979

For the past decade and a half the main drawing card of the "United Secretariat" (USec) has been its pretensions to be the Fourth International. Even while its warring factions were publicly hurling epithets at each other from opposite sides of the barricades over Portugal in 1975, the USec could still attract subjectively revolutionary militants with its claim to be the organizational embodiment of the world party of socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky. And woe to any USec dissidents who challenged this myth—over the years left oppositions have been summarily chucked out for such sacrilege.

Now in the last two months the USec has been torn apart over Nicaragua, with two blocs (each a marriage of convenience, in true USec tradition) taking shape to claim the title. For Ernest Mandel the split exploded his reveries of presenting a "united" USec as an international clearing-house for the "broad far left." The expellees and their new-found allies are now as aggressive as the USec in presuming to speak for "the world movement." Yet the counterposed blocs are deeply unstable, both consisting of centrist-talking adventurers (Mandel and Moreno) combined with hard social-democratic reformist national machines (the American SWP and the French OCI respectively).

On the USec side, its just concluded "Eleventh World Congress" saw three main tendencies most clearly expressed in their competing motions on the nature of the present Sandinista/bourgeois government in Nicaragua. The right wing around Jack Barnes' SWP praised the present ruling junta in Managua as a workers and peasants government; to cozy up to the FSLN (explicitly endorsed as a "revolutionary leadership") the SWP acts as a fingerman and political adviser to the Sandinista secret police against supposed "ultra-lefts" (including its erst-while Morenoite "comrades").

In the middle there was the grouping around Mandel, saying in typical centrist fashion that the nature of the Nicaraguan regime was undetermined. And there was Mandel's left cover, the hodgepodge centered on the British IMG, sections of the Swedish KAF and the Matti tendency in the French LCR. These "loyal oppositionists" labeled the Sandinista junta a bourgeois class-collaborationist regime, but instead of calling for a Trotskyist party to organize independent proletarian opposition in Nicaragua, they accepted the USec's liquidationist policy of entry into the petty-bourgeois bonapartist FSLN.

On the other side, the new lash-up between the French OCI of Pierre Lambert and Nahuel Moreno's Bolshevik Faction (BF) is one of the more unnatural alliances in history. When Vishinsky ranted at the Moscow Trials against a "bloc of rights and Trotskyites" it was a Stalinist slander, but the OCI and Moreno have actually created something worse; Trotsky and Bukharin had more in common than this pair! Lambert's organization is a known quantity among ostensible Trotskyists in Europe: its social-democratic Stalinophobic politics meant eagerly supporting the candidate of the popular front, Socialist leader Mitterrand, in the 1973 French presidential election. By 1975 the OCI's slide into reformism was sealed by its support to the "democratic" CIA-funded Portuguese Socialists as the latter spearheaded a counterrevolutionary anti-Communist mass mobilization.

The Morenoite current is far more contradictory. Moreno himself was a reformist in Argentina, but one who lost his reformist base, the direct tie to his "own" bourgeoisie. Forcibly separated from the national terrain of Argentine reformism, with nothing to sell out and no Perón to sell it to, Moreno—now based on the Colombian PST—chose to embark on a leftist adventure in Nicaragua. Now seeking to consolidate the benefits of his refurbished militant reputation, Moreno has gone out on a centrist swing. His Bolshevik Faction has been built on a left critique of the Mandelites' response to "Eurocommunism" and of the SWP over Portugal and Angola. On these



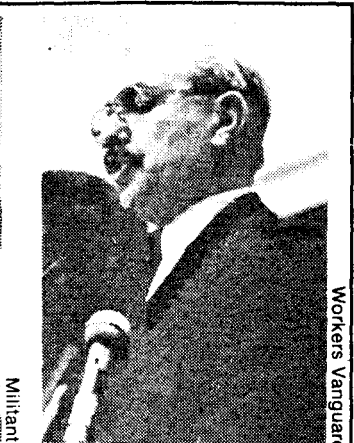
Ernest Mandel



Jack Barnes



Nahuel Moreno



Pierre Lambert

positions the BF sounds uncannily close to the positions of the international Spartacist tendency—but it is a fraud: Moreno is a consummate charlatan. We can prove it, and we have, in the *Moreno Truth Kit*.

For some time now this Argentine political *bandolero* had been sneaking up on Mandel, scurrying through the bushes and then hiding under the skirts of a larger group, only to break from it on a “left” basis when an appropriate opportunity presents itself. First with the SWP (1969-75) in the reformist, pseudo-orthodox “Leninist-Trotskyist Faction” (which was at bottom a reformist opposition to Mandel’s vicarious guerrillism), then in a more informal way in bloc with Mandel. Each time he has extended his influence: first to the rest of Latin America, then establishing a beachhead on the southern flank of Europe. Meanwhile his policies at home remained ultra-reformist (written declarations of support to the Peronist regime, equating left-wing guerrillas with fascist death squads, etc.).

Now Moreno is at it again, this time with the OCI, and the current bloc is even less stable than his previous operations. Its components can’t even agree on whether they are for the “reconstruction,” “reorganization” or “reunification” of the Fourth International and Moreno has admitted that his “Parity Committee” with the OCI is nothing but a defensive “united front”—but one which supposedly will proceed to build “Trotskyist parties” despite its disagreements over fundamental political issues. The “Parity Committee” is merely a cynical attempt to trump the Mandelites by playing the “unity” card, and not surprisingly the USec is invited to join up.

The uproar over Nicaragua has sent left-wing elements in the USec into turmoil. Many are being sucked into the Moreno/OCI bloc, which on this issue stands to the left of



Workers Vanguard

Sandinista diplomat Jaime Wheelock in New York. Spartacist spokesmen demanded, “Why are revolutionaries in your jails?”

the USec’s bottomless liquidation. Particularly in France a number of leftists have joined the new Ligue Communiste Internationaliste (LCI) despite its cynical OCI-loyalist leadership. Elsewhere such elements are still being held in tow by the USec (England, Sweden). Both in Spain and Italy there are relatively large Morenoite breakaway organizations, but ones whose political practice has been exposed as clearly rightist.

But both the USec and Moreno/OCI blocs are showing a suddenly increased vulnerability to the Spartacist tendency. The response has been a wave of scummy cop-baiting and thug violence in the worst Stalinist tradition. Both the LCR and OCI recently used goon squads to attempt to silence the Ligue Trotskyiste de France. But already this policy is beginning to backfire. Only four days after the USec’s GIM local in Köln, West Germany, expelled our comrades of the Troztkistische Liga Deutschlands from a public forum, the GIM local in Tübingen at a November 27 public meeting on Iran solidarized with the TLD’s proletarian opposition to clerical reaction in Iran. No wonder Mandel told the last GIM conference that regarding the future of his German section, “one can only pray.”

We can do more than pray. Over the years, serious leftist USec supporters who sought an alternative to petty-bourgeois impressionism and popular frontism have regrouped themselves behind the authentic Trotskyist program of the international Spartacist tendency. From the Cuban Revolution to the clericalist mass mobilizations in Iran and the insurgency in Nicaragua, our tendency has counterposed the struggle for Trotskyist parties to the Pabloist liquidationism of the USec. Now again this crisis of the USec milieu provides opportunities to regroup subjectively revolutionary militants from the USec into an internationalist formation fighting for the rebirth of Trotsky’s Fourth International. ■

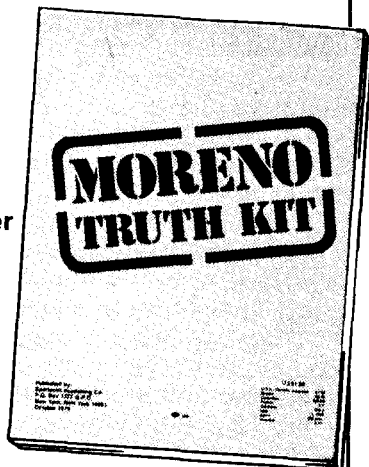
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SWP/USec Criminal Tailism in Iran



Khomeini's Persian-chauvinist militiamen bring the "Islamic revolution" to Kurdistan.

UPI

History Takes Its Vengeance

The following article first appeared in *Workers Vanguard* No. 239, 14 September 1979. It exposes how the United Secretariat (USec) criminally capitulated to the reactionary mullah-led "Islamic revolution" in Iran, even as 14 members of the USec's affiliate languished in Khomeini's jails awaiting execution. Since this article was first published, several important developments have taken place which require comment—the American embassy crisis in Iran, the international crisis precipitated by the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, and the split in the USec leading to the formation of the "Parity Committee" lashing together the Bolshevik Faction (BF) of political adventurer Nahuel Moreno and the reformist Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) of Pierre Lambert.

The persecution of the USec's Iranian affiliate, the Socialist Workers Party (HKS), in late summer-early fall was part of the Khomeini regime's response to growing mass discontent and resistance. Once again leftist protesters were marching through Teheran, unemployed workers staging militant demonstrations and, most threatening to Khomeini, the national minorities (especially the Kurds) were rebelling. It was against this background that in late October Khomeini encouraged his followers to seize the American embassy, hold its personnel hostage and demand the return of the shah. Through this spectacular political

diversion the reactionary religious fanatic could once again appear before the Iranian people as the enemy of the hated shah and U.S. imperialism. In fact, the embassy seizure was an attempt to shore up his regime, specifically designed to ensure Khomeini's victory in the upcoming referendum making him the all-powerful *faghi* (Führer), supposedly Allah's chosen leader over the people of Iran. The essentially diversionary nature of the embassy seizure was recognized by the leftist Fedayeen in Iran and even by the European Mandelites in the USec.

But not the SWP. They rushed to the newly elected imam's defense, claiming, "Khomeini today has the greatest authority in the country as an anti-imperialist leader" (*Militant*, 28 December 1979). Therefore, argued the SWP, any criticism of Khomeini, even from the left, was pro-imperialist. This timeworn Stalinist methodology was dragged out of mothballs for the 17 December issue of the SWP's *Intercontinental Press* in an article entitled, "How the Left Responded to Carter's War Drive." The article's wildest slanders are reserved for the Spartacist League, which it claimed has "increasingly taken outright racist and pro-imperialist positions" because we expose Khomeini's crimes against the Iranian oppressed and call for workers revolution in Iran.

As demonstrated in our reply, "Why They Lie for Khomeini" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 246, 28 December

1979), the SWP's reasoning is but the mirror image of liberal imperialist ideology. If Khomeini is guilty of the crimes we accuse him of, if the Iranian masses suffer under the burden of religious obscurantism, then in the eyes of the SWP this could only serve to justify bringing "human rights" to the Iranian people by sending in the U.S. marines. Communists reject this liberal imperialist syllogism; we said: "Khomeini Nuttier Than Shah, But Hands Off Iran!" Under the guise of combating imperialist chauvinism, the SWP denies the social reality of backward, capitalist Iran: the *chador* becomes a symbol of women's "liberation" rather than of their enslavement in Islamic countries, self-flagellation as a Shi'ite rite practiced during the holy month of Moharram and witnessed by millions on television is an outright fabrication of the *Wall Street Journal*. Claiming that hostility toward Khomeini's Iran in the U.S. is solely the creation of imperialist media fabrication, the *Militant* would save Iran from U.S. invasion by its own media manipulation. Marxists understand that the social force of clerical reaction in Iran today is a product of economic retardation imposed upon that region by imperialism and that the masses will be emancipated from the chains of religious obscurantism only upon the economic foundations of proletarian revolution.

Likewise, the HKS also hailed the embassy takeover. Ten of the fourteen imprisoned HKS members were released. Meanwhile, the HKS underwent a split essentially pitting the pro-SWP elements, largely trained as students in the U.S., against the Mandeliste centrists, mainly derived from Iranian students in Europe. The issue which precipitated the split was the pro-SWP leadership's insistence on standing for the Islamic Assembly of Experts last August against the will of the majority of the group, who favored a boycott.

If the seizure of the American embassy momentarily refurbished Khomeini's credentials as an "anti-imperialist," the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan utterly exploded that fraudulent image. The president of the United States is now obsequiously wooing the imam for a joint *jihad* against godless Russia. Carter might just propose that the embassy hostages be drafted into the Iranian army and sent to fight the Soviets at the Khyber. For his part, Khomeini has pledged "unconditional support" to the anti-Soviet Afghan tribalists and, in fact, has been aiding them all along.

In supporting the clerical reactionary Khomeini, the left was not only hypnotized by his mass following, but believed his anti-Westernism would surely tear Iran out of America's hands. But as Afghanistan proves, conflicts between the deeply conservative Islamic priest caste and their imperialist overlords can only have a fleeting and superficial character. When faced with Cold War polarization linked to the possibility of social revolution in the East, the mullahs will always unite with imperialism against the Soviet degenerated workers state.

Khomeini's fake-Trotskyist enthusiasts either deny this or join him on the anti-Communist side of the barricades. While the SWP defends the Soviet action in Afghanistan, it denies that the anti-Communist, feudalist insurgency is based on Islamic fundamentalism. As for Carter's anti-Soviet offensive, the SWP tries to duck the Russian

continued on next page

Morenoites Call For Counterrevolution in USSR

Some would-be Trotskyists might think the Moreno tendency is leftist because it sent a brigade to Nicaragua and parades around in guerrilla outfits. Then take a look at the Morenoites' call for counterrevolution in Russia based on their support to Khomeini. Of all groups on the left this is the only one that tries to outdo the crazed anti-Communism of Brzezinski:

"The counterrevolutionary Kremlin bureaucracy is discrediting itself by a criminal action against the Afghan people, trampling its right to independence, intervening on its territory without any justification. Defense against external action was not the motive in telling the USSR to intervene, but, on the contrary, an obvious attempt to reinforce its own control, to maintain the status quo in the area shaken by revolutionary ferment. The possibility of extending the Iranian revolution within the borders of the USSR is what terrorizes the Kremlin bureaucracy. The Soviet border populations, tied to those in Iran and Afghanistan by religious, cultural and racial ties, can be infected by the radicalization of the area, can become protagonists in an anti-bureaucratic mobilization within the workers state, laying the basis for a political revolution. This is what the bureaucracy is afraid of, this is why the USSR intervened."

—*Avanzata Proletaria* No. 28,
12 January 1980

This is no isolated deviation (and what a deviation!) by the Morenoites' Italian group. The Parity Committee of the Morenoite/Lambertist bloc calls for the Soviet army to withdraw and leave its arms with the Islamic anti-Communist guerrillas!

"The revolutionary wave born in Iran could only have destabilizing effects in Afghanistan. If religion can be included as an element of national affirmation, the movement which allows a rebellion to develop against the central power is not, any more than in Iran, a 'religious' movement. It takes part in the totality of the mobilization of the masses in this region, and directs itself against a state which remains a semi-colonial bourgeois state....

"If it were a question of aiding the struggle of the Afghan people to realize their national and social aspirations in opposition to imperialism, the rulers of the USSR would need only order their troops to leave their weapons in the hands of the Afghan mass revolutionary movement."

—*Informations Ouvrières*,
19-26 January 1980

This shrill anti-Sovietism must please the notoriously Stalinophobic French OCI with whom Moreno has blocked to split the United Secretariat. But any radical who thinks that Moreno represents any kind of revolutionary Trotskyism had better think again. You might find yourself in the mountains of Afghanistan fighting in an "Imam Khomeini Brigade" against the godless Communist menace. ■

question, declaring that "the issue is not Soviet intervention."

The unstable "Parity Committee" has followed Khomeini into the camp of imperialist counterrevolution, supporting the reactionary Islamic forces in Afghanistan (see accompanying box). For the Lambertists, this is a culmination of their long-standing social-democratic Stalinophobia. For the Morenoites, their position was consistent with their identification with third worldist bonapartist nationalism, even in its most reactionary, anti-Communist forms.

While posturing as a left opposition within the USec, the BF of Moreno was, if anything, even more enthusiastic over Khomeini's "Islamic revolution" than was the SWP. The Bolshevik Faction hailed the Persian mullahs' revolution and criticized the Mandelite/SWP bloc for minimizing its world-historic import:

"The United Secretariat has been categorically, theoretically, and politically contradicted by the Iranian revolution, which has been the most spectacular example of an upsurge to be seen in recent years. . . .
" . . . the Iranian revolution once again shifts the epicenter of world revolution to the colonial world."

—"Declaration and Platform of the Bolshevik Faction," *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* Vol. XVI No. 3, July 1979

For the would-be Trotskyist "imam" from Argentina, Khomeini (like Perón) is merely another "progressive, anti-imperialist" *caudillo* whose corporatist institutions can supposedly serve as the foundation for "proletarian" rule. Now with the Afghanistan crisis, the Morenoites have carried their belief in the world-historic mission of the Persian mullahs' revolution to the point of calling for its extension to the border peoples of the Soviet Union!

The Mandelite centrists are zigzagging between class-treasonous calls for Soviet withdrawal (tailing the Eurocommunist milieu) and the grudging admission that Afghanistan does pose the military defense of the USSR against imperialism. The initial response of the British International Marxist Group was to demand, "Soviet Troops Out of Afghanistan!" in the name of national self-determination. As if the democratic right of national self-determination stands higher than the defeat of feudal counterrevolution or the military defense of the Soviet Union! The organ of the USec's premier French section,

Rouge, takes a different line on Afghanistan every week, sometimes two different lines in the same issue. But, even if they now abjure the defeatist call for the withdrawal of the Red Army, the European Mandelites still condemn the Soviet intervention. In sharpest contrast, we recognize that the Soviet intervention opens the possibility of the social liberation of the peoples of Afghanistan and is a fully justifiable defensive response to U.S. imperialism's present war drive.

* * * * *

They bowed to their executioners.

As Ayatollah Khomeini rose to power in Iran following the overthrow of the bloody shah, the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) emblazoned a headline hailing this event across the front page of its newspaper, a headline which will be immortalized in the annals of class treachery: "VICTORY IN IRAN!" (*Militant*, 23 February). *So whose victory now, SWP?*

Every day since the fall of the Peacock Throne events in Iran have confirmed that the spoils of this "victory" are the savage repression of minorities, the execution of strikers, homosexuals, adulterers and others accused of "crimes against god"; the stoning of unveiled women, the suppression of all opposition parties and press. The current slaughter of hundreds of Kurds in northwestern Iran is only the most recent repressive measure of this Shi'ite theocracy in consolidating *its* victory.

The international Spartacist tendency (iSt) was unique on the left in telling the truth which every day receives confirmation in Khomeini's "Islamic Republic": the mullahs' victory means a regime just as reactionary as the shah's. In contrast, the SWP and its co-thinkers in the Iranian HKS (Socialist Workers Party) disguised and obscured at every stage the reactionary character of Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalist regime. Today the HKS is experiencing the consequences of the "victory" it cheered only six months ago as it, along with other left and secular groups, has had its offices sacked and closed, its press suppressed, its members beaten, jailed and threatened with execution.

Despite the fact that brutal Islamic repression against the left, women, national minorities and homosexuals began on Day 1 of the mullahs' regime, the egregiously misnamed "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec), to which both the American SWP and Iranian HKS are "fraternally" affiliated, characterized the ayatollah as "progressive" and "anti-imperialist." Even Khomeini's attack on their HKS comrades brought forth a desultory response. The one thing the SWP did energetically was to exclude Spartacists from defense of the threatened Iranian socialists. Only now that it has finally dawned on these inveterate tailists, blinded by their opportunism, that they may actually have to pay for their treachery has the USec belatedly sprung to life and begun screaming from the pages of their newspapers, "Stop Execution of Socialists in Iran!"

In time-honored reformist fashion they are trying to cover their tracks by playing up the threat hanging over the arrested HKSers. The Stalinists used the same ploy following the 1973 Pinochet coup, trying to focus protests on freeing imprisoned Communist leader Corvalán. The iSt, which defended Corvalán, also pointed out that the

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Spartacist League/Britain demonstrates in London (1 September 1979) to protest Khomeini's white terror against Kurds, Arab oil workers, imprisoned HKS members and other leftists.



Chilean CP's call for confidence in the "constitutionalist" officer corps paved the way for bloody counterrevolution. Again today we point the finger of guilt. The HKS' present plight was prepared by their own criminal policy. *The real story is: their comrades are not just martyrs—they are sacrificial victims of the USec's support for Khomeini.*

But these gentlemen socialists don't like to talk about responsibility for crimes. Speaking recently in the United States, USec leader Ernest Mandel reacted angrily to Spartacist accusations that he and his organization had betrayed the working class with its support to popular frontism in Chile, Portugal and elsewhere:

"I don't see any workers struggles betrayed by the organization I stand for.... The word 'betrayals' is completely out of order.... You can say it was a wrong policy, or a political mistake. But to speak about betrayals—you can't put in the same category people who are responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands and millions of workers."

For seminar socialists like Mandel, words do not have consequences. If the USec called for Latin American youth to go into the hills to follow Guevara's bankrupt guerrilla strategy, if the SWP supported the counterrevolutionary mobilization spearheaded by the CIA-bankrolled Portuguese socialists—no matter, it's just a "political mistake."

No, it is a *betrayal*—of the proletariat, of Marxism, of anyone who follows your advice. And that is what has taken place in Iran. True, the USec is not influential enough to lead "hundreds of thousands and millions of workers to their deaths"—but at least 14 of its own supporters in the Iranian HKS are now facing life imprisonment or sitting on death row, jailed by the regime whose victory was greeted by these pseudo-Trotskyist tailists.

USec, SWP, HKS—Ernest Mandel, Jack Barnes and the rest: you have committed a crime, for which you will be held responsible before the court of history. You must live with it because your own comrades may die for it.

Cover-Up

After working for months to disguise the reactionary character of Khomeini's Islamic regime, the USec is now desperately trying to shift its line without anybody noticing. Today *Socialist Challenge* (30 August), newspa-

per of the British International Marxist Group (IMG), proclaims in bold letters across its back page, "White Terror in Iran," and announces "Khomeini has become the Shah of Iran." The IMG neglects to inform us how this reactionary regime came to replace Khomeini's "progressive" rule which it applauded only yesterday. Similarly, *Rouge* (24-30 August), newspaper of the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, goes so far as to speak of Khomeini's "coup de force." Against himself?

For its part, the U.S. Socialist Workers Party is also moving (albeit more slowly) to dissociate itself from the bloody ayatollah. Today they write:

"Khomeini's moves against the Iranian working people—aimed to protect the ill-gotten gains of the landlords and capitalists—lead him toward subordination to U.S. imperialism, in spite of the anti-imperialist posture he has tried to adopt up to now."

—*Militant*, 7 September 1979

But it was the SWP which was the foremost con man on the American left for "Khomeini's anti-imperialist posture." Less than one year ago the SWP hailed Khomeini in the *Militant* (17 November 1978) as "progressive":

"Although Khomeini subscribes to a religious ideology, the basis of his appeal is not religious reaction. On the contrary, he has won broad support among the Iranian masses because his firm opposition to the Shah and the Shah's 'modernization' is progressive."

The SWP is so ensconced in its cocoon of bourgeois-democratic illusions that it does not recognize the burning importance of the separation of church and state for backward countries. Khomeini's religious ideology is his political program: i.e., an Islamic fundamentalist theocracy based on Great Persian chauvinism and the moral codes of desert bedouins.

When the iSt told the truth about what the victory of Islamic reaction would mean and raised the slogan: "Down With the Shah! Down With the Mullahs!" the SWP claimed we were "blinded by sectarianism" and "chauvinist." But the real chauvinists were those who refused to do their internationalist duty and warn the Iranian toiling masses that Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution" would prove no more progressive than the shah's "White Revolution." For many sections of the oppressed (e.g., religious

continued on next page

minorities and women), it has already proven more repressive. This is even acknowledged in the SWP's own publications.

A recent issue of *Intercontinental Press* (10 September 1979) contains a translation from a report made by a prominent Algerian lawyer who visited prisoners held in Karoun Prison located in Khuzistan which contains Iran's Arab minority. Arab prisoners are reported as explaining: "... that the Iranian revolution meant no change as far as they were concerned. For them the exactions of the old regime, based on the local feudal rulers continue, oppressing them both economically and socially. The same feudal rulers today are allied with the officials of the new regime, creating a continuity of repression."

Where is the "victory" for the Arab minority of Khuzistan, criminal opportunists of the SWP?

Theocratic Parliamentary Cretinism

The HKS tried to present its credentials as a loyal social-democratic opposition to the dictatorship of the mullahs by running in the August elections for the so-called Assembly of Experts. But in a theocracy, social democracy doesn't pay, even for short-sighted, narrow-minded opportunists. According to the election statement in the last issue of the HKS paper *Kargar (Worker)* printed before its suppression and dated 8 August:

"Three days from now, elections will be held for the Assembly of Experts. This body is to ratify a new constitution for Iran.... This constitution must defend the gains of the revolution and extend them.... The new constitution must pave the way for the establishment of such a government of the oppressed majority."

In fact, the Assembly of Experts was bound by Khomeini's phony referendum for an Islamic Republic, which explicitly ruled out a constituent assembly. The Assembly of Experts could only amend Khomeini's draft constitution consistent with institutionalizing the Islamic Republic, and the political and social hegemony of the mullahs. The Assembly of Experts was no more a constituent assembly than is the college of cardinals. Nor was it any more democratically "elected" than that appendage of the papacy.

Given the predetermined outcome of a Shi'ite clerical dictatorship, many political parties of secular groups and minorities boycotted the elections, including all the Arab parties. Even the main liberal bourgeois party, the National Democratic Front (NDF), refused to participate as "a protest in principle against the revolutionary regime's lack of attention to basic human rights." In Iranian Kurdistan less than ten percent of the eligible voters cast ballots. Thus, the HKS presented the ludicrous spectacle of self-proclaimed "Trotskyists" running for a seat in the Assembly of Experts next to mullahs who were arguing over whether this or that clause was consistent with the Koran.

The 10 September issue of *Intercontinental Press* quotes long passages from the last issue of *Kargar* enthusing over the HKS participation in the elections of Islamic "experts." But the SWP suppresses the existence of an article in the same issue of *Kargar* entitled, "Last Minute Before Publication," which states that: "There is a very important discussion in the party whether to boycott or participate in the elections of the Assembly of Experts." Apparently, participating in the elections for the rubber-stamp

"assembly" of the Islamic Republic was so unsavory that even a significant section of the mullah-tailist HKS balked. The *Kargar* article reports: "As is well known, three of our 18 candidates boycotted the elections."

Fruits of Betrayal

In covering up for Khomeini's reactionary regime and their own record on Khomeini, it is the SWP that has been forced to resort to deliberate lying. A typical piece of slanderous rubbish about that "irrelevant sect," the Spartacist League, that has come to fill so many pages of the *Militant* lately is a piece in the 6 July issue entitled "Spartacists Foiled in Attempt to Sabotage Defense." According to the article, the SL was excluded from a picket to protest the jailing of the HKS because it brought "provocative signs." Through partial quotation the SWP distorts the slogans on the signs: "Overthrow Islamic Reaction" and "Down with Khomeini," instead of "For Workers Revolution to Overthrow Islamic Reaction" and "Down with Khomeini, For Workers Revolution."

According to the SWP, these slogans "were a clear echo of imperialist propaganda against the Iranian workers and peasants"—from which one can only deduce that the SWP believes that the Carter administration is calling for workers revolution in Iran. The article states that the SL was "told by picket organizers that the protest was not open to opponents of the Iranian revolution"—i.e., Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution." Appropriately enough, according to SWP methodology, in order to "defend" the jailed HKS militants one must simultaneously defend their torturers, jailers and potential executioners—or at least not attack them openly!

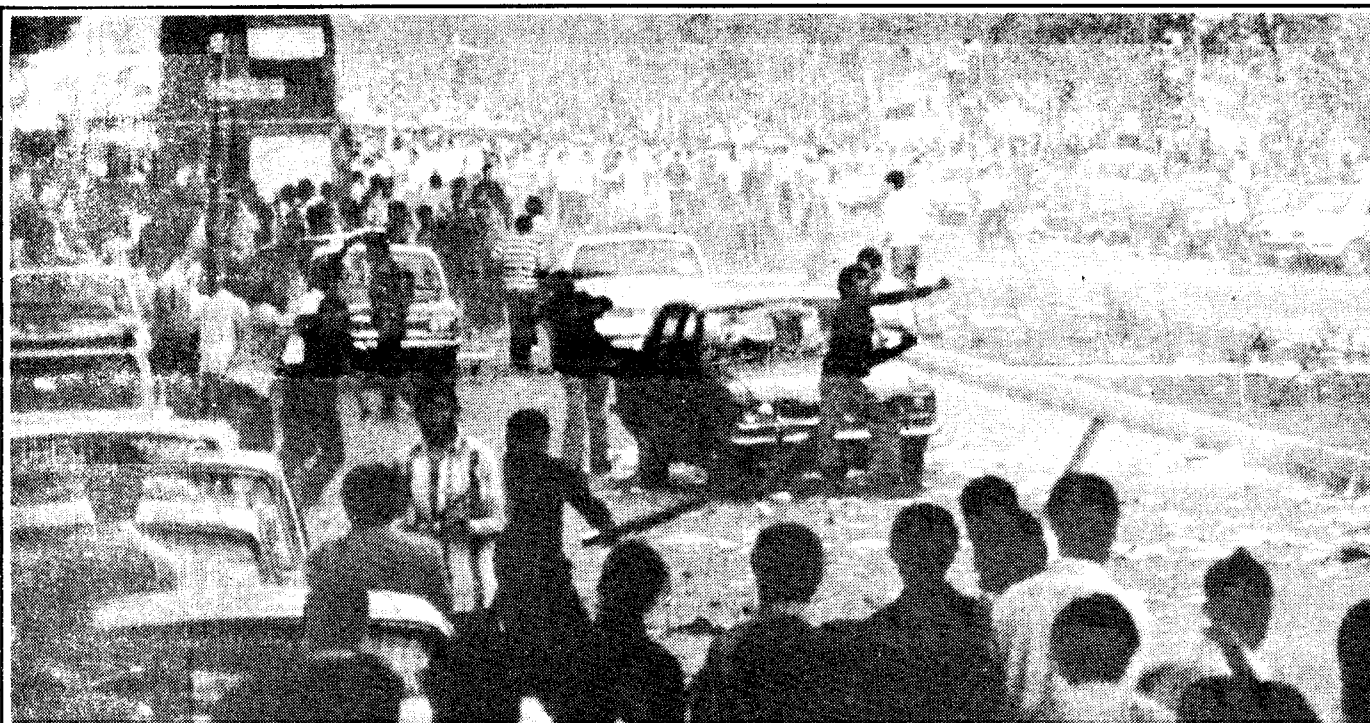
The SWP's international bloc partners in the so-called United Secretariat do not have a better record. In a heated exchange with supporters of the SL and its youth section, the Spartacus Youth League, at Boston University on July 17, Mandel defended the SWP's "Victory in Iran" headline by stating:

"So some of our comrades are in jail—but our organization is legal. Our paper is legal; it is sold in tens of thousands of copies like all other left-wing papers in Iran. Were they legal under the shah?... So what you have is a step from a reactionary dictatorship, which was bourgeois, towards what you could call partial bourgeois democracy.... We said that it is the beginning of the process of permanent revolution...."

—*WV* No. 237, 3 August

One month later the HKS, along with all other left and secular organizations, was illegal, its press banned, its leaders in jail. Is that what you call the next stage in the "process of permanent revolution," Professor Mandel?

The national secretary of the pro-Mandel IMG in England, Brian Grogan, was so swept up in the "process of permanent revolution" when he was in Teheran that he joined the *chador*-covered women and the men carrying icons of Khomeini and chanted "allah akbar" ("god is great"). At a recent demonstration against Khomeini's terror in front of the Iranian embassy in London, called by a Kurdish student association and endorsed by the IMG, Grogan's disgusting action was not forgotten. As the IMG supporters present—a small fraction of their local membership, in the midst of the USec's supposed "emergency campaign"—stood by, the 50-strong contingent of the Spartacist League/Britain chanted: "2, 4, 6, 8—



Reza/Sipa-Black Star

Iranian left's tailing of Khomeini only emboldened Muslim zealots. Above: pipe-swinging, rock-throwing thugs attack leftists in Teheran.

Does Grogan still think god is great?" Another SL chant was: "Last autumn you said Khomeini's fine, it's kind of late to change your line."

The central slogan carried on the SL/B placards was: "USec/IMG Line Kills Arabs, Kurds, Leftists." Other Spartacist signs included: "You Cheered for Khomeini, But You're Not Cheering Now," "Free the HKS and Fedayeen Supporters" and "Khomeini's Revolution Means Massacre of Kurds." On several occasions, when SLers and the Kurdish students jointly chanted "Down with the new shah" and "Down with Khomeini, for workers revolution," the IMG tried to drown this out with slogans which did not attack the ayatollah. Not only do these fake-Trotskyists refuse to directly denounce the mullahs' rule, but they have sabotaged the defense of their own imprisoned comrades in Iran. The IMG waited a month to call its first defense demonstration (on July 7), and then sent only a handful of supporters to the protest.

On the face of it, the USec "defense" of their comrades would seem sectarian and defeatist—if one supposes that their concern was to defend imprisoned leftists. But then the USec at most gave lip service to defense of the Fedayeen, a far larger irritant to the Khomeini regime, when they came under attack. The HKS also abandoned the demand for the Kurdish right of self-determination when things got hot. No, their central aim is to defend Khomeini. And the ultimate price of their betrayal has not been paid by them—*as of yet*—but by the oppressed masses of Iran. But now they appeal for support.

Last fall as the mullah-led opposition gained force, the iSt warned that the Islamic clerics were as reactionary as the butcher shah. But when we said "Down with the shah, down with the mullahs!" the USec/SWP replied that this is imperialist propaganda, that we were apologists for the

shah. In February, when we said "Mullahs Win" the SWP proclaimed "Victory in Iran" and denounced the iSt position as "counterrevolutionary." We said "Your comrades may die, but you support Khomeini," and the fake-Trotskyists physically expelled us from "private" picket lines defending the HKS, refusing to march with anyone who doesn't swear fealty to the "imam." You bowed to Khomeini and while you were kneeling the executioner comes along and is about to cut off your heads. So now you want sympathy for your plight.

All those concerned for democratic rights must demand freedom for imprisoned Kurdish partisans, Arab oil workers, HKS members and other leftists, and all victims of Khomeini's reactionary terror. But the working class must never forget those fake-lefts who claimed Khomeini as a "progressive" alternative to the shah, who hoped to ride to popularity or power on the coattails of Islamic reaction. They are covered with blood.

Even Stalin criticized Chiang Kai-shek after the Shanghai massacre. The USec's sudden discovery that Khomeini is not so progressive after all outdoes Stalin himself in hypocrisy. Chiang Kai-shek claimed to be a revolutionary nationalist and friend of the Russian Revolution when he was courting Stalin's support. But Khomeini stated from the very beginning that he was a reactionary Islamic fundamentalist and Great Persian chauvinist who sought to crush the "satanic communists." The criminal opportunism of the USec over Iran cannot be buried beneath its present (still half-hearted) criticisms and cries for international solidarity for its own supporters in Iran who are as much victims of its own wretched line as they are of capitalist terror. The rebirth of the Fourth International depends upon burning this betrayal and its consequences into the collective memory of the Marxist movement. ■

Tibet: Mao's Afghanistan

Maoists all over the world are screaming about Soviet "imperialism" subjugating "poor little" Afghanistan. Yet 20 years ago the Chinese deformed workers state had to quell an analogous uprising of Buddhist monks, feudal landlords and tribesmen in Tibet. The then-Trotskyist Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) denounced the imperialist propaganda campaign for the Tibetan counterrevolutionaries. We reprint a leaflet issued by the Eugene V. Debs Club of Berkeley, California and the East Bay YSA (Young Socialist, June 1959). It occasioned some reaction in the local radical milieu as it was known to have been written by Jim Robertson, a former long-time Shachtmanite "third campist," as his first statement of Trotskyist Soviet defensism.

* * * * *

A hue and cry has gone up throughout the "free" world and especially in the United States over the latest alleged atrocity of the Chinese (Communist) government. This "atrocity" is the attempt, assured of final success, to reestablish Chinese dominance in the face of revolt planned and led by the Tibetan priestly and landowning classes.

The situation is clear enough in broad outline. To their discredit, the Chinese government has attempted to conciliate with the Tibetan feudal classes for the past eight years. At the same time, as the product of a revolutionary upheaval, the Chinese regime brings with it certain reforms. These reforms, such as rudimentary education, threatened the age-old system of oppression of the peasants by the native rulers. These latter worthies, headed by their "god-king," felt undermined, and while they still had at least a measure of popular support staged a coup which ran into Chinese military resistance.

As an aside to those in the West who profess to admire the quaint devotion of the more backward in Asia to their religious leaders, let it be noted that these condescending attitudes went out with the "humble, devout" French serf of before 1789 and the "carefree, contented" Negro slaves in America. Oppression and obscurantism that lead to blighted and shortened lives are vicious. The path of human betterment is through increasing men's understanding and control of their universe, not by use of rosaries and prayer wheels.

Several defenses have been put forward in favor of the Tibetan feudalists. (1) "Freedom and democracy"!! When in the last two thousand years have the Tibetan people voted or been asked about anything? The very revolt was in part against the eventual possibility of that sort of thing.

(2) "Another Hungary". In Hungary the revolution fought to go forward, seeking to smash the Stalinist bureaucracy (the brothers of Mao and company) in favor of rule from below and for socialism, and against the old order of great landed estates, privately owned factories, clericalism, and political rule by Admiral Horthy's fascist gang.

(3) "Self-determination" might have been a serious basis for deciding in favor of Tibetan independence could someone figure out how the Tibetan people are to express their choice in a nation where the "god-king" gives all the answers as well as asks all the questions. But in reality this aspect is without meaning.

The real choice for Tibet if Chinese control were thrown off is not independent nationhood but abject dependence on American arms, money and advisors. One has but to look at the other reactionary and feudal regimes in Asia to see both the reality and meaning of American imperialist domination: the military dictatorships in Pakistan and Thailand, the corrupt "democracies" of Viet Nam and the Philippines, the personal tyrannies in South Korea and Formosa. Not a pretty picture.

The victory of the Chinese Communist government is clearly the progressive choice in the present contest. However, to recognize this is not to whitewash that regime. But even in its distorted way it is part of great and positive changes on the Asian mainland, changes that eventually will be the Maoists' own undoing. Through these very achievements the regime will be overthrown by the mass of people anxious to rule their own destinies without the intervention of a privileged elite. That is the future; the Tibetan monk-rulers are the past.

But what about the hue and cry in America? How easily fine words are twisted to meet the needs of American "world leadership"!! How morally corrupt our public figures are, men whose political complexion runs the entire respectable spectrum. Nationally a pro-Tibetan committee has been set up ranging in composition from the Formosa lobby mouthpiece, Henry Luce of Life-Time-Fortune, to Norman Thomas, accurately described as "the State Department socialist." At California, the self-styled "Tibetan Brigade" has sprung up and in its publicity seeking fashion faithfully echoes the rhetoric of their elders.

All this noise in a country that backs dictators the world over and as in Guatemala forcibly puts puppets into power with plots staged by the Counter Intelligence Agency. And at a time when, to take a most outstanding example, in Algeria, a whole people have been waging a desperate, bloody war for years against fascist colonials and an imperialist army supplied with American arms.

Here is hypocrisy of world-historic proportions. We socialists say: no thank you! ■

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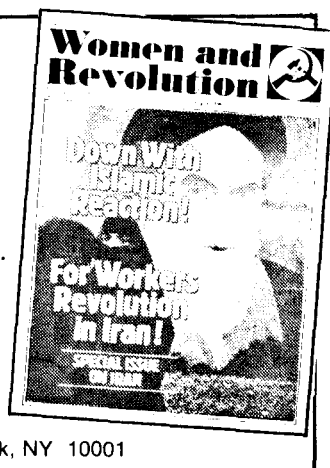
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Singing of the "Internationale" concludes first delegated conference of the iSt.

Forward to the International Trotskyist League

(continued from page 40)

splits and back again, the iSt has grown and grown stronger.

The iSt was formally constituted with the adoption in 1974 of the "Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency" (DOITT) which stated:

"The international Spartacist tendency is just that, a tendency in the process of consolidation. But from its international outset it declares its continuing fidelity already tested for a decade in national confines to Marxist-Leninist principle and Trotskyist program—Revolutionary, Internationalist and Proletarian. The struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International promises to be difficult, long and, above all, uneven...."

This document set forth the programmatic bankruptcy of the various "Fourth Internationals" and committed the signatory organizations to the struggle for an International Trotskyist League in accordance with international democratic centralism. The appendix established an interim organizational structure for the tendency, with the combined Central Committees of the full sections (initially, U.S. and Australia/New Zealand) constituted as an International Executive Committee (IEC) with an interim International Secretariat as its resident executive arm. While recognizing that this formally federated structure could become a brake on the democratic-centralist development of the tendency, we hoped that the election of a fully representative IEC by a delegated international

conference would coincide with the fusion of the iSt—programmatic nucleus of a reborn Fourth International—with some section of cadres drawn from the historic forces of the Trotskyist movement; thus would be founded an International Trotskyist League possessing broader authority among would-be Trotskyist currents.

In the period since the promulgation of DOITT, the tendency has registered considerable international extension. The winning of young Trotskyist cadres in Austria combined with regroupments from German ostensible Trotskyism (mainly from the decomposition products of the left-USec milieu) created the TLD. Recruitment from the USec organizations in Canada and France led to the founding of the TLC and LTF. Spartacist "stations" were established in London and Stockholm. A substantial fusion with forces from the English Workers Socialist League created the SL/B. While these gains did not constitute the qualitative political or geographical expansion to justify the proclamation of an International Trotskyist League, they exacerbated the anomalous situation of a nominally federated leadership structure directing the work of our disciplined democratic-centralist tendency.

In the period prior to the convening of the 1979 conference, the participation of leading comrades, including those from sympathizing sections, in international deliberations had demonstrated the existence of an authoritative leading collective. At the same time, the hard and cohesive political response of all the sections to world events like Iran's "Islamic revolution" increasingly compelled our fake-Trotskyist opponents to recognize the iSt as a united international political entity. An international



Spartacist

conference to elect a representative IEC of the iSt was overdue.

The conference was prepared by national conferences and plenums of the full and sympathizing sections, which elected the voting delegates. Immediately preceding the two-day international conference was a four-day international summer camp which included educationals, panels and special commissions (e.g., finances, press, student work).

The conference proper opened with greetings from each national section and from the youth section of the SL/U.S., the Spartacus Youth League. The greetings reported the results of the preparatory national gatherings and outlined the priorities, problems and perspectives for the sections' work. In general, the European organizations confront the related tasks of forging effective national leading collectives, geographical expansion and press stabilization. It was agreed that regular, at least monthly sectional newspapers are crucial propaganda vehicles of an aggressive regroupment tactic of polarizing centrist organizations and winning their subjectively revolutionary forces to the program of authentic Trotskyism.

The pressing tasks in Europe contrast with those of the larger U.S. section which in the course of a dozen years has mainly regrouped its unstable centrist opponents out of effective existence. Thus the SL/U.S. greetings outlined a domestic perspective of more or less individual recruitment through an aggressive drive to turn the tendency's political capital into a couple of hundred new members.

Following the greetings, the conference considered the main political document (reprinted elsewhere in this issue). Particularly in light of the recent USec split, consolidation

of the European organizations is closely linked to the struggle to turn the sections outward toward rapid recruitment to the iSt. The iSt must strip from the Moreno current its new-found "leftist" mantle and win genuine leftists to the one tendency which has consistently opposed Pabloist liquidationism, popular frontism and petty-bourgeois radical impressionism. We must expose Moreno as a free-floating Argentine nationalist/reformist whose present pretenses to "left opposition" are akin to the left face presented by the German Social Democrats whose reformist terrain had been cut out from under them by Hitler's ascension. Now, however, over Afghanistan the Morenoites have shown their true character, stripping off their transient pseudo-left cover. In the name of Third World nationalism they are supporting the imperialist-backed Islamic reactionaries against the Soviet army. If the Morenoites were to succeed in pulling behind them would-be Trotskyists repelled by the rightism of the USec, a verbally centrist roadblock to principled regroupment would undercut iSt opportunities for rapid growth and postpone the construction of authentic revolutionary proletarian nuclei in important countries of Europe and Latin America.

An extremely stimulating session dealt with the question of how the workers movement can confront the problem of massive unemployment in industries which have become redundant not merely through the vicissitudes of the trade cycle (e.g., the worldwide "Great Depression" of 1929) but due to changes in technology creating semi-fossilized industries and/or shifts in the capacity of competing national industries to maintain their share of the world

continued on next page

Spartacist Britain



**Spartacist League/
Britain marching in
Birmingham
demonstration
protesting
victimization of Derek
Robinson, prominent
CP union leader at
British Leyland**

market. In the outmoded steel/coal region of Northwest France/South Belgium or the British automotive industry, for example, the processes of economic change which once carved out these historic proletarian centers from a former peasantry now threaten to pauperize or even lumpenize whole regional sectors of the working class. The revolutionary Marxists must simultaneously defend the real livelihoods and conditions of work of the workers while adamantly refusing to be sucked into taking responsibility for the capitalist economy, no matter how Labourite its governmental label.

The second conference day had been allocated to discussion of a proposal of fusion between the iSt and the Ceylonese RWP. However, the political conduct of the RWP delegates during the camp/conference and their abrupt departure had already made the outcome a foregone conclusion.

“National Communism”

A major outcome of the conference was a definitive political evaluation of the Samarakkody grouping—with which the iSt had maintained a several-year inconclusive fraternal relationship—as an encysted national left-centrist clot. In the course of his long political history, Comrade Samarakkody had pursued a generally honorable course, but—confronted with the challenge of partaking of an international struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International—he proved unable to make the leap.

As Trotsky explained:

“By its very nature opportunism is nationalistic, since it rests on the local and temporary needs of the proletariat and not on its historic tasks. Opportunists find international control intolerable and they reduce their international ties as much as possible to harmless formalities... on the proviso that each group does not hinder the others from conducting an opportunist policy to its own national task... International unity is not a decorative façade for us, but the very axis of our theoretical views and our policy.”

—L. Trotsky, “The Defense of the Soviet Union and the Opposition,” 7 September 1929

Exposure of the Ceylonese delegation’s retreat from the RWP’s previous protestations of deepening convergence with the program of the iSt was a central focus of the conference. We had hoped that such convergence could provide the basis for turning the RWP away from narrow preoccupation with the popular-front parliamentary milieu in Ceylon—a milieu which is itself in disrepair in the aftermath of electoral rout—and toward the opportunities indicated by the growth of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)—People’s Liberation Front—(whose 1971 radical youth uprising was drowned in blood by the popular-front government) and the unrest among Sri Lanka’s nationally oppressed Tamil population. But the RWP delegation chose to break from the conference rather than break its nostalgic links to the stinking corpse of the reformist Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP).

In typically centrist fashion, Comrade Samarakkody as the main spokesman for the RWP delegation sought to duck politics, hiding behind the filibuster as his main technique. In a studied effort to avoid the real issues, he turned everything into a question of prestige and imagined insult. In his conduct toward the conference he showed himself to stand in the tradition of Andrés Nin, Hugo Urbahns, Henk Sneevliet and Guillermo Lora—“national communist” veteran leaders who could be pretty orthodox under sealed-off conditions, only to reveal their orthodoxy as essentially hollow in the face of historic questions expressed concretely. Though we are not given to comparing ourselves to Trotsky, in this case a look at the correspondence between Trotsky and Andrés Nin shows an even uncanny similarity to the exchanges between the iSt conference delegates and Samarakkody, with the former insisting on sharp political characterization while the latter protested about “tone” in a real or spurious display of hurt pride.

This exposure did not come cheap. The iSt had been loosely associated with Edmund Samarakkody for a number of years. In 1971 he first wrote us that “speaking for myself, I am generally in agreement with your

orientation on some matters of importance to the Trotskyist movement." Further correspondence resulted in a literary collaboration to publicize the USec's suppression of the reports of a special commission (convened at Samarakkody's insistence at the USec's April 1969 Congress) on Bala Tampoe, whose position as head of the USec's Ceylon section is merely the "socialist" cover for his activities as top bureaucrat of a large white-collar trade union (see "The Case of Bala Tampoe," *Spartacist* No. 21, Fall 1972). The collaboration continued with *Spartacist's* publication of Samarakkody's "The Struggle for Trotskyism in Ceylon" (*Spartacist* No. 22, Winter 1973-74) and later with occasional articles for *Workers Vanguard*.

But our main interest was in exploring the evident programmatic differences between our tendency and the Samarakkody group with the aim of determining whether a sufficient programmatic basis existed for an eventual fusion between our organizations. We knew this would not be an easy determination to make. We understood that the RWP presented itself to us always in its most leftist light and that its repeated ignoring of our requests for RWP published and internal materials (e.g., minutes) was no accident. It was only through painfully expensive visits to Sri Lanka—perhaps half a dozen in as many years—that any real sense was gained of the perspectives and work of the RWP.

Most of the early discussions centered on the national question and the Samarakkody group's sharp opposition to our line of revolutionary defeatism on both sides in the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. The RWP's evident softness toward "progressive" nationalist formations in backward countries placed a big question mark over its ability to pose a class-against-class line in Ceylon, where popular-frontist

blocs with the "left"-bourgeois formations against the "pro-imperialist" bourgeois party have besmirched the name of ostensible Trotskyism.

That the RWP had made more than a formal effort to repudiate popular frontism was clear from the courageous action of Samarakkody and another leader of his group, Meryl Fernando, who had on 3 December 1964, as LSSP Members of Parliament, participated in a vote of no-confidence in the government, over the objections of the class collaborators and their left tails who blamed Edmund and Meryl for the fall of "their" government. In the sequel, the comrades proved unable to defend their principled action against the popular-front apologists who of course charged them with "aiding the right." The incident and its aftermath are described in the box on this page.

In 1974, after a protracted visa fight, the iSt succeeded in bringing two RWP comrades to North America and Europe for formal discussions. The results led to a distancing. The hard line drawn in the debates on the national question was compounded by a pervasive skepticism emanating from the RWP over the Spartacist League's self-description as a "propaganda group"—a skepticism we interpreted as an accusation of sectarianism, diplomatically worded (and this from a "party" of a dozen members!). It was in the course of these discussions that we first became aware that the RWP had, eight years after the fact, disavowed the 1964 vote and had actually used the analogy of the 1931 "Red Referendum" in Prussia where the Stalinists had made a bloc with the Nazis to bring down the Social Democratic government. Not only is the rightist United National Party not a fascist party, but the Sri Lanka Freedom Party—unlike the social democracy—is not a

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1964: Samarakkody vs. the Popular Front

"In 1964 when the popular front came in, it came in on a very narrow majority; a right wing of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party broke away; and through a series of maneuvers, the throne speech—which is the principal address containing the intended program of the popular front—was voted down on an amendment by an independent rightist who had been primed by the UNP [United National Party]. It was a very nice amendment, by the way. It said: we condemn this incoming government which has failed to protect the living standards of the working masses. The two comrades of the parliamentary fraction of the LSSP(R) [Lanka Samasamaja Party (Revolutionary)], namely Edmund [Samarakkody] and Meryl [Fernando] [both later of the RWP], voted for the amendment. But, lo and behold, everybody else in the room suddenly voted for the amendment and the government didn't fall, but it got a vote of no confidence, and it chose to turn that into a new election. And immediately the old LSSP turned to Edmund and Meryl and said: you turned the country over to fascist, imperialist, CIA capitalism and what are they paying you for it?... And they felt this keenly, because while they had conducted themselves in a

principled way, they were still very much in the milieu of the LSSP.

"But they were stuck, they'd made this vote and they defended it for nearly ten years; but then they wanted to back away and said it was a tactical mistake. At exactly the time that the youth were being murdered by the popular front, the Tamils were hating the popular front, all those forces that wanted a change in society despised the popular front... our comrades could look only at the LSSP....

"So in adversity, our comrades were very principled and strong and forthright, but given a little opportunity, because there was a split in the LSSP, they said: oh, it was a tactical mistake....

"If the comrades in Ceylon can be made to see the contradiction between what they did and their positions—remember, they *did* it; it's not something we are trying to shove down their throats that they should have done—that tends to unwind all of their tailing after the popular fronts."

—Report of the iSt Delegation to Sri Lanka to the New York local of the SL/U.S., 8 July 1979

Popular Frontism vs. the Tamil People

"... To what extent has that section of the Ceylonese Trotskyist movement... which opposed the drift to the 1964 [LSSP] betrayal, split over it, and then unlike all the other splitters actually sought to transcend the 'old', 'good' LSSP, actually done so? That the RWP has done so to a degree is clear but this is a qualitative matter and dependent upon both clear formal program and living practice....

"... It would seem that the question of the Tamil minority in Ceylon is of triple importance. First the immigrant-descended Tamil laborers on the plantations producing for the world market are the primary creators of value and are by that fact alone central to a proletarian revolutionary perspective.... Second, the struggle by the Leninist vanguard against Sinhalese chauvinism among the laboring masses of the dominant ethnic majority can be no less a precondition for successful revolution than the struggle against Great Russian chauvinism was for the Bolsheviks. Third, for the sake of the extension of the revolution, the laboring population of at least South India may well take the treatment of the Indian-derived Tamils as the key test as to the genuineness of Ceylonese revolutionary intentions.

"But after the 1950 LSSP reunification we have seen virtually no recognition of these considerations.... Instead we note as the alternative consummated by the LSSP the succession of: a national horizon, a parliamentary focus, conciliation to 'anti-imperialist' Sinhalese communalist chauvinism, class collabora-

tion, overt betrayal, complicity in counterrevolutionary butchery. For revolutionists, a principled class-struggle domestic line would be an intolerable contradiction in the absence of an energetically pursued internationalist policy reflected internally in the question of the Tamil plantation proletariat and the struggle against Sinhalese chauvinism, necessarily the prime cause of communalism....

"... To have approached the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in November 1951 for a no-contest agreement on the grounds of that party's verbal radicalism was, from the standpoint of the permanent revolution and the concrete perspective of proletarian revolution on the island, already a crime. The key agitation of the SLFP was, of course, 'Sinhala Only'. From the standpoint of the Tamil plantation workers it is impossible to see the SLFP as the kind of 'lesser evil' with which revolutionists would sign no-contest agreements....

"Something should be said about the April 1971 uprising of Sinhalese youth organized by the JVP.... That such an uprising, evidently conspiratorially prepared over a period of time, could come as an abrupt surprise to all sections of established Ceylonese political life would appear as an indictment of both the socially remote and artificial character of the parliamentary milieu and the fixation of all previously established political elements upon it."

—Letter to Samarakkody, 27 October 1973, reprinted in [iSt] *International Discussion Bulletin* No. 3, May 1974

part of the workers movement, but simply a left-talking nationalist/chauvinist bourgeois formation. Although one can discuss whether a smarter tactic might have been found than a vote over a pro-working-class motion hypocritically proposed by a rightist, the RWP's discomfort with its principled stance of 1964 placed a major question mark over the Ceylonese comrades' ability to withstand the pervasive pressures of popular frontism and suggested an affirmative answer to the question: Is it ever proper to register a vote of confidence in a bourgeois popular-front government?

The RWP's reversal of its "correct verdict" of 1964 is even more egregious in the light of the wholesale massacre of Ceylonese youth carried out by the popular-front government in response to the 1971 JVP-led uprising. Mrs. Bandaranaike's mass butchery exposed before the Ceylonese masses what revolutionists should have known in their guts: that a popular front is not a half-step toward socialism, but a capitalist regime deserving of no support. The iSt has stood alone in the world movement in refusing to vote for the parties—including the working-class parties—of popular fronts. The RWP's later rejection of this position, and of the principled stand of 1964, seemed to put period to any possibility of fundamental rapprochement between the RWP and the iSt.

Though the 1974 discussions ended in an impasse, we continued a fraternal relationship with the RWP, including an (extremely one-sided) "exchange" of publications and

selected internal materials and the publication of an *International Discussion Bulletin* (No. 7, March 1977) containing two lengthy documents by the iSt and a reply by Comrade Samarakkody.

So we were perplexed when we received a letter dated 10 April 1979 informing us that the February 10 RWP conference, after "a lengthy discussion," had decided to "seek to join" the iSt—all the more so as we had not been asked to submit so much as greetings to the conference nor even informed that the question of fusion was being considered. On April 28 we wrote the RWP that:

"As with all sections and candidates for fusion we would need to have a mutual sense of assurance—in a programmatically definable way—that the Ceylonese comrades seek proletarian revolution in Ceylon and in South Asia. If these two considerations exist—the determination to act in concert internationally and the programmatically expressed appetite to seek proletarian revolution—then there is a basis for a valid fusion."

We proposed that an authoritative iSt delegation should visit Ceylon for discussions.

In late spring, a delegation of four iSt comrades from North America and one from South Asia went to Sri Lanka. The delegation and the RWP leadership agreed to a Unification Agreement (20 June) which noted that because of "both the extent of the political differences, the extreme geographical distances, and cultural and standard of living divergences involved, never has a more difficult unification been attempted involving the iSt and another organiza-

tion." Despite RWP amendments to water down the key formulations, the final draft still noted the political obstacles to a valid unification:

"Politically and as an extreme characterisation the RWP could see elements of sectarian ultra-leftism in the iSt, centering upon at best indifference to national struggles of the oppressed, and willful ineffectuality in approaching the masses and in party building. The iSt for its part could perceive, as an extreme characterisation, the RWP as partaking at least in part of a centrism which tails petty-bourgeois nationalism and gives critical support to the worst aspects of revisionism and reformism, while in its own propaganda is largely unable to transcend mere democratic demands."

On the basis of this document, a perspective of unification was adopted. In its report to the New York local on July 10, the iSt delegation explained:

"If these comrades were kids, we wouldn't touch them with a ten foot pole. But they are absolutely the very most evolved, principled best of old Ceylonese Trotskyism—which was terrible...."

In the expectation of unification, we arranged to bring a three-man RWP delegation to the iSt international conference. We reiterated our requests for minutes and other RWP materials. Two iSt comrades undertook a crash course in Sinhala. The conference agenda was prepared with the RWP unification proposal expected to be its central point.

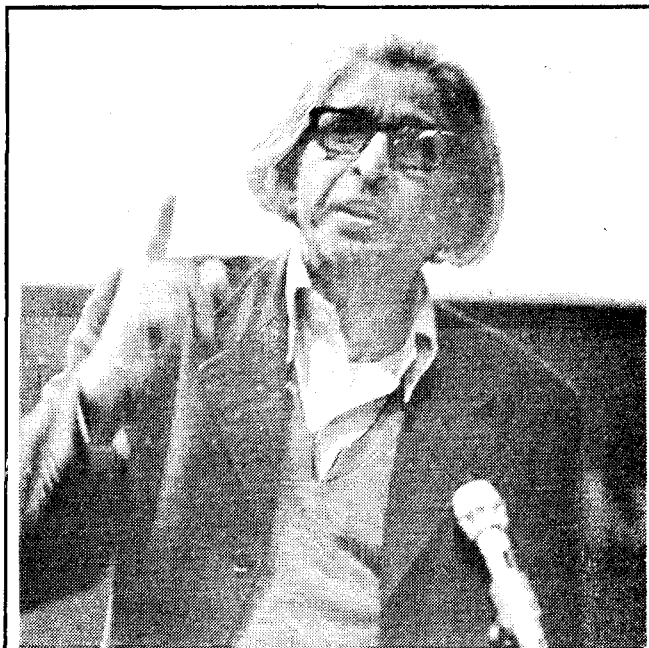
The National Question Comes Home

However the political conduct of the RWP delegation to the iSt conference was characterized by out-and-out refusal to seek the mutual political interpenetration which all claimed to agree was key to a valid international unification. The Ceylonese delegates held themselves aloof from most of the deliberations and—in the few instances where they actively participated in the proceedings—made no attempt to struggle for a common international line. Instead of seeking to win the iSt membership to their criticisms of the iSt majority line, they shamelessly evaded the issues, seeking to turn the iSt's sharp political characterizations of their positions into imagined slights on their personal integrity.

This was their "method" in the panel discussion on popular frontism. The two iSt reporters sought to place the question in an international historical context, pointing to the Bolsheviks' policy in February-October 1917 as the definitive example. Precedents were also noted from both the Second and Third Internationals; the experience of the European Trotskyists in the 1930s was analyzed and

lessons drawn from the case of Ceylon (transcripts of these presentations are printed elsewhere in this issue).

Yet Comrade Samarakkody, the reporter for the RWP, restricted his remarks solely to the question of Ceylon, ignoring in an absurdly parochial manner the historical material presented as well as the numerous recent instances



Spartacist

Edmund Samarakkody speaking at panel discussion on popular frontism.

where popular frontism has been a key test of the Trotskyist program (Chile, France, Portugal, etc.). And in his defense of the RWP's line on Ceylon, Comrade Samarakkody ducked politics by pretending to understand hard political characterization—that the RWP in the last analysis sees itself as part of a parliamentarist popular-front "left" continuum—only as personal insult. Thus: "how can anyone say about Edmund such things," "have we not always said we were against the popular front?"

The RWP delegates devoted most of their speaking time to professing shock at an iSt reporter's statement that during the RWP/iSt discussions in Ceylon in July, RWP leaders had admitted that it was pressure from a 1972 left split from the LSSP which caused the RWP to publicly disavow its 1964 vote eight years after the fact. Oh

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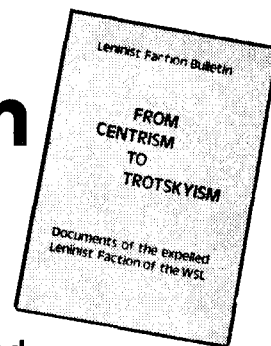
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Workers Vanguard

Black autoworkers participating in SL/U.S.- organized Rally Against Klan Terror held in Detroit, November 1979.

comrades, said the RWP, this is terrible, slanderous; nothing like that was ever said. On the face of it, then, it would seem very strange that the RWP did not object earlier. When the iSt delegation returned from Ceylon, a report was made before the New York local of the SL/U.S. on 8 July. A transcript prepared for the information of our membership and sent as well to the RWP contained the statement: "In adversity, our comrades were very principled and strong and forthright, but given a little opportunity, because there was a split in the LSSP, they said: oh, it was a tactical mistake...."

But not so strange. Apparently the popular frontism panel really brought home to the RWP leaders what was told them from the beginning: the international democratic centralism of the iSt does not permit diplomatic political passivity toward the public line and work of any section, a Ceylon section included. So Comrade Samarakkody's next act was to indulge in a shameful provocation. Having participated at our invitation in a Control Commission convoked at the request of the Australian comrades to investigate serious disciplinary charges against a former leading member of the section, Comrade Samarakkody professed himself unable to draw any conclusions from the evidence while disingenuously denying any intention of impugning the veracity of the numerous witnesses and depositions. This ugly conduct only revealed the RWP's fear of making a clear political break from the conference.

By this point the delegates had recognized that fusion was not possible at this conference. But as serious Marxists, far from wanting to break off the debates, we sought to use the opportunity obtained at enormous effort and expense to exchange opinions. However, before the main agenda point on Ceylon began, the RWP delegation simply informed us that "the atmosphere was not

propitious for fusion," packed its bags and left. Thus the RWP threw away an opportunity to argue for its brand of "Trotskyism" before hundreds of Trotskyists—an opportunity to call on the ranks of the iSt to oust their "sectarian" leadership, for example—showing thereby that its leaders were guided by the narrowest preoccupation with maneuvers. After long years of honorable if partial struggle against the revisionism which has destroyed the reputation of ostensible Trotskyism in Ceylon, the founding leaders of the RWP have shown that they are used up.

Despite the cowardly walkout of the RWP, the conference discussion on Ceylon was clarifying. The RWP "came here perhaps not knowing that they had to choose between the LSSP and the iSt," said a delegate from the French section. "They found out. And they chose," she said. Another delegate reported on an informal discussion between two iSt women and members of the RWP delegation, where the latter showed that the oft-repeated RWP self-criticisms over its lack of Tamil and female members had been merely sops to the iSt bearing no relationship to the RWP's real political choices:

"Women attend their study classes, but the woman question has not been raised there. They do not see the need for special work to draw women into union activity (35 percent of [one of the RWP representative]'s union are women). They asserted that since it took 4-5 times as much work to recruit a woman than a man, it would be a priority to recruit four or five men... women would come around in a period of class upsurge."

Another delegate rose to rhetorically inquire:

"What would it mean if we applied this method to U.S. blacks, who are five times as hard to recruit and five times as much trouble inside when you do recruit them? Perhaps we should direct all our efforts at white Americans and just expect blacks to rally around us in a revolutionary upsurge?"

It was also pointed out that the RWP pamphlet on the Tamil question ("Tamil Minority Question and the Revolutionary Workers Party") is purely civil libertarian and does not transcend democratic demands.

Comrades who had been studying Sinhala in anticipation of a fusion played an active role in the discussion. One reported on a three-part RWP article on Iran ("The People's Revolutionary Uprising in Iran," *Panthi Patana*, 15 January, 1 February and 15 February 1979) which gave the lie to the RWP's repeated claims it agreed with the iSt position of no support to the pro-Khomeini mobilizations. Another gave a graphic illustration of the RWP's fixation on parliamentarism: "The RWP has 12 full and 6 candidate members. So they ran for parliament—18 candidates!"

But the RWP, having beaten its cowardly retreat, was not there to respond. And in the months since the conference we have not heard a substantive political word from the RWP leadership, much less an evaluation of the conference and justification of their break from it.

The Struggle for the Continuity of Revolutionary Trotskyism

When the RWP delegates beat their cowardly retreat from the iSt conference, they showed that their professed internationalism was only skin deep. They had sought, not a genuine interpenetration, but an alliance for ceremonial purposes which leaves all partners free to pursue their national aspirations without interference from a living international collective. Ceylon is a small island where everybody has international ties; even a trade-union ultra-reformist like Bala Tampoe finds it worthwhile to be associated with the USec. It would appear that the Samarakkody group has even sought to exaggerate its connection to the iSt. Thus Ceylon's leading English-language journal of radical opinion, the *Lanka Guardian*, reflected the conventional belief when it referred to "Mr. Edmund Samarakkody's group which is affiliated to the Spartacist League faction of the world Trotskyite move-

ment" (1 November 1978). But the iSt has no desire for "sections" whose national practice would make a mockery of our international democratic centralism. The RWP will have to look elsewhere for partners in that kind of enterprise.

The RWP is the organic left wing of the old LSSP. The LSSP today is rightly despised by the Ceylonese masses as part and parcel of Mrs. Bandaranaike's coalition government which ground the economy down to penury while slaughtering thousands of radicalized youth. But for the RWP, the rout of the popular front at the polls is seen as the end of left politics in Ceylon. If there's nothing leftish going on in parliament, therefore there's nothing going on, though the JVP can pull 50,000 people to a Colombo May Day march. It is tragic that on an island where ostensible Trotskyism has historically had a mass following, the young neo-Stalinists of the JVP now appear as the symbols of militant opposition to the popular front.

The Samarakkody group is the concretization of the observation that no national revolutionary current can pursue an authentic revolutionary course in protracted isolation from the struggle to build a world party. From the time of our inception as a tendency, the American nucleus of the iSt struggled to break out of enforced national isolation. Through this lengthy process we came to see that the main international currents of ostensible Trotskyism were fundamentally programmatically moribund. Thus we adopted the perspective of fighting for the "rebirth" of the Fourth International rather than its reshuffling ("reconstruction").

Yet we were aware that there existed local groupings which had not been firmly bound to the liquidationist program of Pabloism, and we tried to engage them. We looked the longest at the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, a purported continuer of the 1951-53 struggle for orthodox Trotskyism, because it was the largest repository of cadre dating back to the Trotskyist movement of Trotsky's time, in the hope that some section of that cadre would break on essentials from that

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Militants of the
Trotzkistische Liga
Deutschlands
marching in Frankfurt
on May Day, 1979.



Kommunistische Korrespondenz

organization's rightward course. But there was no crack in the OCI cadre when the organization's Stalinophobic apologetics for CIA-backed social democracy in Portugal revealed the OCI as having—like the American SWP—qualitatively degenerated from anti-Pabloist orthodoxy to reformist appetite.

Our long fraternal experience with the Ceylonese comrades of the Samarakkody group was our most notable effort to find, in the words of James P. Cannon, "the initiating cadres of the new organization in the old." This grouping's last decisive revolutionary act took place in 1964, just at the time of the founding of the organizationally independent Spartacist tendency in the U.S. Had we been capable of forcefully intersecting the Ceylonese comrades at that time, it is conceivable that they might have been won to authentic Trotskyism. But the 40 or so Americans who made up our tendency at that time would have had little authority in the eyes of former leaders of a mass-based party.

Since the emergence from the American SWP of that fragment of Trotskyist continuity which founded our tendency, the iSt has won from ostensibly Trotskyist organizations many youthful militants, but not the veteran fighters whose experience could have helped shape the new generation of revolutionists. We do not regret, therefore, that we undertook to go through this experience of political clarification with the RWP. If it had gone favorably, it would have had incalculable political value for the reconstitution of an authentic revolutionary international—and in any case it could not have been left unresolved.

We Go Forward

The first plenum of the International Executive Committee elected at the conference centered on discussion

of how to exploit the iSt's unique Trotskyist position of "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs!" to forcefully confront the fake-lefts who made themselves complicit in the Persian-chauvinist Khomeini theocracy's assaults on the national minorities, oil workers, landless peasants and women of Iran.

Additionally, as we pointed out in the conference document:

"Carter's 'human rights' campaign, reviving the rhetoric of the Cold War in order to morally re-arm U.S. imperialism after Vietnam and Watergate, has conditioned a rapid shift to the right on the part of the ostensible Trotskyist movement....

"The USec majority has most recently embraced the anti-Soviet parliamentary cretinism of the Eurocommunists.... The OCI has now become essentially reformist. Thus the USec majority's abandonment of even formal obedience to the Trotskyist position on the Russian question leaves to the iSt alone the heritage of Soviet defensism."

Carter's intimations of World War III over Afghanistan—which demand an unequivocal military defense of the Soviet Union against U.S. imperialism—fully and dramatically vindicate this statement. The pseudo-Trotskyists lurch from one line to another mumbling that somehow the Afghan mullahs are less "progressive" than their brothers across the Iranian border. Our forthright slogans "Hail Red Army!", "Extend Social Gains of October Revolution to Afghan Peoples!" sharply raise our political profile as the Trotskyist alternative to centrist confusionism or outright support to imperialist anti-Sovietism.

But these developments—combined with regroupment opportunities presented by the unanticipated factional realignments of the USec split—severely tax the capacities of especially our European propaganda groups. Nor are the objective possibilities for iSt regroupments limited to polarizations within the various warring wings of ostensible Trotskyism. In Germany and England particularly, any



Workers Vanguard

New York, February 1980: Spartacus Youth League answers Carter's war drive head on, not pacifism but Soviet defensism.

notion of "left Maoism" has become completely untenable as the Chinese bureaucracy rushes to outdo the Christian Democrats and Tories in anti-Soviet bellicosity. Now more than ever we must seek to intervene in the "crisis of Maoism." Even some of the reformist pro-Moscow Communist parties have taken on a more militant anti-NATO posture which could augur greater receptivity at the base to the Trotskyist program of defense of the gains of October through political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucratic castes and socialist revolution against capitalism. If our overburdened propaganda groups allow this panoply of opportunities to pass us by, history will not be kindly in its verdict.

In this context, our European sections have neither the forces nor the mass links to maintain more than an external and episodic presence in key class battles, such as the present British steel strike which strains to break out of the control of the Labourite union tops. Paradoxically the American SL/U.S., which struggled for a decade to break out of deforming national isolation, is now, in its capacity for selective agitation, a balance to the European sections whose overwhelming task must remain communist propaganda and regroupment struggles. The modest trade-union implantation of the SL/U.S. and its deepening experience among black working people (an oppressed color-caste and in a sense America's closest approximation to an internal colony) are a slender but crucial cord grounding the European sections in living struggles.

But Europe and America are not the world. The iSt's concentration in industrialized nations is an evident weakness which must be transcended before the International Trotskyist League, programmatic nucleus of a reborn Fourth International, can emerge. An effort to cohere a communist nucleus from among Iranian leftists shaken by the bloody consequences of tailing Shi'ite clerical reaction must proceed through the patient labor of circulating Persian-language Spartacist materials among émigrés and foreign students. We must carry our fight against the left-centrism of the Samarakkody group into Sri Lanka itself. The rebirth of the Fourth International requires a struggle to root a communist presence in Japan and South Asia, the Near East, Latin America, South Africa and the degenerated and deformed workers states.

Our forces are small in proportion to our aim, which is to consummate proletarian revolution pervasively on this planet. Yet it is only the authentic revolutionary program of the iSt which can politically arm the proletariat for the conquest of state power on a world scale. No wing of the USec or ex-USec even approximates a Trotskyist perspective; indeed, the program of the centrist "London Bureau" of the 1930s looks good by comparison. In the aftermath of split, centrists remaining within the USec camp will find themselves wedded ever more closely to the reformist American SWP, while leftist elements who followed Moreno because his bonapartist maneuverism availed itself of a leftist pretext in splitting over Nicaragua must now clearly see the true nature of the Moreno/OCI bloc displayed over support to the anti-Communist Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan. These new alliances are built on sand; they are cynical and profoundly anti-internationalist. Only the iSt's Leninist struggle for principled international unity based on program can unite the workers of the world in the fight for international revolution. ■

The Test of Time

U.S. imperialism's declaration of "Cold War II" over Afghanistan is dramatic confirmation that the iSt has alone upheld the revolutionary heritage of Leninism. This new conjuncture is a brutal shock to the fake-lefts who tailed Carter's "human rights" rhetoric, ignoring its anti-Soviet cutting edge; who ignored or apologized for China's sinister alliance with American imperialism against the USSR: who, in short, thought they could ignore the centrality of the "Russian question"—in particular the obligation of proletarian internationalists to militantly oppose imperialism's implacable revanchist appetite to reverse the gains of October. Equally it exposes as cynics and frauds the "Marxists" who fed the flames of anti-Communist Islamic reaction with their paeans to Khomeini's theocratic "mass movement." While the opportunists and impressionists rush to cover their tracks, the iSt stands on its record, which has stood the test of time.

1969

"At the present time, the Vietnam war and the extreme diplomatic and internal difficulties of the Chinese state have forced the Maoists to maintain greater hostility to imperialism and verbally disclaim the USSR's avowed policy of 'peaceful coexistence' while themselves peacefully coexisting with Japan. However, we must warn against the growing objective possibility—given the tremendous industrial and military capacity of the Soviet Union—of a U.S. deal with China." [original emphasis]

—"Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League [U.S.]," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, Part II, 30 August 1969

1977

"We repeat the warning we have sounded since the beginning of Carter's 'human rights' ploy: behind the liberal rhetoric stands the threat of imperialist war, principally directed against the Soviet Union."

—"The Main Enemy Is at Home," *Workers Vanguard* No. 163, 24 June 1977

1978

"But what is the political basis of the current opposition to the shah? ... fundamentally the current mass mobilizations against the Pahlavi family are under the ideological sway of Muslim fundamentalists.... The victory of a reactionary movement of Muslim traditionalism will represent a far-reaching historical *defeat* for communists, who seek a revolutionary emancipation from semi-feudal backwardness. The religious opposition stands on the heritage of the Middle Ages, opposed even to the paltry social advances for women in the past decades." [original emphasis]

—"Down with the Shah, Down with the Mullahs—Iran in Turmoil," *Workers Vanguard* No. 215, 22 September 1978

Reply to Our Critics

No "Critical Support" to Popular Frontism

At the first delegated conference of the international Spartacist tendency a discussion was held on the question of revolutionary electoral policy toward workers parties participating in popular-front coalitions. Below are edited presentations and summaries given by Comrades Jan Norden and James Robertson.

Presentation by Norden:

Comrades, the question of the electoral policy of Bolsheviks toward the popular front has been presented by the United Secretariat as simply a tactical question, and we have become known over the last period for our position that this is a central, strategic question especially in this period.

There's a quotation from a letter by Trotsky to the Dutch section saying that the popular front "is the *main question for proletarian class strategy* for this epoch" and "the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism" ["The Dutch Section and the International," in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)*]. As you'll notice, different passages from this quote keep reappearing in our press. I'd like to just mention tonight two other things that are in the same key quotation. One is that Trotsky takes on not only those who directly support the popular front but also those who "present this question as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver, so as to be able to peddle their wares in the shadow of the Popular Front." And second is that he presents as "the greatest historical example of the Popular Front" Russia in 1917, from February to October. That's where to look for the Bolshevik precedent on this question.

Now, we have very little time, so I would like to concentrate on the essentials. And the main point I think we have to make here is that giving electoral support to the so-called "workers parties of the popular front" is, in fact, the policy of critical support—so-called "critical support"—to popular fronts coming from reformists and centrists who make claim to the tradition of Trotskyism. In other words, they want to give "critical support" to the popular front without openly, directly and demonstrably crossing the class line, so they give "critical support" to the workers parties of the popular front. In effect, this policy calls on the workers to put a *bourgeois* political formation into office. It calls for votes to the mass parties of the popular front. In many cases, as much as 95 percent of all the votes for the popular front in fact go to the workers parties of the popular front. This was the case in Chile in 1970, also in France in the early 1970s, and classically in Spain where Trotsky was constantly referring to the bourgeois component of the People's Front as the "shadow of the bourgeoisie." And, as Trotsky said about the popular-frontist policy of the POUM, "*There can be no*

greater crime than coalition with the bourgeoisie in a period of socialist revolution" ["No Greater Crime," in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*].

Now, in order to justify this policy, opportunists frequently use many sophisticated arguments essentially to deny that the popular front is, in fact, a bourgeois political formation. The Mandelites denied that the French Union of the Left, or the Chilean Unidad Popular government headed by Allende, was a popular front in order to carry out their policy of voting for the workers parties of the popular front. Another argument used is that a popular front is essentially the same as a social-democratic labor party in power, especially in an imperialist country. By glossing over the capitalist class character of the popular front they, in effect, tell the workers: "Look, these people are part of our class and you can demand of them anything. They, of course, are betrayers and will attempt to deny the just demands of the workers, but it is historically possible for them to go beyond the limits of capitalism to crush fascism and stop imperialist war and so on." Now this is the argument that is used. But in fact the popular front, because it is a bourgeois formation, because its program must necessarily be that of the most so-called "moderate" elements who are the bourgeois components of the popular front, cannot go beyond the bounds of capitalism. And by helping to place the popular front in power, those who give electoral support to its candidates share responsibility for setting up a roadblock to revolution and fostering the victory of reaction. So for us it is a central question and not simply a tactical maneuver of a secondary order.

This has been a constant difference between us and the United Secretariat and various centrists over the past years. But it has become particularly important again in light of the prospect of a unification between the international Spartacist tendency and the Revolutionary Workers Party of Sri Lanka. In this projected unification certainly the clearest outstanding and currently expressed area of difference is precisely over whether it is principled and correct to give electoral support to *any* party of the popular front, which is as we see this question. Comrade Robertson wrote in his letter to Comrade Samarakkody expressing the central importance of raising class criteria and not simply "progressive vs. reactionary" criteria. And in the supplementary letter by myself and Comrade Sharpe we stressed the central importance for Trotskyists that any electoral tactic must express the fundamental Marxist principle of the political independence of the proletariat. So, I don't want to go back to those points, I want to make a couple of other observations.

The first one is about Russia in 1917. Frequently, the example of the Bolshevik slogan of "Down with the ten capitalist ministers" is raised by those who argue for electoral support to the bourgeois workers parties

participating in a popular front. And this is also the case with the RWP and I think that frequently this is seen as an argument against us because of a misunderstanding—or, as it may be, a willful misinterpretation—of what we mean when we say that in a popular front the contradiction within the bourgeois workers parties has been suppressed. In the late 1930s then-comrade Shachtman wrote an article on the Spanish elections in which he put our view of this quite clearly. He said when the workers parties joined the popular front, “politically speaking, they appeared before the masses in *one party* with the bourgeoisie” [“The Spanish Elections and the People’s Front,” *New Militant*, 14 March 1936]. And he underlined that and stressed it. The demand of the Bolsheviks in 1917 was that *if* the Mensheviks broke and the Left SRs broke from their bourgeois allies in the Provisional Government and from the officer corps and formed a government based on the Soviet, *then* they would support them against reaction—but *only* then. And that is exactly what our policy of conditional opposition to these reformist and centrist parties in a popular front consists of: it’s saying that *if* you break with the popular front, *then* we can consider a policy of critical support to your candidate, but not until.

Now, the second observation is that this was not a constant policy of the Bolsheviks. From July until late August they did not raise this policy at a time when the Mensheviks and Kerensky were placing themselves at the spearhead of reaction and reactionary repression.¹ [Nor did the Bolsheviks use this tactic after they obtained a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, from mid-September on.] As one comrade said, “When the communists have a majority in the working population or in the Soviets, we are unconditionally opposed to electoral coalitionism with anybody.”

The third observation is this, comrades: when you go up to the ballot box or tell workers what to do at the ballot box, it is not simply an electoral question. A government is going to come out of that. And a bourgeois popular-front government at a time of working-class upsurge is a ticket for fascism, it’s a ticket for imperialist war. If you haven’t warned the workers in advance that this is what electing that popular front is going to mean, you’re complicit in what follows. The key task of the Marxists is to prepare the proletariat so it can resist false friends and see who its true enemies are.

Now Russia in 1917 was not a case of bourgeois parliamentarism, but [the question of coalitionism, of popular frontism, was a central question nonetheless. And] if the Bolsheviks had flinched—well, they did flinch, actually, once they did and the second time they almost did—but if that had been the dominant policy there would have been no October Revolution.²

OK, two other quick points. People frequently say that in the 1930s the Trotskyists did not have our policies in France. Undoubtedly this will come up in the discussion



Kerensky and his entourage.

period. But I would like to call attention to the way Trotsky formulated the question in 1921 in his messages to the French party [see “On the United Front,” in *The First Five Years of the Comintern*, Vol. 2]. He said that *if*—again, he presented it as a precondition—the Dissidents agreed to break the Left Bloc with the bourgeoisie, then we can talk about united front tactics with the Communist Party. But only in that circumstance.

And then finally, on the RWP explicitly: what we find most disturbing and potentially an opening in your own views is the contradiction between your policy or your stated policy of wanting to give electoral support to the workers parties of the popular front on the one hand, and on the other hand taking the necessary step for any Bolshevik of voting against the bourgeois popular-front government. Now there may be questions of tactics but the vote to bring down the Bandaranaike coalition government [of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the ex-Trotskyist Lanka Samasamaja Party] in 1964 was obligatory for any true Bolshevik or Trotskyist. And we find that courageous act one which we stand on, which we have claimed as our own in some of the documents preparing for

continued on next page

¹As Trotsky wrote, “The slogan ‘Power to the Soviets’ from now on meant armed insurrection against the government and those military cliques which stood behind it. But to raise an insurrection in the cause of ‘Power to the Soviets’ when the soviets did not want the power, was obvious nonsense” (*History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 2, Ch. 13, “The Bolsheviks and the Soviets”).

²Before Lenin returned to Russia in April, *Pravda* under the direction of Kamenev and Stalin adopted a policy of conditional support to the Lvov coalition government (the notorious support “insofar as...”). Lenin had to wage a sharp struggle against that policy, which he regarded as a principled difference. And in October, Zinoviev and Kamenev opposed taking power without a coalition with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who however were tied to a “popular front” with Kerensky, Kornilov and the Cadets. Again Lenin threatened split. Far from giving any political support, however critical, to the coalition, Lenin’s strategy from April until the October insurrection was precisely to struggle for the *overthrow of the popular front by the soviets*.

this conference. We find that act in contradiction to your present stated views, or the ones in your last letter on the subject.

Presentation by Robertson:

In 1966, on behalf of the Spartacist League of the United States, I sought to make a statement to an international conference [the London Conference of Healy's International Committee], a statement comparable in unpopularity to that which Comrade Edmund just made. (laughter) We trust that the sequel will be qualitatively different. (laughter) Now would be an appropriate time to reveal the secret codicil to the articles of agreement that were worked out in Sri Lanka a couple of months ago. We agreed to turn over to the RWP the names of our opportunists if they gave us the names of their sectarians. (laughter)

Now, my remarks are subsumed generally under the title, as I put it down, of "Electoral Coalitionism and the Communists." I first want to touch on a point that needs to be hammered out in the incoming International Executive Committee, but I'd certainly like to sketch a view in a sentence or two. As is perfectly clear to everyone who heard Comrade Samarakkody, in every subjective sense [he expressed] intense hostility and opposition to the popular-front governments in Sri Lanka. The point at issue really revolves around the relationship of the LSSP-R, now the RWP, and the LSSP. It was expressly put that the reason that the RWP, in about 1972, came to regret their vote that assisted in bringing down the popular-front government was because they wanted at that time to make a renewed overture to the LSSP.

Now, in a certain sense, the experience of popular frontism was chemically pure in Sri Lanka in a way that it has not been in Chile, Spain or France. Because the popular front in Sri Lanka had a chance to run on and on and on and dissipate itself with its own momentum without being displaced by counterrevolutionary generals or internal or foreign fascists. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party is, at least for the present, discredited, but the Communist Party is badly damaged, and the LSSP is a corpse—it is dead! Its trade-union base is disintegrated, it has lost its youth, its women, the Tamils hate it as a chauvinist party of a master nation. And the LSSP-R, now the RWP, tied themselves to the LSSP—which is a corpse—and they are seen as a left-wing split from the LSSP but still within its orbit—part of the old boys of the LSSP—the best of a bad lot. Where have the subjectively revolutionary elements of Sri Lanka gone? I have to report that in Ceylon where the Trotskyists used to be preponderant over the Stalinists, the Stalinists have for the present won. The Mao-influenced youth of the Stalinist parties broke away and were the founding cadres of the JVP [Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna—People's Liberation Front]. Now, we know that the JVP are just popular frontists with a gun, very much like the MIRistas in Chile. But they happen to include something like 20,000 of the youth and the young women that are Ceylonese militants, subjectively more or less revolutionary. There are no youth, women or Tamils hanging about the stench of death of the LSSP. The JVP has the reputation in Sri Lanka of intransigent opposition

to the popular front. They have 20,000 members, the RWP has 20 members, and no women or Tamils. This is a question to be pursued in the International Executive.

There is nothing special, inventive or unusually Marxistically creative about the position advanced by the iSt. We're simply trying to apply the developed Bolshevik experience, especially as expressed in the period from February to October 1917, in the modern movement. And not even as late as 1917; basically it goes back to Luxemburg's writings on coalitionism in the Second International at the turn of the century. To be sure, the American Socialist Workers Party likes to point out that coalitionism is not popular frontism, unless the Stalinists are present in the coalition. Around about 1905 you'll find a very partial position by Lenin, when the Bolsheviks were still struggling for a united workers party in Russia. The later, anti-comrade Shachtman was fond of quoting one of these positions: "Oh, where the Bolsheviks are in the majority we will oppose the Cadet Party. Where the Mensheviks are in the majority the Bolsheviks will loyally support the Cadet members of the Duma."³ This, along with the organizational question and others, indicates that the evolution of the Bolshevik faction of revolutionary social democrats into the Bolshevik Party of communists was a process over a decade.

And as my last sentence, let me frighten you with a thought I just had. If, in fact, we did not have this position that we do on opposition to popular fronts and any electoral support to any wing of a popular front, I think that we would belong in the left wing of the Mandelbrot USec majority [of their 2 1/2 International]. But we're serious people and intend to carry out the logic of *our* position.

Summary by Norden:

The comrades of the RWP or more precisely Comrade Samarakkody in his letters to the Spartacist League that we printed in our internal bulletin said that a popular front is a two-class government. There are no two-class governments. As Trotsky said, "A horseman is not a bloc between a horse and a man." One class commands, and in the popular front that's the bourgeoisie. Secondly, for those

³In 1957 Shachtman was preparing to liquidate his Independent Socialist League into the American social democracy. To rationalize joining a party that supported the Democrats he pointed out that in 1906 Lenin favored maintaining unity with the Mensheviks, even though the Mensheviks wanted to bloc with the bourgeois Cadets in the elections to the Second State Duma. In the article quoted by Shachtman, "Party Discipline and the Fight Against the Pro-Cadet Social-Democrats" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 11), Lenin stated that "The sanction of blocs with the Cadets is the finishing touch that definitely marks the Mensheviks as the opportunist wing of the workers' party." Lenin called for "the widest and most relentless ideological struggle" against "these shameful tactics of blocs with the Cadets." However, added Lenin, if the Menshevik position should become the party line, "all of us, as members of the Party, must *act as one man*. A Bolshevik in Odessa must cast into the ballot box a ballot paper bearing a Cadet's name even if it sickens him. And a Menshevik in Moscow must cast into the ballot box a ballot paper bearing only the names of Social-Democrats, even if his soul is yearning for the Cadets."

who are sincere opponents of popular frontism, electoral support to the workers parties of popular fronts is not a tactic. It is tailism masquerading as a tactic.

Trotsky had a nice phrase about tactics. He said, "It's not enough to possess the sword. One must give it an edge. It's not enough to give the sword an edge. One must know how to wield it" ["On the United Front"]. The tactic must exploit the contradiction. So the centrists say to the workers parties of the popular front: "Break with the bourgeoisie! Break with the harbingers of fascism and imperialist war! If you do, we will support you—and if you don't we'll support you anyway!" That's not a tactic! We're for tactics.

A comrade mentioned that in the 1936 French parliamentary elections [one of the two French groups which claimed allegiance to the movement for the Fourth International] maintained a Trotskyist candidate in a district where the CP or SP candidate stepped down in favor of a Radical. That's a conceivable tactic. But that does not necessarily imply critical support to the workers parties of the popular front. In fact, in 1935 the position of the French Trotskyists was precisely that. They called for running candidates in those circumstances, and they did not give critical support to any of the parties of the popular front. It was in the '35 municipal elections.⁴

We look for ways of presenting our opposition to popular frontism in a way that could give it a tactical leverage. So that in a Canadian election at some time or other, we first formulated the tactic of conditional opposition.⁵ We were so energetic about it that we went

⁴The second half of their "electoral" policy was for a workers mobilization on voting day to disperse a scheduled reactionary demonstration (*La Vérité*, 10 May 1935).

⁵In 1974, when the social-democratic New Democratic Party was running in a corridor coalition with the Liberals, we wrote: "The Spartacist League urges a policy of conditional opposition to the NDP in the current elections until such time as the NDP repudiates its past practice of entering into a tacit coalition with the Liberals.... Militants in the Canadian trade unions must take up the fight to pass motions in their locals demanding that the NDP repudiate its past practice of coalitionism as a condition for labor support in the elections. Only those NDP candidates who repudiate and promise to vote against the NDP-Liberal 'corridor coalition' should be given labor support in the current election. While the NDP remains dependent upon the unions for both electoral and financial support, its practice of coalitionism undercuts the very principle of independent working-class political action" (see "NDP Must Break With Liberals," *Workers Vanguard* No. 47, 21 June 1974).

looking for some NDP legislator up in Thunder Bay, Canada, to see if he was ready to vote against the coalition.

Our tactics must express our strategy. Our strategy is opposition to popular frontism. One comrade asked a good rhetorical question: "What do you do when there's only *one* candidate of the popular front? You can't even distinguish between the workers candidates of the popular front and the bourgeois candidates, because they're *one*."⁶ Also, in parliament you can't vote for the motion of the workers parties of the popular front because there's only one motion: the motion of the government, and it's the government of the popular front—for or against.

That's the way it is in reality. Because what the masses face in their everyday struggle is a popular front. It's a bourgeois government, not a hydra.

Another common objection to our policy of proletarian opposition to the popular front is the charge of aiding the right. But until you're prepared to overthrow the existing government, *any* kind of opposition to a popular front in office will be open to the attack that it is aiding the right. Think of the May Days in Barcelona.

Now I want to say something about a little historical research I've been doing, and that is the question of the popular front in the 1930s. The French GBL (Groupe Bolchevik-Léniniste) had the position of supporting the social democrats or Stalinists in those districts where it didn't run its own candidates in the 1936 elections. To some extent that was taken as a precedent later, after World War II. It's not the only precedent in the history of the Trotskyist movement by a long shot. In 1942 the Chilean POR (Partido Obrero Revolucionario) ran a candidate for president against the popular front. And in 1948 the Italian Trotskyists opposed any vote to the popular front, but they were criticized by Pablo.

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⁶That was the situation in the February 1936 elections in Spain where the Popular Front presented a single slate, and also when Allende ran for Chilean president in 1970 and Mitterrand for French president in 1974. The response of the partisans of voting for the workers parties of the popular front is to invent phony distinctions. In the 1974 French vote, the OCI (Organisation Communiste Internationaliste of Pierre Lambert) called for a vote not to Mitterrand, candidate of the Union of the Left, but to Mitterrand, first secretary of the Socialist Party, a workers organization. However, the SP had removed him as first secretary precisely in order to make this long-time former bourgeois politician more acceptable as candidate of the popular front.



Sri Lanka coalition brought racism, repression, austerity. LSSP old guard (left to right): Leslie Goonewardena, N.M. Perera, Colvin R. De Silva



Spain, 1936: POUM welcomes President Azana. "If the POUM had not marched at the heels of the anarchists and had not fraternized with

the 'People's Front,' if it had conducted an intransigent revolutionary policy, then... it would naturally have found itself borne to the head of the masses and would have assured the victory" (Trotsky). **La Voz Leninista**, press of Spanish Bolshevik-Leninists, counterposes "revolutionary front of the proletariat" to the Popular Front.



themselves to the POUM and the Popular Front. For they knew from talking to the POUM leaders that the POUM was going to call on the workers to withdraw because their insurrection threatened the popular-front government.¹⁰ They gave "critical support" to the workers party of the popular front *by strikebreaking on a potential revolution*. That's ultimately what it comes down to. So we've already had this experience. It's not just the POUM—the open popular frontists who betray—but also centrists who try to reduce principled questions to mere tactics that can be led to support the worst betrayal.

Summary by Robertson:

There's a problem in viewing the position of the iSt on popular fronts as Oehlerite; that is, when one tries to be a rightist, one is thought, at least vulgarly, to be smarter than a leftist. Now there's a difficulty in taking the Second International as an abstraction. The Second International produced from 1917 to 1919 a rather creditable Communist International. Presumably one should have something to do with that before and during that time. But the Second International in the period of the 1920s was moribund, rightist and largely [openly] in the arms of the bourgeoisie. However, the Depression and the rise of fascism and the rightward turn of the Communist International precipitated a new leftist development in the Second International parties in the early 1930s. It is wrong to have an invariant tactic toward the Socialist Party through these three periods as some comrades would do. Not only is that indifferent to the question of revolutionary opportunity versus betrayal, it's not even intelligent.

Now, regarding the question of the JVP, the issue is one of how the JVP is seen, not what it is. The JVP is seen on that island as a militant, if insurrectionary opposition that means business. We compared it with the Chilean MIR which is, of course, no flattery to the JVP—they merely prepare a *new* version of a popular front. But on the evidence available to us, the LSSP-R—now the RWP—is only viewed as the far left—with a principled backbone—of the old LSSP. And the fact is that Trotskyism in Ceylon, which used to be predominant among the workers—is now bypassed by a factor of a thousandfold.

Comrade Norden did all this fine research on a very confused situation in the French section in the mid-30s. Faced with these complexities, I took a different route. The American Trotskyist organization was unsplit, a principal mouthpiece of Trotsky, and it operated under purely parliamentary conditions in that period. So I chose to use the American Trotskyists as the model for what Trotsky and the Fourth International meant [generally] in that time.

Popular frontism existed in the United States in the late 1930s in the form of the Roosevelt candidacy for president and the LaGuardia candidacy for mayor of New York. In 1936 the labor bureaucrats, social democrats, Stalinists and bourgeois democrats invented a new workers party, the American Labor Party. It was created to bring a few hundred thousand crucial votes in New York State into the Democratic camp. Toward this experiment, and toward every candidacy of the post-split SP and the CP, the Trotskyists had an implacable and central opposition in the name of opposition to the popular front and to every single party that supported the popular front. So much so that until that time the Trotskyists in the United States had largely ignored electoral politics. But faced with the popular-front issue, the SWP was pushed to running its own candidacies for the first time in order to underline its electoral opposition to popular frontism. And they were Trotsky's mouthpiece. ■

¹⁰See Frank Mintz and Miguel Peciña, *Los Amigos de Durruti, los trotskistas y los sucesos de mayo* (Madrid, 1978).

Popular Front

Not a Tactic But "The Greatest Crime"

"The question of questions at present is the People's Front. The left centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver, so as to be able to peddle their wares in the shadow of the People's Front. In reality, the People's Front is the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the dif-

ference between Bolshevism and Menshevism. For it is often forgotten that the greatest historical example of the People's Front is the February 1917 revolution. From February to October, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who represent a very good parallel to the 'Communists' and Social Democrats, were in the closest alliance and in a permanent coalition with the bourgeois party of the Cadets, together with whom they formed a series of

coalition governments. Under the sign of this People's Front stood the whole mass of the people, including the workers', peasants', and soldiers' councils. To be sure, the Bolsheviks participated in the councils. But they did not make the slightest concession to the People's Front. Their demand was to *break* this People's Front, to destroy the alliance with the Cadets, and to create a genuine workers' and peasants' government.

"All the People's Fronts in Europe are only a pale copy and often a caricature of the Russian People's Front of 1917, which could after all lay claim to a much greater justification for its existence, for it was still a question of the struggle against czarism and the remnants of feudalism." [emphasis in original]

—Leon Trotsky, "The Dutch Section and the International" (15-16 July 1936), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)*

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"For the proletariat, through its parties, to give up its own independent program means to give up its independent functioning as a class. And this is precisely the meaning of the People's Front. In the People's Front the proletariat renounces its *class* independence, gives up its *class* aims—the *only* aims, as Marxism teaches, which can serve its interests.... The People's Front is thus thoroughly and irrevocably non-proletarian, anti-proletarian.



"By its very nature, the People's Front must be so. The establishment of the People's Front, by definition, requires agreement on a common program between the working-class and non-working-class parties. But the non-proletarian parties cannot agree to the proletarian program—the program of revolutionary socialism—without ceasing to be what they are....

"The People's Front, understood in its fundamentals, is the major form of the preparation among the masses for the achievement of national unity within the democratic nations in support of the coming war. Under the slogans of the People's Front, the masses will march forth to fight for 'their own' imperialism....

"Thus, the People's Front is the contemporary version of social-patriotism, the new form in which the betrayal of 1914 is to be repeated." [emphasis in original]

—James Burnham, *The People's Front: The New Betrayal* (1937)

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"26. Reformist-Dissidents [the followers of Jean Longuet] are the agency of the 'Left Bloc' within the working class. Their success will be the greater, all the less the working class as a whole is seized by the idea and practice of the united front against the bourgeoisie. Layers of workers, disoriented by the war and by the tardiness of the revolution, may venture to support the 'Left Bloc' as a lesser evil, in the belief that they do not thereby risk anything at all, or because they see no other road at present.

"27. One of the most reliable methods of counteracting inside the working class the moods and ideas of the 'Left Bloc,' i.e., a bloc between the workers and a certain section of the bourgeoisie against another section of the bourgeoisie, is through promoting persistently and resolutely the idea of a *bloc between all the sections of the working class against the whole bourgeoisie....*"

"31. The indicated method could be similarly employed and not without success in relation to parliamentary and municipal activities. We say to the masses, 'The Dissidents, because they do not want the revolution, have split the mass of the workers. It would be insanity to count on their helping the proletarian revolution. But we are ready, inside and outside the parliament, to enter into certain practical agreements with them, provided they agree, in those cases where one must choose between the known interests of the bourgeoisie and the definite demands of the proletariat, to support the latter in action. The Dissidents can be capable

of such actions only if they renounce their ties with the parties of the bourgeoisie, that is, the 'Left Bloc' and its bourgeois discipline.'

"If the Dissidents were capable of accepting these conditions, then their worker-followers would be quickly absorbed by the Communist Party. Just because of this, the Dissidents will not agree to these conditions. In other words, to the clearly and precisely posed question whether they choose a bloc with the bourgeoisie or a bloc with the proletariat—in the concrete and specific conditions of mass struggle—they will be compelled to reply that they prefer a bloc with the bourgeoisie. Such an answer will not pass with impunity among the proletarian reserves on whom they are counting." [emphasis in original]

—Leon Trotsky, "On the United Front" (2 March 1922), in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 2

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"The job of the cartel [the "cartel de la gauche," or "Left Bloc," in France] always consisted in *putting a brake* upon the mass movement, directing it into the channels of class collaboration. This is precisely the job of the People's Front as well. The difference between them—and not an unimportant one—is that the traditional cartel was applied during the comparatively peaceful and stable epochs of the parliamentary regime. Now, however, when the masses are impatient and explosive, a more imposing brake is needed, with the participation of the 'Communists'....

"The coming parliamentary elections, no matter what their outcome, will not *in themselves* bring any serious changes into the situation: the voters, in the final analysis, are confronted with the choice between an arbiter of the type of Laval and an arbiter of the type of Herriot-Daladier. But inasmuch as Herriot has peacefully collaborated with Laval, and Daladier has supported them both, the difference between them is entirely insignificant, if measured by the scale of the tasks set by history." [emphasis in original]

—Leon Trotsky, "France at the Turning Point" (28 March 1936), in *Leon Trotsky on France*

* * * * *

"The July days [in Spain] deepen and supplement the lessons of the June days in France with exceptional force. For the second time in five years the coalition of the labor parties with the Radical bourgeoisie has brought the revolution to the edge of the abyss. Incapable of solving a single one of the tasks posed by the revolution—since all these tasks boil down to one, namely, the crushing of the bourgeoisie—the People's Front renders the existence of the bourgeois regime impossible and thereby provokes the fascist coup d'état. By lulling the workers and peasants with parliamentary illusions, by paralyzing their will to struggle, the People's Front creates favorable conditions for the victory of fascism. The policy of coalition with the bourgeoisie must be paid for by the proletariat with years

of new torments and sacrifice, if not by decades of fascist terror."

—Leon Trotsky, "The New Revolutionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Fourth International" (July 1936), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-1936)*

* * * * *

"What was inexcusably criminal on the part of the [Spanish] Socialist party, the Communist party and the Maurin-Nin party of 'Marxist Unification' was not only that they wrote a 'common program' with the discredited bourgeois parties—which was bad enough—and that thereby, politically speaking, they appeared before the masses in *one party* with the bourgeoisie, but that this 'common program' was dictated and written by the bourgeoisie, and that in every other respect the joint party—under the pseudonym of the 'People's Front'—was dominated by the bourgeoisie." [emphasis in original]

—Max Shachtman, "The Spanish Elections and the People's Front," *New Militant*, 14 March 1936

* * * * *

"In France the Popular Front took shape as the union on a reformist program of the working-class parties with the great 'middle-class' Radical-Socialist Party. There were no such parties in the United States, but the same social forces nevertheless operated under similar conditions, and the United States equivalent of the Popular Front was simply the New Deal Roosevelt Democratic Party."

—"Editor's Comments," *New International*, December 1938

* * * * *

"It is the specific question of LaFollette and LaGuardia. The movements backing them are not dreams, but the genuine, homespun authentic American type of 'Farmer-Labor' and 'Labor' Party. And what sort of movements are they? About this no elaborate argument is needed. Are they 'anti-capitalist'? Not one of their leaders would dream of pretending so. They are dedicated heart and soul to the preservation of capitalism.... Are they 'free of all entanglements with capitalist parties'...? How absurd: their chief task in 1936 was to gather votes for Roosevelt. Do they run genuine representatives of the proletariat for office? LaFollette and LaGuardia are the answer.

"The Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation and the American Labor Party are both vicious muddles of class collaboration, Popular Frontism, outworn Populism and atavistic liberalism, the docile instruments of labor bureaucrats and careerist 'progressive' capitalist politicians.

"Support of these movements at the present time in actuality represents the perspective of the liquidation of independent working-class politics. That is the long and short of it."

—"A Manifesto to the Members of the Socialist Party," *Socialist Appeal*, 14 August 1937 ■

Document of the First Delegated Conference of the iSt

The following are excerpts from the main document adopted by the first delegated conference of the international Spartacist tendency. The more narrow organizational material has been deleted.

* * * * *

The "Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency" (DOITT) adopted in the summer of 1974 codified the modest but significant geographical expansion of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt). Declaring that the Spartacist League of the United States (SL/U.S.) and the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand were the nucleus for the crystallization of an international Trotskyist tendency, the document noted: "In a half dozen other countries parties, groups and committees have expressed their general or specific sympathy or support for the international Spartacist tendency, as have scattered supporters or sympathizers from a number of additional countries." Continued development of the iSt has only confirmed the assertion in DOITT that "The struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International promises to be difficult, long and above all uneven." The iSt has yet to transcend the framework characterized in DOITT as "a tendency in the process of consolidation." Nevertheless, significant growth in Europe, the development of a leading international cadre incommensurate with the present federated International Executive Committee (IEC) and the prospect of unification with the Revolutionary Workers Party of Sri Lanka (RWP) place on the agenda the first delegated international conference of the iSt and the election of an authoritative IEC as a necessary step toward the goal of forging the International Trotskyist League.

Against American-Centeredness

The iSt has been programmatically internationalist from its inception. The organizational predecessor of the SL/U.S., the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), took as one of its founding documents "World Prospect for Socialism." The RT thereby linked itself with Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League and the International Committee (IC), the international opposition to the SWP's capitulation to Pabloite revisionism. Healy's criminal bureaucratism in splitting the RT in 1962 and in the expulsion of Spartacist from the London conference in 1966 badly set back the struggle against Pabloite revisionism within the ostensible world Trotskyist movement as well as in the U.S., and imposed upon the Spartacist League, founded in 1966, a prolonged period of involuntary national isolation. DOITT (published in *Spartacist* No. 23, Spring 1977) codified the extent to which this national isolation had been breached by 1974, but it also indicated the degree to which the international extension of the iSt was tenuous and reversible.

Given the small growth of the SL/U.S. relative to the growth of the iSt elsewhere especially in Europe since DOITT was adopted, the deforming preponderant weight of the SL/U.S. in the iSt has been reduced but by no means redressed. A majority of the IEC as well as the entirety of the Interim Secretariat (I.S.) are SL/U.S. members, in large measure the result of the 15-year history of the SL/U.S. and the relative immaturity of the other sections. However, given this, the political backwardness of the American working class combined with its present relative quiescence, broken recently only by the mine workers strike of 1978, imposes potentially damaging pressures on the iSt. These pressures are compounded by the fact that the iSt's slender links to the organized proletariat are concentrated entirely within North America where they are indeed modest and not immune to attrition and disorientation engendered by the dormant class struggle.

It is particularly important, given the backwardness of the American working class, that the sections of the iSt do not perceive the extremely modest trade-union work of the tendency in North America as normative, although this work contains a major (but not the sole) reservoir of experience in the labor movement for the iSt.

There is a similar tendency to see the SL/U.S. as the organizational norm by smaller sections whose tasks are more modest. While in broad outline the organizational practices of the U.S. section are *the application to an organization with its size and tasks* of the evolved practices and norms of the Leninist and Trotskyist movement, other sections of the iSt must make the corresponding adjustments in terms of scale and concrete tasks....

It has been mentioned that having neither the direct authority of triumphant proletarian revolution nor that of a world-historic figure like Trotsky, the iSt has sought to maintain programmatic and organizational coherence in part by dependence on modern technology (jet planes, overseas telephones and the xerox machine). This is particularly the case given the relative political inexperience of most of the cadre of the iSt. Often it has required a struggle with various sections to enter the latter half of the 20th century (e.g., obtaining sufficient telephone capacity). It is highly probable that the present composition of the iSt would not exist as a cohesive international tendency if it were operating on the resources of the Trotskyist movement of the 1930s.

...The heavy dependence of the iSt on money, particularly on SL/U.S. financial resources, poses the following contradiction:...the U.S. is entering a recession which must necessarily damage that financial base and threatens a significant contraction of international work. At the same time, the possibility of substantial recruitment to the SL/U.S. in the next

period has been posed. Realizing this potential will also require cadre and financial resources. But in the SL/U.S., as in the other sections, recruitment is one road to maintaining and expanding our financial base.

Indicative of the uneven development of the iSt since the adoption of DOITT is that our most significant organizational extension, the founding of the Spartacist League of Britain (SL/B) as our second-largest section, accentuates the overwhelming disproportion in the tendency of the English-speaking sections. It is exemplary of this disproportion that, of the stable and regular newspapers produced by sections of the international tendency, all four are English-language. The French and German presses remain unstable, infrequent and irregular....

Special Preference for the Non-Anglo-American Sections

The iSt remains committed to overcoming this disproportion, which is one that characterized the split in the 1950s between the IC (centered on English-speaking sections) and the International Secretariat. One of the motivations for cutting back *Workers Vanguard* to a bi-weekly was to free cadres to assist the work of the iSt outside North America....

The Anglo-American-centeredness of the iSt was further accentuated by the personally tragic but almost inevitable demise of the Chilean Organización Trotskista Revolucionaria (OTR) under the pressures of exile and a lack of cadre resources for the tasks of a tiny propaganda group. As a consequence, perspectives for work both in Latin America and Spain have been set back.... With regard to the Far East, we have hardly begun to penetrate the exotic character of Japanese ostensible Trotskyism. Through our fusion with the Trotskyist Faction (TF) of the Workers Socialist League in Britain and the foundation of the SL/B, the iSt has acquired an important circle of Near Eastern supporters. Further, in the aftermath of the powerful

confirmation of our line in Iran, we have contacted in several countries Iranian exile individuals and groups who are repelled by the disgusting capitulation of every other left tendency to Shi'ite clerical reaction.

The most important and also most difficult opportunity for the extension of the iSt is the proposed unification with the RWP of Sri Lanka. Except for exile groups like the OTR or isolated individuals,... unification with the RWP presents our tendency with its first opportunity to crystalize a section in the colonial world. This unity would incorporate into our tendency the invaluable, decades-long experience of Comrade Edmund Samarakkody as a Trotskyist leader in South Asia and his struggle to extract from the notorious opportunism of ostensible Trotskyism in Sri Lanka an authentic revolutionary Marxist movement. At the same time, given the magnitude of the outstanding political differences, the enormous geographical distances and the divergences in culture and living standards, unification with the RWP is the most difficult extension the iSt has ever sought to undertake.

Sectional Leadership Problems

All of the sections outside of the U.S. face, to one degree or another, the problems of cohering a stable leadership collective. Such developments seldom take place by linear progression. A study of the history of how such a leadership was cohered in the SL/U.S. reveals the importance of faction fights, anti-clique fights and the necessary political struggles which accompany adapting tasks to changing conditions. The demise of the civil rights movement combined with the opening of opportunities in SDS and the Ellens/Turner faction fight, the "Transformation Memorandum" and the anti-clique fights with Cunningham/Moore/Benjamin/Treiger are key examples. It was these fights and over a decade of common work that gave the SL/U.S. cadre its cohesion. Other sections should not

continued on next page

Invasion of Vietnam by China, in collusion with U.S. imperialism, sharply posed the issue of Soviet defensism. Right: Spartacist contingent in New York demonstration, 24 February 1979.



necessarily expect the cohesion of their leaderships to come less painfully or more rapidly.

Outside of the U.S. all of the sections are led by comrades (most of whom as individuals have more than a decade in the Marxist movement) who constitute a completely new or partially tested collective leadership.... In Britain the Trotskyist Faction was qualitatively co-equal in size with the preexisting station and composed of comrades whose political experiences were shaped by the British far left.... The task of crystalizing a cohered British leadership remains on the agenda.

The leadership of the German TLD [Trotskyistische Liga Deutschlands] has been broadened organically as the recruitment by ones and twos of leading cadres from opponent organizations has repeatedly posed the necessity of their integration into the leadership....

Recently the West Coast CC [Central Committee] group expressed concern that the SL/U.S. was losing its communist cutting edge. The past prolonged period of social quiescence fostering routinism and complacency has markedly affected the SL/U.S.—from the Central Office administration to the *Workers Vanguard* Editorial Board to the youth organization to the trade-union fractions—with occasional disastrous consequences. Nonetheless, the organization has demonstrated the resilience to break out of the office-bound or parochial outlook when opportunities do arise. The fine and energetic work during the 1978 United Mine Workers strike, the 1978 New York City election campaign, the work around the Iran issue and lately in response to the victimization of a leading trade-union militant reveal this capacity. The youth organization will bear most of the burden in the coming year for pushing and directing the recruitment drive. It should be noted that the section has suffered enormously from the lack of a Trade Union Commission and, less pressing but also important has been the lack of centrally directed black work.

Outside of the SL/U.S. we continue to confront the inherent instability of one- or two-branch sections. One-branch "sections" (TLC [Trotskyist League of Canada], LTF [Ligue Trotskyiste de France] and previously the TLD) are schizophrenic locals which are concentrated in one city but are forced to assume some of the responsibilities of a national section. There is a tendency under these conditions to seek to replicate parallel organizational structures for "national" and "local" work leading to cumbersome and ineffectual organizational arrangements. Where sections have two branches the second branch tends to be weak and in the long term unviable.... Periodic transfer and reorganization of cadre have been compelled....

The young comrades of the Lega Trozkyista d'Italia (LTd'I) have shown an inadequate grasp of the methodology of Leninism on the importance to the working class of the fight to defend democratic rights. This has led to disputes in the past... which must be expected to resurface in new forms. At the same time, their political work, energetically pursued, has been in the direction of fusion with the iSt. The I.S. recommends that this fusion take place at the international conference.

Station Stockholm has functioned persistently as a

valuable literature distribution, contacting and information gathering outpost despite its isolation....

Tasks Facing the iSt

Most of the European recruitment took place during the period of détente when the question of the popular front was of immediate and decisive importance. This recruitment took place on the basis of intransigent opposition to electoral support, no matter how "critical," to workers parties in popular frontist coalitions. This had its correlative in the U.S. where the SL/U.S. made its greatest recruitment during the height of the antiwar movement when opposition to class collaborationist "peace" coalitions, the American embodiment of the popular front for that period, was a principal axis of our political intervention. Since a significant section of the iSt was forged in steadfast opposition to popular frontism, the proposed unification with the RWP can be faced with greater confidence, though one of our principal differences is over critical electoral support to workers parties in the popular front.

An acid test for cadre development and the development of the sections is their response to a period of renewed imperialist anti-Sovietism whose most dramatic expression has been the forging of a U.S.-China alliance and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. The Russian question will necessarily intrude directly into the political life of every section. The Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of the gains of the October Revolution will have the same cutting edge as our opposition to the popular front in West Europe and Chile had in the previous period.

The perspective of our sections in Germany, France and Britain must center on regroupment. To this end the TLD and LTF now face the task of stabilizing a regular, correct, *interventionist* press as a main priority. This is not merely a question of editorial and technical capacity but of political leadership and perspective.... The TLD in particular, but all the smaller sections, must aim to gain a feel for social reality in their country by seeking industrial employment on an individual basis, dealing with current social issues in their press and selling their newspaper at the plant gates. But in the short run, as the negative examples of Canada and Australia have demonstrated, *"trade-union work" is the enemy of a regroupment orientation*. The SL/B has gained sufficient forces, by virtue of its successful regroupment, to begin industrial implantation. And in the long run the TLD must transcend its historic resistance to trade-union implantation, a resistance which is rooted in the pre-capitalist caste vestiges in modern German society, and find the road to a modest but real presence in the organized German proletariat. But in this period we will make our gains by aggressive political intervention with our full program. Our presses will be the main tools for qualitative growth.

The failure to develop operational youth perspectives including constituting indigenous campus fractions in Europe has deterred recruitment and the necessary forging of links to the volatile student/youth layer. This work must accompany regional traveling and aggressive

Portugal, 1975—Watershed in OCI's slide to reformism. As Soares' SP was spearheading reactionary mobilization against PCP and proletarian militancy, OCI called for a "SP-PCP government led by Soares."



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opponents work. Only the SL/U.S. and the SL/ANZ have carried out genuine youth work in the last period.

The Need for an Elected IEC

While each of the sectional leaderships outside that of the U.S. is still in the process of being assembled or consolidated, an international leadership has been forged in the past period through joint campaigns and common political struggles. (E.g., the Muñoz campaign, the authoritative international delegations to the 27 April 1978 "Orderly Retreat" PB and the February 1979 TLD emergency conference, the building of the British section which from the establishment of the station... was a truly international undertaking, and the internationally orchestrated propaganda campaigns waged over Iran and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam.) This international leadership has acquired tested working relations and a fund of common experience which make the proposal for an elected IEC both realistic and necessary.

Our tendency is now constrained by the formally semi-federated IEC on which only full Central Committee members of full sections carry decisive votes. This IEC is not commensurate with our evolved international leadership.... Therefore the I.S. proposes that the delegates to the international conference now elect an International Executive Committee.

Workers Vanguard has been the main organ of our tendency internationally. This has had a strongly positive effect in aiding the homogenization of our tendency but has also augmented the U.S.-centricity. The *Spartacist* is intended to be the theoretical and documentary history of our movement. Its continuing infrequency in English, French and German has been one of the major failings of the I.S. Spanish *Spartacist*, even though it is backed up by no Spanish-speaking section and has generated no important contacts, does reach a modest number of cadre of the ostensible Trotskyist movement in Spain and in Latin American exile concentrations elsewhere.... We could, for example, seek to shift vital forces from the SL/U.S. to

rejuvenate from the center the quadri-lingual *Spartacist* while not qualitatively weakening the SL/U.S. press capacity.

The iSt, Ostensible Trotskyism and the Russian Question

Carter's "human rights" campaign, reviving the rhetoric of the Cold War in order to morally re-arm U.S. imperialism after Vietnam and Watergate, has conditioned a rapid shift to the right on the part of the ostensible Trotskyist movement. The products of the factionally sundered International Committee have undergone qualitative degeneration. The political banditry and organizational gimmickry of the Healyites have taken them out of the workers movement and into the environs of Colonel Qaddafi of Libya. The other major component of the former IC, the French OCI of Pierre Lambert, has kept in step with Carter's anti-Soviet crusade and carried its Stalinophobia to new heights. They have adopted the slogans of the pope regarding national rights in East Europe and the slogans of Konrad Adenauer regarding German unification. The OCI has moved so far to the right that there is now a clear convergence with the reformist SWP except where adaptation on respective national terrain to their own bourgeoisie causes one to take a position to the right of the other. (E.g., the SWP on "free speech for fascists," the OCI on the popular front or East Europe.) With the degeneration of the decomposition products of the 1971 IC explosion, the claim of the iSt to represent the continuity of the anti-Pabloite struggle of the pre-1967 IC has been strengthened.

The USec, torn by years of bitter factional warfare, achieved a troubled peace on a more right-wing basis during the period of the French Union of the Left. Spurred by the demise of the petty-bourgeois leftism of the Sixties, the impressionistic international majority led by Ernest Mandel dumped its role as publicity agents for Che Guevara and became the brokers for the left wing of the popular front. Virulent anti-Sovietism

continued on next page

embodied in the campaigns for Soviet dissidents became a common platform of the popular front in Europe—the pledge demanded from the Stalinists by the Social Democrats guaranteeing that their allegiance to their own bourgeoisie would exceed their allegiance to the Kremlin. Thus, central to the recent shift of the USec majority was a backtracking on the Russian question which paralleled the earlier social democratization of their main factional opponent, the American SWP, and facilitated the conjunctural convergence.

The USec majority has most recently embraced the anti-Soviet parliamentary cretinism of the Eurocommunists. This continuing political slide has been accompanied by the growth of a sizable right wing including substantial support in the LCR for the pro-OCI tendencies. The OCI has now become essentially reformist. Thus the USec majority's abandonment of even formal obeisance to the Trotskyist position on the Russian question leaves to the iSt alone the heritage of Soviet defensism.

As shown by the dramatic polarization over Portugal and Angola, the contradictions between the centrists and reformists in the USec still have potentially strong centrifugal force despite the present evident political convergence. When the class struggle reaches an acute pre-revolutionary situation, the paper unity between centrists, whose omnivorous appetites pursue *any* opportunity, and reformists, who go after the *main* chance—conciliation within their own state power (frequently under the fig leaf of the popular front)—will tend to blow apart. The Pabloite *method* of substituting alien class forces for the proletarian, internationalist revolutionary party is of course the same for both wings of the USec. Only the

particular appetite, conditioned by national terrain, is different. The European-based centrists adapt to the Stalinists... who in turn capitulate to their own bourgeois. The American SWP, in the absence of a mass reformist party, capitulates *directly* to the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie.

Should either the centrist or reformist forces acquire real weight in a particular national situation, the convenience of "internationalism" will be expendable. Sectoralism can go by the board as some sectors are found to be "more equal than others." The American SWP's shameless reversal of its "gay power" enthusiasm, to grease the wheels for entry into the trade-union bureaucracy, is but an indication of this—and without an immediate real chance to consummate betrayal within the labor movement.

The pressure to revise the characterization of Cuba as a healthy workers state has been an abiding irritant between the two wings of the USec. In sharp contrast to its social-democratic anti-Sovietism the SWP has opted to continue and intensify its adoration of the Cuban Stalinists. The USec majority, no longer interested in tailing petty-bourgeois guerrillism, would prefer instead to call Cuba a "bureaucratized workers state." The Cuba discussion is indicative of the USec's fundamental disorientation over Stalinism and again exposes the basis of the '63 reunification. Because of the iSt's uniquely incisive position on postwar Stalinism, we should aim our polemics toward this USec weak spot. No serious Marxist can analyse Cuba without reference to iSt material on this subject.

But the dispute over Cuba is presently academic compared to the disgusting spectacle of the entire USec prostrate before the ayatollahs in Iran. The USec has gone so far in its hailing of the mullahs that it has refused, in the U.S. and Australia, to engage in common defense work for its comrades in Khomeini's prisons with those who attack their jailers! The iSt's unique line of "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs!" so obvious from a Marxist or even democratic viewpoint, continues to receive powerful vindication from events which we must exploit to the utmost. In addition, the Iranian struggle has demonstrated the more central role of the woman question in the countries of the East. The programmatic consequences of the slogan "No to the Veil!" must be a part of our regroupment perspectives.

Likewise, over the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, the line of the iSt was not only correct but powerful and popular. It vindicated our tendency's two decades of principled struggle for a Trotskyist analysis of post-World War II Stalinism. For the USec, however, the Chinese invasion of Vietnam prompted a recrudescence of the old factional alignments in an ongoing, long-winded debate where both sides are united by their agreement to avoid the question of Soviet defensism, placed squarely on the agenda by the U.S.-China alliance and U.S. collusion with the Chinese invasion.

The rightward shift within the ostensible Trotskyist movement has meant that small groups with international connections which once existed to the left of the USec—Massari, the "third tendency," the Spartacusbund—have all either made their peace with Pabloism or virtually disintegrated. In Britain there is still a myriad of tiny groups to the left of the IMG who call themselves Trotskyist and continue to offer the SL/B targets for regroupment and linear recruitment.

In Germany our recent focus on discrediting the

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Spartacist League of Australia/New Zealand

GPO Box 3473
Sydney, NSW, 2001, Australia

Trotskyist pretensions of the GIM has produced a trickle of young recruits. But the GIM is so wretched that a generation of subjectively revolutionary youth, mistaking the GIM for Trotskyism, have turned instead to Maoism. Given the unabashed counterrevolutionary foreign policy of China, this Maoist milieu has been in a crisis which the TLD must seek to intersect. Regarding France, ... the LTF is at an historic impasse. They confront three ostensible Trotskyist organizations with thousands of supporters. And behind them is the industrial working class dominated by the CP/CGT which have the appearance, even to our own comrades at times, of an unassailable monolith. But ever since 1789 there has been in France a massive social explosion about every generation. The LTF must prepare for the next such explosion by vigorous recruitment efforts and the stabilization of a real newspaper. If it is able to act with correctness and vigor, it should be able to exploit the ensuing regroupment opportunities and perhaps emerge with a few hundred new members and as a significant factor in the French left.

We are no longer in that period, following the USec's "Tenth World Congress" in 1974, when the two major factions of the USec were on opposite sides of the barricades in Portugal. At that time there could have emerged out of the USec a left opposition to both the centrist majority and reformist minority, an opposition which took a principled revolutionary stand against popular frontism. But while that opportunity may have passed, the model programmatic basis for revolutionary regroupment presented at that time retains its validity for those left-moving forces seeking genuine Trotskyism. This basis was outlined in a draft declaration by cadres expelled from or driven out of the USec who now adhere to or support the iSt:

- No political or electoral support to popular fronts; for conditional opposition to workers parties in open or implicit class-collaborationist coalitions;
- Uphold the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution; for proletarian leadership of the national/social struggle;
- For military support to petty-bourgeois nationalist forces fighting imperialism, but absolutely no political support to such forces; for Trotskyist parties in every country;
- For unconditional defense of all the deformed/degenerated workers states against imperialism; for political revolution against the bureaucracies; no political support to competing Stalinist cliques and factions;
- Against violence within the workers movement;
- For communist fractions in the unions, based on the Transitional Program;
- For the communist tactic of the united front from above; for the tactic of regroupment to unite subjective revolutionists in the vanguard party; for intransigent exposure of centrism;
- Rejection of the claims of ostensibly Trotskyist Internationals to speak for the Fourth International, destroyed by Pabloism in 1951-1953;
- For the reforging of a democratic-centralist Fourth International which will stop at nothing short of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

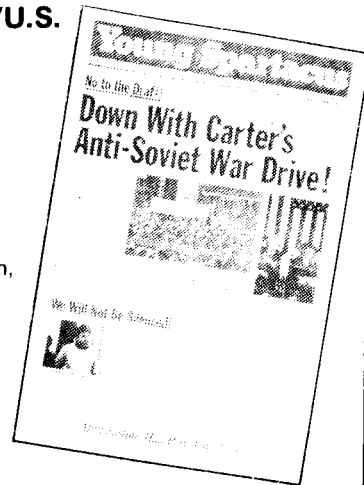
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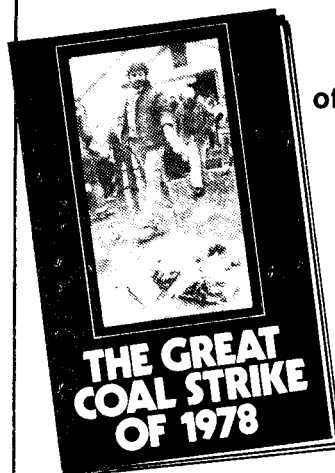
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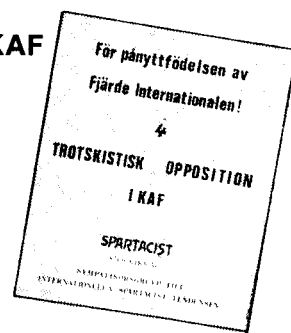
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Toward the International Trotskyist League!

The very first delegated international conference, highest body of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt), was held in Britain in late summer. Voting delegates attended from the Spartacist League/U.S., Spartacist League of Australia/New Zealand, Troztkistische Liga Deutschlands, Spartacist League of Britain, Ligue Trotskyste de France and Trotskyist League of Canada, along with observers from these and other countries.

Also attending were three representatives of the Revolutionary Workers Party of Ceylon (RWP), a small Ceylonese left-centrist current headed by veteran Sinhalese Trotskyist Edmund Samarakkody, and nine members of the Lega Troztkysta d'Italia, a grouping of very youthful Pabloist-derived militants.

The nearly 300 delegates and iSt observers were drawn from the more experienced layers of the tendency. The average age was over 29; political history averaged nearly five years in the iSt and seven and a half years in organized leftist politics, from a wide variety of political backgrounds. There were former members of the pro-Moscow (U.S., France, Austria), pro-Peking (U.S., Canada, Germany) and "Eurocommunist"-type (Australia) Stalinists and of various social-democratic organizations; former "third camp Trotskyists" (Shachtman, Cliff); "anti-revisionist Trotskyists" from the British, American and Israeli Healyites and French and German Lambertists; and ex-members of more eclectic currents: the IWW, Posadas tendency (Italy), MIR (Chile), Black Panthers, women's and "gay" (homosexual) radical groups. But by far the largest number of comrades won from opponent organizations came from the United Secretariat (USec).

In 1964 our founding cadres were expelled from the

American SWP for our left opposition to the USec's capitulation to Castro, dubbed by the SWP/USec an "unconscious Trotskyist." Our principled political struggle against Pabloist dissolution of the Trotskyist vanguard party into bourgeois-nationalist and Stalinist formations was met with political suppression and trumped-up disciplinary charges not only by the SWP, which was already in hard pursuit of deepening reformist appetite, but also by the centrist USec, which hid behind the toothless Voorhis Act (inhibiting international political affiliation) to refuse to hear our appeal.

We had to defend our principled stance for international democratic centralism not only against the live-and-let-live USec but also against the International Committee of Healy/Lambert, which claimed to represent the continuity of Trotskyism while then functioning according to a variant of the practices of Zinovievist "Cominternism." The IC applied a ruthless "discipline" to its small sections but preserved a mutual hands-off attitude toward its English and French organizations.

Our tendency has been built through principled regroupments. Even when we had no presence outside North America, our founding cadres insisted that the maintenance of a revolutionary program requires the subordination of any national revolutionary organization to an international collective. But that collective cannot be scotch-taped together in the manner of the USec, but must be forged in the struggle for programmatic cohesion. As the USec and its competing ostensibly Trotskyist "internationals" have proceeded from rotten-bloc alliances to jagged

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