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*Reconstruct
the Fourth International!*

Magazine of the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

A Reply to the Social-Pacifist SWP

MARXISM and the

DRAFT



**Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism
Women and Protective Legislation**

SOCIALIST VOICE



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Editorial

Revolution, counterrevolution, and war are breaking out across the world. Critical for the masses, these events are likewise the supreme test for those who claim to be their leaders in the struggle for a better life. The self-proclaimed revolutionaries are on trial.

As of now, we have only seen the beginning chapters of the revolutions in Iran, Nicaragua and Grenada. El Salvador, South Korea and other tinderboxes are about to explode. The upheavals will soon hit more advanced capitalist countries, as the international imperialist economy continues to crumble. The Miami riots prove the U.S. is hardly immune.

The crisis has already produced not only revolution but counterrevolution. In Afghanistan, the U.S. and the USSR have unleashed their rival forces of reaction in order to suppress the revolution in that unfortunate land. They commit these atrocities in the vain effort to maintain the general interests of world capitalist stability as well as their narrower national ambitions.

The deepening crisis has inevitably stirred not only the forces of revolution and counterrevolution but imperialist war. As the Cold War begins anew, the bourgeoisie all over the world sounds the call for patriotism. It demands not only support to each of the hostile nations but above all to itself as a class. It demands, in the interest of "unity," the abandonment of the class struggle of the proletariat.

Tragically, but not unexpectedly, the so-called revolutionary left has already failed the test of the times. The revolutions are just beginning and they have already opened up the gaps between the initial petty-bourgeois leaders on the one hand and the revolutionary proletariat on the other — in practice, if not as yet in mass consciousness. But the supposed teachers of consciousness on the left (e.g. the Socialist Workers Party) have demonstrated that they cannot distinguish between the Sandinistas or the Islamic mullahs and the revolutionary masses whom these false prophets

misrepresent. In a desperate hurry to grab onto the shirt tails of these misleaders, they have abandoned the communist alternative. This portion of the left finds its mirror image in those who also fail to see the class line between the leaders and the led and, given their rejection of the leaders, also reject the revolutions of the masses (e.g. the Spartacist League).

In the U.S., the main bastion of imperialism, the need for the left to defend the Iranian revolution spurred only the most minimal demonstrations on the streets and almost total silence in the unions. Some "socialists" openly kowtowed to American chauvinism by bemoaning the Iranian breach of "diplomatic prerogatives" in the hostage crisis, while others applauded Khomeini's suppression of workers, women and national minorities. Not by accident, President Carter's hostility toward the Ayatollah did not prevent him from having the same line toward the quelling of such "destabilizing" forces.

The left protest in terms of demonstrations (for which it is famous) over Carter's attempt to "save" the hostages was unnoticeable. In fact, instead of combatting the real imperialist measures that the ruling class has launched, the left has jumped on the bandwagon of the anti-draft "movement." It far preferred joining with open patriots and pacifists in abstractly decrying the imperialist war while decrying the only real answer, revolutionary class war.

With our small forces, the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) has pointed in the opposite direction in both theory and practice. If "Marxism and the Draft" and "Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism," the polemics against the centrist left which appear in this issue of *Socialist Voice* are particularly hostile, it is because of the momentousness of the events. The differentiation between the LRP and the rest of the left looks far wider than in the past. It is not simply appearance. The "left" has moved even further to accommodate itself to bourgeois conditions. The widening gap is not a result of any substantive change on our part but reflects the massive renewal of struggle throughout the world. The working class once again demands what we fight for, a totally different social system. ■

Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism

The Russian invasion of Afghanistan has thrown the pseudo-Trotskyist left into confusion. The various groups that claim to base their positions on the common premise that the USSR is still a degenerated workers' state have come up with widely disparate points of view. What we will show here is that none of these positions defends the Afghan revolution, the proclaimed goal of both the Russian invaders and their pseudo-Trotskyist interpreters; moreover, none has anything in common with the positions taken historically by the Trotskyist movement which are cited as precedents. And in the case of the American groups, whose lines are most uncritical of Russia, their positions on the Russian invasion mark a new milestone in their degeneration. Not since the Stalinist parties turned to their policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism in the 1930's have would-be revolutionists made such obeisance to the counter-revolutionary goals of "moderation" and "stability."

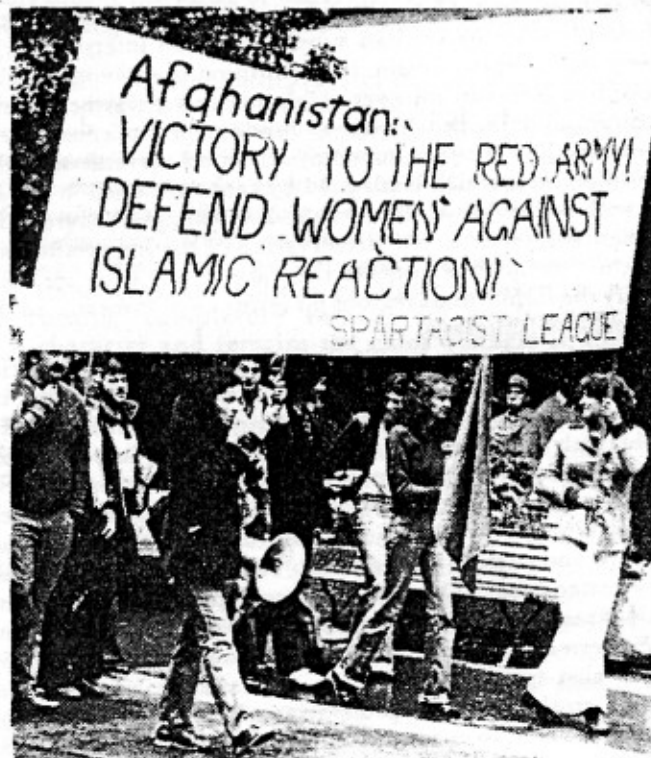
The Afghan Revolution

The Afghan revolution began in April 1978, when the bourgeois nationalist People's Democratic Party (PDP), riding on a mass urban uprising, overthrew the quasi-monarchist regime of Mohammed Daoud and embarked on a series of democratic reforms directed against the backward, pre-capitalist traditions of the country and the landowners, tribal chiefs and Islamic mullahs who exploited the masses. The reforms included trade union rights, land to the rural masses, cancellation of some of the peasants' debts to usurers, a mass literacy campaign extending education for the first time to women as well as men, democratic rights for national minorities, reduction of the bride price, the separation of religion from the state and the increased taxation of foreign businesses.

In its initial period the revolution had active support in the cities and expectant acquiescence among the peasants. But it ran into immense difficulties, due not least to the fact that the ruling PDP (the official Communist Party of Afghanistan) carried out its reforms incompletely, bureaucratically and with extreme brutality. The guerrilla war mounted by the Islamic reactionaries (with aid from the Iranian Shah, Pakistan and China) confined the PDP's rule to the major towns. The government, armed and aided by the USSR as all recent Afghan governments have been, reacted by offering concessions to the reactionaries while stepping up military attacks against villages harboring guerrillas. The bourgeois regime was incapable of defending the achievements it stood for by extending them further and leading a genuine mass revolution.

Russia tried to intervene in September 1979 by urging the revolution's leading figure, Nur Mohammed Taraki, to depose Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin, the organizer of the most ruthless attacks on the counterrevolutionaries. The maneuver backfired: Taraki was killed, and Amin took over full powers. Having failed to moderate the revolution, Russia then intervened in force. In December, troops invaded from the USSR's Central Asian provinces bordering Afghanistan, murdered Amin (with the crude excuse that he was a CIA agent) and installed Babrak Karmal in his place. Karmal was the leader of the Parcham wing of the PDP, traditionally more

conservative and even closer to Moscow than the Khalq wing of Taraki and Amin.



Spartacist banners lie; Russians and puppets hail Islam and crush women's gains.

The Russian army has bolstered Parcham's sway over the towns and some main roads, but it appears to have turned the sentiments of the majority of the population against a government which is openly a foreign puppet. Karmal has moved to conciliate his enemies but with little success. Upon his arrival he appealed to "virtuous clergy, believers, honest Muslims" for a "holy war" in defense of, no less, the "sacred Islamic religion." He promised "respect for our family, people's and national traditions," code words for the barbarous oppression of women and minorities that the April revolution had at one time fought against. Karmal's regime labels itself a "second phase" of the revolution and has replaced the revolutionary red flag of Taraki and Amin with one that bears the image of the Koran.

Karmal has added to his cabinet three men from the pre-revolutionary government and has promised to enshrine "the principle of private ownership" in the new constitution. In an interview with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (*PFLP Bulletin*, March-April 1980), Karmal explained his goals: "Already we have achieved a kind of reconciliation; negotiations have started with representatives of the national and democratic forces and of the different classes and social groups in the country." As well, "there is also a very remarkable section of the patriotic religious leadership working in the government." Karmal and his Russian masters undoubtedly hope to defeat the Islamic forces, but they are

still making their futile appeals to the landlords and mullahs in order to deepen the divisions among the rural guerrillas and to limit the aspirations of the restive urban classes.

Russia's Stabilization Efforts

Russia's goals in its imperialist invasion of Afghanistan are not hard for Marxists to decipher. The USSR has a specific interest in maintaining secure and inexpensive deliveries of natural gas from Afghanistan to augment its own production, especially since its Iranian supply has been interrupted. Nor can state capitalist Russia, in a condition of economic decline, afford to lose control over Afghanistan's repayments on its substantial debt. But Moscow's fundamental purposes are far broader. The Russian economy is bound up with the whole world market, which is plagued by economic crisis in the East as well as the West. Moscow and Washington share a fundamental interest in the preservation of the imperialist world system. Within this context they are rivals, each seeking to pacify the tumultuous regions on terms most favorable to their national self-interests.

Russia, as the weaker of the two superpowers industrially and the more dependent financially and technologically, is in the position of having to prop up a world imperialist structure still largely dominated by the U.S. in order for its own share to survive. Having entered onto the imperialist scene as the result of the counterrevolutionary defeat of the Soviet workers on the eve of World War II, the Russian rulers' particular role is to entrap and defeat proletarian revolutions wherever they threaten to occur. This task they accomplished after the war in Italy, France and other countries, not to speak of the countries in Eastern Europe and Asia that Russia conquered for its own imperialist sphere.

The crushing of the proletariat after World War II permitted the U.S. to expand its empire and post-war imperialism to prosper temporarily through the concentrated extraction of surplus-value from the war-weakened industrial countries and the colonies. In the absence of an international revolutionary proletarian leadership, the mass movements that continued to erupt (especially in the colonial areas) were turned to nationalist paths.

Despite heroic struggles, none of the new nation states that emerged could conceivably achieve either viability or economic independence on the bourgeois road of nationalism in an epoch of economic internationalization. Russia had been successful in creating a powerful modern (although highly contradictory) nation-state because it was built upon the legacy stolen from the Soviet workers' state: the thoroughgoing nationalization of property, the centralization of banking and credit, the state monopoly of foreign trade (see *Socialist Voice* No. 2). This national consolidation proved to be impossible for new bourgeoisies which could not leech off proletarian revolutions. When the crisis of capitalism that had been masked by the post-war prosperity reasserted itself in the late 1960's, the ex-colonies were devastated. The "new nations" from China to Chad were forced to turn back to the imperialist orbits they had never really escaped. And they still face mass upheavals and disintegration. The bourgeois nationalist ideologies and leaderships are losing their sway as the oppressed layers, including larger and more centralized proletariats, begin to move again. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Middle East and South Central Asia.

Russia has long has a neighborly imperialist concern for the stability of this critical region and had even maintained friendly relations with the bloodthirsty Shah of Iran,

America's junior partner, before his ouster. Since then, Iran has been wracked by continuous revolutionary upheavals. Workers councils exist, despite the Islamic obscurantism that constrains them. Various oppressed nationalities are fighting for self-determination. Externally, the grip that the Shah held over the region has collapsed. Iraq and Iran are nearly at war; Pakistan is torn by ethnic conflicts and mass struggles, and the vast Indian subcontinent is shaking with communal and class violence; the Israeli colonial-settler state's "peace" with the Arab world is falling apart, and nearly every Arab regime including the wealthiest is itself faced with internal unrest. In the midst of this tinderbox the Afghan revolution threatened to explode.

Afghanistan has never really been a nation. Its antediluvian economy and diverse national groupings were held together by a central state that survived only with substantial foreign financing. It too was affected by the revolutionary currents of the late 1960's, and the 1978 revolution symbolized the fact that the old relations could no longer hold. The new bourgeois nationalists could not achieve stability either, and it is no accident that the several reactionary guerrilla outfits are unable to even unify their forces against the central government. For there is no national solution for Afghanistan; only foreign imperialist control or international proletarian revolution can fill the vacuum. When Hafizullah Amin began to press the opposition hard and thereby foment even more chaos, the Russians stepped in to restrain the revolution and attempt to create a semblance of unity and order.

The danger the Russians see is not simply the internal anarchy but the possibility of external combustion. Taraki and Amin were both ardent opponents of Khomeini and Islamic reaction in Iran, but Moscow was desperately trying to align itself with the Ayatollah both through its own diplomacy and its minions in Iran, the Tudeh Party. For Khomeini seemed to be the only force that could possibly stabilize Iran, playing his Bonapartist balancing act between the revolutionary anti-imperialist workers, peasants and petty-bourgeoisie and the bourgeois governments of first Bazargan and now Bani-Sadr. Indeed, Islamic reaction (in both pro and anti-Khomeini forms) has been spreading rapidly throughout the Middle East and into Africa, in the absence of alternative ideologies with mass appeal. Religious obscurantism is the last refuge of bourgeois nationalism, whose secular proponents are faltering under the collapse of their promised heavens on earth. Moscow was compelled to prevent the secular Amin from alienating this powerful counterrevolutionary force.

The beauties of Islamic reaction have not been lost on the U.S. either. Despite the hostage seizure in Teheran, Carter tried every gambit in the book to curry favor with the Ayatollah, including a steadfast hostility to every rebellious movement in Iran. So far, however, the momentum of the Iranian revolution among the working masses has been too great to permit open government collaboration with U.S. imperialism.

The possibility of an alliance between Islam and the Kremlin is a great lure for Brezhnev. The Middle East is not just another area of the world but the source of the oil that turns the machinery of international capitalism. If its equilibrium blows up, the survival of the capitalist world is endangered; it is a central area for Russia's stabilization efforts. For Marxists, therefore, to support the Russian military intervention is to line up on the side of imperialism, stability and counterrevolution.

It goes without saying, of course, that no serious Marxist

could support the reactionary guerrillas. In fact, until the time of the Russian invasion, military support for the PDP forces against the guerrilla forces was appropriate, in order to defend the material gains won for the urban and rural masses and to protect the exploited classes from the counterrevolution. Military support means *no* political support for the bourgeois regime but rather opposition to its Stalinist strategy of holding the revolution back in the interest of achieving a bourgeois-democratic stage (which would in fact serve as a barrier to socialism). The best hope for extending the revolution was for the small proletariat to link up with the Iranian working class, which had been instrumental in overthrowing the Shah.

After the invasion, there were at first signs that army sections loyal to Amin were continuing to oppose both the Russians and the guerrillas (see January and February 1980 *Socialist Action*). The LRP called for military support to these forces. Since February little has been reported about them, but the media has an interest in tagging all rebels as pro-West guerrillas. However, after the recent Kabul campus riots the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of May 18, 1980 reported that the students were not pro-West but pro-Taraki. Marxists call for the defeat of both warring counterrevolutionary sides. We hope the workers find their way from past political support to the Khalq to communist internationalism.

Trotsky's Historical Position

We wrote in February that "to our knowledge, no other organization claiming adherence to Trotskyism has stood for the defense of the Afghan revolution against all its enemies." This is still the case. Those that recognize the bourgeois-democratic achievements of the Taraki-Amin governments do not see that the regime has been completely overturned; those that oppose the USSR's imperialism and even recognize the reactionary character of the guerrillas nevertheless deny the need to defend the limited gains of the revolution. Both end up in support of one form of counterrevolution or another.

Several of these left supporters of counterrevolution have tried to devise a Trotskyist precedent for their positions. Although Trotsky was killed in the early days of World War II and did not live to see the Eastern European Stalinist states created in Russia's image after the war, he did witness the Russian takeover of Eastern Poland, Finland and the Baltic States in connection with Stalin's alliance with Nazi Germany. Trotsky's position (which appears in several articles and letters published in the books *In Defense of Marxism* and *Writings 1939-40*) can be summarized as follows: 1) The invasions confirmed the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism, both because they meant extending Stalin's bureaucratic oppression to additional peoples and because they pulled Stalin further into Hitler's imperialist orbit and thereby endangered the workers' state, which Trotsky believed the USSR still to be. 2) The Russian attack nevertheless had limited beneficial aspects, in that Trotsky believed that the approach of the Red Army inspired insurrections by the workers and peasants of the Polish Ukraine to seize bourgeois property. But Trotsky warned the masses of the occupied territories that the Kremlin would soon turn against them in order to enslave them. 3) The Russian territorial acquisitions had to be seen as subordinate to the imperialist war (World War II) in which Russia's existence was endangered; therefore the Fourth International's policy of defending the Soviet Union had to be maintained and extended to the new territories.

Trotsky's information that the invasion of Eastern Poland inspired a revolutionary wave was based on reports in the

Menshevik press; but there is no evidence that these reports were accurate. This question, however, does not alter the political logic of Trotsky's position. Given that Russia was a workers' state, it had to be defended; nevertheless, the Stalinist method of "defense" by enslaving new territories weakened the Soviet Union by demoralizing the workers, disorganizing the ranks of the Communist International, and undermining the potential of a revolutionary outcome to the war. In sum,

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution." (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 19)

The basis for Trotsky's defensist position had already been undermined by the Stalinist counterrevolution in the USSR, which wiped out the last vestiges of proletarian power and restored bourgeois social relations under the rule of the state bureaucracy (see *Socialist Voice* No. 2). The secret clauses of the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 already outlined Stalin's imperialist ambitions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and these were amply demonstrated by the outcome of World War II: Stalin's new conquests were subordinated to Russia politically and economically. Trotsky's judgment that Russia remained proletarian was wrong, but his view of Stalinism as counterrevolutionary was confirmed.

The leadership of the Fourth International tried after the war to maintain both aspects of Trotsky's position: they continued to call Russia a degenerated workers' state, but regarded the new buffer states of Eastern Europe as state capitalist and criticized their Stalinist rulers for holding back the workers' revolution. By the late 1940's, however, it became clear that the social and economic structure of the satellites was modeled after the USSR, and the contradiction of labeling them as different social systems had to be resolved. The Fourth International's head, Michel Pablo, devised the theory that they were workers' states "deformed" by Stalinism (not "degenerated" since they had not gone through the process of degeneration and counterrevolution as had the USSR). But the notion that Stalinism could create workers' states of any kind — requiring a socialist revolution, after all — was in total contradiction to Trotsky's conception that Stalinism had become "the chief obstacle on the road to world revolution."

United Secretariat's Contradictions

All the Pabloite organizations are contaminated by the belief that the USSR still plays some kind of revolutionary role in the world. The largest such organization is the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), which went in three different directions over the Afghan question. Its majority, led by Ernest Mandel, attempted to mimic Trotsky's position on Poland as closely as possible. It stated, "Revolutionists ... do not take any responsibility for the Kremlin's military intervention. They do not give the slightest political support to this intervention, which flows from the overall policy of the bureaucratic caste" (*Intercontinental*

Press, March 3). Its resolution even paraphrased Trotsky: even if the Russian forces were to overturn bourgeois property relations in Afghanistan, "we would remain opposed to the annexation of new territory by the Kremlin, to whom we do not entrust any historical mission" (see *In Defense of Marxism*, p. 20).

But the USec still manages to find a revolutionary lining to the Stalinist cloud:

"Revolutionary Marxists reject any neutralist attitude in this war. In so far as the Soviet army actually is opposing the enemies of the workers and peasants, they favor its victory over them. To achieve that, the gains of the workers must be consolidated, radical social and democratic steps must be taken, and the Afghan masses must be organized and armed to defend them. ...

"In the medium and long term, there is one possibility that cannot be excluded beforehand: In a situation where the semi-feudal and bourgeois forces are extremely weak and the presence of Soviet troops becomes prolonged, the fact that the Soviet bureaucracy is rooted in the workers state created by the October revolution could lead it to structurally transform property relations in Afghanistan."

An amazingly contradictory position! If the Russian army is capable of "structurally transforming" bourgeois property (which must mean creating another "deformed workers' state"), how can any serious communist not give it political support? The contradiction lies in trying to meld Trotsky's unshakeable opposition to counterrevolutionary Stalinism into the Pabloite world view that credits it with creating a dozen "workers' states."

Moreover, if defeating the Islamic guerrillas requires organizing and arming the Afghan masses, as it certainly does, then to support the Soviet army is insane — that army is engaged in *disarming* and *disorganizing* the Afghan workers and peasants, as any Trotskyist or even pseudo-Trotskyist ought to expect. The USec admits that "at the moment, there is no sign that the intervention by the 'Red Army' is encouraging such a mobilization of the workers against the landlords and capitalists," and it warns that the Russians and the Karmal regime "might decide to make compromises" with the guerrillas. Such queasiness about the truth is appalling. Karmal was shouting compromises from the instant the Russian troops marched in, and to suggest that the Russian army might *ever* (even if not "at the moment") encourage mass mobilizations rather than shooting them down is to disseminate the greatest, most dangerous illusions. It is clear that the USec dislikes and distrusts Stalinism, but it nevertheless cannot escape the Pabloite logic of seeking to tie the oppressed masses to the Moscow bureaucracy in the hope of making a revolution behind their backs. Trotsky's "decisive" criterion, "the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat," is irrelevant to Pabloites.

SWP Backs "Moderation"

A minority of the United Secretariat led by the American Socialist Workers Party took a less contradictory but more reactionary position: it backed the Russian invasion as a justified defense of the Afghan revolution, and in particular supported the capitulatory policies of the Karmal regime as opposed to those of the government that the Russians overthrew. Some of the SWP's arguments have to be seen to be believed. Take, for example, the commentary on the PDP's

critical attitude towards Khomeini's reactionary "Islamic Republic" in Iran in the article "Problems of the Afghan Revolution" by Ernest Harsch (*Intercontinental Press*, February 18). Harsch points out that Taraki "hailed the overthrow of the Shah, but added that the Iranian masses had simply jumped 'out of the frying pan into the fire'." He continues:

"The sectarian attacks against the Iranian revolution became even more virulent. Each month, the *Kabul Times* carried at least one editorial devoted to condemning the 'tyranny and despotism' of the 'reactionary and fanatic regime of Iran, led by Khomeini.'"

If that is true, the bourgeois nationalist revolutionaries in Kabul, although Stalinists, provided a more accurate description of the Teheran regime than many "Trotskyists." The SWP is upset that people trying to achieve revolutionary democratic gains in Afghanistan would dare to criticize a regime desperately trying to hold the masses back in Iran. An even more illuminating example is Harsch's analysis of the difficulties the PDP encountered in bringing education to women, in the same article:

"Under the literacy campaign, for example, the PDPA activists who went out into the villages to organize classes immediately attempted to introduce coeducation, without regard to the problems of doing so in areas where women were still commonly segregated from men in public life. Rather than carefully and patiently trying to overcome conservative prejudices against women's emancipation, they sought to force the process."

What tender consideration the SWP shows for those whose "conservative prejudices" classify women as sub-human and who enforce the most barbaric oppression in private as well as public life! Imagine such a statement applied to the desegregation of schools in the United States — the U.S. Supreme Court's eminently conservative formula of desegregation "with all deliberate speed" must seem to be wild-eyed radicalism to the patient "militants" of the SWP. This statement comes from a party that parades on its home ground as the foremost defender of women's rights — but when it comes to treating women as members of the human race it hesitates to "force the process." Forced busing of school children by the bourgeois courts, police and army is the policy of the SWP in the U.S. whatever the wishes of the black families involved, but compulsory education of women by a revolutionary government is, in Harsch's words, an "error and misjudgment" due to the lack of "self-correcting feedback from mass participation and involvement in decision-making." It is not the revolutionary masses (who turned out the monarchists) whose participation the SWP is calling for, but the reactionary forces who shoot people for the crime of teaching women. The SWP's theory that socialism is nothing but the culmination of consistent democracy has been brought to an ultimate, counterrevolutionary end.

The SWP has swallowed whole the Stalinist argument that it was necessary to crush the Afghan revolution in order to defend it. The SWP's criticisms are not just that the PDP was too brutal but that it went too far and too fast. Far better to have "revolutionists" who do their best to hold the revolution back, like Karmal, Khomeini and the Nicaraguan FSLN.

What on earth does this have to do with Trotskyism? The SWP has been reluctant to cite any Marxist historical analogy

whatever, but it eventually felt compelled to come up with a Trotskyist citation that would give it some justification for its position. Here is the passage they found, quoted (from "Letter on India," *Writings 1939-40*, pages 108-9) twice on the same page of the April 28 *Intercontinental Press*:

"The general historic role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and their Comintern is counter-revolutionary. But through their military and other interests they can be forced to support progressive movements. We must keep our eyes open to discern the progressive acts of the Stalinists, support them independently, foresee in time the danger, the betrayals, warn the masses and gain their confidence."

The SWP then connects this passage to Afghanistan by the following reasoning: 1) Since the Soviet bureaucracy rests on the October revolution, it can be forced to take progressive steps; 2) the Afghan revolution was a progressive movement, which, moreover, was endangered by American imperialism through "Washington's violations of Afghanistan's national sovereignty"; therefore 3) Russia's intervention was a progressive step. The fallacy in this logic is that Russia invaded not to support the Afghan revolution but to undermine and "stabilize" it — a fact that the SWP fails to notice because it supports the measures of stabilization itself. And the SWP bats not one eyelash at Moscow's violations of Afghanistan's national sovereignty, which, despite the CIA's dirty work, happen at the moment to be somewhat more extensive than Washington's. After all, the SWP murmurs (parroting Moscow), Hafizullah Amin himself invited the Russians in — and presumably therefore called for his own murder and the overthrow of his own regime.

The biggest fraud in the SWP's argument, however, is the link between Moscow's supposedly "progressive" role and Russia's supposedly proletarian character. For Trotsky meant nothing of the sort, and the passage just quoted had to be doctored by the SWP in order to make it seem so. In between the second and third sentences quoted, Trotsky had placed a parenthetical phrase that the SWP removed without notifying the reader: "Even Ludendorff felt himself forced to give Lenin a train — a very progressive action — and Lenin accepted it." Ludendorff, the brains of the Imperial German military machine during World War I who permitted Lenin to cross Germany to get to Russia in 1917, was hardly trying to defend socialist property relations!

Trotsky's point was to show that the Stalinists, like all counterrevolutionaries, could end up on the right side at a given moment through fortuitous circumstances. It is perfectly natural for one power to aid the opponents of a rival, as Ludendorff did, and as Stalin might do against British imperialism in India while he was allied with Britain's rival, Germany. But there was no material compulsion for Stalin to support the progressive movement in India, a fact that was proved when Stalin switched sides, backed Britain and opposed the anti-imperialist struggle of the Indian people. Trotsky's real point of view on such interventions by the Red Army was explained (*In Defense of Marxism*, page 29):

"Some comrades say: 'And if the Red Army tomorrow invades India and begins to put down a revolutionary movement there shall we in this case support it?' ... We have never promised to support *all* the actions of the Red Army which is an instrument in the hands of the Bonapartist bureaucracy. We have promised to defend only the USSR as a workers' state and solely those things within it which belong to a workers' state.

"An adroit casuist can say: If the Red Army, independently of the character of the 'work' fulfilled by it, is beaten by the insurgent masses in India, this will weaken the USSR. To this we will answer: The crushing of a revolutionary movement in India, with the cooperation of the Red Army, would signify an incomparably greater danger to the social basis of the USSR than an episodic defeat of counter-revolutionary detachments of the Red Army in India. In every case the Fourth International will know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction and where it defends the social basis of the USSR."

Trotsky's discussion is perfectly valid today, despite his incorrect conception of the social basis of the USSR. The crushing of the revolutionary movement in Afghanistan is a responsibility shared by the Stalinists leading it, the Islamic guerrillas (and their Western and Chinese supporters) opposing it, and the Russian army that stabbed it in the back while coming to its "aid." We could add to this list the pseudo-Trotskyists who can't tell revolution from counterrevolution.

Spartacists Hail Stalinist Army

The SWP's enthusiasm for the Russian invasion is subdued in comparison to that of the Spartacist League, an organization that likes to think of itself as the SWP's great rival on the left. The similarity of their lines on Afghanistan gave the SL a problem. All it could do was mumble how "unexpected," "incredible" and "ludicrous" it was for the SWP (which the SL considers to have abandoned the "defense of the Soviet Union") to have a line only marginally less pro-Stalinist than its own. But there was really nothing surprising about the SWP's position. The SWP has long been enamored of nationalist revolutions with leaderships that it considers fundamentally independent of Moscow (like Cuba's and Nicaragua's). The SWP loved the Afghan nationalist revolution but feared its defeat at the hands of the guerrillas, and therefore it accepted both the Russian "support" and stabilization. The SL, for its part, identifies with Russian nationalism, and its position too was predictable.

But not the vehemence with which the Spartacists declared support for the Stalinist army. In the past their support had been couched in more critical terms. Nevertheless, in our critique of the SL's analysis of Russia (*Socialist Voice* No. 4) we had shown that the Spartacists, in effect, disagree with Trotsky's theory that Stalin's rule over Russia after Lenin's death undermined proletarian state power and threatened to restore capitalism; for the SL, Stalin's nationalizations and forced collectivizations destroyed the law of value and therefore moved the USSR further away from capitalism than it had been in the days of Lenin and Trotsky. In Afghanistan, their slogan "Hail Red Army!" was only the beginning:

"While the Moscow Stalinists apparently presently intend to shore up the PDDA regime, and if anything limit the pace of democratic and modernizing reforms, the prolonged presence in Afghanistan of the Soviet army opens up more far-reaching possibilities. Speaking on the national and colonial question at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, Lenin foresaw that '... with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system, and

through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage.' *Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!*" (*Workers Vanguard*, January 11)

What was possible in the days of Lenin's revolutionary Communist International, however, is impossible for the agents of counterrevolutionary Stalinism. But even were we to ignore this decisive obstacle, the Spartacists do not inform us just how the advance to communism in Afghanistan is to be made. Are the Russians supposed to satisfy bourgeois property there? That can't be, because the banks and large industries were taken over by the government years ago — by that criterion, Afghanistan has long been a workers' state. Is it to be done by extending bourgeois-democratic reforms to the limit? No, for the SL has already noted that Moscow is limiting the pace of the reforms. We suspect the SL is suggesting that Russia ought to incorporate Afghanistan within the USSR; that is why it expresses amazement (*Workers Vanguard*, April 4) at the USec's declaration opposing "the annexation of new territories by the Kremlin." The SL is apparently unaware that the subtle minds of the USec were quoting Trotsky without saying so.

Trotsky's legacy has another surprise for the SL. Trotsky had an answer to those who called for the "Hail Red Army" slogan in 1939. Writing to Max Shachtman, the American Trotskyist leader who took the unprincipled position of opposing the defense of the USSR even though he considered it a workers' state, Trotsky replied:

"You quote the march of the Red Army in 1920 into Poland and into Georgia and you continue: 'Now, if there is nothing new in the situation, why does not the majority propose to hail the advance of the Red Army into Poland, into the Baltic countries, into Finland ...' In this decisive part of your speech, you establish that something is 'new in the situation' between 1920 and 1939. Of course! This newness in the situation is the bankruptcy of the Third International, the degeneracy of the Soviet state, the development of the Left Opposition, and the creation of the Fourth International. This 'concreteness of events' occurred precisely between 1920 and 1939. And these events explain sufficiently why we have radically changed our position toward the politics of the Kremlin, including its military politics." (*In Defense of Marxism*, page 38)

The Spartacists have forgotten the difference between Lenin's Soviet Union of 1920 and Stalin's of 1939 and after; or more precisely, they regard Stalin's as an improvement (*Socialist Voice* No. 4, page 25). Trotsky adds to the statement above: "It seems that you forget somewhat that in 1920 we supported not only the deeds of the Red Army but also the deeds of the GPU." In the 1970's the Spartacists reverted to supporting the deeds of the GPU; they are one of the few tendencies outside of the Communist Parties that supported the monstrous Berlin Wall designed for the enslavement of German workers.

The Spartacists have not ignored every Trotskyist precedent. They wrote a diatribe on the Afghan question against the League for the Revolutionary Party in *Workers Vanguard* of March 21, claiming that we had distorted Trotsky's position. We have already replied to some of the slanders and misquotations contained in the SL's article (see "Spartacist Acrobatics" in *Socialist Action*, April 1980); and we have amply showed that Trotsky did not favor the invasion

of Poland. But there is more to be said. After defending the invasion of Eastern Poland, the SL goes on to argue, oddly, that Poland in 1939 is *not* a precedent for Afghanistan in 1979:

"The cases are not identical. In 1939 the Russian invasion of Poland was a product of the Kremlin's reactionary-utopian belief that the USSR could be defended by deals with one or another imperialist coalition (in this case the Stalin-Hitler pact). The intervention into Afghanistan is not a product of 'peaceful coexistence,' but its opposite: the Soviets were forced for purely defensive reasons to intervene in a civil war fighting against imperialist-aided feudalistic reaction."

According to this, the 1979 invasion was a necessary defensive move against imperialism while the 1939 attack, however justifiable in its own right, was unnecessary, a product of the misguided strategy of peaceful coexistence. That is, the case for invading Afghanistan is even better than the case for Poland, says the SL. It is a very twisted argument. In 1939 Russia was genuinely endangered by Hitler's armies mobilized on the Polish border, but the idea that the existence of the USSR today is threatened by or through Afghanistan is hard to swallow. In 1939 Trotsky thought that the Kremlin was momentarily aiding social progress in Poland; in 1979, not even the Spartacists believe that the Russian troops are advancing the PDP's reforms. The real purpose of this argument is to evade what Trotsky had to say, and we can well understand why.

Afghanistan has enabled the Spartacists to make clear just what it is they defend in the USSR. Comparing the aborted invasion into Iranian territory by "Crazy Carter and his mad anti-Russian Dr. Strangelove" with the "speed and efficiency" of the Russian intervention into Afghanistan, *Workers Vanguard* (May 2) commented, "No wonder everyone recognizes that the Russian presence on the Afghan border of Iran is one of the few stabilizing features in a dangerously unstable situation."

No doubt Russia's presence is a stabilizing factor, or at least the Russians hope it to be. What causes one to wonder is that people calling themselves revolutionaries find stabilization to be a virtue. This Spartacist preference is reminiscent of Andrew Young, who liked to praise the Cuban troops in Angola for their stabilizing efforts (see "Carter's Twisting African Policy," *Socialist Voice* No. 7) when he was in office. Indeed, the SL's plea for stability amounts to a call for U.S. imperialism to turn back to the "peaceful coexistence" notions of Young and Vance and reject the "manifestly mad" hawkishness of Brzezinski. We have often pointed out that a policy of defending the Soviet Union today, when that country is one of the two leading imperialist superpowers, will in the long run come down to defending the Soviet Union's goal of detente. Apparently frightened out of their customary discretion by the specter of Carter's "craziness," the Spartacists have compressed the long run into the short. Underneath their verbal ferocity lies an organization of panicked liberals.

(The Spartacists' incessant refrain that Carter, Khomeini and Brzezinski are all crazy signifies the abandonment of any attempt at Marxist understanding. There are, after all, revolutionary mass struggles on the loose in the world, and the politicians of the bourgeoisie have to find ways to contain them. Whipping up chauvinist feelings by Iranians or Americans is one method for doing this, and it is not madness but bourgeois class logic to try.)

There is a certain tragic comedy in the SL's position on Afghanistan. On Iran, the Spartacists claimed that Khomeini was "even more reactionary" than the Shah and criminally chose not to support the mass revolution that overthrew the monarchy. But they had consistently and very often correctly attacked the SWP for backing the policies of Khomeini and the mullahs. We note with interest that they have joined with the SWP over Afghanistan in covering for the Stalinists' hailing of Islamic reaction. For the SWP, a "moderate" revolutionary process is a very good thing. For the SL, the methods don't matter as long as the Russians do it. The techniques and styles differ, but the conclusions of these sister organizations are the same.

"Stabilization" and Imperialism

The SWP and the SL have been rivals ever since the SL split away in the early 1960's, nominally over the degree of degeneration of the Cuban "workers' state." Their alignment today results from the fact that they each capitulate to counterrevolutionary nationalisms, even if different ones. The SL's first loyalty is to Russia because of its advanced, planned economy that typifies order and stability; its anti-capitalism is a middle-class hostility to competition and anarchy, but not to exploitation. This is the nationalism of the world powers, a position the SL arrived at because of its identification with the advanced nations and its disdain for the oppressed. (We have analyzed the most obscene manifestations of this phenomenon in articles on the Spartacists' American chauvinism in *Socialist Voice* Nos. 3 and 8.)

Women and Protective Legislation

The article below, written in July 1977, is an important contribution to the discussion on protective legislation for women workers. It was written for the Internal Bulletin of the Workers Socialist League (WSL) of Great Britain by oppositionists who have since left that centrist organization, Julia Kellett, Steve Murray and BB Walker. It was given to *Socialist Voice* by the authors for re-publication, in the belief that its content deserves wider attention. We agree.

The protective laws are gains won by the working class not only for women but for the proletariat in general. The article argues against the WSL position that the condition of women under capitalism has sufficiently advanced so that gains in this area are less important and can therefore be set aside. We in the U.S. also have to deal with this utopian idea, which is becoming increasingly bizarre as the capitalist crisis proves that the condition of women workers is worsening, not improving.

The attack against protective legislation described in the article is not limited to the bourgeoisie, "socialists" and feminists of Britain. In the U.S. today the proponents of the so-called Equal Rights Amendment blithely dismiss the fact that, in exchange for its admittedly symbolic virtues, the ERA would undermine what protective measures remain on the law books.

In Britain, after the article was written, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) sponsored by the last Labour government issued a report recommending the repeal of legislation that prohibited night work and double day shifts and restricted the total number of hours worked. Further, it advocated equalization of rules for men and women regarding lifting and weights and the relaxation of other working

The SWP, on the other hand, romanticizes bourgeois-nationalist revolutions, especially in the "third world." At a historical conjuncture when the possibilities for national consolidations are fading and the nationalist leaders must make ever greater concessions to imperialism, the SWP finds no alternative but to go along with them: hence its attitude towards Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Iran, Grenada, and now Afghanistan.

Both organizations have substituted nationalism and sectoralism for the proletarian internationalism of Marxists. Stalin's theory of socialism in one country was a way to give a proletarian cover to nationalism. It now requires the cleverer disguise of pseudo-Trotskyism. But it is still bourgeois. In both its "third world" and its Russian form, nationalism leads first to "stabilization" (the goal of Russia, Cuba and every bourgeois ruling class) and then straight into the lap of U.S. imperialism.

Trotsky defended the Soviet Union, he believed, in order to promote revolution. His latter-day misinterpreters defend it in the name of moderation and stability. Trotsky opposed Stalin's invasions because, above all, they disoriented the revolutionary workers. The SL and SWP defend Brezhnev's invasion because they no longer believe in proletarian revolution and are, knowingly or not, dedicated to the bourgeoisie's last gasp at an alternative. The instability the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie are so afraid of is a sign that the proletarian revolution is again moving onto the agenda throughout the world. The pseudo-Trotskyists have done the rising proletariat a service by so publicly declaring their loyalties to the bourgeoisie in advance. ■

conditions affecting women. The Commission acknowledged that there were two alternatives: either repealing the protective laws or extending them to men. It rejected their extension to men on the grounds that this would not be economically viable for employers. Two trade union members of the Commission dissented, arguing for extending the current protective legislation to men.

When the report was published in March 1979, the Trades Union Congress opposed these proposals, but the employers' organization, the Confederation of British Industries, not surprisingly, welcomed them. One of the authors of the article wrote us last fall that "the WSL has yet to comment on the fact that its position is now supported by the CBI and EOC and opposed even by the bureaucrats of the TUC." Likewise in the U.S., the left proponents of the ERA attempt to ignore the support given by the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce, and President Jimmy ("Life is unfair") Carter.

The authors still agree with the essentials of their article although not with every point. We too have certain criticisms. For example, it would have been good to point out that not all protective laws are actually gains; some in our experience have simply been devices to divide the working class without any positive compensation. Or, like the ERA, they wipe out real protective legislation.

As well, in the article the connection between the nature of the bourgeois family and the relationship of women to production is dealt with in such a limited fashion that it allows a variety of interpretations. The question, linked to the origin of women's oppression under capitalism, is not a small one.

We have taken it up in the past and shall return to it again. Neither of these criticisms, however, affects the essence of the article, whose concreteness, insight and scope commends it to the attention of the working class movement. Its discussion of "women's gains" as gains for all workers is particularly striking. Its formulations on the limits of bourgeois-democratic gains and the necessity of socialist revolution are in accord with our own views.

For a fuller discussion of the LRP's views on the ERA and protective legislation we urge readers to refer to *Socialist Action* of November 1978.

In reprinting this article we have made small deletions for reasons of space. We have retained the original British usage. Also, "Cowley" refers to the British Leyland automobile plant in Oxford, England where the WSL is active. The "NC" is the National Committee of the WSL.

Introduction

The April NC meeting voted to endorse a position of applying through the trade unions "in special circumstances" for exemption orders to lift the restrictions preventing women from working on night shifts. The discussion arose from our experience in the Cowley car factories where women are excluded from all but one area of the factory because night work is a condition of employment. The majority of the NC argued that the only "realistic" way women can achieve equal job opportunity at Cowley is by applying for an exemption order.

The comrades writing this Bulletin consider that this position represents a complete break from the *Perspectives for Work Amongst Women* adopted by the National Conference. Such a position not only abandons the entire communist tradition which fought for protective legislation for women workers and stands instead in the camp of the bourgeois feminists, but actually reverses gains hard-won by the working class movement. The comrades who argue for night work are actively fostering the illusion that equality for women can be achieved under capitalism through bourgeois legislation; that legal rights, specifically the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act, can fundamentally alter the social conditions of women. The position adopted by the majority NC is in direct conflict with the method of the Transitional Programme and moves explicitly in the direction of opportunism.

The purpose of this article is to explain the issues involved to the movement as a whole, point out the extensive revisions which flow from this position and develop a way forward in line with the perspectives adopted at the conference.

The Communist Tradition and Protective Legislation

At the outset in the *Perspectives for Work Amongst Women* we take a vital stand against the feminists and revisionists by insisting that women's oppression stems not from "prejudice" nor from lack of "rights" nor from lack of "opportunity" and "choice" but from class society; from the relationship between the bourgeois family and the capitalist mode of production. We wrote:

"The bourgeois family is the most basic social unit of capitalism ... The material basis for women's oppression stems from capital's inability to socialise domestic labour ... It is because women occupy an economically and socially subordinate position in the family that they are

treated as of secondary significance in other areas." (1)

Basing ourselves on this Marxist analysis of women's oppression we draw two important conclusions: firstly that "women are denied full equality in public production." (2) The position women occupy in the family has wide ranging consequences. In practice she is denied full equality in all areas of public life — in public employment, and socially and politically. Secondly:

"Democratic rights alone will not in any event radically alter the social subordination of women, based on their position in the family. Formal legal equality is not social equality." (3)

Inequality before the law is a result of the material position of women in capitalist society and not the cause of social inequality. For this reason real social equality cannot be established through bourgeois legislation. No law can guarantee women real equality of employment, opportunity or "freedom of choice" under capitalism; it can only concede formal equality. Legal rights alone are a shell of supposed equality, masking an actual content of social oppression.

As bourgeois society generates the appearance of being a "natural" and eternal order, so the subordinate position of women appears to be the result of artificial restrictions on their freedom, not of capitalist society. Thus for the bourgeois supporters of women's emancipation, legal reform is the solution to women's oppression. For the communist movement on the other hand, legal reforms only represent concessions extracted from the capitalists by the struggles of the working class and represent gains only when the working class is able to



Demonstration in U.S. carries signs "ERA YES!" and "ERA THE AMERICAN WAY". Under capitalism the American way is to gut protective laws for women workers.

independently defend them. When the communist movement fought for legal reform — equal voting rights, freedom of divorce, etc. — it did so to demonstrate that it was capitalism and not “natural” or legal inequalities that chain women to “domestic slavery.”

The communist movement took as its starting point the actual conditions of working women in capitalist society, which relate not to this or that period of capitalist development or crisis, but to capitalism overall — their situation of social inequality stemming from the family. Working women not only occupy an unequal position in relation to capital, as part of the working class; but also specifically as women they occupy an unequal position in relation to men, based on their subordination in the family. The attitude of the communist movement to protective legislation was premised on an understanding of this specific oppression, which flowed out of an analysis which rooted women’s oppression in the family. It was on this basis that the communist movement distinguished between formal *bourgeois equality* and real *social equality*. This distinction was fundamental to the struggle between the socialist camp and the bourgeois feminists which split them on class lines once and for all.

Protective Legislation

The communist movement argued that working women held a different place in bourgeois society than working men, and therefore needed special protection in industry. There should be no need to add that the campaign for protective legislation went hand-in-hand with a fight to draw women into production, and was in no way based on an acceptance that women should occupy an inferior place in family or public life. What the position did recognise was that the family could not be replaced under capitalism and that women would therefore be brought into production under differing conditions than that of the male worker. They started from the actual conditions working women faced in employment; conditions which are inextricably bound up with women’s position in the family and which will only alter on the basis of a developed socialist economy able to socialise housework.

Kollontai and Lenin maintained the position in favour of protective legislation on this basis *after* the Russian Revolution. Kollontai wrote:

“As opposed to the feminists, the socialists, demanding equal rights for women in state and society, do not shut their eyes to the fact that women’s responsibilities towards the social collective, society, will always be somewhat different to the man’s. The woman is not only an independent worker and citizen — at the same time she is a mother, a bearer of the future. This gives rise to a whole series of special demands, in areas such as women’s labour protection, security for maternity and early childhood, help with the problems of children’s upbringing, reforms in housekeeping and so on.” (4)

The communist movement fought for an understanding that women do occupy a specific social position under capitalism with their confinement to the home — a position of *social inequality*. The Comintern *Theses on Work Amongst Women* adopted at the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921 made this point in the clearest way by arguing that it was necessary to:

“recognise that the functions of motherhood are *social functions*; promoting and supporting

appropriate measures to aid and protect women.”

(5)

It firmly states that the functions of motherhood are *social*, not *natural* or *private*. It argues that because the functions of motherhood were social they in no way accepted that the prime responsibility for child-rearing or housework should rest with the individual woman in a privatised family unit. The thesis insists that the Communist Parties must advance a clear programmatic position on the socialisation of domestic labour and:

“wage a well-planned fight against traditions, bourgeois customs and religion, clearing the way for better and more harmonious relations between the sexes, protecting the moral and physical strength of labouring humanity.” (6)

The demand for protective legislation was a practical recognition that under capitalism the social and cultural development of the working class is thrust onto each private family unit and shouldered by women individually. The theses did *not* accept that the position women had in the home was part of a “natural” order and that protective legislation was a concession *solely for women*, because they were “naturally weaker.” They argued that protection was necessary to protect the standard of life and *social* development of the *whole* working class. The position was taken that protective legislation for women was a gain for all workers, and one that should be *extended* to male workers. Further, the struggle for protective legislation was to be a collective responsibility of the entire working class.

Though the functions of the family cannot assume a *genuinely* social character, and women cannot achieve real social emancipation except on the basis of a planned economy, communists *as a principle* demand that the working class see the functions that women shoulder under capitalism are in fact *social* functions. Communists therefore fight for protective measures as a gain for all workers, and call for the working class to fight every inch for protective legislation to better the social conditions of their class under capitalism.

Lenin realised that household functions do not assume a genuinely social character overnight with the seizure of state power. While social inequality persists within the family, absolute equality of labour conditions does not allow women to occupy the same position as men. It is still representative of a formal equality without a genuinely social content.

“As long as women are engaged in housework their position is still a restricted one. In order to achieve the complete emancipation of women and to make them really equal with men, we must have social economy, and the participation of women in general productive labour. Then women will occupy the same position as men.

“This, of course, does not mean that women must be exactly equal with men in productivity of labour, amount of labour, its duration, *conditions of labour*. But it does mean that women should not be in an oppressed economic position compared with men. You all know that even with the fullest equality women are still in an actual position of inferiority because all the housework is thrust upon them.” (7)

Under capitalism when women are brought into production on terms of equal exploitation with men this inevitably leads not to equality for women but to the double burden of the family and work and to a general deterioration in the conditions of the whole working class. This was the case in the 18th and 19th centuries when nascent capitalism strove to develop a “free” labour market, extending the working day to

extremes and drawing men, women and children into the factory system. The response of the working class was to fight both for restrictions on the working day and for protection for women and children. It was out of this experience that the founding document of the 1st International and Marx firmly advocated both restrictions on the duration of labour and special protection for women:

"A preliminary condition, without which all further attempts at improvement and emancipation must prove abortive, is the limitation of the working day. We propose eight hours work as the legal limit ... all legal restrictions will fail and be broken through by capital if the period of the day during which eight hours must be taken, be not fixed ... Nightwork to be but exceptionally permitted, in trades or branches of trades specified by law. The tendency must be to suppress all nightwork. This ... refers only to adult persons, male or female, the latter however, to be rigorously excluded from all nightwork whatever." (8)

The communists gave their support to protection for female labour not because they considered women naturally unable to work the same hours as men (capitalism itself clearly established this) but as a means to improve the conditions of life of the whole working class. In practice the restriction of hours which women worked acted as a lever to improving the working conditions for all sections. (15) The goal was not to establish freedom for capital to exploit women on a par with men, but to end the joint exploitation of both men and women workers as the only condition in which social equality could be gained.

Protection for women workers was the first demand made by Social Democracy in the 1890s in Germany in the sphere of women's emancipation. The resolution by the Paris International Workers' Congress of 1889 demanded:

"Prohibition of female labour in all branches of industry where the work is particularly damaging to the female organism, the prohibition of night work for women and young workers under the age of 18, the prohibition of such branches of industry and labour processes as are prospectively detrimental to the health of the workers.

"The Congress further declares, that male workers have a duty to take women into their ranks on a basis of equal rights, and demands in principle: equal pay for equal work for workers of both sexes and without distinction as to nationality." (9)

Clara Zetkin at the 1889 Congress opposed protective legislation for women workers on the basis that women would achieve emancipation only if they were exploited in a completely equal manner with men. This was the position of the bourgeois women's movement, which then (as now) saw its goal as the complete legal equality for women *irrespective* of women's unequal oppression in the family and capitalist society as a whole. But in 1892 Zetkin supported the socialist position, that equal rights are not identical with the liberation of women from domestic slavery. She changed her position. This was the basis for the demands proposed by L. Kautsky and supported by Zetkin to the 1893 International Workers Congress in Zurich:

"In view of the fact that the bourgeois women's movement rejects any special legislation to provide legal protection for women on the grounds that it interferes with women's freedom and her equal rights with the male; and that this

movement, therefore, does not, on the one hand, take into account the nature of contemporary society, which is based on the exploitation of the working class, both women as well as men — by the capitalist class; and that it fails on the other, to recognise that through the differentiation of the sexes woman obtains a special role, namely as the mother of the children, which is so important for the future of society, the Zurich Congress declares that it is the duty of the representatives of women workers from all countries to advocate most emphatically legal protection for women workers." (10)

The struggles of the working class movement for restrictions on the length of the working day and for protection for women and children were gains for the working class. They are not gains because they abolish women's oppression under capitalism or establish real equality; but insofar as they are successfully maintained by the working class they defend, against the abuse of capital, a standard of life fought for by workers. Protective legislation is one aspect of the material conditions of the working class today. The bourgeoisie has attempted to erode these gains, to increase the exploitation of the working class. Only the strength of the working class has prevented a return to the decades of the 19th century. Today there is clearly a drive both to lengthen the real working day through the extension of systematic overtime working and to erode and abolish protective legislation, as part of the offensive of the bourgeoisie to "solve" the crisis.

Today's Conditions

In the *Perspectives for Work Amongst Women* our programme for women's emancipation is placed clearly within the context of the crisis of capitalism today. In its frantic attempts to restore profitability, the bourgeoisie is mounting a vicious attack on all the past gains won by the working class with the co-operation of the trade union and social democratic leaders.

Both at work and in the home the attacks of the capitalists fall particularly heavily on women workers who are additionally amongst the lowest paid and poorly organised sections due to their social position. In these conditions the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act, legislation granting women formal equality and implemented by the bourgeois state, not only does not transform women's socially subordinate position or grant women real social equality, but can act as a weapon against the whole working class.

In the *Perspectives* we show how the EPA was designed first of all to head off the demands of women workers, and in the hands of the bureaucracy, is used as a means of introducing job evaluation to the detriment of both male and female workers. We cite this instance (and there are many others) of the use of this supposedly beneficial legislation against the working class, not to conclude in an ultra-left way that the legislation is simply reactionary or worthless or that in no circumstances should we fight for legal reforms. Rather as communists we place no reliance on the bourgeois state to implement reforms and understand that such reforms will only benefit the working class insofar as they arise from the independent struggles of the working class and are implemented on the terms and under the control of the working class.

This means, we know, that the SDA, which "guarantees" equal job opportunity, in practice means no such thing, save to the extent that a principled working class leadership fights for such measures. And beyond that, we know that even then

such a struggle will not *fundamentally* alter the social position of women but will in fact show openly that it is capitalism itself which is the *absolute barrier* to women's social equality.

We stress this point because the comrades in the majority on the NC put a different position in arguing for an exemption order. Protective legislation, they argued, was no longer necessary because:

"The social conditions have now been fundamentally altered by the increase of legal rights conceded by the bourgeoisie to women ... We now have the situation where the EPA and SDA at least have formally conceded equality for women in society." (11)

It is simply astounding that on the basis of this non-Marxist position the comrades advocate relinquishing protective legislation.

Though the NC adopted the position of applying for exemption orders in "exceptional circumstances," there is no doubt that this position has general implications. At Cowley the introduction of the EPA has made jobs traditionally reserved for women open and attractive to men because wages have been raised, thus threatening to drive women out of the workforce. Women are prevented from applying for jobs in other areas of the factory because night work is a condition of employment. This is no exceptional circumstance. In hundreds of other engineering factories similar conditions apply and the employers are themselves considering applying for exemption orders. It should be no surprise to us that formal equality has the effect of setting men against women workers in competition for jobs.

But the conclusion drawn by the NC majority — that protective legislation should be abolished because it is a restriction on women's freedom to compete with men for jobs — is a false one. It would benefit the employer. As we noted in the *Perspectives* there are two conflicting tendencies at work: on the one hand the capitalists want to disguise the effect of redundancies by thrusting them onto women, and on the other they would like to replace male labour with cheap female labour. (12)

Night Work

The proposal of the NC majority that we assist an erosion of protective legislation by arguing for women to go on nights is a step which will attack the conditions won to benefit all workers. There is no half-way house. We cannot accept the abolition of protective legislation in one factory and expect it to stop there. We either maintain and extend protective legislation to include male workers or we throw the baby out with the bath water — we throw away all protective legislation. The article in *Socialist Press* No. 60 only drew out the logic of this position when it warmly greeted news that a woman had applied to work on a coalface in the mines. The Equal Opportunities Commission established under the SDA is extremely likely to recommend in its report on protective legislation at least a major "relaxation" of protection for women.

Of course the NC majority argue that once women are brought into the factory (under conditions where the gains of protective legislation have been jettisoned) there will then exist the best conditions to fight for women's rights:

"There can be no better way to raise the question of women's oppression and sexist attitudes than by the entry of women themselves in force into these spheres of employment and so into the powerful engineering unions." (13)



Arab women at work. Social gains cannot give equality under capitalism.

That is like shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. *Must women first surrender the one concrete measure for their protection extracted from capitalism, in order then to fight for women's rights?* Indeed one of the measures that it is proposed to fight for is "improved conditions for compassionate reasons for a worker to be exempted from night-shift" — a gain women already have! To say that this provides the "best conditions" for struggling for women's rights is simply to deny that women have a specific social oppression.

Of course it is progressive for women to be brought into the labour force and for them to struggle together with male workers as part of the working class. But the NC majority argue that the "best conditions" are where women are drawn into production on the basis of *equality of labour conditions*. What sort of "unity" is this? This "unity" refuses to fight for a recognition that there are social inequalities between men and women workers. This does not establish unity on a principled basis because it refuses to tackle the political backwardness of male workers — instead it adapts to it. If social conditions were indeed the same for men and women workers, the NC majority would of course be correct because the problem would not be the specific material oppression of women but merely a residue of sexist attitudes.

This is a reformist position. It argues the only realistic way to bring women into the labour force is under conditions which are "realistic" for the capitalists who employ them. The comrades forget that historically capitalism has drawn women into the labour force in a contradictory way. It couples a progressive step — drawing women out of the home — with a reactionary one — heightening their specific oppression. It implies that the material basis of women's oppression is already ended, since women's social position has *fundamentally* altered, and all that is required is for workers to unite against capitalism. Since the position is an outright denial that women have a different social position than men in production, it says that all protective legislation is unnecessary.

The majority comrades do not want to go the whole hog.

They cling to an untenable position. They insist that they are arguing against protection for women only in "special circumstances," limited at the moment to Cowley. What are these special circumstances? — they are that the contract of employment specifies night work. But what is it that justifies our accepting an employers "right" to impose that condition of employment, especially when it is well-known that even most male workers prefer not to do night work! The NC majority are proposing that, rather than wage a political fight against the backwardness of male workers, we exchange protective legislation for participation in the workforce for women. This denies the need for a *revolutionary* struggle both to draw women into the workforce, and to ensure that this is done on the basis of recognising their specific oppression.

But in the end the NC majority pull back from the consequences of their position. That is why they conclude by calling for 24-hour nurseries. This demand, with which we agree, is in no way a "concession" for women workers, but is part of our general programme to benefit the conditions of the whole of the working class. But in the hands of the majority it becomes a *substitute* for raising at the outset the fight for special provision, including the defence of protective legislation as a gain for *all* workers, of which the demand for 24-hour nurseries is a part.

Programme

In our view the NC majority position represents both a rejection in practice of the *Perspectives for Work Amongst Women*, which clearly argues that the special position of women workers has to be recognised in our programme, and a break with the method of the Transitional Programme.

By refusing to defend protective legislation and by implying that legal reform can end women's social inequality, they take a reformist position contradicted by a principled record on similar issues.

The extension of overtime working today is an attempt to lengthen the working day and increase absolute surplus-value. The decline in real wages forces workers to do overtime. We do not regard this as progressive, and argue principled opposition to all overtime working. Instead, we fight for an adequate wage based on the demand "sliding scale of wages" and expose the myth that a worker has a "free" choice on whether to do overtime or not. The bourgeoisie, despite the existence of legislation limiting the hours workers labour, through an attack on the wages of the working class, are increasing the length of the working day behind the screen of overtime. For these reasons the WSL, as a question of principle, opposes overtime in the workers' movement.

We have consistently opposed the position of the bourgeois feminists in the National Abortion Campaign who claim that the legal right to an abortion will give women the "right to choose." The formal legal right to abortion in no way gives women a real *social* freedom to choose whether or not to have children. This is why we have fought not simply for the legal right to abortion but for the social provision for free abortion through an expanded National Health Service, family planning facilities, provision of nurseries, etc., linked to other class questions. We argue explicitly that legal reforms cannot abolish the social basis for women's oppression and guarantee women a real choice. In a class society the "right to choose" — to determine one's social position — is limited by capitalism. Our position, of linking democratic demands to the demands of the transitional programme, avoids coun-

terposing democratic demands to a maximum programme. *Only if democratic demands are separated from a revolutionary programme will they necessarily have a reformist content. Similarly, the fight for protective legislation does not in itself lead to a position of arguing that legal reforms can substantially alter the position of women or the working class, if they are advanced and argued for within a revolutionary framework.*

Workers see overtime as a "realistic" way to make up real wages. Our positions, on the other hand, do not begin with what is "realistic" or "practical" under capitalism at a given moment, but are concerned to win workers to an independent defence of their conditions. The immediate issue of equal job opportunity at Cowley should not blind us to the programmatic issues involved. *By accepting, for pragmatic reasons, that a group of workers hitherto exempt from night work should now be made eligible we potentially weaken all sections of workers in the fight to abolish night work altogether.*

The method of the Transitional Programme begins with the present consciousness and conditions of the working class, but does not adapt to them. The demands form a bridge between today's conditions and consciousness and the "Socialist programme of the revolution." This means that we argue the right to employment on terms advantageous to the entire working class, not on the terms and conditions imposed by capital. Jobs for the unemployed, the sliding scale of hours and wages, the demand to re-open disused factories, set out in our Youth Perspectives, are all such demands. We are not accepting the "choice" between redundancies or the viability of a firm, between maintaining social services or putting private industry first, between import controls or the dole, or between protective legislation or jobs.

The example of the struggle at Fords Dagenham in 1968 by women workers' for equal pay is a case in point. The Fords management sought to make equal pay for equal work dependent on equal working conditions — i.e., that for women to gain equal pay they should accept shift work. The Ford women refused to "choose" between equal pay with equal working conditions or low wages. They won their struggle for equal pay for equal work *without these strings attached*. Employers elsewhere will take advantage of exemption orders and argue that equality of job opportunities and pay should be accompanied by equality of working conditions. Thus the very victory of the women at Fords nine years ago is jeopardised by the position we have taken at Cowley!

It is on the basis of our general position on women adopted by the National Conference that we advance the following programme on the night work issue. In our *Perspectives for Work Amongst Women* we make the struggle for workers control central to the fight to involve both working women and housewives in the fight of the whole working class against capitalism. But this involvement is not on the basis of relegating their specific oppression to the sidelines. Workers control is a practical recognition of how to fight for women's rights in the context of advancing the social conditions of all workers. We demand, for instance, the implementation of equal pay for equal work by elected committees of workers, and for the conditions of, and the right to employment of women workers to be under the control of workers committees. We explicitly argue:

"Only by linking the fight for women's emancipation to the struggle for workers control, the core of the Transitional Programme, can we raise practically the question of what type of

democracy and what type of state can create the social conditions for their liberation. It is the recognition that the involvement of women in organs of workers control can *begin to undermine their social subordination in the family* that distinguishes our analysis from every left-posturing current in the workers' movement." (14)

We actually relate the fight for control over all spheres of life by the working class to the struggle to "undermine the social subordination of women in the family." Though the control by the working class begins with production, it simultaneously encroaches into all areas of social life, including the family. It is the way we combine the participation of women in the fight for control and make provision for specific demands relating to women included in the general demands of the working class, which differentiates our position from the bourgeois feminists and revisionists. One obvious example of this is the fight to maintain and extend all social services under the management of workers committees; a demand which has direct bearing on the family and the position of women within the family unit.

We make the fight to bring women into production part of the struggle of the working class to control its social conditions as a whole. *We oppose on principle the lifting of protective legislation in industry and demand that women be taken onto all categories of jobs without giving up that protection.* We oppose the application for an exemption order, but still argue that women be employed in all areas of the factory.

To win the support of male workers on this issue we have to fight for an understanding of the specific oppression of women — their dual burden at home and at work — and argue for protection as part of the gains of the entire workforce. *We absolutely oppose, in line with this, that more men work nights as a consequence of women being employed on permanent days in all areas of the factory.* This is an important weapon in the fight to abolish night work for men as well.

We do not regard exemption as a concession solely to

women. This is why *we should argue immediately that all men in a similar social position (as single parents) or with major responsibility for the family, sick relatives, etc., are exempted too.* We show that protection is a social question, and is an integral part of the conditions of life which affect the entire working class. To implement this: we have already called for committees to be elected from all union branches to monitor the implementation of equal pay and opportunity. *These committees must also be responsible for laying down grounds for exemption from night work. Their conclusions are to be referred to management but monitored by the same committee.*

We should struggle immediately for nursery facilities, not as compensation for acceptance of night work, but in relation to the social needs of the workforce. This will be in relation to an assessment of the requirement of both day and night shifts and irrespective of whether it is the husband or wife who is employed at the factory. There should be a resolution put to all union branches that they should assess how nursery facilities should be run and organised. The nursery should be completely funded by British Leyland but managed by the workers.

None of these demands is solely applicable to Cowley. *As part of a general fight for equal job opportunity we demand more jobs — through public works programmes, expansion of the public services, and nationalisation. We do not make employment dependent on factories running 24 hours.* The crisis these demands put on the individual employer and the bourgeois state are not our concern any more than the difficulties an individual employer faces when we refuse to accept redundancies and demand "work sharing on full pay": Let the bosses as a whole pay for the right of all workers to have a job. It is not our concern whether the bosses can make a profit!

We consider it an urgent matter that the membership reject the NC majority's position on this question. It is opposed absolutely to the traditions of the Communist Movement and has far-reaching consequences for the working class.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Perspectives for Work Amongst Women*, pg. 2, *Trotskyism Today*, no. 13
2. *ibid.*, pg. 3
3. *ibid.*, pg. 3
4. *Women Workers Struggle for Their Rights*, pg. 16, Kollantai
5. *Comintern Theses on Women*, 1921, published in *Workers Power*, no. 4, pg. 24
6. *ibid.*
7. *Women and Society*, Lenin, 1919
8. *The First International and After*, Marx, pg. 87-8
9. *The Emancipation of Women*, Thonnessen, pg. 40
10. *ibid.*, pg. 50
11. "Should We Argue for an Exemption in British Leyland (The Case in Favour)," presented to the NC by Gill Blackwell, pg. 2
12. In the *Perspectives* we argue on pg. 2 that "In times of crisis there is often a counteracting tendency for male labour to be replaced by cheap female labour." We discuss this in relation to the experience of the 1930s when the employers did displace male with female labour. The employers' ability to impose the conditions on the working class was related to the general defeats of the workers' movement in the 1926 General Strike. The employers today confront a strong and determined

working class but already are attempting to attack labour conditions and social gains of the working class. The lengthening of the working day through overtime, the expansion of shift working, especially the twilight shift amongst women, cuts in social services, name but a few. The erosion of protective legislation would be eagerly grasped by the employers as a means to employ advantageously women in worsening conditions and to use this as a stick to attack all sections of workers.

13. *Socialist Press* No. 60, "Open up Jobs to Women," pg. 10

14. *Perspectives for Work Amongst Women*, pg. 3

15. The early struggle of the working class to restrict hours of work in factories took the form at first of a campaign by both men and women to improve working conditions of women and children. This was done with the full realisation that protection for women and children was the first step towards improving conditions for the whole working class. Marx in *Capital, Vol. 1*, pg. 268-9 discusses this question. He quotes from the Factory Act of 1844-5 with a touch of irony, an observation made by an official: "No instances have come to my knowledge of adult women having expressed any regret at their rights being thus interfered with." He adds "One of the first consequences was that in practice the working day of the adult male became subject to the same limitations." ■

Never has the U.S. left been so united. When Jimmy Carter proposed introducing registration for a future military draft on January 23, the whole radical spectrum responded with one voice: "No Draft!" Registration, however, was just one item in the "Carter doctrine" of stepped-up militarism and Cold War rhetoric that the President adopted in response to the tumultuous events in Iran and Afghanistan. And the left, ranging from social democrats and pacifists to Maoists, ex-Maoists and pseudo-Trotskyists, was as divided as ever in its attitude towards the traditional questions of revolution and imperialist policy. But Carter, that apostle of harmony among peoples, had only to speak from his Presidential pulpit and unity was born.

It wasn't just the left, of course. A layer of reactionary Congressmen objected to the draft on the grounds that it was a diversion from building up a powerful voluntary army. Another layer of liberal politicians agreed, differing mainly over what amount of money and what weaponry the armed forces should get. This lineup has now been joined by the voice of the "Eastern Establishment," the *New York Times*. There are also right-wing libertarian groups, one of which carried a giant banner at the March 22 anti-draft march in Washington proclaiming, "The Draft is the Ultimate Socialism: Nationalization of Human Beings."

Yet despite all this political muscle and variety, most of which is conscientiously opposed to socialism in any form, the organizational mainstays of the self-styled anti-draft "movement" are the multi-hued socialists. They include the pro-U.S. Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), the pro-Russia Communist Party and Workers World Party, the pro-China Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) and Revolutionary Workers Headquarters, the pseudo-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party and Spartacist League, the ex-pro-China Revolutionary Communist Party and Progressive Labor Party and the ex-pseudo-Trotskyist International Socialists and Revolutionary Socialist League. If any group is missing from this list it is merely an accident. Except for ourselves, whose omission is a deliberate political act.

Under Capitalism Draft Inevitable

The League for the Revolutionary Party maintains a totally distinct position on conscription, the classical Bolshevik one. We oppose *all* bourgeois armed forces, voluntary or conscripted. ("Not one man, not one penny for the bourgeois army!") Therefore we give no support to Carter's registration campaign. But as Lenin and Trotsky (as well as Marx and Engels in an earlier epoch) frequently pointed out, a disarmed imperialist state — a state without its essence, the army — is not only a contradiction in terms but an absurdity in reality.

Since the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state in the U.S. is not an immediate alternative, we are faced with an inescapable, practical choice. Like Lenin and Trotsky under such circumstances, we prefer a conscripted army to a voluntary, mercenary one since a mass army trains the working class militarily for its survival in the class struggle and its future revolutionary tasks. So long as capitalism continues to exist mass conscripted armies are inevitable. The real question will be: under whose control, that of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat? That is why *we do not campaign against draft registration*, since this can only foster pacifist illusions. In practice it also lends support to the only existing alternative, what the ruling class wants and needs if only for the

Marxism and A Reply to the Socialists



Russian revolutionary soldiers in 1917. Worker and peasant control of the army. Events proved correct Lenin's hostility to the bourgeoisie in order to turn the imperialist war into a class war. The army was to be controlled by the masses by the state.

time being, a mercenary army. Capitalism will be forced to create a mass conscripted army by its own logic of development. However, at this juncture the bourgeoisie prefers the less risky voluntary force to carry out its imperialist needs.

In the introduction to our recent pamphlet "*No Draft! Is No Answer! The Communist Position on Stopping Imperialist War*," the LRP explained:

and the Draft Social-Pacifist SWP



peasant conscripts shattered government control
to pacifism. He hailed militarization of the masses
His military program centered on arms training

"With the rise of war fever ... actions against imperialism are vitally important. Bolsheviks must work in united actions with anybody and everybody willing to fight against the deeds of imperialism. We march with anyone to stop government attacks on U.S. workers. We do not demand political agreement from those we march with. But Bolsheviks cannot join in a 'movement'

that stands for a pro-imperialist, anti-working class policy.

" 'No Draft' is no answer to the preparations for war by the bourgeoisie. 'No Draft,' in fact, is a slogan that paves the way to the same disaster. The working class revolutionary party, at the head of the masses, is the only movement capable of ending imperialism — the highest stage of capitalism and the source of war."

This is a period for the preparation of an international imperialist war. It must be turned into a period of preparation for an international civil war between classes. Therefore it must become a period of preparation for the revolutionary international of social revolution and, in particular, its American section.

Proletarian Military Policy

Our contention that the anti-draft protests are in practice pro-imperialist and anti-working class is an application, under different circumstances, of the position Leon Trotsky urged on the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party in 1940, a position known as the "proletarian military policy." (Much of Trotsky's reasoning can be found in the excerpts from articles and letters reprinted in the above-mentioned LRP pamphlet. The complete documents are in the Pathfinder Press book, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)*, and page references for quoted passages will be to this book.)

Writing at a time when the second imperialist world war was already under way in Europe and Asia and would inevitably force the United States to take up arms, Trotsky maintained that revolutionaries had to favor conscription and universal military training without in any way entrusting the working-class conscripts to the bourgeois state. He advised "not to fight against the necessity of the workers being good soldiers and of building up an army based on discipline, science, strong bodies and so on, including conscription, but against the capitalist state which abuses the army for the advantage of the exploiting class." (page 321)

Once conscription was adopted by the bourgeois state, it would be necessary to concentrate revolutionary efforts on seeing that workers secured the proper military training. This meant a campaign for trade union control by which communists would try to separate the workers' interests from the capitalists': "a program of education, of workers' schools, of workers' officers, devoted to the welfare of the worker army, etc. We cannot escape from the militarization but inside the machine we can observe the class line." (page 333) And he summarized:

"The great majority of the workers understand or feel that these means (professional voluntary armament) are outdated from a military point of view and extremely dangerous from a class point of view. That is why the workers are for conscription. It is a very confused and contradictory form of adhering to the 'arming of the proletariat.' We do not flatly reject this great historical change, as do the sectarians of all kinds. We say 'Conscription? Yes. But made by ourselves.' It is an excellent point of departure." (page 392)

It was a point of departure for Trotsky because he knew that in the coming wartime conditions the SWP would need to add a military program to its revolutionary transitional slogans in order to win the ear of the working class. Our position today is

different in that war is not now inevitable, so we raise workers' control over conscription not as an agitational demand but only as revolutionary policy for future situations. The line of the SWP, however, has changed unrecognizably. This is not because times have changed but because the SWP has abandoned every vestige of Trotskyism except the name. Nevertheless, in contrast with the other pseudo-Trotskyists, it has uncharacteristically attempted to justify its anti-conscription work in Leninist and Trotskyist terms. This was the purpose of an article by David Frankel, "The Proletarian Military Policy Today," in *Intercontinental Press* of April 14.

This article purports to answer questions "posed today by some liberal civil-libertarians, trade-union officials, and feminists, as well as by prodraft propagandists in the capitalist media." Or so Frankel says at the start, indicating that he will be taking up the arguments of a pretty respectable bunch. But when he gets down to the actual questions, it emerges that the first three of these have been posed not by various liberals but by socialists, using distinctly leftist terminology:

"One objection that has been raised to the demand to end the draft is that a volunteer army is somehow a more reliable instrument for the ruling class than one composed of conscripts. A related argument is that socialists should be in favor of military training for the working class, therefore they should favor conscription over a volunteer army. Finally, there is the argument that conscription is somehow more 'democratic' because otherwise only the poor will be forced to enlist due to economic pressures."

The last of these arguments is attributed to the social-democrat Michael Harrington. But the first two, the ones that appeal to genuine socialist opponents of the ruling class, are presented anonymously. Since to our knowledge we are the only ones who have raised these issues, we can only assume that the article is in part a hidden polemic against our views. And we are not the sort of people who let such opportunities go by unseized. Frankel's criticism will consequently get the response that it deserves.

Frankel makes an elaborate attempt to "update" Trotsky in order to match the SWP's line today. His problem is how to get from a position Trotsky described as "militarist" (page 257) to one that amounts to pacifism. This cannot be accomplished at one leap, so he does it by successive restatements, each slightly worse than the one before.

He begins with the requisite nod to Trotskyist revolutionism: workers will have to defend themselves militarily against bourgeois attacks in order to make their revolution. The eventual goal must be a workers' militia. He then asserts, "Proletarian military policy is not based primarily on an approach to the capitalist army." After this sinks in for a while, the same thought is restated in a somewhat more unconditional fashion: "It is primarily through the trade unions and other mass organizations of the working class — and not the army — that the actual process of arming the masses is carried out" (emphasis added). Finally, a couple of pages later on, the idea reappears in absolute form: he refers to "... the need to oppose a military coup or for the working class to arm itself (tasks which must be carried out through the unions, not the army) ..." (emphasis added).

By this point, Frankel has succeeded in posing Trotsky's actual proletarian military policy as a conjunctural tactic entirely subordinate to the idea that the trade unions are the central organizations for arming the masses and the future militia. And isn't it actually true that Marxists believe the

workers and the unions are more central to revolution than soldiers and the army? It is, of course, at the highest level of generality, where the question is to develop working-class consciousness in broad areas of social life. But the unions are not necessarily more important for the specific tasks of the arming and military training of the working class.

Unions vs. Army

Frankel makes the argument that it was the workers who took the initiative in the Russian revolution of 1917, which in turn had its impact on the army. True enough, but it cannot be ignored that the army was an important source of revolutionary strength, military knowledge and arms for the workers — and that these factors had a reciprocal impact in aiding the revolution. So much so, in fact, that it is inconceivable for a communist to make Frankel's statement that arming the working class "must be carried out through the unions, not the army." Is it possible that Frankel has forgotten the key role in the revolution as a whole, the insurrectionary process and the civil war played by the Kronstadt sailors and the Lettish riflemen?

It was not just the Bolsheviks' success in winning over sections of the armed forces that enabled the revolution to succeed. Even Frankel admits that success came in part from "the Bolsheviks' patient propaganda work aimed at the soldiers," work that helped undermine the army when it was called upon to defend the state of the Czar and his successors. The "patient propaganda work" recalls a fact that Frankel otherwise ignores; namely, that Trotsky's militarist strategy during World War II was based on Lenin's, which proved successful in World War I. Lenin's strategy was not just to propagandize among the soldiers but to utilize conscription in order to arm and train the working class; we will cite his explanation for this at a later point.

But Frankel then implies that a working-class military strategy directed toward the armed forces would have only a reformist content since the army must be shattered, not reformed. "A strategy aimed at somehow taking over the tsar's capitalist army — rather than shattering it and destroying its usefulness to the rulers — would have been bound to fail."

Because the SWP conducted its army work during the Vietnam war on a reformist basis it believes that this is the only possible way. Communists think differently. The shattering of the Czarist army (including "taking over" whole sections) was the result of the actions of worker-soldiers allied with the masses of peasant soldiers fighting the bourgeoisie and officers. For the workers do not belong only to unions; they also man the army (and in far greater proportion in the U.S. today than in the Russia of 1917). Frankel's convenient identification of the working class with the trade unions alone is alien to the method of Lenin and Trotsky.

Nor is the working class outside of the army confined to the trade unions. There is no question that unions are the strongest working class organizations in the U.S. today and therefore key to revolutionary activity. (The modern-day SWP discovered this fact only recently, when it finally decided that the campus radicalization of the 1960's wasn't permanent and sent its members into factory jobs; it now has learned to play the role of shop-worn "labor movement" types, at least for this season.) Unions, however, tend in capitalist society not to enroll the majority of workers and to exclude large sections of the most oppressed. Such layers play a vital and volatile role in working-class struggles, precisely during revolutionary

upheavals when they above all have little to lose and are willing to go furthest in order to win. The military training of the non-unionized workers will clearly not be carried out through the unions; moreover, the same workers are likely to be overrepresented in the army, drafted or not, especially in periods of high unemployment. To rely only on "the unions, not the army" for the military training of the working-class masses is indeed an idea that is "bound to fail."

In identifying the working class with the unions and in effect counterposing the workers to the soldiers, Frankel is playing games with revolution and history. Workers' consciousness is forged in the unions in a central way, but it is not forged by constricting the unionists to act without making demands on state power. That was the position of the "economists," the union reformists of early 20th-century Russia whom Lenin opposed. Trotsky's demand for trade union control over military schools in the armed forces was a way of expanding the class consciousness of the workers in the unions into making a fight for state power.

When communists argue for a mass workers' army as opposed to the present bourgeois army, we explain the need for a workers' militia as essential for a workers' state. Communists do not demand that the unions nationalize the monopolies; we argue that union workers (as well as others) should demand that the unions fight for nationalization by the state. (See "Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program," in *Socialist Voice* No. 8.) Likewise we do not call simply for a trade union militia. We do raise the idea of armed defense guards and pickets for the unions to carry out. These are embryos of the future workers' militia, as are other embryos organized by the revolutionary party and by organizations of the oppressed. The actual workers' militia, however, will be created at the point of revolution; it, not the unions, will itself be the fount of state power.

The counterposition of unions to the army in the Russian revolution is a complete fraud because institutions that far transcended the unions and cut across Frankel's union-army dichotomy served as the basis for the revolution and its armed force. Contrary to Frankel's implication, there was no trade-union army in Russia, but there was a *soviet* army. The mass united front institutions at the base of the revolution, the soviets, included workers from the unions and from the army as well as unorganized workers and many peasants. The revolutionary vanguard, the Bolsheviks, also bridged these various layers (except, in general, the peasants) and was the decisive element in carrying the revolution through. The impetus that enabled the revolution to shatter the army was not a product of union militias but of the consciousness of the need to fight for state power, formed only in part through the unions. In the end it was the Bolshevik program that was decisive, and that was an all-rounded social program stressing state power (and including conscription!), not a trade-union program.

Is Conscription Obsolete?

There is another side to the question of military training that Frankel does not deal with. Trotsky's 1940 writings show that he was concerned that workers learn the use not only of hand weapons but of all the tools of the military trade, including ships and airplanes:

"We do not wish to permit the bourgeoisie to drive untrained or half-trained soldiers at the last hour onto the battlefield. We demand that

the state immediately provide the workers and the unemployed with the possibility of learning how to handle the rifle, the hand grenade, the machine gun, the cannon, the airplane, the submarine, and the other tools of war. Special military schools are necessary in close connection with the trade unions so that the workers can become skilled specialists of the military art, able to hold posts as commanders." (pages 221-2)

Today we would have to add all the modern technological and nuclear weapons as well. If the working class is to make a revolution in any of the advanced industrial countries, this knowledge is absolutely necessary. The bourgeoisie is not about to give up (or forget how to use) its nuclear weapons. In order to neutralize and win over the army, the proletariat has to demonstrate credible force — that is an axiom of revolution. And that requires training in battlefield strategy and advanced weapons. Small arms training is conceivable on a trade union level, along with the tactics to be used against the "goons, cops and fascist bands" that the SWP warns us about in an internal resolution cited by Frankel. (Of course, the SWP in practice never demands that the unions arm themselves nor warns the workers of the need to arm.) However, the depth of military knowledge needed to undermine and win over the soldiers of a modern army is beyond the capacity of a trade union.

For communists, it must be axiomatically understood that the world is fraught with the danger of imperialist war. Such a war is not inevitable today only because there is yet time for a future revolution to head it off. Lenin and Trotsky believed that only revolution could stop capitalism's drive toward war, and even the SWP isn't quite ready to deny that yet. If so, all the differences that can be cited between 1940 and now do not obviate the need for arms and training for the workers in the most advanced forms of warfare. All over the world the bourgeoisie knows and the workers are coming to understand that military power will be decisive as the continuation of politics by other means. Either war or revolution demands mass armies. In this situation to engage in pacifist attacks on armies in general is to disarm the workers, and no one else. Frankel is intent on reducing Trotsky's 1940 program to a matter of momentary tactics that no longer makes sense. He argues that Trotsky based his position not to oppose conscription on the grounds that he shared the workers' desire to combat Hitler. Times have changed, says the SWP. The U.S. army is not engaged in fighting fascism but has since turned to "waging colonial wars against the Korean and Indochinese peoples." Therefore, "demands for proper training and equipment, for training of troops under the direction of the trade unions, and for the election of worker-officers were clearly not applicable."

Why not? Frankel is simply proving that he does not understand a most fundamental question of Leninism. Just because Trotsky found a point of contact with workers based upon their mutual desire to destroy Hitler doesn't mean that he welcomed the war aims of the U.S. ruling class. The Second World War for the U.S. was an imperialist war to redivide the world, a war that Marxists could not support any more than they could the colonial wars to subordinate Korea and Vietnam. Furthermore, does Frankel really think that Trotsky wanted American workers to be well-trained in order to prevent them from becoming cannon fodder, but didn't want the same training for German, Italian and Japanese workers? No, he was a genuine internationalist and advocated the same

position everywhere during World War II, not just in the U.S. Thus the last passage quoted appears not in a letter focusing on specifically American conditions but in the *Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution*, a document addressed to all workers. What the SWP today finds "clearly not applicable" to imperialist wars is a fundamental position of Trotskyism.

In addition, Frankel must be aware that Lenin advocated the same conscription policy for Russia's workers under Czarism, second to none in its oppression of nations, even though he had a policy of revolutionary defeatism in Russia.

So much for the inapplicability today of the proletarian military policy. We have only to add that the SWP at least does the service of openly discarding this Bolshevik attitude towards conscription. The Spartacist League also rejects the proletarian military policy and goes even further than the SWP: it believes that it was wrong during World War II as well as now. But it will be a long wait before the SL ever takes the responsibility of trying to disprove Trotsky's line by arguing that it was social-chauvinist — a characterization they make of the position today.

Conscript vs. Mercenary Army

Frankel also takes up the objection that the ruling class considers a voluntary army more reliable. He has two answers to this: one, that in fact the bourgeois preference is the opposite; two, that it doesn't matter. These two replies are not exactly consistent with each other, but the logical lapse is immaterial since both answers are wrong.

Frankel begins the first answer by pointing out that the bourgeoisie has been debating the question for years. "The basic problem that they face," he states, "is that *any mass combat force must be drawn from the ranks of the working class, and will be unreliable because of that.*" One reason for this, he adds, is that the high proportion of black soldiers in the volunteer army has given the military brass trouble. Frankel winds up this reasoning with the assertion that because the bourgeoisie has decided to move towards a draft, that is the form of army that they prefer. "The task of socialists now is to join in and build the mass movement against the draft, not to speculate about whether the ruling class is defending its interests in the most efficient way."

It is absolutely true that a mercenary army can cause the bourgeoisie problems because it, like a conscript army, is recruited from the lower classes. History has shown many instances of mercenary armies revolting against their masters or otherwise getting out of hand. Such revolts, however, have generally occurred in the form of coups (despite Frankel's sneering at the idea), not revolutions. Soviets and other kinds of workers' councils have often developed in mass conscript armies but never, to our knowledge, in mercenary ones. This is by no means surprising. Who, after all, is more likely to develop class consciousness: a volunteer who serves the bourgeoisie for patriotism or for pay, or a worker dragooned along with his entire generation into the army?

In the U.S., it is also true that the bourgeoisie has had particular trouble with its volunteer army because of the high percentage of blacks who are dissatisfied with conditions both in the army and out. But the army of draftees was worse from that standpoint. In 1972 the government abandoned the drafted army in the face of numerous rebellions in Vietnam, including officer killings and sabotage. That is why Carter's real program is not an immediate introduction of the draft but

the beefing up of the present mercenary army. (Despite Frankel's assertion that a draft is imminent, Carter's registration call was meant to soften up public opinion for a future draft by exorcising the anti-war sentiment still evident among workers — as well as to threaten Russia.)

Carter's actual military program for imperialism rests upon building a larger Rapid Deployment Force, designed to send up to 100,000 marines and paratroopers (together with tanks and planes) to smash any anti-imperialist outbreak. This plan also means a greater concentration upon nuclear and technologically advanced weaponry for use by the strengthened voluntary army. To succeed, it requires better educated and more highly skilled mercenaries. Naturally, the government will see to it that the proportion of blacks goes down.

Frankel bases his claim that the bourgeoisie prefers a draft on quotations from *New York Times* articles in 1979. The *Times* had indeed favored a draft, but it no longer is certain. And it no longer likes Carter's registration proposal. In an editorial published on April 30 of this year, it dismisses the bill going through Congress to register 19- and 20-year-old men: "Hardly anyone, in fact, claims very much for the measure except that rejecting it seems somehow unpatriotic." It makes the point that "... registering, without even examining, a few million peripatetic youths will hardly add much to preparedness." And an article in the same paper indicates the views of the liberal anti-draft politicians (as well as their reactionary colleagues, who support registration but don't see it as the answer now). Senator Charles Mathias opposed the bill on the grounds that "registration would not be a cure-all for military manpower shortages. The principal need, he said, is to provide sufficient incentive, including higher pay, to retain volunteers," according to the *Times*.

Frankel, in any case, abandons the argument that the bourgeoisie prefers draftees and urges socialists "not to speculate" about such matters. He thereby calls our attention to the case he has prepared earlier in his article for neutrality between forms of the bourgeois army: "Choosing between conscription and a volunteer army is like choosing between the death penalty and the capitalist prison system. Socialists oppose them both."

Form vs. Content

This may sound very radical but it has nothing to do with Bolshevism. Of course Marxists "oppose them both," but in the absence of the immediate alternative of the socialist revolution, we have preferences. Even the SWP has them. For example, the SWP has campaigned against conscription but not against the volunteer army. And it has campaigned against capital punishment but never to close down the prisons. If Frankel were to be taken at his word, he would be advocating disarmament along with the equally ridiculous pacifist notion that the bourgeois state can do without prisons. Fortunately, Lenin pointed out repeatedly that hiding from the real world of the capitalist state doesn't abolish it: "Disarmament means simply running away from unpleasant reality, not fighting it." As long as the bourgeois state exists it will have its army and prison system. Frankel is merely expressing his preference for a mercenary army, just as Bolsheviks express theirs for conscription.

Frederick Engels described this preference explicitly in his article, "The Prussian Military Question and the German Workers' Party," published in 1865. Concerning a

reorganization of the Prussian army, he wrote:

"The German proletariat ... is completely indifferent as to how many soldiers the Prussian state needs in order to continue to survive as a great power. Whether the reorganization increases the military burden or not will not make much difference to the working class as a class. On the other hand, it is by no means indifferent as to whether universal military service is fully introduced. The more workers who are trained in the use of weapons, the better. Universal conscription is the necessary and natural extension of universal suffrage; it enables the electorate to carry out its resolutions arms in hand against any coup that might be attempted.

"The ever more complete introduction of military service is the only aspect of the Prussian army reorganization which interests the German working class."

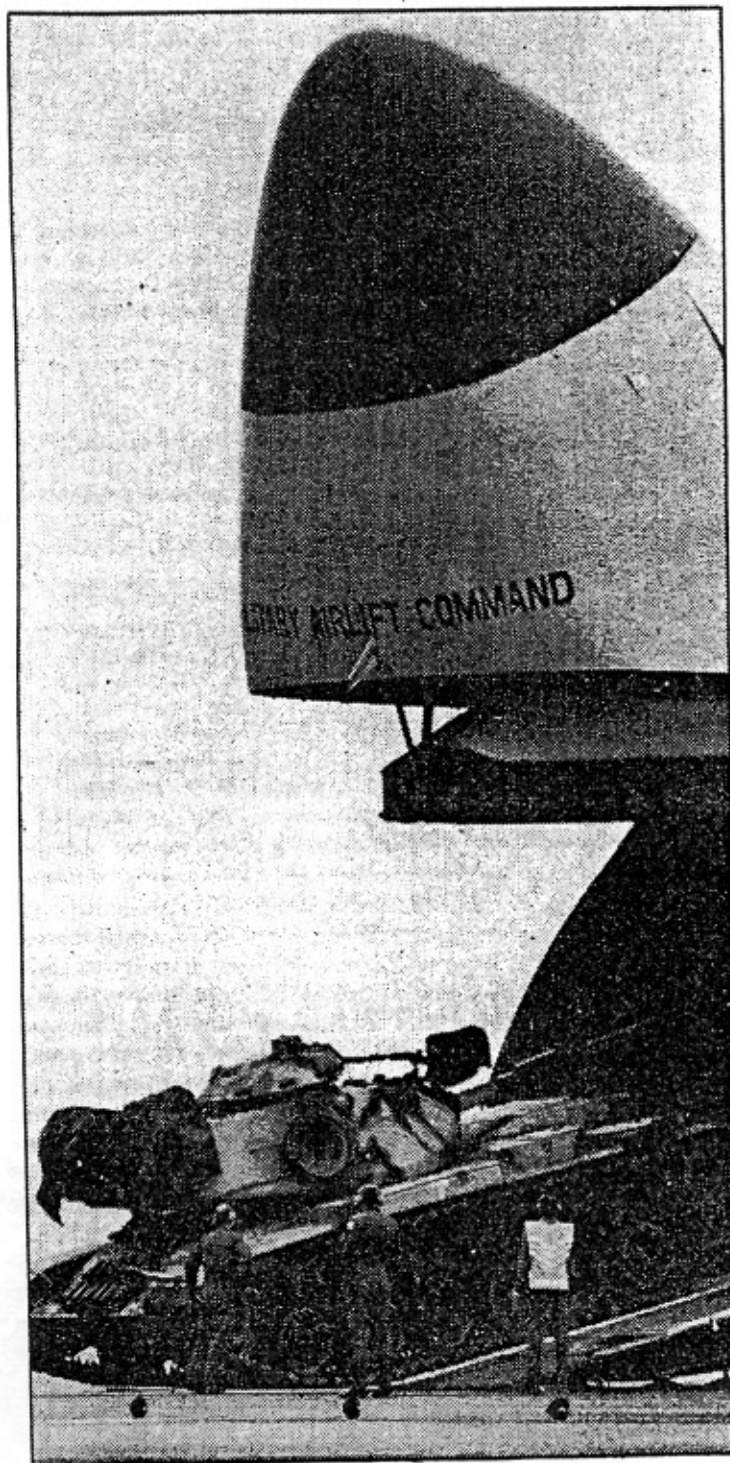
The advantages for the working class of universal conscription were known from the beginning of Marxism, but Frankel persists in denying them. At one point he expresses his opposition in a categorical statement that appeals to a higher theoretical level — and directly contradicts Engels.

"The idea that the *form* of the capitalist army — as opposed to the level of consciousness and organization of the working class — will be a decisive factor in whether a military coup can be carried out, or in whether the working class can arm itself, has nothing to do with Marxism."

No, it is the SWP that has nothing to do with Marxism. Forms have content, and must in the final analysis reflect this content. The conscript form of the bourgeois army can be a decisive factor since it reflects the organization of the working class, even though in a dialectically contradictory way. Frankel counterposes the conscripted and mercenary capitalist armies as mere forms as opposed to the decisive "consciousness and organization" of the workers. But these different "forms" are also different organizations, and organization by the capitalist state can decisively affect the consciousness and will of the working class, Frankel's ignorant assertions about Marxism to the contrary.

Engels pointed this out in *Anti-Duhring*, the well-known work written in collaboration with Marx. Unfortunately it is necessary to quote him at great length.

"The army has become the main purpose of the state, and an end in itself; the peoples are only there in order to provide and feed the soldiers. Militarism dominates and is swallowing Europe. But this militarism also carries in itself the seed of its own destruction. Competition of the individual states with each other forces them, on the one hand, to spend more money each year on the army and navy, artillery, etc., thus more and more hastening financial catastrophe; on the other hand, to take compulsory military service more and more seriously, thus in the long run making the whole people familiar with the use of arms; and therefore making the people more and more able at a given moment to make its will prevail in opposition to the commanding military lords. And the moment comes as soon as the mass of the people — town and country, workers and peasants — has a will. At this point the armies of princes become transformed into armies of the people; the machine refuses to work, and militarism collapses by the dialectic of its own evolution. What bourgeois democracy of 1848



Tank rolls off C-5A transport as Rapid Deployment force has its first major exercise. Registration diverts attention from present plan to upgrade volunteer army for use against revolts.

could not accomplish, just because it was bourgeois and not proletarian, namely, to give the laboring masses a will whose content was in accord with their class position — socialism will infallibly secure. And this will mean the bursting asunder of militarism from within, and with it of all standing armies."

Engels was aware, as Frankel is not, that universal compulsory military service was an enormous step forward for the

proletariat. This "form," a necessary *institution* of capitalist society, provides a "decisive factor" in the "bursting asunder" of the capitalist army.

Rosa Luxemburg also understood the historical implications of militarism. In her well-known polemic against Bernstein, *Social Reform or Revolution*, she presents an excellent dialectical rendition of ideas previously put forward by Marx and Engels:

"It is one of the peculiarities of the capitalist order that within it all the elements of the future society first assume, in their development, a form not approaching socialism but, on the contrary, a form moving more and more away from socialism. Production takes on a progressively increasing social character. But under what form is the social character of capitalist production expressed? It is expressed in the form of the large enterprise, in the form of the shareholding concern, the cartel, within which the capitalist antagonisms, capitalist exploitation, the oppression of labor-power, are augmented to the extreme.

"In the army, capitalist development leads to the extension of obligatory military service, to the reduction of the time of service and, consequently, to a material approach to a popular militia. But all of this takes place under the form of modern militarism, in which the domination of the people by the militarist state and the class character of the state manifest themselves most clearly."

Luxemburg recognized the transitional nature of the conscripted army as opposed to the mercenary army. Its type of organization is moving towards the workers' militia, even though it exists in a contradictory relation to the form of bourgeois state control. The relation between form and content here is that of sharp contradiction; that is what gives a mass conscripted army the potentially explosive character that Engels, Lenin and Trotsky have pointed to. (We also point out for Frankel's benefit that Luxemburg was writing these lines in the year 1900, when there was no war and no Hitler to make it seem that her view might be colored by momentary tactical considerations.)

Lenin also developed a similar dialectical idea. It appears in his authoritative document, "The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution," in Volume 23 of his *Collected Works*.

"The bourgeoisie makes it its business to promote trusts, drive women and children into the factories, subject them to corruption and suffering, condemn them to extreme poverty. We do not 'demand' such development, we do not 'support' it. We fight it. But *how* do we fight? We explain that trusts and the employment of women in industry are progressive. We do not want a return to the handicraft system, pre-monopoly capitalism, domestic drudgery for women. Forward through the trusts, etc., and beyond them to socialism!

"With the necessary changes that argument is applicable also to the present militarization of the population. Today the imperialist bourgeoisie militarizes the youth as well as the adults; tomorrow, it may begin militarizing the women. Our attitude should be: All the better! Full speed ahead! For the faster we move, the nearer shall we be to the armed uprising against capitalism."

There are, however, significant differences among Engels, Luxemburg and Lenin. Engels, writing in 1865 prior to the Paris Commune of 1871 and well before the dawn of the epoch of capitalist decay, posed the bourgeois conscripted army itself as a gain for the proletariat. The process of achieving a proletarian-run army out of the bourgeois military is not yet clear. For Marx and Engels, it was then possible to vote men and money to a progressive bourgeois army as opposed to either the old feudal or mercenary forms.

By the time of *Anti-Duhring*, written after the Commune in 1878, his formulation about the "bursting asunder of militarism" is a major advance. It reflects the lesson Marx and Engels drew from the life of the Commune, that the bourgeois state and army could not simply be taken over but had to be smashed. But even then the bourgeois military was still considered progressive to some degree, capable of carrying out remaining bourgeois tasks.

Luxemburg, writing in 1900, focuses the class contradiction within the army in more exact terms. She indicates that the drives transforming the capitalist system produce anti-socialist forms while the content (including "obligatory military service") moves in a socialist direction. The class duality is clearer than in Engels, and it now appears that the conscripted army can no longer be given political or military support even though it is a "material approach to a popular militia."

The Epoch of Capitalist Decay

By 1916, Lenin had demonstrably recognized the existence of the new epoch of imperialism and that capitalism was no longer progressive — bourgeois society now incorporated the reactionary features of earlier societies and could not be supported against them. The world war and the collapse of the Second International convinced him of this, and he described his view of the new epoch in the book *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and other writings. Therefore we find, "Not one penny, not one man for the bourgeois army." He connects bourgeois militarism to monopolization and the enforced labor of women in the factories. He does not "demand" these developments and offers no support. But he does make it abundantly clear that the road forward to socialism lies through these institutions.

We have already cited Trotsky making this very point: the workers' favoring of conscription "is a very confused and contradictory form of adhering to the 'arming of the proletariat.'" Trotsky understood that the mass conscripted army was related to the fundamental transitional tendencies of the epoch of capitalist decay.

"It is very important to understand that the war does not nullify or diminish the importance of our transitional program. Just the contrary is true. The transitional program is a bridge between the present situation and the proletarian revolution. War is a continuation of politics by other means. The characteristic of war is that it accelerates the development. It signifies that our transitional revolutionary slogans will become more and more actual, effective, important with every new month of the war. We have only of course to concretize and adapt them to the conditions." (page 321)

Trotsky posed his position as "Conscription? Yes. By the bourgeois state? No." Writing in the new epoch of capitalism, Lenin and Trotsky (along with Engels and Luxemburg) accepted conscription as part of the inherent logic of

capitalism and its transformation into socialism. But as opposed to the earlier writers, they no longer saw the bourgeoisie's mass army as progressive. They counterposed the universal mass army of the proletariat to that of the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, since conscription was inevitable under the bourgeoisie (and still preferable to volunteer armies) they posed the class line within the army with the intent of shattering it. Lenin, in the same article cited previously, wrote:

"You will soon be grown up. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn the military art properly. The proletarians need this knowledge not to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as is being done in the present war, and as the traitors to socialism are telling you to do. They need it to fight the bourgeoisie of their own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, and not by pious wishes, but by defeating and disarming the bourgeoisie."

In short, Lenin and Trotsky were fierce opponents of pacifism and accepted conscription as the terrain for struggle. This was not a momentary tactic as Frankel would have us believe but one based on a thorough understanding of the driving forces of capitalism. That is what Marxism is all about.

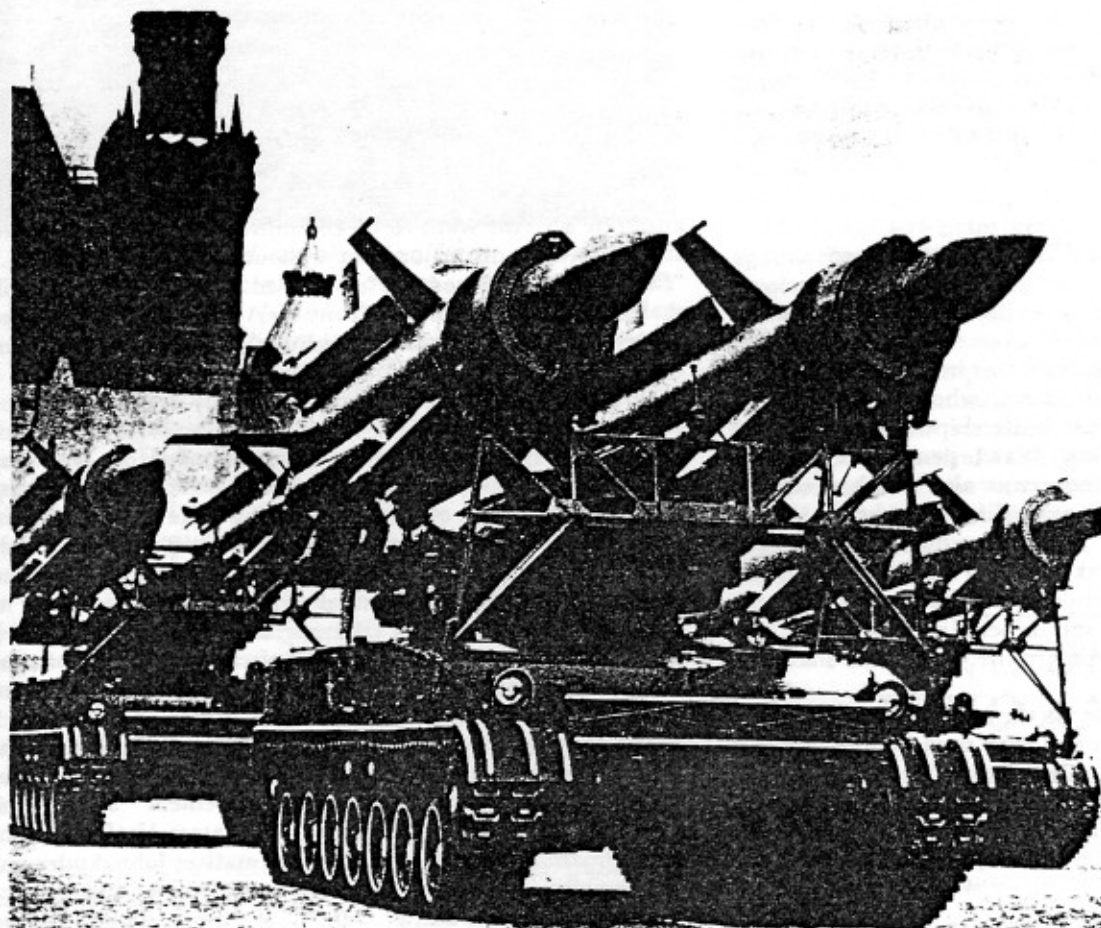
So much for Frankel's forms that make no difference and his magisterial pronouncements on Marxism. It is entirely reasonable for anyone, even a Marxist, to disagree with

Trotsky, Lenin, Luxemburg, Engels or Marx — separately or all at once, as with Frankel — but their judgement, based as it is on the historical experience of working class struggles, will be deemed correct by communists until disproven. The first step in disproving their ideas is to acknowledge their existence, and this Frankel does not do.

Having dealt so forthrightly with his Marxist opponents, Frankel then turns his attention to the feminists, addressing the question of women and the draft. He attacks the National Organization for Women for insisting that equality demands that women be drafted along with men if a draft is adopted over its opposition. Frankel points out ironically that NOW has fallen into a trap laid by Carter, who is trying to use the recruitment of women and blacks to give a progressive facade to the imperialist army. "Surely, an army that stands for equal rights for blacks and women must really be a force for democracy around the world!"

If this is a reason to oppose equal entry of women into the army, it must be the same for blacks. The SWP, like all other socialists and militants, once thought it was a victory for blacks to fight for equality in the army, but apparently no longer. Does Frankel not know the role that black veterans have played in self-defense organizations and in the black struggle generally by putting to use what they learned in the army? Imagine the U.S. historically if only whites had had military training!

Moreover, if winning rights for blacks and women becomes a victory for U.S. imperialism, as Frankel is arguing, then this



Russia displays missile power during 1968 May Day parade. Inter-imperialist war is inevitable so long as capitalism exists. The pacifist idea of capitalism without an army is even more absurd than the idea of achieving peace through detente and SALT agreements.

is the case for all the democratic struggles fought by blacks, women and other oppressed sectors (including, for the SWP, the anti-draft struggle!). The truth is that such victories do make American democracy look better to people across the world, and thereby they foster great illusions. By the same token, *all* victories won by blacks and women in struggle in the U.S. have the same contradictory effect. Should the vote for blacks and women never have been fought for because it fosters illusions in American democracy? Obviously not. Victories will be inherently contradictory so long as capitalism remains; the answer is to oppose not victories but capitalism.

A Marxist would not simply expose the limits of such victories under capitalism, including the right to equal entry into a conscripted army. A Marxist would raise further demands (such as child care) to deal with the additional problems capitalism forces on women. If won, these victories too would be hailed by the bourgeoisie as examples of its beneficent democracy. Presumably Frankel, on the other hand, would condemn them for creating illusions.

Capitalism always seeks to draw benefit from acts it is compelled to carry out against its will. Frankel understands neither the dialectical nature of capitalist trusts and militarization nor the struggle for women's rights. Compare Lenin again: "Today the imperialist bourgeoisie militarizes the youth ... tomorrow, it may begin militarizing the women. Our attitude should be: All the better! Full speed ahead! For the faster we move, the nearer shall we be to the armed uprising against capitalism!"

The SWP has discovered a "right" not to be drafted that would have been inconceivable to every leading Marxist from Marx through Trotsky. It is the pettiest of petty-bourgeois moralizing, appealing to the same "individualism" as the libertarians with their opposition to the draft as the "nationalization of human beings." It is a demand worthy only of pacifists, and the SWP truly deserves the social-pacifist label.

Social-Pacifism and Social-Patriotism

But that is not the whole of it. In the history of socialism, there have been two varieties of social-pacifism. One kind was the pacifism of those who denounced war in times of peace but then rallied to the imperialist banner when war broke out. There were many of those in the leaderships of the European Social Democracies during World War I, people whom Lenin labeled social-patriots. But there was also another variety, typified by the Russian "internationalist" Menshevik Martov and the German renegade Kautsky, who stuck to their pacifism even after the outbreak of war. Their fault was not to support imperialist militarism directly but to oppose the Leninist strategy of "turning the imperialist war into a civil war" — that is, a class war to determine which class shall rule the state.

The SWP has not yet come to the openly social-patriotic variety of pacifism but it is in bed with such people, not just for a one-night stand but for a long-term relationship. Take for example DSOC, a group that has played such an important role in leading the anti-draft "movement." It stated its social-patriotic case with admirable bluntness in a recent flyer, "New draft, new war?"

"The Administration claims our armed forces are inadequate to the task of preserving our 'national interests.' We say that a standing army of two million troops, backed by one million ready

reserves and the most sophisticated military machine this world has ever known is more than sufficient to protect the American people."

DSOC is under no illusion that in opposing the draft it is not calling for a mercenary army. It does so knowingly. It sometimes tries to sugar-coat the pill, but unlike the more left-wing anti-drafters it has no need to evade the reality. DSOC's national chairman Michael Harrington told the 20,000 participants at the March 22 anti-draft rally, "We are here ... to cleanse the American flag and not to burn it. We are the real patriots." Who can doubt the man?

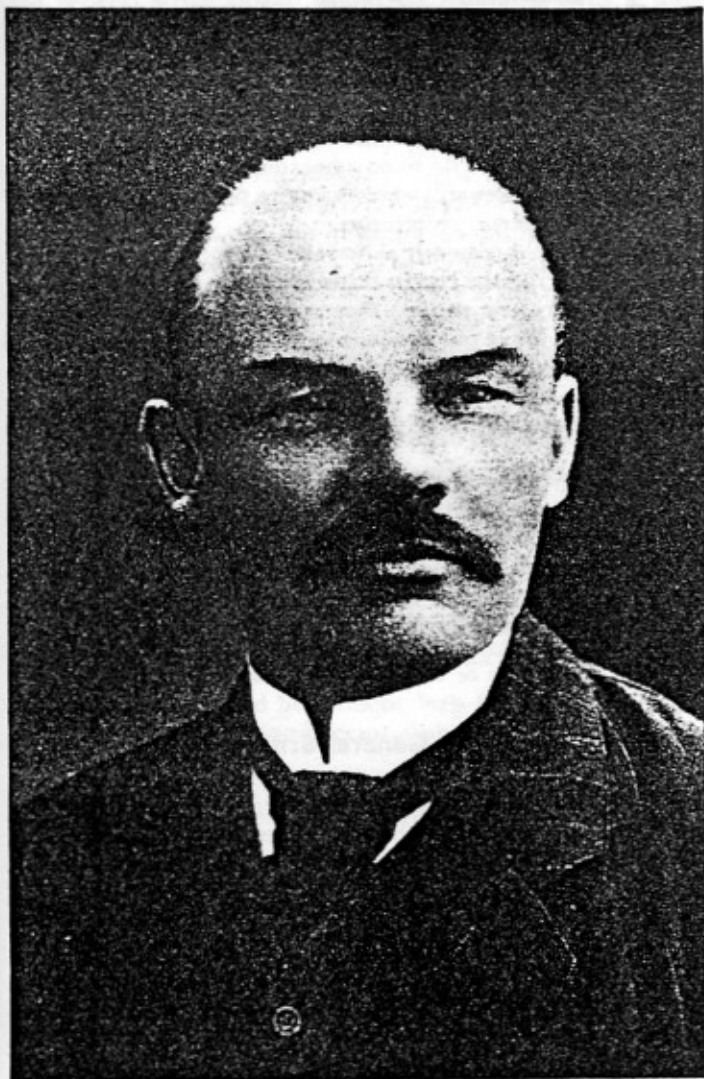
Then there are the pro-China leftists who, while opposing the draft (at least for the time being), complain that Carter isn't sending enough arms to his friends in China, Pakistan and among the Afghan guerrillas. Since the Maoists believe that Russia is the main threat to the world, they are eager to line up with the allies of U.S. imperialism — today: tomorrow it will be the U.S. itself. At the appropriate moment these types will abandon any pretense to social-pacifism and become even more open warmongers; whether "social" or not remains to be seen.

Pacifism Builds Patriotism

The SWP was perturbed when the social-democratic and other patriotic elements in the leadership of the Mobilization Against the Draft issued the official call for the March 22 demonstration which, among other things, condemned the hostage-taking in Iran and the Russians in Afghanistan, implicitly aligning itself with Carter's foreign policy. This statement was in line with DSOC's concern for the "legitimate security interests of the United States," that is, the imperialists' right to control events in all countries of the world. The SWP made a feeble attempt at criticizing the call while sticking to its primary goal of holding the "movement" together at all costs. "We think," wrote the *Militant* on March 14, that "few antidraft activists want to be committed to a hastily adopted stand on Afghanistan or Iran without thorough discussion." "Caution is warranted ...", it added. "Many more are still making up their minds." It further opposed the "rush to judgement" and expressed gratitude that "discussions continue."

How very conciliatory, and how totally fraudulent. The SWP does not really believe that political decisions should not be adopted speedily; it adopted its own line on Iran and Afghanistan quickly enough and is by no means still making up its mind. What it objects to is not the haste of the decision, or even that the decision goes against the SWP's view, but that any decision was taken at all. The SWP above all wants to keep the "movement" open to all points of view, including its own but also including the social- (and not-so-social-) patriots. Hence it calls not for condemnation of the Mobilization's pro-imperialist line but for "discussion." Even the *New York Times* could live with that.

The social-pacifists like the SWP are providing platforms not only for patriotic socialists but for the liberal wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie itself. The "movement" against the draft is spearheaded by the likes of Senators Hatfield, Kennedy, Proxmire and Mathias, Representatives John Anderson, Kastenmeier and Weiss, Governor Jerry Brown, and the ex-Honorable Bella Abzug. Many of them spoke at the Washington march from the podium, a pro-imperialist platform built by the activity of "socialists" — not only DSOC but the SWP, SL, RSL, ad nauseam.



Lenin considered social-pacifism more dangerous than social-patriotism. Its "plausible, pseudo-'Marxist' catchwords and pacifist slogans" were harmful because they were cloaked and could mislead advanced workers.

The liberal imperialist wing of the anti-draft "movement" is suspicious of Carter's Cold War moves and prefers a more cautious approach to save the inter-imperialist deal (detente) with the USSR. They are leeching off the anti-war sentiments of the American people. If Frankel is worried that the draft of women and blacks will sow illusions in American democracy, he should be drumming these liberal imperialists out of the "movement" — they are precisely the ones who make imperialism look democratic. Trotsky wrote, "Our agitation in connection with the war and all our politics connected with the war must be as uncompromising in relation to the pacifists as to the imperialists." (page 105) The SWP compromises with the former as an indication of its future compromise with the latter.

Since that march and since Frankel's article appeared the world situation has taken another turn. Carter pulled his imperialist raid on Iran in late April, and even though it fell apart, it clearly showed what the purpose and capacity of the U.S. mercenary army is. As Presidential adviser Brzezinski summed it up, "Do not scoff at American power. Do not scoff at American reach." Similar views were echoed by all the

Congressional liberals, including those who serve as spokesmen for the anti-draft demonstrations, except that they might have criticized Carter's "timing" or the mission's failure. All applauded the try if not the result. And if DSOC, tied as it is to the coattails of Senator Kennedy's campaign, has broken the liberal phalanx of support and issued a condemnation, we have not heard of it. It is now absolutely clear that the Mobilization's support for Carter's policy was not just words on paper but a guide for action.

The SWP, naturally, did not hesitate to denounce the raid as an imperialist attack. Good. But it has not made a sound to indicate that it will have no part of a "movement" whose leading spokesmen are not just mistaken thinkers on this or that aspect of U.S. policy but active cheerleaders for imperialist intervention. We cannot demand that the SWP accept the rigors of Marxist thinking and recognize that anti-draft propaganda amounts to favoring the mercenary army. But we do have a right to expect that any left organization will wake up and see the results in practice of the "movement" it has helped to build. Denouncing Carter's raid is not enough if one is in bed with its supporters. One must either kick them out of bed or, given the actual relationship of forces, crawl out, shamefacedly, oneself.

Revolutionary Party is Only Answer

That the SWP and all the other social-pacifists are lined up in a class-collaborationist and patriotic movement is no accident. They abandoned Bolshevism long ago. The fact that they are all "united" now should not lead anyone to believe that they will grow closer or even keep the present level of unity. The social struggle will force divisions within this melange. Most elements will decisively assert their American patriotism, some will remain pacifists, some will defend Russian patriotism. Others will break on a class basis to join the working class alternative.

The LRP advocates genuine united fronts, joint actions against the deeds of imperialism. But we will not surrender the revolutionary program in order to march with pacifists or patriots. We will not join any class-capitulatory "movements" which proclaim the dangerous lie that conscription can be prevented under imperialist capitalism. We will continue to fight for the communist-Trotskyist position that the only answer to wars, standing armies and imperialism is a movement to overthrow the system that breeds them. The task is not to construct movements to reform the unreformable but to re-create the revolutionary party and international. The bourgeoisie prepares for its war; we must prepare for ours. ■

"NO DRAFT" IS NO ANSWER!

**The Communist Position on Stopping
Imperialist War**

**Including Writings by Lenin and Trotsky
On Conscription and Militarism**

A Socialist Voice pamphlet published by the LRP.
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For a General Strike in Britain

The following document, slightly edited here for clarity, is a polemic written by the League for the Revolutionary Party in April 1979 to the British group Workers Power (WP). Its purpose was to criticize WP for its failure to press for a general strike during the strike wave that wracked the United Kingdom in the winter of 1978-9. It also objected to Workers Power's unwillingness to counterpose the struggle for the revolutionary party against the reformist Labour Party, which then constituted the Queen's government. WP has on several occasions informed us of its intent to reply, but it has not yet done so.

The WP group, like ours, had its origins in a split from the International Socialists (IS), a tendency that in the early 1970's included fraternal organizations in both Britain and the U.S. (The British IS is now called the Socialist Workers Party.) The British IS, led by Tony Cliff, and the American group, descended from Max Shachtman, held somewhat different theoretical outlooks. The Shachtmanites maintained the anti-Marxist view that the USSR was a new class society, bureaucratic collectivism, that could expand the productive forces at a time when decaying capitalism could not. The British called Russia state capitalist but produced a basically similar analysis (see *Socialist Voice* No. 1, page 26). What held them together was their shared opportunist approach to politics — a practice of capitulating to reformism on the grounds of defending "rank and file-ism" (a method described in the document).

Workers Power had moved a long way from this background. We wrote this document because the WP organization, unlike other British groups, appeared to be developing to the left, although in an uncertain fashion. We hoped to engage WP in an open dialogue and convince them of the lessons we had learned in our own break from our common experience with centrism. Unfortunately we were not successful.

In the polemic we warned WP about the dangers of being unwilling to push a reformist party to the wall. In a letter accompanying the document we also warned them that their attempt to straddle the "Russian question" between the Cliffite state capitalist position that they formally held, and the Pabloite deformed-degenerated workers' state line that they seemed to be moving toward, would lead to a disaster. It could only mean the abandonment in theory of the independent revolutionary party.

A few months ago WP announced its conversion to the Pabloite position, ostensibly as a result of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Although their new position does not seem to have been fully worked out in theory, it does arrive at a conclusion in relation to Stalinism in Afghanistan similar to its attitude towards Labourism in Britain: reformism and Stalinism are better than nothing, so the working class should limit or postpone its struggle against them. By thus conceding the battle to bourgeois forces, Workers Power has landed back in the swamp of centrism.

The question of the general strike that the document deals with still plays a central role in both Britain and the U.S. The significance of the British steel strike earlier this year, because of its length, bitterness and politically strategic character, cannot be overstated. A socialist general strike position, as opposed to the recent parody of such a tactic perpetrated by the British union bureaucrats, was called for. Workers Power

(like some of the other left centrist groups in Britain) has raised the call for a general strike during the recent events. They felt it possible to do so now because the Labour Party is not in power, but they still were unable to point to a clear path away from Labourite reformism.

The LRP has consistently raised the call for a general strike in the U.S. During the recent transit strike in New York, ours was the only force on the left that raised the general strike as the way to win. Here too the bulk of the left politely followed the labor bureaucracy — either the official leaders of the transit union or the "out-bureaucrats" who demagogically appealed to rank and file-ism — in their quashing of the strike.

Despite such setbacks the lesson remains that the general strike can be a magnificent demonstration of working class unity. It is a weapon designed to help workers understand the strength of their class in practice. It enables them to translate the economic, defensive consciousness of the class into a political attack on state power. Hence it is a crucial weapon in the fight for the working class to reconstruct its revolutionary party.

1. Why No Call for a General Strike?

We find your position on the recent strikes to be ambivalent and contradictory exactly where it verges on the most critical questions. For example, your editorial in *Workers Power* No. 2, "United Action Can Fix Jim," uses various terms to call for united working class action: a "class-wide response," a "generalised working class onslaught," "a general clash," "a generalised offensive," and "linking up and generalising." It suggests "a move from isolated, individual struggles towards a generalised offensive," and points out that it is bankrupt to rely upon spontaneity to "generalise" the strike at Fords. It painstakingly suggests a variety of working class link-ups and actions which could lay the basis for councils of action "if the struggle reaches the level of a generalised offensive."

In sum, this editorial, like your other articles on the subject, generalizes greatly on the necessity for generalization of the strike but always avoids advocating a general strike. It reminds us of a story about a British architect who built an edifice which included an enormous room designed without internal pillars to hold up the ceiling. Although he deemed them unnecessary, he was forced to bow to the pressure of the fearful and construct pillars. He got his private revenge, for unknown to his timid critics, his pillars terminated a few inches below the ceiling, and the house stood. In politics, however, if one's constructs fall short of the necessary conclusion the whole structure will tumble like a house of cards.

You carefully avoid giving concrete content to your generalizing position: how far should the strikes spread? You do not, even as an aside, point out what is wrong with a general strike position, much less polemicize against it. And although our information is far from complete, we know that the bulk of the far left has not raised the demand; nevertheless, the Spartacists, with whom you do argue frequently in your press, do raise the general strike, even if in an incorrect way. To us, your omission is striking.

From hints in your articles we could conjecture that the reason your haven't taken up the question is that you hope that in time the struggle would have matured to the point where

the general strike slogan would be meaningful to a wider audience. Whether or not our conjecture is true, we disagree with your position and the method underlying it. Moreover, your failure to take the final step in calling for generalization gives a feeling of ambiguity and lack of concreteness to your position that is not overcome by your advocacy of concrete organizational and programmatic steps.

Both your tendency and ours are aware of the fact that there is a huge gap between the objective conditions and the subjective consciousness of the class. One indication of this relative lack of advanced consciousness is the tiny size of the far left. Not only has the fundamental crisis of capitalism matured, but the objective bases for proletarian rule have also ripened. A chief factor in these objective considerations is the enormous size and potential power of the working class at the heart of centralized and concentrated production.

Unfortunately, the workers do not realize their real material interests, nor are they conscious that they have the strength to gain them in the only way possible, through the socialist revolution. The general strike is a major weapon in our arsenal designed to bridge the gap between the present level of consciousness and the advanced workers' consciousness of the objective tasks. The general strike is not the revolution — but it does pose the question of state power in a very concrete way. Its achievement would be a major leap forward, overcoming the sense of weakness and sectoralism which pervades many sections of the class.

General Strike Necessary

Our tendency spends a great amount of time *propagandizing* about the general strike. But given the present conjuncture in the United States there are few times when we can agitate for it. While much of the far left in the U.S. has been steadily moving to the right, the various groups nevertheless have organizationally sectarian attitudes. The phenomenon of the "small mass party," whereby tiny groups try to substitute for the larger class institutions by puffing themselves up like blowfish, is widespread here and known to you too, of course: the SWP-GB and the WRP are excellent examples. We in contrast pursue a strategy of placing our demands on the independent class institutions, the trade unions, for united action. In the U.S. this frequently has taken the form of calls on the unions for general strikes.

Our overall propaganda position does not apply to any and all situations that arise in the U.S. It is no panacea; its importance derives from our general assessment of class relationships here as well as objective factors. In Britain in the recent situation we believe that the general strike slogan was in order. Trotsky points out in his German writings (pages 238-9) that the general strike is most useful in situations where the class is strong objectively but weak in leadership, and that a successful general strike is a major step in bridging that gap.

While this general assessment obviously applies to Britain today, this alone doesn't prove that the slogan is appropriate. But even you, who do not raise the slogan, agree that the all-important task is to generalize the separate strikes. Presumably you are trying to address the advanced workers and provide them with a strategy designed to lead the mass of currently more backward workers. Any advanced workers (and many ordinary militants as well) would naturally ask: how general is "general"? Do you want the whole union, two or three unions, all unions, or what? Since you raise programmatic demands as goals to be won in action, and since these demands are in the interest of the whole class, why should not

all unions (and also the unemployed and un-unionized) join in a general strike commensurate with the demands?

You call for "co-ordinated action across all the unions involved." But why only the unions involved — why not all of them? You movingly point out the dangers of sectoralism. It is obvious that large non-striking sections of the working class were hostile to some of the strikes because they saw the strikes as competitive to their own interests. Your programmatic class-wide demands designed to overcome this sectoralism can only be achieved through mass action, not just sympathizing strikes by some, but a general strike.

2. How to Pose the United Front

We ask ourselves, why do the British comrades leave the question open-ended? Especially since we imagine that they really would like the strike movement to take the direction of the general strike.

Possible answer number one is that you believe the call is premature and the organization for it is lacking. Only a few unions were out on strike, and their strikes were over sectoral demands. Rank and file linkages were not yet in place, nor was there any significant discussion of common programmatic demands. Only after such first steps are accomplished would a new rank and file leadership emerge that would make it possible to call for a general strike.

We would reply that this is exactly the wrong way to approach the question. The workers, including the non-striking majority, are worried and angry over their pay, work conditions, the threat of redundancy, social decay, inflation, etc. A general strike is quite possible under these circumstances. A revolutionary vanguard should be propagandizing for it, attempting to win the advanced workers (including workers belonging to the pseudo-left) to such a strategy. The only way to achieve it tomorrow is to argue for it now and get other advanced workers to join in. Those who recognize the need for it is the future but don't say so now are leaving it to the backward workers to take the lead in putting it forward — hardly revolutionary leadership.

Perhaps you agree that it would have been correct to mention the general strike as our future goal, but you think that it would be irresponsible to imply that it could occur now, without the requisite organization and the widespread circulation of programmatic demands.

Organization already exists, however, namely the unions and the TUC. It is absolutely true that workers will not buy a general strike without seeing the vehicle to carry it through. But workers know that the TUC and its leaders have power; thus workers follow them even though they are cynical about them. Those workers who have become so cynical as a result of past betrayals that they would not respond initially can be won as soon as they see the mass pressure gaining strength in the unions. Thus the demand for a general strike must be placed on the TUC and the union leaderships by revolutionaries, alone at first if necessary. The TUC leaders are capitulators, but the TUC has the power to bring out the bulk of the working class and shake society to its roots. Many of the leaders can be forced to lead by mass pressure; others can be displaced.

Workers Power, we believe, lets the TUC leaders off the hook. Yes, you condemn them, but the only real exposure in the eyes of the workers comes with practice. Revolutionaries must find ways to place demands on these leaders in such a way as to maximize *mass* demands upon them — this way the workers will more quickly come to understand the role of the

betrayers and their own capacity to overthrow them.

WP has it backwards. You place the burden of generalizing the strikes not on the TUC but on the CP and SWP rank and file networks, which are hollow vessels. The CP, SWP, etc. should be criticized, of course, but for letting the official unions and bureaucrats off the hook. They should be attacked for not using their friends and cadres to fight for a general strike. Instead you call upon their weak workers groups to take on the whole burden of spreading the strikes themselves as well as adopting an advanced program.

We suggest an alternative two-level united front approach.

1) A major task is the united front of the working class. This is embodied in the demand on the TUC for a general strike against the capitalist attacks. We counterpose our political program to that of the leadership and other workers, but we march together in action with them nevertheless. 2) The united front is addressed initially to the "rank and file" front groups and the CP, SWP, IMG, etc. We propose a united front to demand that the TUC lead a general strike. Here too we want the sharpest debate over programmatic goals, but programmatic agreement, whether minimal or maximal, is not the basis for a united front. We never wish to imply that there is substantive political agreement on the great issues of the day between these groups and us (if that were true we belong in one party with them and not simply in a united front!). We hope to win over the base of these groups during the united struggle.

A general strike may occur based upon a variety of defensive demands. Whatever basis it begins with, the task of revolutionaries is to call for it in connection with our advanced class-wide demands. (The program should be raised as that of the revolutionary workers, certainly not as a "take it or leave it" ultimatum.) If pressure for a general strike mounts and the TUC leaders fail to respond, several developments are possible. For example, the far left centrists or the genuine revolutionaries may be able to lead the general strike either as a mass wildcat or by displacing some of the union leaders officially. A new leadership will thereby come into being organizationally as a result of its having taken the lead politically. The "rank and file" organization will take real shape as a consequence of the movement for the general strike, not as its precondition. Organization follows politics.

3. Rank and File-ism

We believe that your organization is still caught up in the rank and file-ist method of the IS (SWP), albeit on a far more leftist basis, and that this weakness is closely connected to your strategy in the strike wave. The SWP attempts to build its rank and file following upon a minimal program, a next-step approach. You correctly point out that this is inevitably sectoralist. Each group of militants is attracted on a parochial program which varies over time and even conflicts with that of the next group. (Thus recently in the U.S., the IS's black workers and white workers operating inside their Teamster front group split openly on a vote over a minimal democratic motion for black rights. One group's minimum transcended the other's maximum.)

In order to overcome such sectoralism you wish to establish a more advanced and class-wide program as the basis for your rank and file notion. Your material on this subject reminds us strongly of our own attempts several years ago, both inside the IS and afterwards in the RSL. Opposed to the IS's minimalism, we kept adding demands to make the "united

front" program more and more socialistic and not simply militant. We went all the way to the top of the pillar and stuck there just short of the ceiling: we wouldn't tell anybody that these demands meant the socialist revolution. It wasn't that we wanted to be deceitful, but we still had a left version of the maneuverist politics we had learned in the IS: if we tell the workers that what they want requires socialism we will scare them off. Instead, feed them little crumbs along a trail (many steps or stages) and eventually they will arrive at the doorstep of socialism; then we can present them with the full picture.



British workers launched a series of strikes and demonstrations in 1978-9. British centrists refused to call for a general strike which would have crippled the reformist government.

We went far beyond the IS in that we asked for big leaps and not just small steps, but the method of stagism was essentially the same. We called it "transitional," erroneously believing that that's what Trotsky meant. In reality, we were posing a series of joint political blocs which, given the advanced character of our demands, meant a series of propaganda blocs, not common actions for concrete goals. For example, we would attempt to link up with militants in the auto industry who were for a sliding scale of wages and hours. We would argue out the details and come up with verbal political agreement — but always on the basis of *their* politics. They thought the goal was possible under capitalism, and even in a single union or locality. By not stating our fundamental belief that democracy and other reforms could only be achieved permanently under the dictatorship of the proletariat, we were capitulating to the militants' non-socialist consciousness.

What we have now learned from such experiences is that we must not be open-ended with our politics in order to win the "rank and file"; we must "say what is." The movement and its

joint actions may be open-ended in that it is not predetermined whether it will end up reforming capitalism to a small degree for an instant or moving towards the workers' state.

We believe that you today are back where our tendency was before we had completely shed the residue of Shachtman and Cliff. Allowing the more backward workers to determine our program through a false united front, or calling on the rank and file to lead, are only different variants of an appeal to backward consciousness. What is the program of a "rank and file"? Leaderships formulate programs which reflect, well or badly, the material interests of the working class. Rank and file groupings adhere knowingly or otherwise to many different programs. "Rank and file" alone means nothing except opposition to the persons presently in the leadership — it may not even mean opposition to their policies. Trotskyists are striving to forge a leadership, not a rank and file; that is the crisis of our epoch.

Bolshevik Leadership is Key

Cliffism and Shachtmanism always talked about the rank and file as a consequence of their position that democracy was the central question for the working class. As we have pointed out in our magazine, both Cliff and Shachtman in rejecting Stalinism also rejected the very fundamentals of the workers' state. One aspect of this was to identify the end of the Russian workers' state with the end of the soviets. For them, the soviets and workers' democracy became the key distinction between a Stalinist state and a workers' state. However, soviets and workers' democracy are necessary for a healthy workers' state but not sufficient. The key to the revolutionary character of soviets is not their democratic form, i.e., that they contain the rank and file, but that they are led by Bolsheviks. Historically it has been proved that soviets not led by Bolsheviks are not revolutionary and will not last long. It is the party, the embodiment of advanced consciousness, that is the determinant. In a healthy workers' state, advanced consciousness will triumph in time over backward (pro-capitalist or petty-bourgeois) ideas through political struggle, aided by the economic changes in society. To put it another way, the ranks are constantly transformed into leadership.

"Democratic" Cover for Bureaucrats

The "democratic" or "rank and file" trappings of the Cliffites should fool nobody. In tailing backward consciousness they really tail the bureaucrats who have dammed up the workers' consciousness at its present level. The pseudo-democratic method is similar to the plebiscitary method of Bonapartism. Even during his period of "Luxemburgism," Cliff believed that a manipulating leadership was the key to socialism and that the masses were only the battering ram. Thus he would give the masses any program they liked. Cliff's party links up the minimum program and the militant struggles; it is based not on socialism but on maneuverism. It stands for manipulation by a benevolent Bonaparte accompanied by the acclamation of the rank and file.

Of necessity the IS leaves the program of the party vague. Nevertheless, Cliff's program has a content: a left version of the bureaucracy's. The SWP tries to work the blowfish routine in order to look like a realistic alternative to the present labor bureaucrats. All it succeeds in doing, however, is provide a political cover for the bureaucracy. For when given a choice of which to follow, workers will ride the back of a whale rather

than a blowfish if both are heading in the same direction.

4. The Revolutionary Program

We do not maintain that you are still left Cliffites; our general assessment is that you are moving away from that. We see vestiges, however, which at critical points are in contradiction to what seems to be your basic direction. It is our own bitter experience that teaches us the necessity of making a complete break.

You call on the rank and file to do this and do that. As we have said, a rank and file is amorphous. Such calls can only add to the workers' sense of weakness. How does a rank and file point out a direction? Only leaders do. Your method frustrates the ranks. But at other points you are aware of this and make your calls more specific. You call upon the rank and file groups to take certain steps, and you also show awareness that it isn't the "rank and file" of these rank and file groups that steers them but their leaders, the CP, the IMG, SWP and other assorted centrists. But just as they are tailing the left bureaucrats, you are placing yourselves in a position to tail the centrists.

Your attempt to find programmatic linkages with the centrists and the rank and file front groups they control — rather than to pose common actions for conjuncturally common goals — speaks to the point. It means that you run the danger of paving the way for the advanced workers to go to the larger groups rather than you. You may end up providing them with a left cover, just as they do for the bureaucracy.

After all, isn't that what you attempted to do in the electoral arena with the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory? You tried to raise the radicalism of the Campaign's demands; that is, you tried to form a more radical propaganda bloc than the ICL and the Chartists wanted. The fact that you held out for the more radical version and finally broke with the Campaign (albeit on not too clear grounds) is a sign of ambivalence rather than clear-cut capitulation.

Another example: in *Workers Power* you continually pose the leadership that is to be generated out of the strike movement in coy and unclear terms: "a new leadership based upon the rank and file," or "a new leadership" that will be built to "achieve final victory ... (in) settling accounts with the real power that the bosses and bankers have to make the working class pay." In your January issue you call for "a new militant leadership rooted in rank and file organization and responsible to it." (Ironically, in the same issue you criticize the SWP and correctly state that "what is wanted is not a 'new militant' but a communist strategy for the trade unions.") You frequently associate this new leadership with such demands as the sliding scale and other class-wide demands. We know of only one leadership that can actually settle accounts with the ruling class and actually carry out the transitional demands. It is the Bolshevik leadership, which can do so only through the creation of a workers' state. So why suggest something else?

Once again, it is a question of putting forward radical demands only capable of fulfillment through a workers' state and implying that they are possible to win through a less far-reaching struggle. You have limited your program not to that of the present-day bureaucracy but to that of the bureaucracy's would-be successors, the centrists. It is they who characteristically use far-reaching, even transitional, demands in such a way as to pose the reform of capitalism.

We are aware that the centrists do not want to go as far now as the things you are saying; they undoubtedly consider your

organization to be ultra-left and sectarian. But so long as the workers' state and the socialist revolution are not the key to your propaganda, the centrists can go as far as you when they are pushed by the movement. You are propagandizing for what is in fact the centrists' future position, just as they are today paving the way for the future leadership of the left bureaucrats who will be forced later on to "steal" their program.

Indeed, should some militant centrists come to leadership positions based upon the decapitated politics you are now raising, you will have to give them political support, not just critical support. They will be carrying out the line that you have been the best fighters for. And there have been such centrists in the past: the Martovites, for example.

Yours in our opinion is not a communist course. No militant leadership, "new" or otherwise, can answer the crisis. It takes a revolutionary leadership. And if we are truly Marxists and proletarian democrats we must tell the ranks the truth about this. Our relationship to the masses is that of being their advanced consciousness and seeking to win them to our understanding. We hold nothing back and only seek the best opportunities to explain our points of view. It is only in this sense that we maneuver — with the class, and not behind its back.

Workers' Government Slogan

We know that in your magazine you have outlined a program for trade union work less vague than in your popular paper. But it too hesitates to go all the way. Thus it never goes beyond the workers' *government* slogan (not the workers' state), which you undoubtedly believe is to follow the method of the Transitional Program. In our future document (subsequently published as the article "Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program" in *Socialist Voice* No. 8 — ed.) we will go into this question more thoroughly. Suffice it to say for now that Trotsky was careful to explain that the Transitional Program was designed to replace the old minimal program, not to substitute for the socialist revolutionary program. The workers' government slogan in particular was designed for a period when the mass working class parties were leading struggles — and therefore implicitly posing the question of workers' power — but were politically tied to the bourgeoisie's government (through the Popular Fronts, etc.). The slogan was a challenge to those parties: stop hiding behind the bourgeoisie, take seriously the aspirations of the masses and your own promises, and get the bourgeoisie out of the government. The workers' *state* remained the program of the Fourth International, but the parties and more backward workers who did not favor revolution could still be urged to carry out their *own* professed programs to their limit: a workers' government, even under capitalism. Such a government, of course, would be merely transitory, and its existence would pose the state question in the sharpest terms; it would therefore be "but a short episode on the road" to the actual workers' revolution and workers' state.

Trotsky was obviously not attempting to blur the distinction between a workers' government under capitalism and the workers' state itself; he was trying to find ways to overcome the blur caused by the mass non-revolutionary parties. Today the centrists put forward the workers' government slogan in an entirely ambiguous way (Peru and Iran are cases in point), never calling for a workers' state and rarely if ever citing the need for a revolution. We are of course talking about sub-

stantive, not terminological, distinctions. Someone who calls for a "workers' government" but presents the content of smashing the entire bourgeois state apparatus is making a (still dangerous) terminological error, not a political capitulation. We wish there were even such people in Peru and Iran today.

In your case, while your use of the workers' government slogan in this period is the farthest left we are aware of, your failure to go all the way in your magazine is amplified by the merely "militant" formulations in your paper. It indicates that your hesitation is not terminological but political. And that is the problem: you stress the program for the radical rank and file that you wish to build to such an extent that your own, revolutionary socialist, program does not appear.

5. The Revolutionary Party

In stressing the necessity for revolutionary leadership we are led to a further point. You state accurately that "a political lead is desperately needed," for militancy is not enough. This echoes Trotsky's point in "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Decay" that the political road is the only solution since problems can no longer be solved on the industrial and trade union level. While this is a perfect reason for the general strike, it is also the basis for our contention that the revolutionary leadership for the unions must be posed as that of the revolutionary *party*.

This is doubly important in a country where reformist economism has such a history. Politics is the generalization of economics, and centralism is the distillation of politics. Cliff rejected Stalin's authoritarianism only to reject as well Lenin's centralism, only at first organizationally, but politically always. In avoiding the question of centralized political power, the IS adapted to the localistic, plant by plant, industry by industry consciousness of the workers. This consciousness reflected the acts of the labor bureaucracy which had succeeded in selling the line to the workers that concentration on their own economic benefits and local working conditions was all that was necessary. Again, in tailing "rank and file" consciousness the IS adapted to the strategy of the bureaucrats.

Cliffites and Shachtmanites

It is an interesting side point that the Cliffites and Shachtmanites split not over the relatively small differences between the Bureaucratic State Capitalism theory of one and the Bureaucratic Collectivism theory of the other, but over the Communist Parties. And it was not that one was Stalinophobic and the other not: they split not so much for their dissimilarities but for the different applications of what they held in common. Both tailed the shop steward militants in the labor movement. The Shachtmanites in the 1940's tailed the secondary leaders of the United Automobile Workers, reformists aligned to the Reuther brothers who were in many ways (prior to the Cold War) more left than the CP unionists. The Cliffites tailed the CP stewards in Britain, where the CP was notorious for concentrating upon leftish economic activity rather than the political action that typified Stalinism elsewhere. (Of course, the economist outlook of the CP has deep causes, reflecting the strength of the Labour Party barrier and trade unionist power rooted in the imperialist-labor aristocratic inheritance.)

From the time of Attlee's victory at the end of the Second World War to the present, the British workers have become gradually divorced from political action. The Labour Party, which once rode the crest of a movement, is now a shell, tied to the workers through the unions and its historical identification rather than through their active participation. Relative prosperity and the bourgeoisie's ability to yield sops in the face of struggle were the chief reasons. In this context arose the IS-GB as a left reflection of the bureaucracy. It too concentrated on economic action and eschewed political action. But as centrists, the Cliffites cover their economist practice with promises of revolution in the future. Like the Russian "economists," they leave the political tasks to others "at this stage." The Russians left politics to the Cadets while sneering at them; the Cliffites leave it to the Labour reformists while they too sneer at these representatives of the bourgeoisie.

Thus the question is not whether to be political or not. Politics controls the questions of the shop floor, as you point out, no matter how the Cliffites perceive it. To "abandon" politics means in reality to yield to reformist politics. The question becomes *what* politics: reformism and Labour, or

working class in as far as it defends its interests. Those interests can now be served only by determined direct action If Callaghan's government falls from office as a result of mass working class action that would be a lesser evil than the triumph of Callaghan's picket-busting policies."

This theme runs through your coverage, but it too has a noticeable omission: you never indicate that the strike movement should *want* to bring down this strikebreaking government. You don't consider that this would be a positive step.

In fact you guaranteed your vote beforehand. In October 1978 you wrote: "If the struggle against pay restraint forces an election, should we take the record of the Labour government as ample evidence that we should not vote for them? We do not think so. While we must fight Callaghan's plans, taking no responsibility for the plight of his government, we will still be calling for a vote for Labour."

You called for a vote for Labour not our of love for Callaghan but out of hostility to the Tories and class solidarity with the workers who look to Labour. But still, if Callaghan was to be brought down by strike action (and it did turn out



National Union of Public Employees in march in London last year. NUPE threatened an electoral boycott of the Labour Party, but the lack of a revolutionary alternative left the capitalist parties as the only choice.

the revolutionary party? The revolutionary party must be advocated categorically and openly counterposed to reformism. This of course does not mean surrendering the tactic of critical support to Labour in elections, although we think (as you know) that such a tactic is wrong in the present conjuncture.

6. Bring Down the Labour Government?

This brings us to the second argument you might raise in defense of not calling for a general strike: a general strike could well bring down the Labour government. We expect that your immediate reaction to this proposition is that we are being unfair to you. After all, you have stated clearly "No holding back to preserve a wage-cutting government" and you repeat the point often. You stated in bold type in your February issue: "A Labour government is only of use to the

that way), the only governmental alternative was the Tories. And so you assured strikebreaker Callaghan of your vote in advance, giving him a veritable carte blanche.

Is it therefore unfair for us to suggest that you hesitated over the general strike because that would *certainly* have brought down the government, while it was only *likely* that the limited strike wave would do so? After all, if the workers were not really prepared to deal with a mass unified strike, how prepared are they to deal with Thatcher, who plans greater attacks than does Callaghan? Not only is the class unprepared but there is no serious alternative leadership; you well describe the cretin Tribunites as an absurd alternative.

Your ambivalence is registered here very clearly. You want to fight to the limit, but there are limits. In your editorial "Recall the TUC. Smash the Concordat" in your March issue

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For a General Strike

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you call for everything but a No vote to Labour over its latest atrocity. You approve of NUPE's hostility to this deal. But what is your position on NUPE's threatened electoral boycott of Labour? Will you reason with them to come back into the Labourite fold? And nowhere do you raise the necessity of a revolutionary party to be counterposed to the Labour Party, even as a propaganda point.

We believe that a general strike would have had only beneficial consequences. One of the chief reactionary characteristics of the election has been to aid in shifting the locus of class confrontation from direct action to parliament, where two agents of the bourgeoisie quarrel over how to discipline the workers. A general strike would have posed the *fundamental* question of state power, although by itself it does not answer the question. But an inevitable accompaniment of such a mass eruption would have been a real class solidarity, which in turn would have been an enormous spur to the growth of a revolutionary alternative. Unfortunately such an alternative could not grow as a result of the limited strike wave, nor as a result of the current bourgeois elections.

A general strike would have been a marvelous "election issue." It would have posed the genuine class alternative to both Thatcher and Callaghan — workers' power.

The sectoral strikes were valuable despite their limits. But one consequence was to turn off large numbers of workers who have now been led to see other workers as their enemy. This results from the Labour Party's policy; the diminished number of workers intending to vote for Callaghan is proof. A vote for Labour is now a vote *against* class solidarity, not for it. The only alternative for the working class is a massive non-vote to Labour, conducted with a fighting line against any and all government and capitalist attacks. A general strike would have made such an electoral policy a powerful one. Even now, a call for a general strike makes such a line possible and necessary.

Revolutionary Party Essential

One more word on the matter of automatic support for Labour. Relatively permanent support of this type can only undercut the struggle for the revolutionary party. One becomes "realism" and the other only "hope." Your logic is that the revolutionary party, which would inevitably mean a sizeable raid away from Labour, should only develop at a time when the Conservative Party is less of a threat.

Comrades, we think it is no accident that your recent editorial in issue No. 5 calls for "the workers movement" to fight Callaghan and the TUC and for several political demands. Who concretely is to organize this struggle? Your organization does not exist in your own paper. You find it necessary to call for the formation of a genuine Trotskyist

Party in Iran. Entirely correct. How about posing one for Britain?

Then you could deal more precisely with what, for example, you called for in your article on Leyland in issue No. 1: Leyland workers "must fight for the nationalization, without compensation, of the entire motor and components industry under workers control." Once you decide that it is necessary to "say what is" and that nationalization really under the control of the workers can occur only through a workers' state, then you will have resolved the contradiction in your political approach.

Political Aims of General Strike

We would add one further point. Several times in *Workers Power* you refer to the very real danger of the armed power of the state during the strikes. Trotsky pointed out the absolute necessity of raising the call for armed bodies of the working class as a necessary response even to clashes on the picket lines. How much more necessary and opportune it was during the big strike wave! For comrades steeped in the tradition of the Transitional Program, your omission of this call was glaring.

We note that the Spartacists also neglected this slogan, as is customary with them. Their omission was even more glaring than yours because they did raise the general strike. A general strike accelerates the open mass confrontation between the classes — a good thing, but one that automatically carries with it a greater danger of armed response by the state. The Spartacists were nothing but irresponsible to issue no warning or demand for workers' defense guards to accompany their general strike slogan. Trotsky observed that the beauty of the Labor Party slogan in the U.S. in the late 1930's was that it posed not a reformist interlude but a sharp class confrontation. He stated that not to accompany the slogan with the call for armed workers' defense bodies would make us look like pacifists.

Nor did the Spartacists ever point to the political consequence of the general strike: that it would bring forward the issue of state power, not just governmental power. It is of course necessary to arm the workers politically as well as militarily.

In conclusion: the direction of the working class movement must become political, and it must be based upon objective necessity and objective possibility, not only subjective considerations. The major task of the British working class during the strike wave was not to win limited and sectoral gains but to *smash the social contract*. That is what we believe had to be said. What is the best way to translate the sectoralist economic actions by an objectively powerful class into such a class-wide political act if not the *general strike*? That had to be said.

From this, the organizational and pedagogical tasks and tactics would follow. And the result would have been a major step forward toward solving the crisis of leadership, the necessity for reconstructing the *revolutionary party*. ■