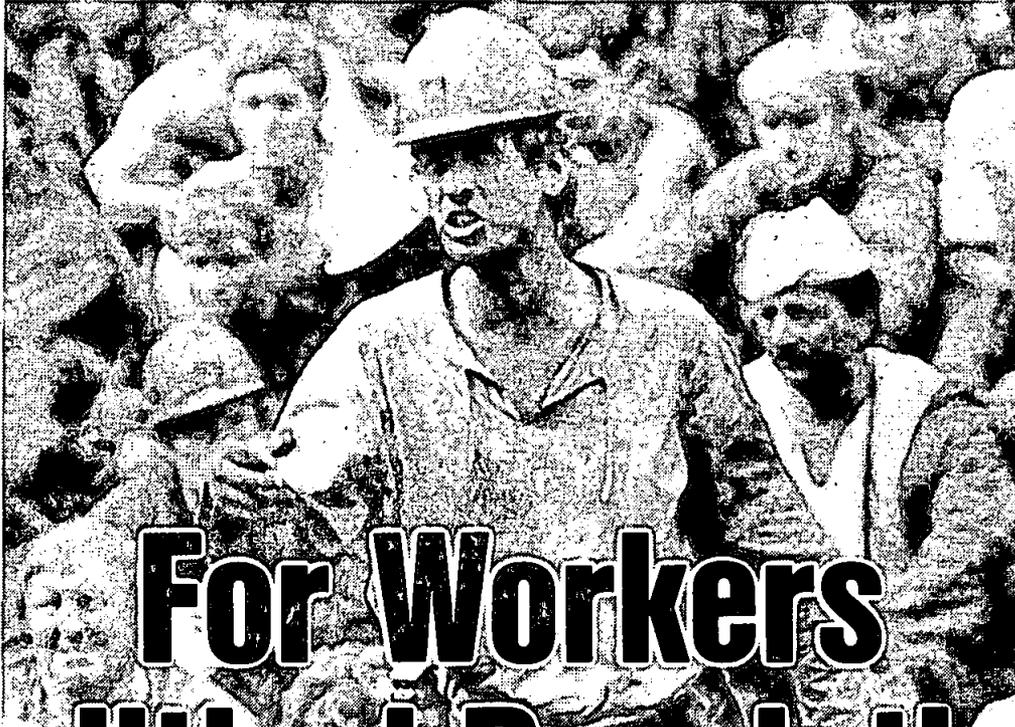




"Market Socialism" Breeds More Misery



TASS via Reuters

For Workers Political Revolution in the USSR!

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English Edition

SPARTACIST

An Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

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Number 43-44



Summer 1989

Letters

Some Political Bandits at the End

22nd March 1988

Dear Comrade,

Obviously, it is important that we gain the maximum support for the campaign to get the Russian government to release all documents relating to Leon Trotsky and the Moscow trials. Truth must out. The trail of blood left by Stalinism needs to be acknowledged by all, even if it is unpalatable to some communists.

By the same token, we must see that errors of a similar type are not committed in this country by people purporting to be Trotskyists. That is why the current issue of the Syndicalist journal, *Solidarity*, is so alarming. It contains a secret internal report of the WRP.

This shows that the WRP received large infusions of funds from Libya and other Middle East governments. Apparently, a total of at least £1,075,163 came from these sources.

Even more disturbing, the secret report reveals that the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein wanted information about the activities of opponents of the regime living in Britain. So members of the WRP acted as spies for their Iraqi paymasters. As a result, Iraqi left-wingers, returning to Baghdad, were tortured and executed.

In my opinion, it is vital [for] working-class organisations, as a matter of urgency, to make the following demands:

First, that the full facts be revealed about the WRP's associations with Colonel Gaddafi and other Middle East dictators.

Second, that the names of all those involved be made public.

Third, that both the WRP and these individuals be asked to account for their actions.

The principles of glasnost should not be confined to the precincts of the Kremlin. Unless we are a bunch of hypocrites, the British left must see to it that the same principles of frankness and openness operate in this country. Otherwise how can we expect Mikhail Gorbachev to reveal all?

Yours fraternally,
Raymond Challinor

Spartacist replies: We thank Raymond Challinor for his letter, originally sent to the editors of both *Workers Press* and *Revolutionary History* and printed here with his agreement. The "secret internal report of the WRP" to which Comrade Challinor refers is the by now infamous report of the David North-dominated "International Committee" Control Commission, dated 16 December 1985. Substantial excerpts of this report were published in the Spring 1988 issue of the British anarcho-syndicalist journal *Solidarity*. Subsequently, the British Workers International League (WIL) published the report in full in the April 1988

continued on page 44

Letters

Luxemburg and Lenin and Liebknecht

New York
4 November 1987

Dear comrades,

In cde. Robertson's presentation at the 18 January 1987 Spartacist League meeting commemorating the "Three L's" of Bolshevism (*Spartacist* [English edition] No. 40, Summer 1987) the concluding words of Rosa Luxemburg's last article are misconstrued. I raise this point not just out of a concern for factual accuracy but because Luxemburg's final article with its triumphalist close offers so telling a (negative) confirmation of the central thrust of cde. Robertson's talk: that in the absence of a revolutionary leadership with evolved authority revolutions miscarry despite the most revolutionary situations—that the lesson of 150 years of revolutions is that "nothing happens spontaneously"—and hence it is absolutely vital that the leadership of the party knows how and when to preserve itself from annihilation at the hands of the counterrevolution.

Having heard a comrade read this passage aloud during the meeting, cde. Robertson commented that Rosa Luxemburg "sheers off: 'I was, I am, I shall be.' That's your final statement the day before you're murdered? Very subjective and narrow." In fact, however, Luxemburg was not speaking of herself here: she places these words into the mouth of a personified The Revolution (rather like Delacroix's famous painting of the bare-breasted Liberty leading the workers forward at the barricades).

Luxemburg's article concludes:

"'Order prevails in Berlin!' You unseeing hirelings! Your 'order' is built upon the sands. Tomorrow already the Revolution will 'arise with a clatter' and to your terror proclaim with the sound of trumpets:

"I was, I am, I shall be!"

[emphasis in original, all translations are my own]

Thus the theoretical weakness expressed here is diametri-

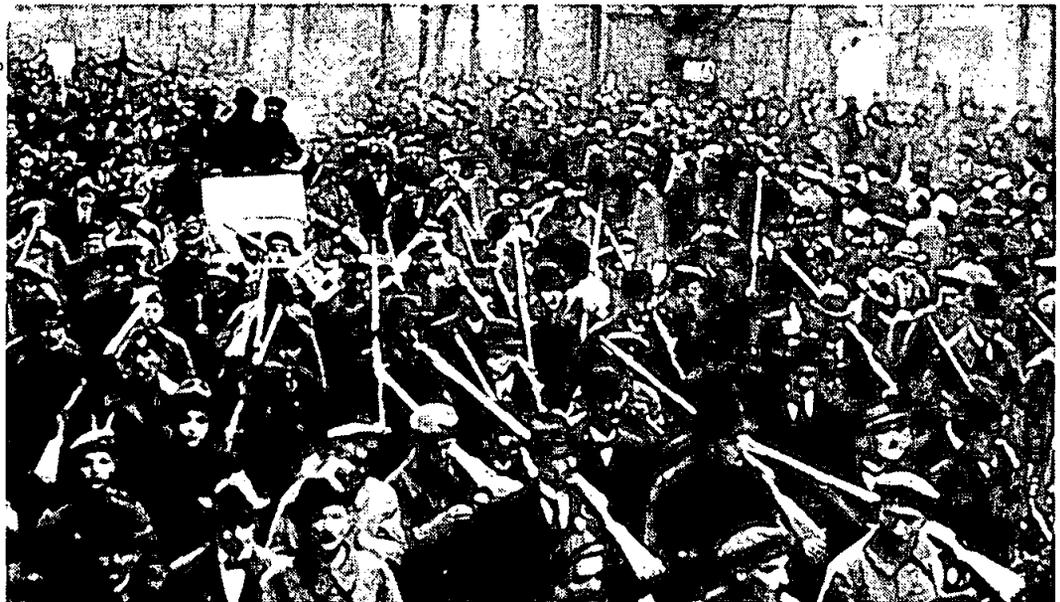
cally opposed to that ascribed to her: not subjectivity but objectivism, in the sense of hypostatizing the unstoppable forward motion of history into a personified mythic figure—The Revolution, who (or which) is the real protagonist and central actor of this final article. And for Luxemburg The Revolution in Berlin 1919 is embodied concretely in the spontaneous actions of Berlin's working masses.

It is typical, then, that this article, written immediately following the bloody suppression of the so-called Spartacus Uprising and despite its claim to the contrary ("What was last week, this 'Spartacus week' in Berlin, what did it achieve and what does it teach us?"), not only offers no critique of the indecisiveness of the fledgling KPD (German Communist Party) during the revolt but fails even to mention the KPD at all: when Luxemburg writes, "The leadership failed badly" ("Die Führung hat versagt") she is criticizing not the KPD but the left Independent Socialists (USPD) and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards, who provided what direction the uprising had. She continues, "But this leadership must be recreated by the masses and out of the masses. The masses are what is decisive, they are the rock on which the final victory of the revolution will be founded." And what, one wonders, of the KPD?

These complementary weaknesses—downplaying the vital role of the vanguard party and uncritical glorification of the spontaneous actions of the workers—come together in Luxemburg's blanket endorsement of the uprising, against which, given the unfavorable local balance of forces, she had originally warned in the most strenuous terms. Now, despite recognizing that the SPD (German Social Democratic Party) government of Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske had deliberately set off the revolt through "a brutal provocation," she concludes that, in the face of

"this bold-faced provocation... the revolutionary workers were forced to take up arms. Yes, the honor of the revolution was at stake.... And immediate resistance arose

Dietz Verlag Berlin



Demonstration of armed workers and soldiers during Spartacus uprising in Berlin, 1919.

spontaneously from the Berlin masses. . . . It testifies to the healthy instinct . . . of the Berlin proletariat that it spontaneously moved to occupy the other power bases of the counterrevolution. . . ." [emphasis in original]

Specifically, it does not seem to occur to Luxemburg to ask the basic question of whether the SPD provocation to which a large section of the Berlin proletariat responded (the replacement of a left-leaning Independent Socialist as Berlin chief of police with an SPD hack) would bring about such a basic change in the balance of forces as to dictate armed resistance by the workers.

Of course, it is better to fight than simply to cave in, and the battered workers of Berlin needed to be told, while they were tasting the bitter ashes of defeat, that their heroism had not been in vain. But what seems to me to be missing from Luxemburg's response to this defeat is a willingness to fulfill the party's pedagogical function, to draw and convey the requisite tactical and political lessons (which would have required differentiating the party from the masses), to say plainly and unambiguously to the workers: We warned against this uprising before it took place. When it occurred, though, we were at your side. Now that it has been defeated (in a single city) through the weakness of your vacillating misleaders and the betrayals of the SPD we have to ensure that such a defeat cannot happen again. There is an art to knowing how and when to insurrect, and we, the KPD, not the halfhearted pacifist socialists of the USPD or the syndicalist Revolutionary Shop Stewards, can provide you with the leadership that will bring success. Follow us to victory of the revolution!

Instead, Luxemburg disappears the KPD in favor of consoling platitudes: "... revolution is the only form of 'war' . . . where final victory can be prepared only through a string of 'defeats'!" Enumerating the repeated defeats of revolutionary upsurges over the past hundred years, she concludes, "And yet this selfsame history proceeds unstopably step by step to ultimate victory."

Luxemburg's resort to a personification of "The Revolution" for the triumphant close of her article is thus deeply

revealing—one cannot imagine Lenin or Trotsky employing such a literary device because such inevitabilism conflicts with their concept of the leadership role of the vanguard party. Equally telling is the fact that the hard militant and non-theoretician Liebknecht proclaimed "our program will live" just before he was murdered at the behest of the SPD while Luxemburg in essence said "The Revolution is undying."

Nonetheless, Rosa Luxemburg's final article breathes the spirit of Delacroix's magnificent painting glorifying the martyrs of July 28th, as a moving exhortation to the workers not to lose faith in socialist revolution because of a passing defeat: in her own way she was just as hard as Liebknecht. And to the extent that the imperfect knowledge reaching Germany in 1918 rendered this possible she had become a Bolshevik. One has only to think of her words (of 15 December 1918), where as co-speaker at the USPD congress she staged the breakaway of the Spartacus fraction: the resolution she presented called for "reject[ing] the summoning of the National Assembly as only leading to strengthening the counterrevolution and deceiving the Revolution of its socialist goals"—a Leninist position that is anathema to all "democratic socialists"—and demanded centrally:

"immediate seizure of all political power by the Workers and Soldiers Councils, disarming of the counterrevolution, arming of the working class, formation of a Red Guard to defend the revolution, dissolution of Ebert's Council of People's Delegates, bestowal of supreme state power on the Executive Council of the Workers and Soldiers Councils."

It is *this* tradition of "Luxemburgism" to which we cleave. Would that she (and Liebknecht) had realized how indispensable their leadership was and had left Berlin!

Comradely,
Dimir

Spartacist replies: We thank comrade Dimir for his cogent contribution.

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

Latest issue of *CSDN* No. 11 (August 1989) contains:

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"Market Socialism" Breeds More Misery

For Workers Political Revolution in the USSR!

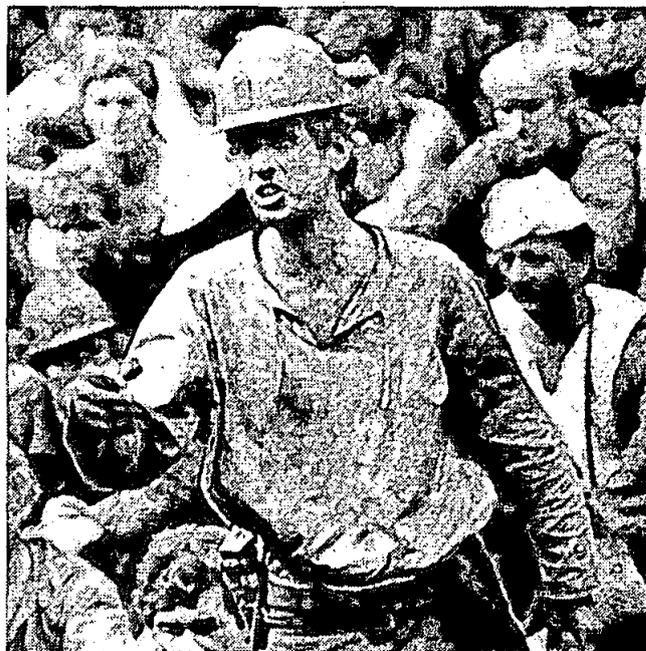
Since the victory of the 1917 October Revolution the various imperialist powers have directed implacable hatred at the Soviet Union. Even today, 65 years after the anti-revolutionary bureaucratic caste of Joseph Stalin triumphed over the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky, world imperialism still targets the USSR. The capitalists' unremitting hostility is eloquent testimony to the fact that the Stalin apparatus, while able to politically expropriate the Soviet working class, was compelled to base itself on the socialist property forms issuing out of the Revolution. It remains the duty of workers everywhere to unconditionally militarily defend the USSR against imperialism. Yet it is the heritage of Stalin and his successors that the proletariat of the Soviet Union must now fight a civil war from Jalalabad to Riga to defend and extend the gains of October.

It was the crimes of Stalin and the apparatus he led and personified that set the stage for the impasse in which the USSR finds itself, and these crimes were by no means confined to the Soviet Union. Out of the false perspective of "socialism in one country" flows the wrecking of the Communist International, aborting proletarian revolutionary struggle which could have stopped the rise of fascism in Germany, the attendant saddling of the proletariat with the anti-revolutionary class-collaborationist policies of popular-frontism and thereby enormous responsibility for the subsequent course of history.

Because of the betrayals of Stalinism, the Second World War did not lead to the revolutionary victories it potentially promised. At the end of the war the old imperial powers of Europe were militarily devastated and politically tainted with fascism, their ties to their colonial empires disrupted or shattered. All that remained was to throw them out and the means were in the hands of the proletariat. Instead Stalin propped up his "democratic" Western allies, giving capitalism a new lease on life, a chance to restabilize itself based on the defeat of the workers and a redivision of the world market. This is the legacy of "socialism in one country," a legacy the Gorbachev bureaucracy is carrying forward.

Perestroika and Glasnost

Gorbachev and his followers are frantically trying to overcome the bureaucratic parasitism, corruption and accompanying intellectual and worker alienation that have led to economic stagnation in the Soviet degenerated workers state. The road of "restructuring" they have chosen, dubbed perestroika, is that of market socialism and economic decentralization. But as the experience of the



TASS via Reuters

A miner speaks at strike meeting in Prokopyevsk, Siberia, July 1989. Miners strikes rocked USSR; bureaucracy scrambled to make concessions.

Yugoslav and Chinese deformed workers states reveals, these policies only magnify all the contradictions inherent in a regime of bureaucratic usurpation, while generating powerful tendencies toward capitalist counterrevolution.

It is an irony of history that in order to maintain their rule Stalin's heirs now feel compelled to permit a genuine, albeit limited, political liberalization (glasnost). Political and intellectual life in the USSR today is marked by an outpouring of criticism and dissent both within the bureaucracy and among the intelligentsia. The noteworthy absence of any significant Marxist current in this torrent is a measure of the limits of glasnost, the alien class appetites of large sections of the Soviet intelligentsia (which today significantly overlaps and interpenetrates with the bureaucracy) and the effectiveness of decades of bureaucratic usurpation in corrupting and discrediting the ideals of socialism.

The current "openness" of the USSR provides an imperative opportunity to construct an authentic communist party to return the world's first workers state to the revolutionary road of Lenin and Trotsky. At the same time it reveals and accentuates the centrifugal forces generated by and tearing at the bureaucracy. Chief among these

are the outbursts of national antagonisms that have swept the USSR.

National Conflicts Boil Over

In Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan the regime has been compelled to resort to armed force to suppress nationalist demonstrations, strikes, riots and pogroms. In the Baltic republics nationalists, including leading elements of the bureaucracy, proclaim their independence from Moscow, openly embracing the heritage of the White-terror regimes of the interwar period and aspiring to restore capitalism. Rumblings of nationalism are heard from Byelorussia and the Ukraine. Potentially most sinister of all are the Great Russian fascists organized in Pamyat. National tensions have reached the point that Gorbachev felt compelled to deliver a specially televised nationwide speech which called for reining in national passions and warned that the bureaucracy will tolerate no attempts at secession.



Cambio 16

Meskhetian Turks flee pogroms in Uzbekistan, June 1989. "Market socialism" breeds ethnic strife, threatens dismemberment of USSR. Return to the internationalist road of Lenin and Trotsky!

The immediate detonators of these outbursts have varied. Several years ago fierce rioting in Kazakhstan erupted when Gorbachev purged a Kazakh crony of Brezhnev from the republic's leadership, replacing him with an ethnic Russian. The recent turmoil in Kazakhstan grows out of bitterness over lack of jobs, especially for Kazakh youths. In Uzbekistan, disgruntled youth made jobless as a result of the mechanization of cotton farming served as the core of mobs who staged a pogrom against Meskhetians, a Turkic people exiled to Uzbekistan by Stalin late in World War II. Adding to Uzbek grievances was a big drop in the price the state was willing to pay for cotton. Over 12,000 troops were required to quell the rioters, who staged armed attacks on police and militia outposts. In the aftermath of the upheaval tens of thousands of Meskhetians were evacuated to Russia.

In Armenia mass demonstrations and strikes embracing virtually the entire population have demanded the immediate transfer of the 85 percent Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region from the jurisdiction of the Azerbaijani to the Armenian republic. Confronted with the demand of the Armenians the Supreme Soviet instead decided to uphold the status quo. Since then the region has

experienced martial law and rounds of vicious communalist violence. Tens of thousands of Armenians long resident in Azerbaijan have fled to Armenia. Likewise thousands of Azeris have been forced to leave their homes in Armenia.

Underlying the Armenian protest is a desire to increase the cultural and economic advantages of Armenia relative to the other nationalities of the USSR. The protests underline the potential for rifts in the bureaucracy to generate explosive social struggle. But Stalinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism provide no program capable of realizing the just aspirations of the working masses. As a result these aspirations are easily sidetracked into the dead end of murderous and suicidal ethnic strife.

Self-Determination and Socialism

Trotskyists uphold the right of self-determination of the various nations of the USSR—i.e., their right to secede and form a separate state—except where it serves as a cover for counterrevolution. We do not consider the present bound-

aries of the various entities within the USSR as sacrosanct. The Stalinists are unable to arrive at a democratic solution to this question, which necessarily is connected to an economic program capable of meeting the needs of the peoples of all the regions of the country. The failed policies of the bureaucracy generate powerful tendencies for capitalist counterrevolution under cover of the fig leaf of national self-determination. Such tendencies must be opposed and exposed as part of the struggle to reforge an authentically communist workers party in the USSR.

Fake-Trotskyists, such as those in and around the United Secretariat of Ernest Mandel, harm the cause of all the Soviet working people by their tailing of every manifestation of nationalism that crops up in the USSR. Thus for example Marilyn Vogt-Downey writes for the American Fourth Internationalist Tendency in the June 1989 *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*:

"While to date none of these movements appears to have directly challenged the basic premises which underlie the economic restructuring that is weakening the foundations of the workers' state—and some have even advocated more drastic measures to dismantle those foundations—the movements remain contradictory. Being mass-based they will *inevitably* reflect the genuine needs of the masses



Basil Blackwell Inc.

Yeniseisk, Siberia, 1928: Left Oppositionists demonstrate on anniversary of October Revolution under slogan "Turn the Fire to the Right. Against Kulak, Nepman and Bureaucrat—Not in Words but in Deeds."

as the results of the perestroika reforms become apparent and the struggle deepens." [our emphasis]

It is such methodology that led the USec to embrace the Croatian fascist Ustashi in Australia! The policies of the bureaucracy inevitably are laying the basis for a social explosion, but the outcome of that explosion—who will prevail—remains to be determined. All experience of the workers movement suggests that unless a new communist party is forged on the programmatic basis of Trotsky's Fourth International, the outcome will not be in favor of the Soviet proletariat.

Nationalism and Counterrevolution

It is necessary to distinguish among the various national conflicts that have erupted. Those in the south and in Central Asia so far appear similar to those raging in Yugoslavia—i.e., the various nationalities are struggling to ensure themselves a "fair share" within a "market socialist" USSR. But the national movements in the Baltic republics are openly on the road to capitalist counterrevolution.

These republics, while strategically situated, are Lilliputian. The big national question for the USSR remains the Ukraine, which has enormous military, industrial and agricultural importance. The western Ukraine has historically been the center of the most reactionary currents of Ukrainian nationalism. It was occupied by Pilsudski's Poland in the interwar years and was the base of operations for the bourgeois nationalist Petliura. At the end of the Civil War, Petliura cynically ceded claim to the occupied territory in exchange for Polish patronage and a chance to rule the Ukraine as a Polish puppet.

It is with such nationalists in mind that Trotsky invoked the slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine in 1939. For national conflicts in the USSR do not operate within the logic of Stalinist autarky. World imperialism takes a keen interest in these conflicts, acutely conscious that nationalism is a bourgeois ideology, antithetical to socialism. Its chief carriers in the Soviet Union are the petty-bourgeois layers—speculators, parasites, chunks of intelligentsia and bureaucracy, all susceptible to imperialist bribery.

U.S. imperialism plays the tunes of "democracy" and "self-determination" for the USSR, East Europe and

China. These are very old tunes. Following the victory of the 1917 October Revolution, 14 capitalist armies intervened on the side of the Whites to try to throttle the infant Soviet Republic in its cradle. In the Ukraine, in Georgia and in the Baltic the imperialists became the hypocritical partisans of "self-determination."

Thus German imperialism presided over the birth of an "independent" Ukraine, and joined with British imperialism to "self-determine" the Baltic republics and Georgia. The bourgeois nationalists of these would-be republics of course decided to "self-determine" only after October 1917. Previously they had been among the most fulsome supporters of a unitary Russian bourgeois state.

Bureaucratic Appetites and the Soviet Economy

Since the introduction of the first Five Year Plan there has been enormous growth in the economic and military

Women and Revolution

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Photo: Boni and Liveright; Flag: Museum of October Revolution, Moscow



Inset: A flag of the Latvian Riflemen, stronghold of the Bolsheviks in October 1917 Revolution.
Left: Latvian Smolny Battalion arrives in Petrograd, 26 November 1917.

power of the Soviet Union. This growth has been achieved at terrible cost and sacrifice by the Soviet working masses. Today the USSR has achieved a rough military parity with the main imperialist power, the USA. This and this alone has prevented the dismemberment of the USSR by world imperialism.

But despite the enormous strides taken by the USSR, its economy still lags significantly behind those of the most developed capitalist countries in productivity of labor. Further, the old bureaucratic methods of extensive capital investment and borrowing of technique, which in the past achieved great results, though at great social and economic overhead, have reached their limits. The USSR is gripped by a relative economic stagnation. As Trotsky so presciently observed in *The Revolution Betrayed*: "Under a nationalized economy, *quality* demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative—conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime of fear, lies and flattery."

Gorbachev's "reforms" seek a road consistent with "socialism in one country," i.e., pursuing the pipe dream of disarmed peace with imperialism while pushing a "market socialism." They dramatically expose the appetites of a wing of the bureaucracy to secure its uncertain economic privileges by devouring the workers state piecemeal.

Trotsky noted early on the magnetic attraction that the manners and mores of the most finished bourgeois snobs had for the privileged Soviet strata. Leading the pack are of course the top Soviet governmental officials, diplomats, economic experts, heads of trusts, etc., whose duties throw them in daily contact with these bourgeois elites.

The USSR today generates much more social surplus than it did in Stalin's day. With the disappearance of the bloody purges which Stalin used to winnow the bureaucracy, the appetites and the opportunities of important chunks of the top layers of Soviet society to feather their nests have grown correspondingly. Not so surprisingly this reality finds its reflection in the theories of some pro-perestroika economists, whose passion for the workings of the market would embarrass Adam Smith!

But establishing "market socialism" will simply replicate

all the distortions already evident in Yugoslavia and China. Factory will be set against factory, industry against industry, newer plants against older plants, industry against the consumer and agriculture—and regions and nationalities against each other. In such circumstances the bureaucracy will be able to continue its role as arbiter only if it expands enormously, as in fact it has in Yugoslavia. Market socialism will inevitably lead to the abandonment of the monopoly of foreign trade, in turn leading ineluctably to the uncontrolled penetration of the economy by the world capitalist market, preparing the ground for capitalist restoration.

Neo-Bukharinism

The essentially ideological (in the sense of false consciousness) outlook of the perestroika intelligentsia is revealed by their utter incomprehension of the turn made by the Stalin faction from the New Economic Policy to collectivizing agriculture. To them it's simply a case of the good guys, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, losing out to the bad guy Stalin. Correspondingly, the solution is simple—i.e., return to the road of NEP. But politics is above all a question of who will prevail, and the various antagonists ultimately reflect different class interests. NEP had consequences which are not simply Stalinist swearwords. The growth of the kulak, the rise of the middleman, the growth of class polarization in both the city and the countryside—all in fact contributed to the power and self-consciousness of the burgeoning Stalin bureaucracy and the complete suppression of party and soviet democracy. The NEP was initiated by Lenin as an expedient measure following the dislocations of the Civil War. But to his epigones, centrally Stalin and Bukharin, it was the *sine qua non* of their domestic policy—the working out of the algebra of "socialism in one country."

As early as 1923 Trotsky pointed out the divergence between industrial and agricultural prices, the famous "scissors" that threatened to lead to a sharp break between the country and the city, imperiling the proletarian dictatorship. Already by 1926 almost 60 percent of the saleable

grain was in the hands of just 6 percent of the peasantry. The inability of the regime to provide the peasant with industrial goods led to a grain strike that threatened the cities with starvation. It was this crisis that ultimately led to the break between Stalin and Bukharin.

Insofar as they deal with the question it is at this point that the Gorbachevite philistines invoke the Stalin of 1923-27 to accuse the Stalin of 1928-29 of going over to "Trotskyism." In fact the course of forced collectivization and forced-march industrialization was a belated and bureaucratic parody of the program of the Left Oppositionists, who in any case had the dubious pleasure of watching these events from their places of Siberian exile to which they had been consigned by the Stalin/Bukharin faction.

Gorbachev's USSR is in economic development a far cry from the Soviet Union of 1928-29. But if the Bukharinites had prevailed and the NEP had continued, it is an open question whether there would even be a Soviet Union today. The policies of the Gorbachevites pose the question of whether there will be a Soviet Union tomorrow.

A Capitalist-Restorationist Program

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky spelled out the measures required to restore private property in the means of production in the Soviet Union:

"First of all, it would be necessary to create conditions for the development of strong farmers from the weak collective farms, and for converting the strong collectives into producers' cooperatives of the bourgeois type—into agricultural stock companies. In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual 'corporations'—potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the émigré former proprietors and foreign capitalists."

If we leave aside the émigré proprietors, most of whom have long since passed from the scene, the scenario corresponds almost perfectly to the program of the most outspoken Gorbachevite "reformers." As Trotsky noted, the bureaucracy inevitably must seek supports for itself in property relations. Yet in order to accomplish such a transformation not "reforms" but a counterrevolution will be required. The film of reformism cannot be run in reverse. And that is both the dilemma of the bureaucracy and the mortal danger posed to the USSR by Gorbachev's course.

The Baltic Republics—Perestroika in Action

The most likely site for implementation of such "reforms" are the Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. These three tiny republics, independent for a span of only 20 years until militarily occupied and then annexed by the Soviet Union in July of 1940, have been a *cause célèbre* for anti-Sovietists of all stripes—the quintessential "captive nations." Stalin's motivation in grabbing this territory was undoubtedly military. At the time Trotsky remarked that although the territory was of strategic importance, the invasion by the Red Army would be seen as an act of violence and not of liberation, facilitating the mobilization of world public opinion against the USSR. In the long run, he opined, Stalin's occupation would do more harm than good.

Historically the Baltic peoples were subjects of the tsarist empire. In Estonia and Latvia the cities were largely Rus-

sian, German and Jewish while the countryside was completely dominated by German baronial estates—with the native peasantry mainly reduced to the state of landless agricultural workers or tenants. In Lithuania, Polish landlords held sway in the countryside while Vilnius was populated by Poles, Jews and Russians.

The October Revolution polarized the region along class lines. In Estonia and Latvia in particular the peasant masses flocked to the red banner of Bolshevism, the Latvian Riflemen serving as crack troops of the newly fledged Soviet regime. Correspondingly the bourgeois and landlord classes of the region, always a bulwark of the Romanovs, launched themselves on the road of separatism as a means of combating the revolution. The soviet governments of the Baltic republics were drowned in blood by German and Polish troops. A chilling portrayal (reflecting the mentality of a German aristocrat-gone fascist) of a slice



YIVO Institute

Lithuanian and German fascists beat Jews to death on street in Kaunas in 1941 (above). In Kaunas today, nationalists march under flag of reactionary interwar bourgeois state (below).

Turnley/Newsweek



of the bitter civil war fought in this region between the German landlords and the "Balts" can be found in Marguerite Yourcenar's *Le Coup de grâce* (1939). The bourgeois republics set up in place of the soviets were from the outset creatures of German and British imperialism, living under the protecting guns of the British fleet.

By the mid-1930s the interwar Baltic republics had become tiny carbon copies of Baron Mannerheim's Finland and Pilsudski's Poland, making up in viciousness for what they lacked in size. Today miserable remnants of these ruling classes still cling to "legations," maintained as "governments-in-exile" courtesy of the CIA. And lately these puppets have been jerked into motion, going so far as to begin issuing "passports." They are, in fact, the CIA's only credible remnant of "émigré foreign proprietors" for the whole USSR.

U.S. imperialism smells "rollback" in East Europe and the USSR. It has watched and cheered the rise of the Baltic People's Fronts, which openly aspire to a "Finnish option"—i.e., a return to capitalism. These Fronts are linked to restorationist wings of the bureaucracy on the right flanks of the respective regional parties. The Gorbachev bureaucracy had hoped this most developed region of the Soviet Union would be the flagship of perestroika, a version of China's Guangdong Province free trade zone. But events in the region have acquired logic of their own that bodes a collision with Moscow sooner rather than later.

The Estonian Supreme Soviet has already twice enacted legislation giving the republic veto over Soviet law. On May 18 they were joined by the Lithuanians who enacted a similar constitutional amendment, as well as a measure to control immigration into Lithuania. The Lithuanians also enacted a declaration stating their desire to be an independent state. Six days later the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet exempted citizens of the republic from a new highway tax enacted by Moscow intended to raise additional funds for highway repairs. According to a reporter from

the official Lithuanian press agency Elta, "Drivers said that Lithuania should not be obliged to pay for the rotten roads in Russia" (*New York Times*, 25 May 1989).

Along with juridical measures the Estonians have taken a number of economic measures intended to create an Estonian market cut off from the rest of the USSR. Thus since the beginning of 1989 the republic's government has "temporarily" banned private citizens and cooperatives from sending scarce consumer goods out of Estonia. According to the 13 March *Izvestia*:

"Severe restrictions have been placed on shipments by mail, railroad and air. A box of candy, a container of butter and children's underpants are now contraband. There's no point in going into stores without a passport—a significant number of items are sold only to residents of Tallinn and its outlying area. War has been declared on the outside buyer.... The consequences are simply unpredictable. Estonian television has shown a Leningrad post office. On its doors is a sheet of paper: Mail to the Baltic republics is not accepted. In neighboring provinces they have stopped selling gasoline to vehicles with Estonian plates."

—*The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*,
Vol. XLI, No. 12 (1989)

The next aim of the Estonian bureaucracy is to separate the republic's currency from that of the USSR. According to Inderek Toome, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR:

"We've decided that it's within the competence of the Estonian SSR to organize banking and currency circulation. This includes the introduction of Estonian money and the procedure and rate of exchange of this money for other currencies, including the rouble common for the USSR.... As for property, we have spoken in favor of a diversity of its forms, which will create conditions for a variety of forms of enterprise."

—*Moscow News*, No. 23, 11-18 June 1989

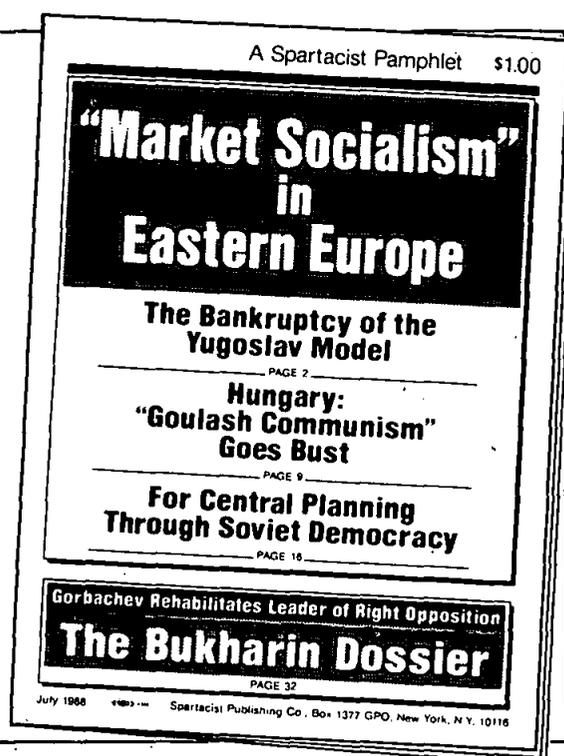
Proposed Estonian legislation would return all land to private farming and legalize "small-scale" private enterprises, giving them the right to hire labor and amass capital. Foreign ownership of property would be permitted.

A pamphlet on the economics of the East European deformed workers states, analyzing Yugoslavia, Hungary and East Germany in the context of Gorbachev's perestroika. The pamphlet considers the history of the ruling bureaucracies' efforts to combat stagnation through decentralization and "market-oriented" reforms, and counterposes the Trotskyist program for centralized economic planning based on workers democracy.

Includes "The Bukharin Dossier," concerning Right Opposition leader Nikolai Bukharin, frequently presented today as the "godfather of perestroika." The article also discusses the "rehabilitation" of "Old Bolsheviks" purged and murdered by Stalin's counterrevolutionary terror.

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Chung/Asiaweek

Spectre of workers political revolution haunts Stalinists. Chinese printing workers rally outside Tiananmen Square, June 1989.

Immigration from other parts of the USSR would be restricted. Not constrained by party ties, the People's Fronts and Sajudis (Lithuania's front) openly call for independence and capitalist-style economies. About a quarter of the Front membership are also Communist Party members.

Counterrevolution Disguised as National Liberation

In the recent elections to the Congress of People's Deputies the native populations of the Baltic republics solidly supported the nationalist People's Front candidates. One factor in this support is a very deep-seated national insecurity, especially in Estonia and Latvia. Fully 40 percent of the population of Estonia and nearly 50 percent of the population of Latvia is Russian. These immigrants are largely proletarians, drawn to the province by the large industries built there since World War II. Playing on chauvinism, Front proposals for getting rid of the Russians have run a gamut from proposing to shut down the big enterprises employing a majority of Russians to establishing republic citizenship based on longtime residency and fluency in the native language.

In reaction, elements of the bureaucracy in Estonia have formed an "Internationalist Movement," co-led by a Russian and, interestingly, a Siberian Estonian. Siberian Estonians, descendants of Estonians exiled to Siberia and "Russified," are also looked down upon by renascent Estonian nationalists. On March 14 a demonstration of over 80,000 Russian-speaking workers gathered in front of Tallinn city hall. The workers were incensed by the officially sanctioned February 24 celebration of bourgeois Estonia's Independence Day, which included a surreptitious nighttime removal of the republic's red state flag and its replacement with the interwar flag. Red flags were raised over buildings and a republic-wide strike committee elected. Demands were raised for equality of language and national rights. Internationalist Movement spokesmen accurately denounced developments in the republic as

"creeping counterrevolution." The stage is set for a bloody civil war in which capitalist counterrevolution will disguise itself as a struggle for "national liberation and self-determination."

Stalinism in a Bind

The situation facing the Gorbachev bureaucracy in Estonia exemplifies one pole of the contradiction facing latter-day Stalinism, the other being represented by the recent events in China. There ten years of "market socialism," of so-called reform, brought the country to the brink of proletarian political revolution. As China shows, market reforms only intensify problems of inequality and corruption. Thus deposed "reformer" Zhao Ziyang's sons are reputedly two of the wealthiest capitalists in China, while ten years of "economic reform" have resulted in a reported 50 to 100 million surplus agricultural laborers wandering around the countryside.

Top Soviet bureaucrats cluck their tongues approvingly at the stores in Yugoslavia and China with their relative (to the USSR) abundance of consumer goods. Why not? The upper crust of the bureaucracies in these countries is assured access to these goods, as is any other citizen who has the cash. Bureaucratic rationing and privilege are simply monetized according to the well-established capitalist principle, to each according to his ability to pay, and the bureaucracy's *raison d'être* is to ensure that its members get paid first and most—a veritable consumers' union of parasites with guns. The Soviet workers are deeply committed to socialist egalitarianism and rightly despise the special privileges of the bureaucracy—the foreign currency shops, the dachas, the limousines, the elite medical clinics, etc. But these pale before the inequalities of capitalism. The figure of a Donald Trump, who can purchase an entire airline, remains profoundly alien to the experience of the Soviet workers. The appearance of beginnings of inequality based on private property has already inflamed class tension in the USSR. Its growth will result in explosions of working-class anger that will shake the foundations of bureaucratic

usurpation, as it already has in China.

The bureaucracy can only oscillate between repression and relaxation all of which serves to throw up more social lava. Chinese Stalinism, after the bloody suppression of rebellion in Beijing, is in a muddle—cracking down, trying to maintain its alliance with U.S. imperialism, while tinkering with its program of “reforms.” Meanwhile the country’s economic weakness and the penetration of the capitalist market threaten it with a kulak revolt—something that would test the solidity of the Chinese military, whose leadership approximates a set of peasant cliques and is discredited among the masses for its role in the recent massacre.

East Europe—Poland and Hungary

If the Chinese students evinced some confused sympathy for the ideals of classless “democracy,” both they and the masses who joined them in revolt did so under the color of the red flag and singing the *Internationale*. The mass character of the revolt was conditioned by the widespread outrage over the rampant corruption and inequality generated by the bureaucracy’s neo-NEP. In the Polish deformed workers state events have taken a different course.

The recent elections to the Polish parliament confirmed what everyone knew—that Polish Stalinism had succeeded in driving the mass of the Polish working masses into the arms of the clerical-nationalist and pro-capitalist Solidarność. The victory of Solidarność, albeit limited according to a prior agreement with the bureaucracy, has embarrassed and deeply split the Polish Stalinists. The elections and the events leading up to them also expose Solidarność’ pretensions as a trade union. Only a small



Wide World

Hungary, 1956: Workers on captured Soviet tank. Workers political revolution split Stalinist bureaucratic apparatus.

percent of this “union’s” candidates were workers. And rifts have begun to appear between the proletariat and Solidarność’ leadership, which endorsed the shutdown of the Lenin Shipyard and now opposes strike action by the workers. Thus for the first time since 1981 a real chance exists for breaking the Polish working class from this company union for the CIA and Vatican.

Poland is an economic basket case indebted to the imperialist bankers for nearly 40 billion dollars. Subsidies to Poland from the USSR have totaled even more. And both the bureaucracy and Solidarność see no way out save further infusions of capital from the imperialists. Little of these enormous sums has found its way into productive investment. A great deal has gone toward subsidizing a reactionary and inefficient peasantry clinging to small private farms.

So far there have been insignificant market “reforms” in Poland. The chief obstacle to their implementation is the militancy of the Polish working class that Solidarność will have difficulty restraining. According to Solidarność’ Lech Walesa, civil war could result if reforms demanded of Poland brought unemployment and reduced incomes: “I am sitting on a powder keg, and I have doubts we will be able to do it” (*New York Times*, 12 July 1989). And while some elements of the Polish bureaucracy reconcile themselves to trading bureaucratic privilege for the joys of becoming petty and not-so-petty entrepreneurs, others keep their hands near the levers of armed power, watch and wait.

In neighboring Hungary, the Minister of State, Imre Pozsgay, says that it is “impossible to reform communist practice as it currently exists in the Soviet Union and East Europe.... This system must be liquidated.” In its place Pozsgay envisions “a party of a new type based on European socialist and social-democratic ideas” instead of a “reformed Communist Party” (*Le Monde*, 30 May 1989). Recently the regime implemented a series of political and economic measures. Opposition political parties are legal. Anyone can publish his own newspaper. A fully fledged stock market has been created. The rights of private entrepreneurs and foreign investors have been vastly expanded—e.g., private businesses can now employ up to 500 workers instead of 30, and Western investors can own 100 percent of Hungarian firms. The forint, Hungary’s currency, is to be made convertible so that foreign firms can repatriate profits. The intent is to put one-third of the economy in private hands in the next few years.

Hungary has already had over two decades of “market socialism,” Kadar’s so-called “goulash communism,” kept afloat by loans from world imperialism. The “goulash” has spoiled. Hungary now has the highest per capita foreign debt in Europe. Prices for food, housing and fuel are soaring—inflation is 20 percent annually. The country has widespread unemployment and attendant problems of poverty and drugs. It also has the highest suicide rate in Europe. As a result of the government’s “reforms” over 200,000 workers will lose their jobs in the next several years. For example, a Swedish proposal to the World Bank calls for a 20 percent reduction in Hungarian steel production and sacking of 50 percent of the steel workers.

The workers, fed up and cynical, have few illusions in either the party “reformers” or the newly fledged opposition parties, none of which has anything remotely resembling a mass following. According to Ferenc Koszeg, a

Afghanistan is front line of international class war. Women soldiers in Kabul (below). Family in Kabul home destroyed by mujahedin rocket (right). The ICL helped raise over \$44,000 for civilian victims of Jalalabad siege, and sent a correspondent to Kabul in June to continue our propoganda campaign.



Franklin/Magnum



Reuters

leader of the opposition Alliance of Free Democrats, "There is fear and apathy. They don't believe that the organizations can be effective. There is even a suspicion that they are movements of intellectual elites, not attached to the masses" (*New York Times*, 15 May 1989). The economic and political innovations of the "reform" wing of the bureaucracy are in fact overtly cynical measures intended to persuade Western bankers to pour eight billion dollars in new loans into the country. So far there have been no takers and the new stock market has done no trading. Foreign capital is hesitant to invest. Instead, as in Poland, it plans to pump seed money into the country to create a new class of entrepreneurs.

As in Poland, there is a developing polarization within the bureaucracy. Harvard-trained economist and current Hungarian prime minister Miklos Nemeth reportedly plays tennis on a regular basis with the U.S. ambassador. Meanwhile Janos Barabas, Budapest First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, explains: "I could see an opposition leader as prime minister. But if he were wise, he would name a Communist as his secretary of defense" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 31 May 1989).

Retired police and army officers are organized into the hardline Stalinist Ferenc Munnich Society. (Munnich was the man the Russians wanted to install in power after crushing the 1956 workers political revolution, until Tito persuaded them to go with Janos Kadar.) Elements of the Munnich Society are linked to the workers militia, comprising some 60,000 people, with reserves of 20,000. On March 15 the militia was issued arms before a scheduled mass rally in Budapest.

Munnichite Stalinism is of course generally discredited as a political current, but both the "reform" bureaucrats and the opposition are demanding disbanding of the party-organized workers militia. Doubtless for the benefit of vis-

iting U.S. president George Bush, the most outspoken of the "reform" leaders issued a call in the Budapest paper *Magyar Nemzet*:

"Reform circles should be capable of mobilizing the reform wing of the party and articulating the features of a majority party—a Hungarian Socialist Party or a Democratic Socialist Party—by a split, achieved by conservatives leaving."

—*New York Times*, 13 July 1989

The next day over 10,000 mourners showed up at the funeral of former party boss Janos Kadar. The crowd was unexpectedly large, although dwarfed in size by the recent memorial meeting for Imre Nagy, Hungary's prime minister during the 1956 Revolution. Following the Soviets' brutal suppression of the uprising, Nagy and his comrades were brutally murdered and buried in unmarked prison graves. Over 100,000 people attended a solemn ceremony celebrating Nagy as a hero of the revolution. Pozsgay, Nemeth and other top government officials attended, laying a wreath and serving as honorary pallbearers.

But many Hungarians remember that the 1956 Revolution first brought to power not party bureaucrats beholden to the imperialist International Monetary Fund, but armed workers soviets. During the height of the revolution, then Hungarian defense minister Pal Maleter (later executed with Nagy) patted his revolver when asked by a reporter about what would happen if the capitalists tried to return.

Anti-Perestroika Stalinism

While the bureaucracies in Hungary and Poland experiment with "pluralism" in order to wheedle new loans out of the imperialists, their Stalinist brothers in East Germany and Czechoslovakia so far want no part of Gorbachevism. Both states have maintained centralized economic planning, and are doing much better than their "market socialist" neighbors—giving the lie to the contention that central

planning *per se* is responsible for the economic quagmire in the degenerated/deformed workers states.

Certainly these countries historically were more industrially developed than Poland and Hungary, with substantial proletariats and correspondingly more advanced cultures in which the church played a much less central role. Their relative success today is linked to bureaucracies economically less capricious and more rational than their Polish and Hungarian counterparts. Where the bureaucracy is less promiscuous, the planning principle is sufficiently powerful to override tendencies inherent in Stalinism toward economic disproportions and stagnation. The impact of the 1968 Prague Spring surely constrains the appetites of the Czechoslovak bureaucracy, which 21 years ago presided over an economy that was the sick man of Eastern Europe.

In passing it should be noted that Romania is a case of political and economic pathology, even within the framework of Stalinism. Ceausescu, whose personality cult (on a Romanian scale at least) rivals that of Stalin, has accomplished something unique. He has managed to pay off all debt Romania had incurred to the bloodsucking imperialist bankers! To do so the entire country has been reduced to extreme penury. To solace the tired, hungry and cold workers he has stirred up anti-Hungarian chauvinism. Bulgaria, which economically is doing relatively well, meanwhile has decided to pre-empt possible national conflicts with its indigenous Turkish population by viciously driving them out of the country.

USSR Crucial

Gorbachev's policies have certainly influenced and interacted with the events in East Europe and China. But in the last instance it is developments in the USSR which will be decisive. The hopes of Stalinism in a pinstriped suit for "reform" and a stable "market socialism" are as much a pipe dream as the fantasy of peaceful coexistence with



Ogonyok

Pamyat supporters give Sieg Heil to leaders. Soviet workers must crush Pamyat fascists!

imperialism. Even more of a pipe dream are the schemes of elements of the bureaucracy in Poland, Hungary and the Baltic republics to engineer a peaceful return to capitalism.

The initiatives of the Soviet bureaucracy are a response to real pressures. Gorbachevite economist Shmelyov speaks of an economic crisis of Soviet society leading, he fears, to "counterrevolution"—i.e., a return to police methods the bureaucracy was so notorious for in the past. Gorbachev himself noted, "I even know war veterans come on the bus to Moscow, carrying portraits—a portrait of Brezhnev covered in medals, and a portrait of Gorbachev covered in rationing coupons" (*New York Times*, 26 May 1989).

The market socialism reforms advocated by the bureaucracy have scarcely been implemented. But worker discontent with shortages, corruption and inequality have led to over a dozen wildcat strikes this year. Most of these actions have been short-lived protests. But the strike by 110,000 coal miners in the Siberian coal mining region centered on Novokuznetsk has rocked the bureaucracy, which has scrambled to make concessions to placate the angry miners. According to the 15 July 1989 *New York Times*, the bureaucracy "promises to meet some of more than 40 demands for more food in stores, warmer winter clothing, improved maternity leave, anti-pollution measures, housing improvements and other specific local needs." The bureaucracy has also sought to channel the strikers' contrary political demands into market-oriented "self-management" reforms.

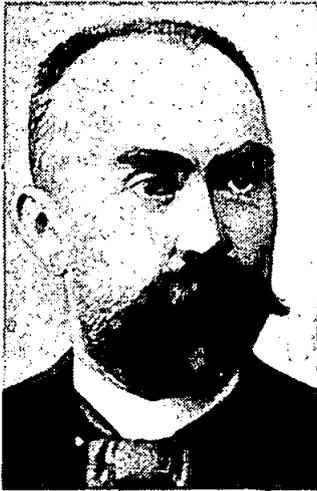
The demands of the strikers, far broader than any posed by strikers in capitalist countries, reflect the class nature of the Soviet state. They also reflect very directly these Soviet workers' acute awareness that the 1917 October Revolution is their revolution. The Soviet working people deeply believe that the Soviet workers state, despite all its deformities, is "their" state. They deeply believe that the factories, mines and land are the property of the entire proletariat. All this constitutes an enormous barrier to imperialist aspirations for counterrevolution in the USSR. The receptivity of the Soviet working masses to an internationalist perspective was reflected in the appeal by the striking miners for support from the British National Union of Mineworkers, led by Arthur Scargill. Scargill had spoken out against anti-Communist Solidarność and Reagan/Thatcher's anti-Soviet war drive; during the 1984-85 British miners strike the Soviet miners union gave massive financial support to their class brothers in Britain. The Soviet miners' appeal to the NUM stands in sharp contrast to Solidarność' craven crawling before Thatcher.

Nevertheless, the heavy nationalist overtones sweeping the USSR facilitate the mobilization of forces of capitalist counterrevolution. They also threaten to channel growing anger over the economic consequences of market socialism into the dead end of intercommunal conflicts. To mobilize the Soviet proletariat the key demand is: *All Power to Workers Soviets!* Aside from the Baltic republics and possibly the western Ukraine the relationship of forces does not now favor counterrevolution, particularly if the Soviet workers can join hands with their Chinese comrades, who have already had bitter experience with market "reforms."

In China nascent political revolution nearly split the People's Liberation Army. Civil war threatened to erupt between the bureaucracy and the Chinese proletariat.

Founding East European Marxists

Georgi Plekhanov
1856-1918



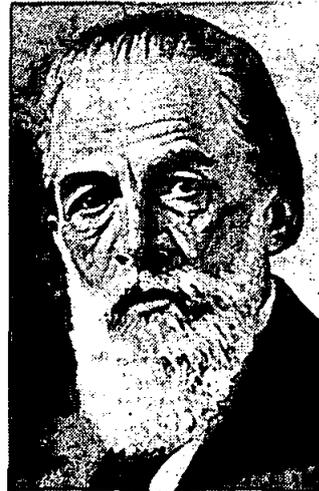
Progress Publishers

Ludwik Warynski
1856-1889



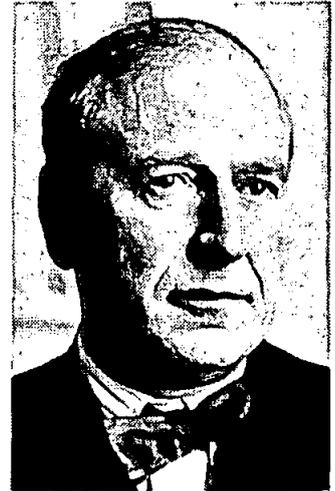
Ksiazka i Wiedza

Dimitar Blagoev
1855-1924



New York Public Library

Christian Rakovsky
1873-1941



Wide World

Plekhanov of the Russian Emancipation of Labor group, Warynski of the Polish party Proletariat, Blagoev of the Bulgarian "Narrow Socialists," and Rakovsky of the Bulgarian, Romanian and Russian parties.

In the USSR the appearance of capitalist-restorationist forces can lead to an open clash between them and the proletariat, which will inevitably split the bureaucracy into its polar components. Soviet politics thrown into turmoil by glasnost demonstrate anew Trotsky's observation that "all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko)" (*Transitional Program*).

Contemporary Butenkoism manifests itself in the sinister anti-Semitic Pamyat. Soviet workers must mobilize to drive these fascists off the streets before this festering sore grows into a cancerous growth which endangers the Soviet state and its multinational people. Meanwhile, the eagerness of the Gorbachev regime to conciliate U.S. imperialism from Kabul to Central Europe to Nicaragua cannot but generate deep misgivings among wide layers of Red Army officers. Unlike the Chinese PLA, heavily peasant in composition and presided over by regional peasant-derived cliques, the Red Army is proletarian at its base with an officer corps that has a memory and tradition stretching back to the 1918-21 Civil War.

The bureaucracy has already been forced to begin to acknowledge Trotsky's role in both the revolution and in founding the Red Army. The more historically-minded officers recall Stalin's sabotage of the defense of the Soviet Union on the eve of World War II—including his bloody purge of Tukhachevsky and the cream of the Red Army officer corps. Today Soviet veterans returned from Afghanistan, officers and enlisted men alike, see themselves as proletarian internationalists who did their duty. The Afghan war veteran who denounced the traitor Sakharov for his pro-imperialist slander of the Red Army's role in Afghanistan not only rocked the Congress of People's Deputies, but reflected widespread popular opinion.

One can reasonably anticipate even whole units of the Red Army and Navy siding with the working class and its vanguard against burgeoning capitalist counterrevolution, dismantling the bureaucratic structures, restoring democracy and workers soviets, and initiating a planned

economy with the full and active participation of the masses. Such an economy must be dedicated to the principle of egalitarianism and committed to realizing a constantly rising quality in the conditions of economic and social life for all. Only a workers vanguard party suffused with an international vision—a vision inextricably linked with the solidarity of workers everywhere against their exploiters and oppressors—can carry out such a domestic perspective. ■

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When Was the Soviet Thermidor?

In 1923, on the sixth anniversary of the October Revolution, the triumvirate of J.V. Stalin, G. Zinoviev and L. Kamenev, under great pressure, opened the pages of *Pravda* for what was to be the party's last free debate, to discuss the "New Course." Many articles critical of the Central Committee were published until the middle of December. A looming economic crisis and the growing bureaucratism in the party had propelled Leon Trotsky and others into opposition. A group of prominent Bolsheviks, including V. Antonov-Ovseenko, E. Preobrazhensky and Yu. Pyatakov, submitted a document to the Politburo on October 15 known as the "Platform of the 46," which bluntly stated:

"The regime established within the party is completely intolerable; it destroys the independence of the party, replacing the party by a recruited bureaucratic apparatus which acts without objection in normal times, but which inevitably fails in moments of crisis, and which threatens to become completely ineffective in the face of the serious events now impending."

The increasing bureaucratism had been a serious concern of Lenin's. He made a bloc with Trotsky in December 1922 to fight Stalin, and the 4 January 1923 postscript to Lenin's *Testament* proposed to remove Stalin as General Secretary. Despite Lenin's clear urgings and warnings, Trotsky agreed to a compromise at the 12th Party Congress in April 1923 and Stalin was allowed to keep his post. Lenin's *Testament* was always carefully hidden from the party ranks.

In the discussion leading up to the 13th Party Conference, the loose "Trotskyist" opposition obtained 20 to 30 percent of the votes in local party meetings in Moscow and Petrograd, and won 67 out of 346 party cells of industrial workers. But Stalin ran the apparatus, which blatantly rigged the delegate elections. At the Conference, held just days before Lenin's death in January 1924, the opposition had only 3 out of 128 delegates. The "New Course" was supposed to be a change in the direction of workers democracy; instead the Conference showed Stalin and his minions shaking their fists in the face of the party.

One of the points used as a factional club by Stalin in December 1923 and thereafter was that Trotsky was not part of the Bolshevik "Old Guard"—this was to feature prominently in the attempt to disparage and disappear Trotsky's role as co-leader with Lenin of the October Revolution. In 1917 Trotsky was won to Lenin's view on the need for a Bolshevik party and "from that time on," Lenin said, "there has been no better Bolshevik" (speech to the Petrograd Committee, 14 November 1917). Throughout the long years of his exile, right up to his assassination by a Stalinist agent, Trotsky waged a battle, as uncompromising as any Lenin waged, to reforge an international communist vanguard and to oppose the Stalinists while giving unconditional military defense to the USSR against imperialism.

In his retrospective analysis explaining the triumph of the bureaucracy, Trotsky used an analogy with the ouster of the radical Jacobins on the 9th of Thermidor during the French Revolution:

"Socially the proletariat is more homogeneous than the bourgeoisie, but it contains within itself an entire series of strata that become manifest with exceptional clarity fol-

lowing the conquest of power, during the period when the bureaucracy and a workers' aristocracy connected with it began to take form. The smashing of the Left Opposition implied in the most direct and immediate sense the transfer of power from the hands of the revolutionary vanguard into the hands of the more conservative elements among the bureaucracy and the upper crust of the working class. The year 1924—that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor."

—"The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism" (1935)

After January 1924, *the people who ruled the USSR, the way the USSR was ruled, and the purposes for which the USSR was ruled* had all changed. This view is supported by the material spread over several of the 14 volumes of the eminent historian E.H. Carr's *History of Soviet Russia*. In *The Interregnum 1923-1924*, Carr states:

"Notwithstanding its formally subordinate status, the thirteenth party conference of January 1924 was a more decisive occasion in party history than either the twelfth congress which had preceded it in April 1923 or the thirteenth congress which followed it in May 1924."

The victory of the bureaucracy came hard on the heels of the German defeat in October 1923. The failure of the revolution to spread internationally sharply exacerbated the economic scarcity produced by seven years of war. In his book *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), Trotsky cites Marx, who noted that when want is generalized "the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive." The bureaucracy emerged as the arbiter in the "struggle for necessities," usurping political power from the mass organizations of the proletariat.

The usurpers were unable to imprison Lenin in life but after his death they buried Lenin's program of proletarian internationalism, replaced in 1924 by the Stalinist "theory" of "socialism in one country." The very idea had been denied by Stalin himself in lectures serialized in *Pravda* in April-May 1924 and collected in a pamphlet, *The Foundations of Leninism*; yet in the 20 December 1924 issue of *Pravda*, Stalin went into print with his new line and the first edition of his pamphlet was subsequently withdrawn from circulation. Over the next decade and a half, the cadres of Lenin's party were physically liquidated and the Communist International was made into the Kremlin's instrument to betray other countries' revolutions.

To place the Soviet Union upon Lenin's road also requires that conscious workers know when the qualitative departure from that road took place. ■

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Когда произошел советский термидор?

В 1923 году, в шестую годовщину Октябрьской революции, триумvirат в лице И. В. Сталина, Г. Зиновьева и Л. Каменева под величайшим давлением представил страницы «Правды» для обсуждения «нового курса», что явилось последней свободной партийной дискуссией. Многочисленные статьи, содержащие критику Центрального комитета, выходили вплоть до середины декабря. Разрастающийся экономический кризис и усиление бюрократизма внутри партии побудили Льва Троцкого и других встать в оппозицию. 15 октября группа видных большевиков, в составе: В. Антонова-Овсеенко, Е. Преображенского и Ю. Пятакова, представила на рассмотрение Политбюро документ, известный под названием «Политической платформы 46», в котором прямо говорилось:

«Режим, установившийся внутри партии, совершенно нестерпим, он убивает самостоятельность партии, подменяя партию подобранным чиновничьим аппаратом, который действует без отказа в нормальное время, но который неизбежно дает осечки в моменты кризисов и который грозит оказаться совершенно несамостоятельным перед лицом надвигающихся серьезных событий».

Разрастание бюрократизма серьезно волновало Ленина. В декабре 1922 года он заключил союз с Троцким против Сталина, и 4 января 1923 года, в постскрипуме к «Завещанию» Ленина, было предложено убрать Сталина с поста генерального секретаря. Несмотря на настоятельные советы и предупреждения Ленина, Троцкий пошел на компромисс на XII съезде партии в апреле 1923 г., и Сталину было разрешено остаться на посту. Ленинское «Завещание» всегда тщательно скрывалось от рядового состава партии.

На прениях, предваряющих XIII партийную конференцию, «Троцкистская» оппозиция получила от 20% до 30% голосов на местных партийных собраниях в Москве и Петрограде и заняла 67 из 346 партийных ячеек промышленных рабочих. Однако, то, что Сталин управлял партийной машиной, привело к подтасовке результатов выбора делегатов. На конференции, проводимой всего за несколько дней до смерти Ленина, оппозиция была представлена всего тремя делегатами от 128. «Новый курс» должен был принести перемены по направлению развития рабочей демократии, вместо этого конференция наглядно показала как Сталин и его приспешники потрясают кулаками перед лицом партии.

Одним из моментов, использованных Сталиным как фракционный козырь в декабре 1923 года и в последствии, был тот факт, что Троцкий не входил в число «Старой гвардии». И в дальнейшем раздувание этого факта служило попытке скрыть и умалить роль Троцкого как соратника Ленина в деле руководства Октябрьской революцией. В 1917 году Ленин полностью убедил Троцкого в необходимости создания Большевицкой партии и «с тех пор, — сказал Ленин, — не было лучшего большевика» (речь к Петроградскому Комитету, 14 ноября 1917 г.). Через все долгие годы изгнания, вплоть до убийства его сталинским агентом, Троцкий вел непримиримую борьбу, так же бескомпромиссно как Ленин, чтобы перековать международный коммунистический авангард и противостоять сталинистам, при

этом оказывая безусловную поддержку вооруженной защите СССР против империализма.

В своем ретроспективном анализе, объясняя триумф бюрократии, Троцкий приводит аналогию с якобинцами, когда во время Французской революции на 9 Термидоре произошло изгнание радикальных якобинцев:

«Пролетариат социально однороднее буржуазии, но включает в себе все же целый ряд слоев, которые особенно отчетливо обнаруживаются после завоевания власти, когда формируется бюрократия и связанная с ней рабочая аристократия. Разгром левой оппозиции в самом прямом и непосредственном смысле означал переход власти из рук революционного авангарда в руки более консервативных элементов бюрократии и верхов рабочего класса. 1924 год — это и есть начало советского Термидора».

«Рабочее государство, Термидор и Бонапартизм», 1935

После января 1924 года все переменялось: люди, которые управляли СССР, способ управления и цель, во имя которой это управление осуществлялось. Видный историк Е. Х. Карр дает подтверждение этой точке зрения материалами, содержащимися в нескольких томах его четырнадцатитомного труда «История советской России». В «Междоусобице 1923-1924 гг» Карр заявляет:

«Несмотря на формально второстепенный статус, тринадцатая партийная конференция от января 1924 года явилась более решающим событием в истории партии нежели XII съезд, который ей предшествовал в апреле 1923 г., или XIII, который следовал за ней в мае 1924 г.».

Победа бюрократии прямо следовала за поражением Германии в октябре 1923 г. Провал распространения революции в международном плане был резко усугублен экономической нехваткой вызванной семью годами войны. В книге «Что такое С.С.С.Р. и куда он идет?» (1936) Троцкий цитирует Маркса, который отмечает, что с обострением нужды «должна снова начаться борьба за необходимые предметы и, значит, должна воскреснуть вся старая дребедень». Бюрократия возникла как арбитр в «борьбе за необходимые предметы», перехватывая политическую власть у массовых организаций пролетариата.

Узурпаторы не смогли лишить свободы Ленина при его жизни, зато после смерти они захоронили ленинскую программу пролетарского интернационализма, замененную в 1924 г. сталинистской «теорией» «социализма в одной стране». Сам Сталин отрицал эту идею в серии лекций, вышедших в «Правде» в апреле-мае 1924 г., после чего они были собраны в памфлет «Основы Ленинизма»; однако, уже 20 декабря 1924 г., в очередном выпуске «Правды», Сталин выступил в печати с новым направлением, в результате первый тираж памфлета был изъят из обращения. За время последующих полутора декад, кадры ленинской партии были физически ликвидированы, а Коммунистический Интернационал был превращен в орудие предательства Кремлем революций в других странах.

Сознательным рабочим необходимо знать, когда имели место качественные отклонения от ленинского пути, для того, чтобы поставить Советский Союз обратно на этот путь. ■

The Fight for Communist Leadership

International Communist League Launched

ADAPTED FROM WORKERS VANGUARD
NO. 479, 9 JUNE 1989

It is with pride tempered by a sober assessment of our responsibilities that we announce the founding of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), previously the international Spartacist tendency. The International Executive Committee took this step on 13 May 1989.

Fifty years ago, Leon Trotsky, Lenin's companion in arms and founder of the Red Army, proclaimed the creation of a new International to carry forward the authentic Leninist program abandoned and besmirched by the Communist International under the sway of J.V. Stalin and his anti-revolutionary bureaucratic clique. The ICL today fights to reforge the Fourth International.

In the shadow of the approaching second imperialist world war, Trotsky observed with increasing urgency that the objective preconditions for world proletarian revolution were overripe, but what was lacking to uproot decadent capitalism on the world scale and establish a socialist world order was an authentic revolutionary leadership at the head of the proletariat. The spread of the barbarism of fascism and the oncoming world war were not the only deadly dangers confronting the workers of the world at that crucial moment; posed also was the question of the very survival of the Soviet Union and the remaining gains of October.

Today once again, those who struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation in what is unquestionably a period preparatory to war still confront that same excruciating crisis of leadership, but in a different situation. The contradictions of Soviet society and the problems of the Chinese revolutionary struggle, both brilliantly analyzed by Trotsky, have exploded with pent-up force. In the capitalist countries, the working class certainly lacks the level of socialist consciousness and organization it possessed in the 1920s and 1930s. The legacy of Stalin's reign of terror inside the Soviet Union, and of the repetitive betrayals of crucial revolutionary opportunities, has been the massacre of pro-Communist militants from China to Spain to Greece to Chile to Iran. Stalinism has created millions of anti-Communists and the general level of identification of human progress with the idea of communism stands at a relative low point. Yet as the workings of capitalist imperialism create millions of new subjective communists across the globe, the absence of genuinely communist leadership is acutely felt by many and the program of Leninist internationalism can be put forward with great impact.

The Homeland of October Is in Grave Danger— All Power to Workers Soviets!

Under Gorbachev we have witnessed an attempt to "restructure" the Soviet economy in the direction of encouraging powerful forces toward capitalist restoration, combined with a "diplomacy" of apparently limitless appeasement of imperialism which is being paid for in blood



Le Bolchevik

Banner of newly founded International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) unfurled for the first time at annual Lutte Ouvrière fête, Paris region, May 1989.

in Afghanistan (although the *mujahedin* siege of Jalalabad has evidently been thrown back, much to the dismay of American policymakers and the Pakistani annexationists), and which has devastating implications as well for the working people from Nicaragua to Southern Africa to Indochina. Now within the USSR, national antagonisms—spurred by the recent “reforms” termed “market socialism” which encourage the richer republics to seek greater autonomy from their poorer neighbors, but also nourished by decades of the bureaucracy’s Great Russian chauvinism—threaten to dismember the homeland of the October Revolution. The slogan of “free elections” and the agitation for “national independence,” particularly in the Baltic states, in this context can be nothing but a transparent cover for the program of capitalist restoration. Should nationalist unrest spread to the Ukraine, this would be extremely ominous. The anti-Semites of the Russian nationalist “Pamyat” fascists have grown dangerously, protected by elements of the bureaucracy. Today, the continued existence of the bureaucratic caste, the heirs of Stalin, constitutes a more immediate and direct threat to the conquests of October than ever before: what is posed is nothing less than civil war. *Only* through the return to the working people of their state, through the rule of *soviets* (councils of workers and soldiers), can the egalitarian consciousness (the idea that nobody should live off the exploitation of the labor of others) which remains deeply ingrained in sections of the Soviet working masses be mobilized in decisive struggle to uphold the gains of October.

The effects of what is termed “market socialism” are clearly shown in Eastern Europe. In Poland, the Stalinist bureaucracy’s gross economic mismanagement and heavy-handed repressiveness opened the road for workers’ grievances to be channeled into a reactionary-clericalist company union on behalf of the “free trade union” CIA along with the Western bankers and the Vatican. Every leader of *Solidarność* is and has been since 1981 a traitor to the working class on behalf of NATO imperialism. Today the Polish regime and *Solidarność* are selling the country to the IMF and are prepared to allow the historic centers of the proletariat—the Lenin Shipyard workers, the miners of Upper Silesia—to be dismembered. The Stalinist schema of “national autarky” has come home to roost—Down with the Stalinist nationalists in Moscow and East Berlin who allow the imperialist world market to regulate the terms of trade between “fraternal socialist” trading partners; reforge the historic link between the German and Polish proletariats through proletarian political revolution!

In China, the mass outpouring of defiance in early June heralded the Chinese proletarian political revolution against the corrupt and despised Stalinist bureaucracy. What began as a student upheaval around vague demands for greater democracy was embraced by the working people of Beijing who came out into the streets seeking by their massive numbers to block the unleashing of troops against the demonstrators. Some units fraternized with the crowds, other units were brought in to shoot down the people. For the moment the Deng regime has arrested the momentum of the Beijing spring with a wave of repression which has struck first and hardest at the working class. But tremendous resentment has built up among the salaried people against the beneficiaries of “building socialism with capitalist methods”—a full-fledged NEP. The decrepit bureaucratic caste which has opened the doors of China to massive

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Московский процесс — процесс над Октябрем

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Историческое значение...
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Политический анализ...
Итоги процесса...
Задачи оппозиции...
Критика буржуазной прессы...



Bi-monthly Organ of the Opposition Group in the Workers' (Communist) Party of America
The MILITANT
For the Russian Opposition!
Against Opportunism and Bureaucracy in the Workers' Communist Party of America!
A STATEMENT TO AMERICAN COMMUNISTS BY JAMES F. CANNON, MARTIN ARBER AND MAX BUCHHEIM

QUATRIÈME INTERNATIONALE
IV^e INTERNATIONALE
La Conférence IV^e Internationale

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SPARTACIST
NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY-MARCH 1964 10 CENTS

WITCH HUNT IN THE SWP
The National Committee of the Socialist Workers' Party expelled the members of the party's left wing...
Control Committee

The struggle for the continuity of Bolshevism: the Bulletin of the Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist) (1936); first issue of the American SWP's *Militant* (1928); *Quatrième Internationale* (1938), journal of the French Trotskyists; first issue of *Spartacist* (1964).



Le Bolchévik

5 June 1982: French Spartacists protested Reagan and Mitterrand under the banner of unconditional military defense of the USSR against imperialism.

capitalist encroachment and shamelessly allied itself with U.S. imperialism can be shattered. The urgent task which stands before the Chinese workers is the forging of an authentic communist party, an internationalist vanguard, which can lead the struggle for the unity of China under workers leadership.

Stalin and Mao and all the pygmy Stalins and Maos have done everything they could to make "communism" a code word for murdering your own people and trying to get little concessions from imperialism by being its cat's paw, as the Chinese have been America's agent militarily against Vietnam. In part, illusions in "Western democracy" among the Chinese students stem from the misidentification of militant communism with Maoism—i.e., economic primitivism and "barracks socialism," the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, the student protesters are singing the *Internationale*.

Decadent Imperialism Has Been Given a Breathing Space

Today the capitalist world remains marked by the decomposition of the short-lived "American Century": having emerged as the dominant capitalist power after the devastation of Europe and Japan in World War II, Washington's "new world order" quickly unraveled, beginning with the Chinese Revolution and America's consequent embrace of its former enemy, Japan, as a bulwark against the spread of revolution in Asia, continuing with the Cuban Revolution and underlined by the dirty, losing war against the peasants and workers of Vietnam. Now beset by sharp trade rivalry with Japan and the demands of resurgent German imperialism to assume its "rightful" place as the leader of capitalist Europe, American capitalism has become the world's biggest debtor nation; its essential industrial plant decays while its exports increasingly center on raw materials and agricultural products. At the same time this wounded capitalist colossus maintains its ambition to police the world from Latin America to the Persian Gulf, while possessing a nuclear arsenal which could destroy the world a hundred times over.

The resurgent bourgeois anti-Sovietism of the 1980s, inaugurated by Jimmy Carter's hypocritical "human rights" crusade and escalated under the unashamed Cold Warriors of Reagan/Bush/Thatcher, highlighted the timidity and demoralization of the "left." Also standing out sharply are the criminal passivity of the trade-union "leaders" who, confronted by sharp attacks on the workers' living standards and working conditions, continue seeking to eschew the traditions of mass militant struggle which built the unions; the craven subservience of the "black elected officials" to the racist ruling-class establishment whose only program for jobless black youth, welfare mothers, the homeless amounts to genocide; and the bankruptcy of the "liberals" who have largely abandoned the pretense of concern for the workers and poor. Today the communists, whose aim is the proletarian conquest of state power and the reconstruction of society on a new basis, are at the same time the most consistent defenders of the ideals of the Enlightenment and the gains of bourgeois revolution: the right to bear arms; the separation of church and state—against the imposition of religious fundamentalism as a political program; against censorship, whether by "creationists" seeking to ban the teaching of evolution or "anti-pornography" feminists or the burning of Salman Rushdie's "blasphemous" novel; against the racist death penalty; for the liberation of women. In Britain, where the bourgeois revolution was early and uncompleted, we say: Down with the monarchy, the aristocracy, the established churches—For a voluntary association of workers republics in the British Isles! In Japan, where the bourgeois revolution came late and from the top down, we demand the abolition of the emperor system—For a Japanese workers republic!

War and Revolution

Lenin, in his work on imperialism as the epoch of capitalist decay, showed that the system of class relations had now become (as Marx had analyzed) a barrier to the development of the productive forces, leading to inter-imperialist rivalry and war to redivide the world's spoils.

The first imperialist world war brought unprecedented suffering and mass slaughter of the working people and revealed most of the Socialists of the Second International to be cowardly chauvinist tails on the imperialist ambitions of their "own" ruling classes. But defeat in war can be the mother of revolution, and Lenin and the Bolsheviks, who had built up a hard revolutionary party and broken sharply from the social-patriots, were able to transcend their own inadequate theoretical formulas (which had denied the possibility of proletarian revolution in backward Russia) and thereby to lead the small but militant Russian working class to the taking of state power, on the basis of an internationalist program. This historic conquest on behalf of the workers of the world led straight to the foundation of the Third (Communist) International, which was able to expose the "socialist" pretensions of the respectable reformist gentlemen of the Second International and win the allegiance of advanced workers and subjectively revolutionary militants on every continent.

But the international revolutionary wave which swept up the working masses from Germany to Bulgaria receded and was thrown back; the failure to extend the Russian Revolution, particularly the failure of revolution in Germany with its powerful working class, left the young Soviet workers state isolated. Trotsky summed up the causes and future implications of the playing out of that cycle of revolutionary struggle in his *Lessons of October*.

In the USSR, under conditions of extreme poverty and demoralization, with the working class decimated and exhausted by the Civil War, the way was open for a conservative bureaucracy to arise as a parasitic excrescence upon the working class. By 1924, this bureaucratic caste had acquired self-consciousness and a program: the self-contradictory dogma of "Socialism in One Country"—the antithesis of the Leninist outlook of internationalism which had animated the revolution. Predicated on the illusion that it was possible for an isolated Soviet workers state to survive and coexist with capitalist imperialism over an extended period, this program in Stalin's hands meant the destruction of the Communist International as an instrument of revolution and ultimately led straight to the murder of all the leaders of the Bolshevik Party. In place of soviet democracy was created a monstrous apparatus of bureaucratic control: first by the Stalinized party, then by the Stalin faction, and finally by Stalin backed up by a small handful of cronies, after the purge trials wiping out all the Bolshevik Old Guard.

Beginning with Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech" and carried forward with new momentum under Gorbachev's glasnost, the heirs of Stalin in the Kremlin have been forced increasingly to acknowledge the crimes of Stalin: the brutality of forced collectivization, the deportations and executions of oppositionists, the purge of the Red Army on the eve of World War II. In part a reflection of the emergence of a new generation of Soviet leaders lacking personal responsibility for Stalin's dirty deeds, and of the growth of a new layer of Soviet academics and bureaucrats embarrassed by the transparent mendacity of official Soviet history, Gorbachev's glasnost is mainly a response to the intractable problems of the Soviet economy. The call for "openness" in political discussion is centrally intended as an adjunct to perestroika, or "restructuring" of the economy in line with market forces, and much of the debate has as its not-so-secret agenda the refurbishing of the

reputation of Nikolai Bukharin and the economic program of the Right Opposition.

Yet the Gorbachevites have been unable to prevent the raising in the discussion of the archetypical "blank space" of Soviet history: the figure of Leon Trotsky. Even as Stalin's heirs seek to replace their discredited lies with new and different distortions, the question of Trotsky is potentially explosive, for—unlike Bukharin, Stalin's bloc partner until 1929—Trotsky led a fight against Stalin and the epigones, aimed at restoring the domestic and international policies pursued by Soviet Russia to a Leninist course. The policies which Trotsky fought for from 1923 until his murder by Stalin's assassin represented the Leninist alternative to Stalin, the "gravedigger of revolution." Today Trotsky's road is the only means for the survival of the Soviet Union.

Beginning in 1923, Trotsky and his supporters of the Left opposition sought to address the problems of the devastated Soviet economy through policies aimed at reconstituting an industrial proletariat and overcoming the divisions between city and countryside through a perspective of industrial growth. They predicted that Bukharin's program of "socialism at a snail's pace," implemented by Stalin, would enormously strengthen forces toward capitalist restoration, eventually compelling the ruling clique to adopt measures proposed by the Left. This is what happened, but instead of the Left's policy (voluntary collectivization with the incentive of mechanization of agriculture), Stalin's version was the now-infamous brutal forced collectivization.

It is unquestionable that, even under bureaucratic leadership, the Soviet planned economy made tremendous progress and a modern country was forged in formerly backward Russia. Nonetheless, even after 50 years Trotsky's brilliant analysis of the Soviet economy and society in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) remains the touchstone for understanding Russia today. Only the Trotskyist perspective of proletarian political revolution to reverse the political dispossession of the working class by the privileged bureaucratic caste can unleash the creativity and productivity of the Soviet working people and regulate the problems (e.g., heavy industrial investment vs. consumer goods, egalitarianism vs. "material incentives," centralized planning vs. local control, and the problem of quality) which have bedeviled the Soviet economy recurrently and have re-emerged in sharpened form today.

Rejecting the suicidal dogma of "Socialism in One Country," the Left oppositionists in the 1920s struggled to reassert the perspective of international extension of the revolution as the only effective answer to the isolation and capitalist encirclement of the first workers state. Events in China, where Stalin's opportunistic subordination of the Communists to the treacherous bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek led to the beheading of a powerful revolutionary struggle, confirmed Trotsky's warnings. But while some of Trotsky's cothinkers believed this vindication would lead to gains for the Left, Trotsky observed that whereas a successful Chinese revolution would have increased the class consciousness and confidence of the Russian and international proletariat, the setback of revolutionary struggle would only strengthen Stalin's hold.

The International Left Opposition, constituted in 1930, after Trotsky had been exiled from the USSR, considered itself a forcibly externalized faction fighting to return the



Films Art et Science

Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the Russian Revolution, addresses May Day rally in Red Square, Moscow, in the early 1920s. Banner salutes workers struggling against the "old world" of capitalist exploitation. Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!

Third International to a revolutionary course. But when Hitler's Nazis were coming to power in Germany in 1933—based on the bourgeoisie's fear of revolution by the powerful, pro-socialist German working class—the Stalinists refused to fight. Nor did this disaster precipitate any fundamental struggle within the Communist Parties internationally. The Trotskyists declared that the Third International could not be reformed. Especially with the promulgation in 1935 of the "People's Front" policy—the systematic perspective of an alliance with the parties of so-called "democratic" imperialism—the conclusion was inescapable: there was no place for revolutionists in the Stalinist Communist Parties. In place of Lenin's revolutionary International had been consolidated a powerful anti-revolutionary apparatus as a new obstacle to revolution, more disciplined and effective than the old Social Democracy. The false identification of Stalinism with Bolshevism provided Stalin with dedicated political agents throughout the world; only Stalin and perhaps a half-dozen cronies (who these were changed over time) knew what it was all about. Millions who loyally carried out his dictates, up to and including the murder of Trotskyists, believed all the while that they were fighting for socialism.

In 1933, the Trotskyists constituted themselves as the International Communist League (Bolshevik-Leninist) in recognition of the imperative need for an authentically communist new International; the Fourth International. Trotsky rightly foresaw that the menace of German fascism would lead in a straight line to war against the Soviet Union. As the interimperialist rivalries and alignments of the upcoming war took shape, the Trotskyists struggled against time to break the Stalinists' hold over the advanced workers. The Fourth International was founded in 1938 on the basis of the document, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (the *Transitional Program*), and the perspective put forward in "War and the Fourth International" (1934) of uncom-

promising revolutionary defeatism toward all imperialist combatants, including those aligned with the USSR, combined with revolutionary defensism of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

The launching of the Fourth International was opposed by some, like Isaac Deutscher, who argued it was premature. Trotsky insisted that, on the contrary, the second imperialist world war would, like the first, provoke social convulsion throughout the capitalist world and a new wave of international revolutionary struggles. And he predicted that the brittle system of Stalinist rule in the USSR, which had arisen as an accommodation to the breathing space for the imperialist world order secured by the failure of the post-WWI revolutionary wave, would itself crack under the impact of the new world war or soon thereafter.

The validity of Trotsky's predictions was in fact confirmed by the Red Army's initial collapse in the face of Hitler's invasion, as well as by the turbulent social conditions in Western Europe at the war's end. In Italy and Greece, naked treachery by the Stalinists was needed to militarily and politically disarm the leftist Resistance forces and hand power back to the capitalist class (however, Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia refused to commit suicide—they led a peasant-based indigenous revolution to victory and established a bureaucratically deformed workers state). In France the Stalinists endorsed "national reconstruction" to re-establish a stable bourgeois regime. Trotsky's insistence on the need for revolutionary leadership was tragically confirmed by the results of its absence: the Stalinists, who emerged stronger than before in Italy and France based on their resistance to the Nazis, were successful in deflecting revolutionary struggle.

Central to that outcome was Stalin's success in putting over the lie that World War II in the Allied imperialist nations was a struggle of liberation—that it was a great battle against fascism and for a better world. In the context of the mass popular revulsion against fascism, Stalin's policy

of the Popular Front—the alliance with “democratic” imperialism—prevented the growth of mass antiwar sentiment paralleling the massive radicalization of World War I. The lie was successful; a war fought so that U.S. imperialism could emerge as the predominant imperialist power, the capitalist “world policeman” which rained death down on Vietnam for two decades after Dien Bien Phu, was popularly accepted as a war of the people against fascism.

Nonetheless the victory of the Anglo-American imperialist bloc was conditional. It was the Red Army which had smashed Hitler's Wehrmacht; moreover, Hitler's East European puppets had all made a mad dash for the nearest American headquarters, leaving behind a power vacuum which the occupying Soviet army quickly filled. The victorious imperialists had to divide Europe with Stalin.

The war devastated the small forces of the Fourth International—having geared up for battle against fascism and war, they were in effect militarily defeated. The physical obliteration of the Left Opposition in the USSR was completed by the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico by a Stalinist agent in 1940. Large numbers of Trotskyist cadre in Europe and Asia were wiped out by war and repression. The decimation of the most promising young Trotskyist leaders was a factor in the emergence of a revisionist current within the FI in the early 1950s. So was the passivity of the American Socialist Workers Party, a relatively strong party nourished by close collaboration with Trotsky, and located in a country insulated from the real carnage of the world war.

The revisionist current, led by the impressionist Michel Pablo, abandoned the perspective of workers revolutions in order to become for a time entrists into and political tails of the CPs. Worshipping the accomplished fact of Stalinism's continued existence, they had decided it would endure perhaps for “centuries” and they therefore decided that a “new world reality” would compel it to play a “roughly revolutionary” role, obviating the need for Trotskyist parties. Within a couple of years, Russian tanks were crushing the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Today it is very clear that the CPs play no such revolutionary role in the world, while the bureaucratic caste of Stalin and his heirs has brought the Soviet Union itself to the threat of civil war, and an incipient political revolution was provoked in China. Trotsky's expectation of a terminal crisis of Stalinism is as alive as today's headlines.

Today the representatives of the revisionist current—having passed through a period of vicarious guerrillaist/pro-Stalinist enthusiasm which included hailing the massacre of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, then having gone for “Eurocommunism” and Soviet dissidents, and in a big way for the Solidarność devotees of Marshal Pilsudski (the bonapartist founder of modern capitalist Poland)—are in a position to do some harm as vociferous apologists of those demanding “national liberation” for the Baltic republics. In their mouth, “Trotskyism” is made out to be some kind of latter-day left social democracy.

The bourgeoisie is celebrating in anticipation of the “end of Communism.” The Stalinist bureaucracies have indeed reached the point of terminal crisis. But their crisis is because they are opposed to everything communism stands for. The national antagonisms in the Soviet Union, the revolt in China, arise in response to “market socialist” policies that are counterposed to centralized socialist planning. The bureaucratic stranglehold over political and

cultural life, the appeasement that has emboldened imperialism—these are not communism, but its antithesis.

An International Program Mandates International Organization

“By its very nature opportunism is nationalistic, since it rests on the local and temporary needs of the proletariat and not on its historical tasks. Opportunists find international control intolerable and they reduce their international ties as much as possible to harmless formalities... on the proviso that each group does not hinder the others from conducting an opportunist policy to its own national taste.... International unity is not a decorative facade for us, but the very axis of our theoretical views and our policy” (Leon Trotsky, “Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition,” 7 September 1929).

From the time of our tendency's inception as a left opposition within the Socialist Workers Party of the United States in the early 1960s, we have recognized that

Founding Conference of Spartacist League . . . Pages 10, 11

SPARTACIST

NUMBER 8 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1966 18 CENTS

“GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION”

MAOISM RUN AMOK

The Red Guards, bearers of Mao Tse-tung's thought, instruments of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, have entered their critics: “Revolutionaries are Monkey Kings, their golden rods are powerful, their supernatural powers far-reaching and their magic omnipotent, for they possess Mao Tse-tung's great invincible thought. We wield our golden rods, display our supernatural powers and use our magic to turn the old world upside down, smash it to pieces, pulverize it, create chaos and make a tremendous mess, the bigger the better! We must do this to the present revisionist middle school attached to the Tsinghua University, make revolution in a big way, rebel to the end! We are bent on creating a tremendous proletarian spear, and having out a proletarian new world!”

And Peking Review (9 Sept. 1966), the authoritative foreign-language political organ of the Chinese government, approves.

Bureaucratic Dangers
Such grotesqueries are symptoms of the dangers a



MAO'S HEAD smashes down the Yangtze while Stalin's has come to rest on a Budapest street.

“Not a single one of the tasks of the ‘bourgeois’ revolution can be solved in these backward countries under the leadership of the ‘national’ bourgeoisie, because the

Spartacist No. 8 (November-December 1966): From the beginning our tendency has fought for international communism, against the betrayals of Stalin and Mao and all the little Stalins and Maos.

national isolation must in short order destroy any subjectively revolutionary formation, not least one subjected to the pressures of operating in the heartland of world imperialism, the United States. We stand proudly on our record of 25 years of struggle for authentic Trotskyism and are working on documenting it archivally and historically. In January 1974 an interim Conference centered on European work and perspectives, with participation of comrades from seven countries, was held in Germany. The document which formed the programmatic basis for the Conference accepted the “responsibility to struggle actively for the constitution as soon as possible of a democratic-centralist international Spartacist tendency.”

In July 1974 the “Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency” announced the constitution of a nucleus for the early crystallization of the international Spartacist tendency, to be governed under the principle of international democratic centralism. The document sharply attacked the federalist practices of competitors claiming the mantle of Trotskyism, noting that

Pablo's political heirs of the "United Secretariat" and the Healyite "International Committee" "have chronically mocked the principles of internationalism and of Bolshevik democratic centralism as their different national groups or nationally-based factions have gone their own way—ultimately in response to the pressures of their own ruling classes."

American Revisionists and the Voorhis Act

In particular the "Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency" noted the revisionists' invocation of the U.S. government's Voorhis Act as a convenient excuse for anti-internationalism. The Voorhis Act, passed in 1940, sought to massively inhibit international political affiliation through "registration" requirements intended to paralyze political organizations. Already in 1953, when the SWP was still adhering to "orthodox Trotskyism" but shrinking from waging an aggressive international fight against Pablo, they cited the Voorhis Act to justify their passivity in the international arena which had facilitated the rise of impatient young impressionists like Pablo: in his May 1953 speech, "Internationalism and the SWP," the party's leader, James P. Cannon, said that after 1940 "We no longer belonged to the Fourth International because the Voorhis law outlawed international connections. Our role, therefore, could only be advisory and consultative" (*Speeches to the Party*).

Our 1974 "Declaration" charged: "The 'Voorhis Act' with its patently unconstitutional and contradictory provisions has never been used by the government—only the revisionists." We cited the United Secretariat's evasion of our appeal against expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party: the USec's Pierre Frank replied to us on 28 May 1965: "... we call your attention first of all to the fact that the Fourth International has no organizational connection with the Socialist Workers party and consequently has no jurisdiction in a problem such as you raise."

Our 1974 "Declaration" also quoted, from a 1974 SWP internal bulletin, a particularly explicit SWP formula for nationally limited political responsibility:

"The Socialist Workers Party proclaims its fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International but is prevented by reactionary legislation from affiliating to it. All political activities of members of the SWP are decided upon by the democratically elected national leadership bodies of the SWP and by the local and branch units of the party... There are no other bodies whose decisions are binding on the SWP or its members."

Our document cited as well the assertion of national autonomy by the sinister "International Committee" of Gerry Healy, whose American publicist, Tim Wohlforth, wrote in his 1972 pamphlet, "Revisionism in Crisis":

"With the passing of the Voorhis Act in 1940 the SWP was barred from membership in the Fourth International by law. Ever since that time the SWP has not been able to be an affiliate of the Fourth International. So today its relationship to the United Secretariat is one of political solidarity just as the Workers' League stands in political solidarity with the International Committee."

And we quoted our response to Healy in 1966 when he sought to suppress an opponent's pamphlet by claiming it would render his U.S. supporters as well as ourselves vulnerable to the Voorhis Act:

"The Voorhis Act is a *paper tiger*—never used against anyone and patently unconstitutional. For the Justice Department to start proceedings against a small group like ours would make the government a laughing stock, and Healy knows this. He is aware that for years the SWP has hidden behind this very act to defend its own federalist idea of an International."

The first delegated international conference of the international Spartacist tendency was held in Britain in 1979. Over the following decade, the development of the sections, particularly in Europe, and their cohering of leaderships has become an increasingly important component in shaping the international tendency. Now looking back at the pressures to which a decade of Reaganite bourgeois

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Revolutionary Marxism

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reaction has subjected our American organization, we must believe that if our tendency had not achieved significant international extension, the SL/U.S. would have become an eccentric and disintegrating American sect.

For Revolutionary Regroupments— For Lenin's Communism!

Today, our small forces confront very high stakes. The achievements of the international Spartacist tendency, now the ICL, are modest: our militant labor/black mobilizations against fascist provocations in the United States—an expression of our consistent understanding that the fight against racial oppression is key to the American workers revolution—have been warmly greeted, as have other legal and social defense initiatives of the Partisan Defense Committee and cothinkers internationally; we have protested every move by U.S. imperialism against the Latin American masses, and raised funds for Nicaragua; among some layers of the Communist movement in West Europe we have become known as “the Trotskyists who defend the Soviet Union”; our forthright championing of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, under the slogan, “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan—Extend Social Gains of October to Afghan Peoples,” was grudgingly admired by elements of the Western CPs which were seeking to resist the “Eurocommunist” drift toward greater social-democratic accommodation with one’s “own” ruling class. Recently, our offer of an international brigade to fight the CIA’s *mujaheadin* “holy warriors” after Gorbachev’s cowardly withdrawal and, when that offer was declined, our publicity and fund-raising campaign for the civilian victims of Jalalabad met with surprising support from women and from Muslim immigrants and other minorities in many countries, as well as among Stalinist milieus. Our defense of the program of “permanent revolution” for those vast areas of the world deformed by imperialist domination—i.e., that the proletariat, independent of the weak and cowardly bourgeoisie and counterposing a vision of social emancipation to the ideologies of nationalism (particularly the nationalism of the majority), must take power to achieve even those democratic tasks formerly associated with bourgeois revolutions—has won us a hearing among oppressed national minorities.

Revolutionary regroupments on the program of Leninist internationalism are the means to resolve the disproportion between our small forces and our task. The heirs of Stalin manifestly lack the capacity to defend the Soviet power, of which they have been simultaneously the parasitic defender and the counterrevolutionary disorganizer for 65 years. Yet to the same measure that they have brought “communism” into disrepute thanks to the crimes they have committed in its name, they have also reduced their ability to manipulate the allegiance of dedicated pro-Communist workers throughout the world. No longer can a Stalin and his half-dozen conscious accomplices wield “monolithic” parties as instruments of class-collaborationist treason in the name of “building socialism.”

We take our stand on the authentic communist tradition of the Bolsheviks who made the Russian Revolution. We choose the communism that had Lenin as its greatest teacher in the imperialist epoch. We choose the communism of Lenin’s comrade Trotsky, who beginning as early as 1923 understood the main lines of what needed to

be done. We choose the communism that Stalin utterly betrayed as he deliberately destroyed the Third International. We choose the communism of a new Fourth International that will do away once and for all with the exploitation of man by man and establish a socialist society based on a new vision of the continual expansion of human freedom in all spheres: in politics, economics, culture and in every aspect of personal life.

We must believe that, failing sudden working-class upsurge against the conditions of capitalist decay, the re forging of a communist Fourth International, built of authentic communist parties on every continent, will be arduous and often dangerous. But this is the only road forward for all of humanity. Yet as we seek to bring this program to bear among the world’s workers and oppressed, we must recognize that the possession of the technology of nuclear holocaust by an irrational imperialist ruling class foreshortens the possibilities: we probably do not have much time.

But experience, not least bitter negative experience, can also be a powerful and accelerating teacher. We had better follow the precepts and practices of such comrades as Lenin and Trotsky. Thus we could cut short by months or years the time required for the necessary rearmament of the communist movement. ■

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Establishing an Interim IEC, 1973-79

The Spartacist tendency arose as an opposition inside the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), opposing the centrist degeneration of the SWP in the early 1960s. We fought to uphold the perspective of Trotskyist proletarian revolutionary parties throughout the world, in opposition to the SWP's uncritical embrace of the Castro leadership of the Cuban Revolution which uprooted capitalism and created a deformed workers state. The SWP carried its abdication of the fight for revolutionary leadership to the U.S. terrain when it abstained from active intervention into the tumultuous Southern civil rights movement; the party embraced the rhetoric of "black nationalism" as the excuse to evade involvement in the explosive struggles shaking the U.S. North and South and the fight to break black militants away from liberal-pacifist and vicarious-nationalist perspectives and win them to the revolutionary socialist program of Trotskyism. Our principled struggle resulted in our expulsion in 1963 (in order to get rid of us the SWP destroyed the democratic-centralist organizational norms which had governed the party for 35 years). Within a couple of years after our exclusion, the SWP had consolidated around a firmly reformist appetite fully expressed in its popular-frontist orientation as a stooge for liberal Democrats in the Vietnam antiwar movement, consciously to the right of the heterogeneous "anti-imperialist" New Left. We immediately began publication of the journal *Spar-*

tacist; the Spartacist League of the U.S. was founded in 1966. The documentary basis of our early history and struggles is collected in our *Marxist Bulletin* series. From our inception we understood that we could not long exist as revolutionary internationalists within the confines of one country, and we struggled to find international cothinkers and collaborators. In 1963 the SWP had joined forces with Ernest Mandel to found the "United Secretariat," reuniting with those who followed the revisionist course of Michel Pablo. As members of the SWP we had opposed this reunification, and for a period of time before and after our expulsion we seriously explored Gerry Healy's rump "International Committee." But Healy's claim to stand on the program of authentic Trotskyism, against the Pabloite revisionism which destroyed the Fourth International in 1953, proved utterly fictitious. After our break with Healy in 1966 he spun out on an increasingly bizarre and destructive course of political banditry. We persevered in our struggle for international extension.

The events of May-June 1968 in France, which shocked the elitist student New Left into a recognition of the revolutionary capacity of the working class, as well as the growth of anti-imperialist sentiment throughout the world fueled by the continuing American escalation of its losing war against the peasants and urban masses of Vietnam, created new opportunities for us to win youthful radicals to

Organizational Appendix to "Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency"

A) In the period until the first international conference the Central Committees of the initiating sections, and such others as become voting sections, will jointly constitute the common interim highest body of the tendency. This body shall carry out the aims and tasks of the international tendency as have been set forth for it—including organizing the discussion and preparation for the international conference and in the interim functioning as the international leadership for the work of the tendency. This body shall function on the basis of Leninist organizational principle in accordance with the Organizational Resolution of the 3rd Congress of the Communist International and of the Organizational Rules of the initiating sections.

B) A resident secretariat shall be appointed from among the members of the interim highest body. The resident secretariat shall carry out its work on behalf of and under the direction of the interim highest body.

C) The resident secretariat will take immediate jurisdiction over the main and relevant aspects of what has been previously the largest sectional International Department, which now becomes the principal executive arm of the organizing nucleus. The resident secretariat is charged with expanding or changing the immediate physical location, technical apparatus and

facilities, and personnel of the executive arm as necessary for it to effectively discharge its tasks.

The resident secretariat will be directly responsible for the continued publication of the public organs of the international tendency in English, French, German and Spanish.

The resident secretariat will also assume direct responsibility for the organization of international discussion and its continued publication in English in *International Discussion* and *Information Bulletins* for circulation among supporters and indicated sympathizers of the tendency. Primary responsibility for the publication of such Bulletin material in other languages must presently remain with the appropriate national organizations.

D) Prior to the convening of the projected first international conference, other national groupings may become voting sections by decision of the interim highest body, provided that such groupings have demonstrated agreement with the common principles of the tendency, willingness and ability to accept and carry out its program in accordance with international democratic centralism and have shown the organizational capacity, responsibility and stability to maintain a systematic public face in their own countries.

the program of Trotskyism internationally. In 1973 the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand (SL/ANZ) was founded. By this time the SL/U.S. had also won significant new forces through political intervention in the radical student movement, including several comrades with real foreign-language capacity. Our expanded international work enabled us by early 1974 to win some New Left-derived cadre from in and around the no-longer-very-"United" Secretariat (USec) in Australia, the U.S., France, Germany, Austria and Canada. The USec, an unprincipled conglomeration of reformists and impressionistic centrists claiming to represent the "continuity" of Trotskyism, was then and remains today our main international competitor, a real obstacle on the road to reorganizing the Fourth International.

In July 1974 the "Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency" was adopted by the Central Committees of the Spartacist League/ANZ and the Spartacist League/U.S. and declared to be in force following concurrence with it at a European summer camp of the international Spartacist tendency. This "Declaration," published in *Spartacist* No. 23 (Spring 1977), detailed the programmatic basis and international perspectives of our tendency; its Organizational Appendix, which we publish here for the first time, established the interim organizational basis for international democratic-centralist functioning.

Following the adoption of the "Declaration" and its Organizational Appendix, the Political Bureau of the

SL/U.S., at a meeting held on 17 July 1974, voted the following motions:

- "1) To acknowledge that this document is now in force and that the SL/US is subject to it, and
 - "2) To put formal ratification of this document on the agenda of the upcoming SL National Conference.
- "Therefore, in light of the above motion, to transfer out the international department of the SL/US to the jurisdiction of the International Executive Committee, including the four *Spartacist* publications in English, French, German and Spanish and the International Bulletins."

The Fourth National Conference of the SL/U.S. voted to endorse this document on 28 August 1974.

The "Declaration" noted that "the Spartacist tendency is now actively working for the immediate convening of an international conference to politically and geographically extend the tendency and to further consolidate it." By the time the first delegated conference of the international Spartacist tendency was held in August 1979, we had established sections in France, Germany, Britain and Canada, as well as the United States and Australia. *Spartacist* No. 27-28 (Winter 1979-80) published a report on the conference proceedings. The conference delegates elected an International Executive Committee, thus replacing the de facto federated IEC established by the Organizational Appendix with a representative, internationally elected body. This elected International Executive Committee, which appoints an International Secretary and Secretariat, is now the highest body of our tendency between international conferences. ■

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FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MARXISM

Trotsky in 1939-40: "The IEC Does Not Exist"

In a recent major programmatic statement, "Trotskyist Policies on the Second Imperialist War—Then and In Hindsight," the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the international Spartacist tendency, now the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), takes up in detail the political program, strategy and tactics elaborated by Leon Trotsky for World War II. Critically examining the work of the small Trotskyist nuclei in Europe and the United States during the war, this document lays particular stress on the disorientation caused by the "Proletarian Military Policy" (P.M.P.), a series of demands first raised by Trotsky in early 1940 which centered on the call for trade-union control of Western imperialist military training.

The IEC's document was published in February 1989 as the introduction to the second in the *Prometheus Research Series*, "Documents on the 'Proletarian Military Policy'." This 102-page bulletin adds significant new material to the available documentary record by publishing internal documents from WWII Trotskyist groups in the United States, Britain and France, as well as two polemical articles by Max Shachtman. It can be ordered by mail from sections of the International Communist League (see advertisement page 31).

Our international tendency has long argued that the P.M.P. necessarily cuts across the Leninist understanding of the state as an instrument of class dictatorship. The demand for working-class control of military training for the bourgeois army is either utopian or reformist, and in the midst of an escalating imperialist war it carries with it a definite social-patriotic thrust. It was the publication of articles on the Trotskyists in WW II in the French-language *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* (No: 23, September 1985), recent material published in the British archival journal *Revolutionary History* (Nos. 3 and 4), as well as a wealth of memoirs and documentary material published in French over the last decade, that provided the basis for a new review of the work of the Fourth Internationalists during the war.

Even before the Fourth International was founded in September 1938, a Stalinist campaign of assassination targeted the key administrative cadre of the International Secretariat in Europe: Leon Sedov, Erwin Wolf and Rudolf Klement were all murdered in the months before the founding conference. In August 1940 Trotsky himself was assassinated, and in the course of the war hundreds of Trotskyists in Europe and Asia were killed by both imperialist repressive forces and the Stalinists. In the light of this devastating loss of cadre, our tendency has pointed to the failure of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) to take international administrative responsibility during the war (see "Genesis of Pabloism," *Spartacist* No. 21, Fall

1972, and the speech of Jim Robertson at the 27 August 1974 Cannon Memorial Meeting, published in *Spartacist* No: 38-39, Summer 1986). "Trotskyist Policies on the Second Imperialist War—Then and In Hindsight" also stresses this abdication on the part of the SWP:

"The losses in Europe and Asia underline a critical failure on the part of the SWP leadership—they were unable to take on the leading role in the International, a responsibility that was posed for the SWP after Trotsky's death. The SWP was the one section which had been founded by cadre who came over *as part of a faction* from the Communist International; the section which had been strengthened most by close collaboration with Trotsky; the section which, because it was situated on the North American continent, had the most material resources, a large maritime fraction and thus some limited ability to move around the globe during the war. Yet they did not see themselves as responsible and barely kept up the pretense of maintaining a functioning International Secretariat in New York. They did not even attempt to set up an outpost in a neutral European country."

Our longstanding position on the SWP's failure in this regard is given added emphasis by the two letters from Trotsky to SWP leader James P. Cannon which we publish below. These letters, one dated 26 July 1939 and the other 29 February 1940, were obtained from the Trotsky Exile Papers at Harvard University. To our knowledge they have never before been published in English, though they do appear in French translation in the Trotsky *Oeuvres* published by the Institut Léon Trotsky (the editors of the *Oeuvres* have been able to include material from the Exile Papers in recent volumes; Pathfinder Press completed their 14-volume set of Trotsky's *Writings* in English before the Exile Papers were open to the public in 1980).

On the basis of these letters we can say that Trotsky was fighting for the SWP to take some international administrative responsibility in the year before his death. In the letter of 26 July 1939, Trotsky proposes that the Pan-American Committee (PAC) function as an interim International Secretariat. This Committee had been formed in conjunction with a Pan-American Pre-Conference held in New York in May 1938 to help prepare for the founding conference of the Fourth International. Jan Frankel had been the central administrator of this Committee, which published *Clave* as a review for all Spanish-speaking sections of the FI, but the Brazilian Mário Pedrosa took over responsibility for the PAC when he arrived in New York after the Fourth International's founding conference. Evidently, from this point on the Committee foundered and Trotsky advocated the transfer of Charles Curtiss to New York to take over the responsibilities of Committee Secretary. Curtiss had been resident in Coyoacán as the PAC representative to the Mexican sec-

tion from July 1938 through July 1939. The "comrade G" mentioned by Trotsky was Albert Goldman, who had been sent to Paris in 1939 following Cannon's fruitless trip to France (see Cannon's report in *SWP Internal Bulletin* No. 10, June 1939).

In February 1940, at the time of Trotsky's second letter to Cannon, the SWP was embroiled in a crucial factional struggle over the Russian question. A section of the SWP cadre, led by Max Shachtman, Martin Abern and James Burnham, had bowed to the wave of anti-Communism sweeping petty-bourgeois public opinion following the Stalin-Hitler pact and had abandoned the military defense of the Soviet Union. Trotsky played a crucial role in the fight against this petty-bourgeois opposition in the SWP and his major articles and letters written in the course of this fight have been published in the book *In Defense of Marxism*. The factional struggle was resolved only in April 1940, when the minority split, taking a full 40 percent of the SWP membership.

With the outbreak of the war in Europe the Fourth International's center was transferred to New York with an interim leading body composed of all resident IEC members. Shachtman and his supporters had a majority in this body. Throughout the fight in the SWP Trotsky had been concerned that premature organizational measures against the minority not obscure the necessary political clarification. Yet it is clear from this letter to Cannon, as well as from other previously published letters (see *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement 1934-40*, pages 851-855), that Trotsky also sought to prevent the Shachtman minority from using their formal majority on the resident International Executive Committee for factional purposes. However, the leading members of the SWP minority ignored their status as IEC members throughout the fight—a mark of the stillborn nature of the IEC and symptomatic of the political decomposition of some of the individuals involved.

In his letter of 29 February 1940 Trotsky envisaged that it might be necessary to hold a rump "Pan-American" Conference of the Fourth International in Mexico to elect a new IEC, in conjunction with a projected visit by Cannon. Instead, an emergency conference of the Fourth International was held in New York in May 1940 on the initiative of the United States, Canadian and Mexican sections. This conference dissolved the old resident IEC and elected a new one (see *Documents of the Fourth International*, pages 351-355). Yet this new IEC also remained, for the most part, a dead letter.

These letters highlight the tremendously frustrating objective situation in which Trotsky was operating in the last year of his life. It was obvious that the imperialist world war would bring about tremendous revolutionary opportunities; but with the Stalinist purveyors of the Popular Front commanding the allegiance of most of those who sought to be communists, the scattered scores and hundreds of the Fourth International—decapitated, without even a functioning international administrative center—were for the most part in no position to struggle for leadership. It was this overwhelming disproportion between ends and means which led Trotsky into a certain amount of political disorientation in his last months, giving rise to the P.M.P.

"Trotskyist Policies on the Second Imperialist War—Then and In Hindsight" points to Trotsky's use of the post-



SWP memorial meeting for Leon Trotsky, New York, 28 August 1940. James P. Cannon is seated at center stage.

February 1917 Russian Bolshevik experience in elaborating the P.M.P. as particularly misleading. Proletarian "control" of any aspect of the bourgeois army is only possible as a brief episode in a revolutionary situation, as in Russia after the overthrow of the tsar. A situation of dual power did not exist in any imperialist country in 1940, and the small parties of the Fourth International had not been able to establish the kinds of fractions and propaganda outlets among the masses which the Bolsheviks had established in the period 1912-14 and later as war-weariness set in. It was this important preparatory work which allowed Lenin's party to put itself at the head of the revolutionary workers of the tsarist empire in 1917.

Only in Vietnam, a country where the masses came to class consciousness *after* the Stalinists adopted an explicit policy of class collaborationism in 1935, did the Trotskyists have both the base and the opportunity to lead the masses at the end of the war. We stand on the work of the heroic Vietnamese Trotskyists, who knew when to move, leading the Saigon proletariat in an uprising against the Allied imperialist armies in August 1945. It was the perfidy of the Stalinist Viet Minh, who initially welcomed the imperialist armies and arrested and executed the Trotskyist leaders, which enabled the British and French armies to

July 26, 1939

Trotskyists led Saigon
insurrection against
Allied imperialists in 1949.
Below: Round-up of
independence fighters
jailed and executed
by French. Inset:
Vietnamese Trotskyist
martyr Ta Thu Thau.



Quatrième Internationale



Keystone

crush the uprising and reassert (for a time) their colonial domination.

* * *

We publish both letters as they were written by Trotsky, including his use of pseudonyms. We list below a key to the names used in Trotsky's letter of 29 February 1940 (names used in the letter of 26 July 1939 have been explained above).

Smith was the party name of Farrell Dobbs, who visited Trotsky in Coyoacán in early 1940.

Fischer was Otto Schüssler, a leader of the German section, member of the IEC and Trotsky's secretary in Mexico from February 1939 to August 1940.

Sam was Sam Gordon (also known as J.B. Stuart), assigned by the SWP to be administrative secretary of the resident IEC in New York.

Lebrun was Mário Pedrosa, nominal head of the PAC, and **Johnson** was C.L.R. James. The latter had remained in the United States after having been invited to New York from Britain to participate in the 1938 Pan-American Conference, and both of them were members of the IEC and supporters of the Shachtman minority.

Gerland was Jean van Heijenoort, who served as Trotsky's secretary, translator and bodyguard from 1932 to 1939. The article by Gerland appeared in the May 1940 issue of *Fourth International*.

Harold Isaacs, author of *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, had worked with the Chinese Trotskyists during the 1930s.

Cornell was Charles Cornell, who was at the time one of Trotsky's secretaries in Coyoacán.

These letters were signed for Trotsky by two of his secretaries. They appear here by permission of the Houghton Library of Harvard University.

Dear comrade,

Our international organization has practically ceased to exist since the assassination of Klement: No bulletins, no press service, no circular letters—nothing.

After your return from Paris I proposed that the Pan-American Committee function temporarily as a substitute to the I.S. I proposed that they publish at least every month a bulletin in English and Spanish. This was accepted in principle by the National Committee but practically nothing followed from this decision.

The PAC is a myth. Only after long insistence from abroad is it possible to receive a political answer from the PAC. It seems that there are not regular meetings, nor regular decisions, minutes, etc. Who is the responsible secretary of the committee? It seems that nobody is responsible for anything.

From the letter of comrade G. in Paris I do not see any plans for publishing the international bulletin, etc. Possibly in Paris and Europe generally it is now difficult to do something of this kind. The more it is necessary that the PAC exists and acts.

My concrete propositions are:

A. To fix exactly the personal composition of the PAC and its responsible secretary.

B. To create a technical sub-committee of three young, devoted and active comrades under the direction of the responsible secretary.

C. To publish in the name of the PAC an international bulletin in English and Spanish.

D. If possible, transfer comrade Curtiss from Los Angeles to New York and appoint him as secretary of the PAC.

We have not the right to lose more time on the international field. I insist on a prompt regulation of this question.

Comradely yours,
Vaughan T. O'Brien

February 29, 1940

Dear Friend,

The question of the International Executive Committee is of the greatest importance. When we talked about the matter with Smith, I didn't know that the relationship of forces in the committee is 4 to 1. A radical, a very radical decision only can save the situation.

Fischer is writing simultaneously to Sam asking for information about the connections of the IEC with the national sections especially of Lebrun's connection with Brazil and Johnson's with England. But this request for information can have only a formal interest. The essence of the matter is that the IEC *does not exist*. The same is true of the Pan-American Committee—no correspondence, no resolutions, no bulletins, nothing—zero. The new chapter should begin with the establishment of the fact that neither the IEC nor the Pan-American Committee exists.

The re-establishment of a leading body is possible only through an international conference. We are obviously unable now to convoke a world conference but we can convoke a "Pan-American" conference even if not too

complete. This means that we must begin with the re-establishment of the Pan-American Committee and then enlarge it as far as possible with representatives from non-American sections. It is the only way I see but this way seems to be sure enough.

I heard that you wish to visit Cornell briefly after the convention. You could visit him with one or two American comrades and with one Canadian, of course with the necessary mandate. While visiting Cornell you would meet representatives of three more sections (German, Mexican, and Russian). A Frenchman and a Spaniard would participate with consultative voices. I doubt if a Chinese mandate could be obtained by then. You will have three American sections, two Europeans with a deliberative voice and two Europeans with a consultative voice. Under the given conditions it would be a good beginning (the presence of a Canadian is *absolutely necessary*).

The convention should elaborate a war manifesto and appoint a really functioning committee. The four Minority members of the present IEC would then be condemned to remain what they are now, that is a fiction.

It would be very good if Gerland (the author of the article "The Algebra of the Revolution") could receive at least a limited mandate from France but it is a very doubtful possibility. The Belgians seem to be with us. Would it not be possible to have from them, if not a mandate, at least a declaration of solidarity?

Are you in permanent connection with the British section? Do you send them your internal bulletins? Have you a

correspondence with them? Do they really support Johnson's attitude? We are ready to write to them from here when we have an answer from Sam.

The British Revolutionary Workers League seems to be in agreement with us, at least on the Russian question. They published "The U.S.S.R. in War" as a leaflet and sent it to the author with a friendly letter. Under the given conditions you should enter into direct if not official connection with them and send them the bulletins for their internal information.

The Mexicans will surely disavow Lebrun as a Latin American representative. If he doesn't have direct support from Brazil, he will remain suspended in mid-air.

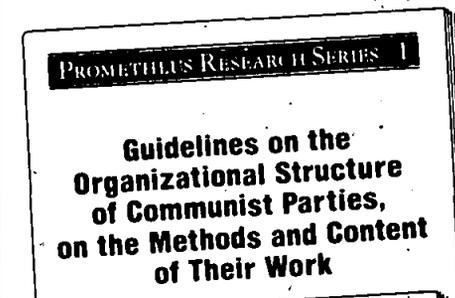
Such are the most urgent practical steps for re-establishing the international leading body. All these steps should be centered around the Pan-American convention which from its side should be held as soon as possible. The new Pan-American Committee should appear on the scene with its manifesto not later than the first of May.

Such are the suggestions I make for your immediate consideration after a discussion with Fischer.

Comradely yours,
W. Rork
Coyoacán, D.F.

P.S. What is Isaacs' position? If he is with the Majority could he have a mandate from China? Do the Chinese comrades receive the internal bulletins?

W.R.



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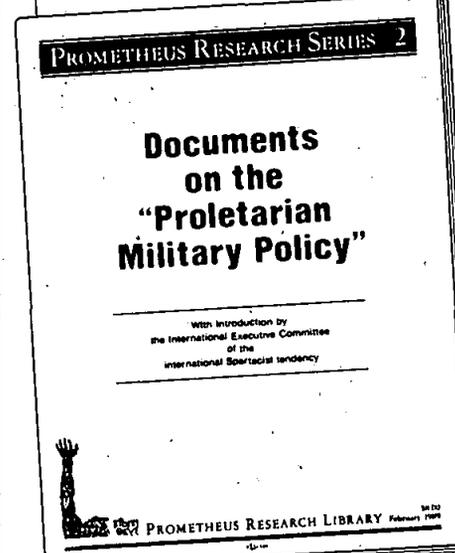
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Leonard Schapiro

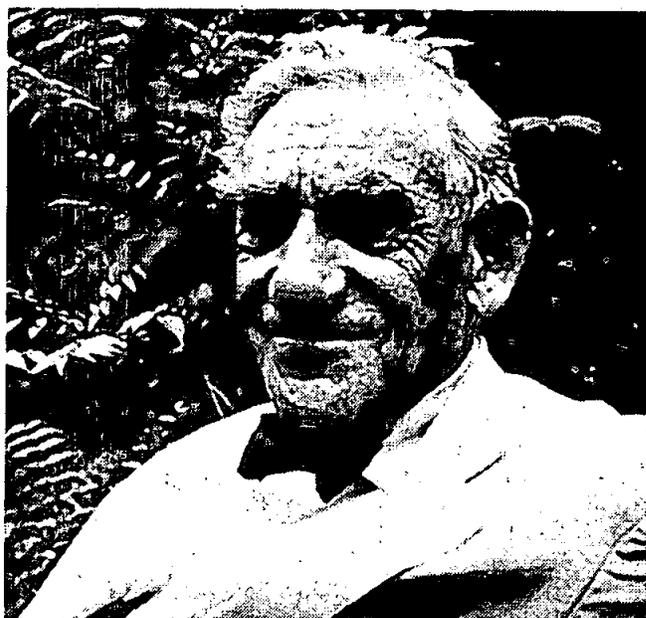
Lawyer for Counterrevolution

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 was the living vindication of Karl Marx's proposition that the working class was to be the gravedigger of capitalism, that the dictatorship of the proletariat was to be humanity's road from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. Workers around the world saw in the Soviet republic their own future, a beacon of hope amid the seemingly endless slaughter of the First World War. The imperialist rulers, having squandered millions of lives to steal each other's colonies, immediately linked arms in seeking to crush the Russian workers state in blood, unleashing not only armies of intervention and pogromist White Guards but a torrent of lies and slanders aimed at justifying violent capitalist counterrevolution. The yellow press ranted about bloodbaths in the streets of Petrograd and Bolshevik "nationalization of women." Meanwhile, from his study in Berlin, Social Democrat Karl Kautsky beat to the cadence of the imperialist cannon in Siberia with polemics defending "democracy" against Bolshevik "terror" and "dictatorship."

The Bolsheviks fought back on both fronts. Even as they organized the military defense of the new workers state, Lenin and Trotsky defended the revolution politically. The slander mills of the yellow press could be easily disposed of but against Kautsky they aimed trenchant polemics, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* and *Terrorism and Communism*. They understood, as Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci was to say, that: "In the political and military struggle it may be good tactics to break through at the points of least resistance.... On the ideological front, however, defeat of the auxiliaries and the minor followers has an almost negligible importance: on this front it is necessary to defeat the eminent people" (*The Modern Prince and Other Writings* [1957]).

In the contemporary literature of anti-Communism, Leonard Bertram Schapiro ranked as one of the eminent people. Born into a Russian Jewish mercantile family in Glasgow, he witnessed the first years of Soviet power as a child in Petrograd. His childhood impressions of the revolution would be "refined" later by an elite public school and university education in London. After an early career as a barrister (and a stint in British military intelligence), he became a professor of Russian studies at the London School of Economics. By the time he died in November 1983, he was deemed, as an obituary in the *Tory London Times* (3 November 1983) wrote, "one of the most influential scholars of his generation in Russian studies in the entire non-communist world." Such accolades do not come lightly from this mouthpiece for the decaying British Empire: E.H. Carr, author of the monumental 14-volume history of Soviet Russia, was eulogized by the *Times* a year earlier only as an "eminent historian."

While numerous CIA-inspired hacks churn out, as Paul Sweezy observed of one, ignorant compendia of everything wrong anyone ever said about Marxism, Schapiro brought to his work an intimate knowledge of Russian literature and Marxist writings. He applied that knowledge



Leonard Bertram Schapiro, 1908-83.

Roma Schapiro

to furthering the popular misidentification of Communism with Stalinism—its blatant lies and intimidation, its opportunist reversals and nationalist excrescences, its blood purges and gulags. The *New York Times Book Review* (4 June) recently hailed Schapiro as one of the "pioneers... in exposing Stalinism—and indeed Leninism—as the source of Russia's misery." In numerous books and dozens of articles, this pioneer Cold Warrior devoted himself, fanatically, to providing a plausible academic veneer to the Big Lie of contemporary anti-Communism: that the Stalinist police-state perversion of "socialism" is the natural offspring of Lenin's October.

In a preface to Theodore Dan's *The Origins of Bolshevism* (1964), Schapiro acknowledged his debt to the former Menshevik leader in "trying to study and understand the political complexities of Russia as transformed by Lenin." But where Dan came to conclude that Lenin's October was historically progressive, Schapiro saw in it the beginnings of the evil empire. He titled his first book, published at the height of the Cold War in 1955, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*, and laid out in its opening and closing sentences the thesis he was to hammer away at for the next three decades:

"This is the story of how a group of determined men seized power for themselves in Russia in 1917, and kept others from sharing it; and of the consequences which ensued... when it became evident that they enjoyed but little popular support.... The malignant figure of the General Secretary, Stalin, has become only too familiar in its portrayal by disappointed oppositionists, defeated by the apparatus which he controlled. But it was Lenin, with their support, who equipped him with the weapons, and started him upon his path."

Schapiro was not a scholar of the Russian Revolution, but a lawyer for counterrevolution. Who else would see in



Painting by I. I. Brodsky

Massacre of 26 Baku Commissars in 1918 by British army of Intervention during Civil War.

General Kornilov a "left-winger"? Schapiro was Big Liar-in-chief for a generation of Cold Warriors and imperialist war criminals, epitomized by Reaganite "Dragon Lady" Jeane Kirkpatrick, whose jesuitical rhapsodies over "mildly authoritarian" dictatorships against "Communist totalitarianism" were marching orders for death squad regimes in Central America and *mujahedin* cutthroats in Afghanistan. Apprentice rulers for imperialist America at Harvard University are advised to read Schapiro's books in a course on the Russian Revolution offered by Reaganite National Security Council adviser Richard Pipes, particularly if they want to "have plenty of ammunition to fire back" at Trotskyist defenders of October: "So next time the Young Spartacists want to strike up a chat, you'll give them more than an earful."

"Plenty of ammunition"—to be used one day in firing something more lethal than words at student protesters in South Korea or starving masses in Latin America. Schapiro's crusade against Bolshevism was motivated by the same aristocratic contempt for "the mob" which inspired the rantings against the French Revolution by the likes of Edmund Burke and H.A. Taine. Listen to the dispassionate scholar of Russian studies rave how "the mass appeal of bolshevism delves much deeper into the dark recesses of the mob mind. It draws response from the fear of freedom, the envy, the anti-intellectualism, the chauvinism—in short from all the characteristic ambience of mass man... with his own mass morality, his crude egalitarian and levelling aspirations and his herd paranoia" ("Totalitarianism in the Doghouse," Leonard Schapiro, ed., *Political Opposition in One-Party States* [1972]).

Now listen to Taine fulminating a century earlier on the storming of the Bastille by "the people, that is, *the mob*, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand individuals fortuitously gathered together upon a motion or an alarm and trans-

formed immediately and irresistibly into legislators, judges; and executioners. A formidable, destructive, and shapeless beast that can not be curbed, it sits at the portals of the Revolution together with its mother, the baying monster Liberty, like Milton's two specters at the gates of Hell" (quoted in Paul Farmer, *France Reviews Its Revolutionary Origins* [1963]). The people—a "shapeless beast"; liberty—that "baying monster"; the "mob mind"—its "egalitarian aspirations" and "herd paranoia." Here is the mind of the anti-democrat in all its naked glory. For Leonard Schapiro, power may corrupt, but power in the hands of the working class corrupts absolutely.

The Schapiro School of Falsification

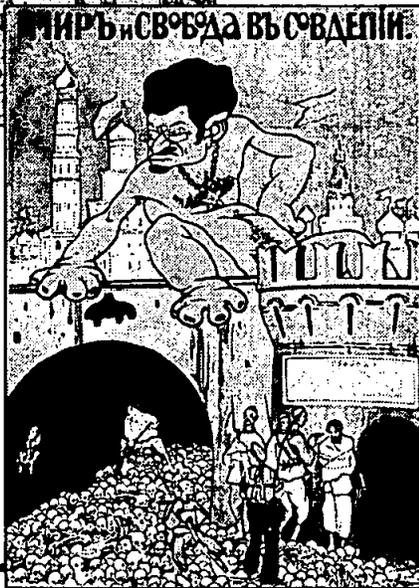
Schapiro puts the revolution on trial in Her Majesty's court, donning the black robe and powdered wig of the barrister, the upper crust of English lawyers who have exclusive audience in all the superior courts. The barrister "is not answerable for anything spoken by him relative to the cause in hand... even though it should reflect on the character of another and prove absolutely groundless," unless "he mention an untruth of his own invention" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Esteemed counsel for the counter-revolution would never stoop to untruths... of his own invention. Schapiro's carefully researched work was also carefully discriminating, pruning the facts to fit his premise, presenting half-truths where any more would injure his argument, retailing slimy innuendos and untruths invented by others. Simply to read his works alongside those of serious bourgeois historians like E.H. Carr demonstrates this. Leon Trotsky was certainly partisan in his presentation of *The History of the Russian Revolution*, but even Schapiro grudgingly admits, the revolutionary leader "does not apparently attempt to falsify facts." Schapiro does. For the ideologues of

Schapiro's counterrevolutionary heritage.



Mary Evans

Left: Masses in French Revolution depicted as bloodthirsty rabble; sans-culotte shown with hanging priests.



Penguin Books

Right: Anti-Semitic White Guard poster shows Trotsky as embodiment of "Jew-Bolshevism."

reaction, who seek to retard the tide of human progress, truth is not a handmaiden but a handicap.

Schapiro willfully and promiscuously superimposes images of Stalinism on Lenin's actions in an attempt to mislead. He speaks of "rigged elections" and "takeovers," of "manipulation" and "stage-managed conferences," without so much as a hint of concrete evidence to substantiate rigging and manipulation. He charges Lenin with demanding "recantations" from Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other oppositionists in 1917; what Lenin demanded was not that they renounce their views but simply abide by party decisions. He labels the 1922 trial of Social Revolutionary (SR) leaders a "show trial," conjuring up images of forced confessions, glassy-eyed defendants and outlandish Vyshinskyite accusations; in fact these SR leaders had openly engaged in numerous counterrevolutionary plots and had literally ordered the trigger pulled in assassination attempts against Lenin and other Communist leaders. Moreover, they were tried in public, with their own choice of counsel.

Schapiro cites an argument by Lenin against the Workers Opposition in 1921, falsely claims that Lenin equated them with the Mensheviks as counterrevolutionary, and then asserts this to be the birth of that "form of syllogism" used by Stalin later to argue, for example, that since both

Trotsky and Hitler opposed Stalin, therefore Trotsky must be a Nazi agent. Only "the mind trained in the crude antitheses of the marxist dialectic" could swallow such Stalinist amalgams, chortles the learned professor, who nevertheless manages to prove himself cruder even than Stalin in fabricating them. Schapiro insinuates that Lenin made conscious use of the tsarist police agent Malinovsky since "the immediate aims of Lenin and of the police were identical—to cause the maximum of disruption and disunity in the social democratic movement" (*The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* [1960]). Again on that hoary lie, to which we shall return, that Lenin was a German agent in World War I, Schapiro oozes: "If the Germans did indeed pay them, as seems very probable, it was because bolshevik aims coincided with their own—to knock Russia out of the war" (*Communist Party*). One might note, truthfully, that Professor Schapiro's aims fully coincided with those of numerous Western intelligence services.

The reader who does not personally investigate his many footnotes (for example, *Origin* has 771) has no way of knowing whether the seemingly logical arguments marshaled by Schapiro are also accurate. To examine every omission, half-truth, insinuation and tendentious argument Schapiro uses to weave his fabric would require at least a book in reply. It is enough to pull out a few central threads in his logical construction to tear it to shreds. In brief, Schapiro argues: 1) that the "original sin" of Stalinism lay in Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* (1902) and the 1903 split with the Mensheviks; 2) that the October Revolution was a coup d'état aimed at securing a "monopoly of power" for the Bolsheviks; 3) that in the period 1917-21 Lenin pursued a more or less conscious policy of eliminating all political opposition outside and within the Communist Party.

1903: Lenin as Party "Dictator"

According to Schapiro, the split with the Mensheviks was a result of Lenin's desire to be "dictator" of the party. He portrays the "fundamental difference" between Bolshevism and Menshevism in the succeeding years in Lenin's determination "that his own organization must be preserved in disciplined and 'monolithic' form whatever the immediate consequences" as opposed to the Mensheviks' "growing belief that the revolution could be accomplished by the workers 'as a class'" (*The Government and Politics of the Soviet Union* [1965]). Schapiro claims that *What Is To Be Done?* counterposed to "the idea of a revolution made by the workers themselves...one made by professional revolutionaries, the party, in their name." This showed, dixit Schapiro, the influence not of classical Marxism but of Blanquism.

But Schapiro is nothing if not erudite. His ceaseless researches (among the rubbish bins of early Menshevik attacks on Lenin) lead him to point to the Russian Blanquist Peter N. Tkachov as "Lenin's predecessor": "it is with justice that Tkachev has often been described as the originator of many of Lenin's ideas. Lenin himself would later closely study Tkachev, and insist on Tkachev's articles as required reading for his own followers. In contrast, Engels was very critical of his views, and engaged in open polemics with him" (*Communist Party*). Lenin could well admire Tkachov: as against those who saw Russian socialism developing organically out of the peasant communes, Tkachov recognized the necessity of revolutionary action to overthrow the autocracy and seize state power. Where is



Vezenberg and Co.

V.I. Lenin and Y. Martov, while co-leaders of St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, February 1897.

the "contrast"? The oracle has spoken, without deigning to quote either Engels or Lenin on the question. Yet, in one of his few references to Tkachov, in the selfsame *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin was explicit in "rejecting an immediate call for assault" and polemicized against an opponent who "zealously imitates Tkachov"—"while an original historical event represents a tragedy, its replica is merely a farce."

Engels attacked Tkachov for his populism; by the time Lenin became a revolutionary, Engels' letter was already part of the corpus of Russian Marxism (as Dan points out). Tkachov influenced a generation of *pre-Marxist* Russian revolutionaries, notably Narodnaya Volya. He looked not to the development of proletarian class struggle but to *voluntarist* action by the radical democratic intelligentsia: the revolutionary does not wait "until the current of historical events itself indicates the moment, he selects it himself." Can anyone who is at all familiar with Lenin's writings conceive of him saying such a thing? To offer just one counterexample: Lenin advanced the slogan, "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!" But he made it clear that "We can neither 'promise' civil war nor 'decree' it, but to go on working—if necessary for a very long time—in that direction..." (Letter to Shlyapnikov, October 1914).

Schapiro's description of *What Is To Be Done?* as "in essence the whole theory of Bolshevism" is overly simplistic, ignoring Lenin's evolution to the conception of the *vanguard party* and the material basis for a split in the workers movement caused by pro-imperialist opportunism (see Spartacist pamphlet, *Lenin and the Vanguard Party* [1978]). The 1903 split originated over the issue of party membership and Lenin's determination to have a "hard" (anti-opportunist) majority on the editorial board of *Iskra*. Lenin did stand for the organization of the revolutionary *minority*—a party of professional revolutionaries—not in counterposition to but at the head of the broad masses of the proletariat. And he was proven right in this. Schapiro of course hauls out Trotsky's famous anti-

Bolshevik bromide—that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be replaced by the dictatorship of the party, and finally the dictatorship of an individual. Trotsky later acknowledged the correctness of Lenin's view:

"I thought of myself as a centralist. But there is no doubt that at that time I did not fully realize what an intense and imperious centralism the revolutionary party would need to lead millions of people in a war against the old order."

—*My Life*

The fundamental political divergence which developed between Menshevism and Bolshevism centered on the question of whether the proletariat should ally with the liberal bourgeoisie or the peasantry in the coming, bourgeois-democratic revolution. Though it was only in 1917, with his "April Theses," that Lenin placed the proletarian revolution on the agenda, abandoning the call for a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry," he recognized early on that the liberal bourgeoisie could play only a counterrevolutionary role. Thus, in 1917 Trotsky was able to transcend his deep differences with Lenin on the organization question because his perspective of permanent revolution—the proletariat seizing power at the head of the peasant masses—found him a lot closer to Lenin than were many "Old Bolsheviks" who agreed fully on party organization but wanted to support the liberal bourgeoisie in the form of the Provisional Government.

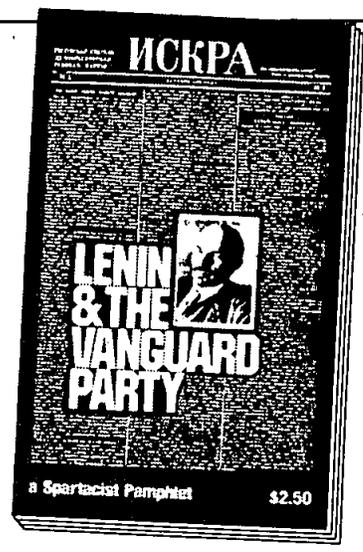
Our honored Court historian, CBE, FBA, chronicles the political conflict between Bolshevism and Menshevism in the period leading up to the decisive break in 1912 as though he were writing a high-class gossip column for one of Britain's ubiquitous "tits and bums" tabloids: one squalid wrangle after another over Lenin's supposed shady dealings on finances, the use of police agents, etc. The fundamental political questions at stake simply go by the boards. Lenin's insistence in *What Is To Be Done?* that the proletarian party had to be "tribune of the whole people"—leading the fight against all aspects of tsarist oppression—goes virtually unnoticed by Schapiro. Lenin's struggle both against nationalist deviations (the Bund, etc.) and against those (like Rosa Luxemburg) who denied the right of national self-determination, is dismissed in *two paragraphs* in Schapiro's *Communist Party*. But facts are, indeed, stubborn things. Even a disingenuously awestruck

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Schapiro must concede that the Bolsheviks actually carried out their program on the national question in 1917: "In insisting upon these rights [of self-determination] for Poland and the Baltic States, the Bolsheviks were defending neither Russian self-interest, nor their own, but (possibly for the first and last time in their foreign policy) a question of principle" (*Origin*). Possibly for the first and last time, an honest statement from Leonard Schapiro, Esq.

1917: Workers Revolution as "Coup d'Etat"

To read Schapiro, you would think Russia in 1917 was marked by something akin to an extended parliamentary crisis, a failure by responsible parties to agree on a common policy to deal with a tiny gang of power-crazed fanatics:

"What was widely believed to be an attempted *coup d'état* by the bolsheviks in July for a short time united all the socialists behind the government and against the bolsheviks. But, soon after, an attempt by General Kornilov (himself a left-wing supporter of the revolution, though backed by right-wing industrialists) to restore order by imposing a military dictatorship turned the tables. The Provisional Government, forced to choose between what it rightly or wrongly regarded as 'counter-revolution' and the bolsheviks, jettisoned Kornilov, and thereby alienated those remnants of the army which might have been prepared to support it."

—Communist Party

Were the Bolsheviks intent on a "coup d'état" during the July Days? Lenin and Trotsky denied it; Trotsky devoted an entire chapter to the matter in his history. Schapiro of course knows better than to pay any attention to what *they* said. However, in *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (1978), Alexander Rabinowitch writes: "from mid-June on, as we have seen, Lenin had worked with energy to prevent an insurrection from breaking out." Rabinowitch's exhaustive research of Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik papers and documents led him to conclude that the key sections of the Petrograd proletariat solidly identified with Lenin's program. In July, the Bolshevik leaders sought to channel the widespread popular disgust of the Petrograd masses with the Provisional Government, and particularly with the renewed military offensive it had just ordered, into peaceful protests, recognizing that the proletariat at large still lagged behind the consciousness of the capital.

The stormy period between February and October was marked by *dual power* between the workers' and soldiers' soviets and the bourgeois Provisional Government. The bourgeoisie rapidly showed itself to be the counterrevolutionary force Lenin and Trotsky had predicted it would be. Enter Schapiro's "left-winger" Kornilov (backed by right-wingers), who wanted only to "restore order." All he wanted, after all, was a "moderately authoritarian"—as the well-tutored Madame Kirkpatrick would say—military dictatorship! "Revolutionary order"? The Bolsheviks represented the only force for revolutionary order in Petrograd—soviet power.

Already by April (as Rabinowitch noted in a reply to Schapiro's critical review in the 31 March 1977 *New York Review of Books*, where Schapiro calls Kornilov a "simple soldier"), Kornilov's name had become synonymous with counterrevolution in Petrograd for calling out his artillery to be used against demonstrating workers and soldiers. Kerensky "opposed" Kornilov only after furious attempts at cementing a bloc had failed and only because he knew



Novosti Press

Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party banners in workers' demonstration during 1905 Revolution. Front banner reads: "Workers of all countries, unite!"

that the "simple soldier" would have hanged him and the other "socialist" traitors from the same scaffold as the Bolsheviks. Substantially under Bolshevik leadership, it was the masses (including large sections of the army) who stopped Kornilov—without the need to fire a shot. His "remnants" literally melted away in the face of the mobilized workers.

As Schapiro admits elsewhere, neither of the alternatives to a "Bolshevik coup"—for the Provisional Government to adopt their program on peace and land, or to crush them outright—was really possible under the circumstances. Why? Because the Bolsheviks represented the aspirations of the vast majority of workers and poor peasants. Schapiro cannot explain this because he denies the *conscious intervention of the masses* on the stage of history—all is reduced to "manipulation," "takeovers" and "coups," while "mass man" sits passively gazing. Having rendered the July Days an attempted Bolshevik coup, he then points to its "failure" to argue that it "belied the Bolshevik claim of overwhelming mass support."

Our historian graciously gives history a helping hand in "belying" Bolshevik claims. Schapiro never once even mentions, until his last book, *The Russian Revolutions of 1917* (1984), the June 18 demonstration called by the official (i.e., Menshevik and SR) soviet leadership in Petrograd. Intended as a show of force *against* the Bolsheviks, this demonstration was transformed into a show of strength *for* the Bolsheviks as, virtually to a man, the 400,000 marchers carried Bolshevik slogans opposing the Provisional Government—"Down With the Offensive!" "All

Power to the Soviets!" The dawning realization by the bourgeoisie that Lenin's "fanatics" and not the "responsible" Menshevik and SR ministers enjoyed mass support among the workers was a prelude to the crackdown the following month.

Schapiro deigns to admit that the Bolsheviks' "reckless promises" of peace and land played well to "the passions of the crowd," but primarily what ensured a Bolshevik victory was their "singleness of purpose," their "superior organization, discipline and armed force"—and, of course, their "ample funds" from the German Kaiser (*Government and Politics*). Another untruth not of the barrister's own invention! Schapiro dusts off this tsarist slander used to justify the repression of the July Days with the claim of fresh evidence, citing a compilation of German Foreign Office documents captured at the end of World War II (Z.A.B. Zeman, ed., *Germany and the Revolution in Russia 1915-1918* [1958]). These documents, writes Schapiro, "establish beyond reasonable doubt that the Bolsheviks were in receipt of German instructions." He quotes a report by Foreign Minister Kühlmann boasting—a month after the revolution—that what had enabled the Bolsheviks to build up their propaganda effort was "a steady flow of funds through various channels and under different labels."

If you read these documents, you'll also learn that Russia was supposed to have a revolution in *January 1916*, financed by the Germans at a cost of 20 million rubles! Zeman himself ridicules talk of the Bolsheviks being "German agents." Even if Baron von Kühlmann is to be believed—and there is much reason for him at this point to have been claiming credit for the Bolshevik victory—this is the only statement in all the documents which says anything more than the not very surprising fact that the German government threw money rather indiscriminately and "under different labels" at anything they could find in an attempt to disrupt the Russian war effort. On the other hand, the documents do say that in the negotiations over Lenin's "sealed train" journey, the Bolsheviks were scrupulous in rejecting any possibility of German political interference, insisting that passengers be allowed "absolutely

regardless of their political opinions or their attitude towards the question of the desirability of war or peace." Naturally, our good barrister does not see fit to mention *that*.

It is simply impossible to completely ignore the mass support of the Bolsheviks on the eve of the revolution. Schapiro explains it as one of the biggest confidence jobs in history. The Bolsheviks appealed to the masses on the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!", but "Few of them realized that the Bolsheviks' real aim was a one-party autocracy" (*Russian Revolutions*). Once again, our aspiring English aristocrat incisively exposes the "herd paranoia" of "mass man"; if only they had read the fine print first, he oh-so-sagely explains: "Lenin's writings leave little doubt that he, at any rate, had no intention of ever sharing power with the Socialist Revolutionaries or Mensheviks as a permanent policy" (*Origin*). Which of Lenin's writings? Having culled through 45 volumes of Lenin's *Collected Works*, Schapiro manages to come up with one—an October 1915 article in which Lenin argued it was "admissible for Social-Democrats to join a provisional revolutionary government together with the democratic petty bourgeoisie, but *not* with the revolutionary chauvinists."

Did Schapiro read Lenin's article, or did he leave it to one of his admiring research assistants? What Lenin is saying here is that it would be inadmissible to have a coalition with the *pro-war* chauvinists committed to continuing the imperialist slaughter. This quote in fact "leaves little doubt" that *Schapiro lies*. And it is substantiated by the historical record, which Schapiro tries to turn inside out. In July, it was the Mensheviks and SRs who drove the Bolsheviks out of the soviet *and underground*. Even when the soviets were under social-chauvinist control, the Bolsheviks never voluntarily abandoned these organs of the proletarian democracy. But in October the Mensheviks and SRs were not driven out, they *walked out* of the Congress of Soviets—in order to make common cause with the Kadets, the tsarist officers and the other opponents of the proletariat. Had the Bolsheviks been intent on a one-party state, they could have easily outlawed their opponents right then, when the SRs and Mensheviks were widely despised.



Schapiro tries to "disappear" mass support for Bolsheviks. Here, over 400,000 Petrograd workers and soldiers demonstrate on 18 June 1917 with Bolshevik slogans: "Long Live the Third International." "Down with the counterrevolution! Down with the ten capitalist ministers! All power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies! We demand immediate convocation of Constituent Assembly!"

The Bolsheviks specifically invited the Left SRs and Martov's Menshevik-Internationalists into the Soviet government; the former ultimately accepted, while Martov chose to link hands with the Menshevik traitors. Negotiations were even held with the Right SRs and Mensheviks, who showed where they stood on "sharing power" by organizing the counterrevolutionary "Committee for Salvation of Country and Revolution" while provocatively insisting—with more than a little chutzpah—that *Lenin and Trotsky be excluded* from any coalition government. Two weeks after the seizure of power, Lenin continued to declare:

"We stand firmly by the principle of Soviet power, i.e., the power of the *majority* obtained at the last Congress of Soviets. We agreed, and *still agree*, to share power with the minority in the Soviets, provided that minority loyally and honestly undertake to submit to the majority and carry out the programme, *approved by the whole* Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, for gradual, but firm and un-deviating steps towards socialism."

—"From the Central Committee of the RSDLP (B)" (November 1917)

Even in Westminster it is practice that the majority form the government!

Red Terror and White Pogroms

In his treatment of the period 1917-21, Schapiro tries to read back the Stalin blood-purges of the late 1930s to the Bolshevik regime of Lenin and Trotsky. Having lost the case of "The People vs. Kornilov," Schapiro takes on as his next clients the Mensheviks and SRs. Rather distasteful business for a respectable barrister, but then these were respectable, anti-Bolshevik "socialists"—rather like Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Schapiro tells us that the Mensheviks always acted as a legal opposition, while it is "at most a half-truth, and a misleading over-simplification" to claim that the SRs sought to overthrow the Soviet regime by force of arms. "The socialists were not eliminated in 1921 because they were counter-revolutionary. They were described as counter-revolutionary in order to justify their elimination" (*Origin*). In fact, to read Schapiro there was hardly a counterrevolutionary danger at all—largely "the imagination of the Cheka." Imperialist inter-

vention? Why, "it was with the cooperation of the Communists that the first British landings in Murmansk were carried out" (*Origin*).

Soviet Russia in the four years following the revolution was hardly the scene of a parliamentary election race in the English Home Counties. Fourteen imperialist armies had invaded, White armies ravaged the country, massacring Reds and terrorizing the Jewish ghettos. The front lines of the counterrevolution shifted both geographically and politically, as sections of the Mensheviks and even the SRs recoiled from blatant support to the White terror. At the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919, Lenin explained that the "petty-bourgeois democrats":

"... do not know where to sit, and try to sit between two stools, jump from one to the other and fall now to the right and now to the left. . . . We say to them, 'You are not a serious enemy. Our enemy is the bourgeoisie. But if you join forces with them, we shall be obliged to apply the measures of the proletarian dictatorship to you, too!'"

The Left SRs, who initially supported the Soviet power, not only quit the government over the signing of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk but decided on a course of what they themselves termed "terrorist acts against the leading representatives of German imperialism" and defense of such actions "by force of arms": not the sort of thing a very proper Englishman would ever condone, unless it was aimed—against the *Soviet government*. In July, they assassinated the new German ambassador, Count von Mirbach, with the aim of dragging Russia back into the war, while armed Left SR units took Dzerzhinsky and other leading Bolshevik Cheka officials hostage, attempting an ill-prepared putsch in Moscow and an insurrectionary rising in Yaroslavl. Four days after the assassination, a Left SR who was Red Army commander in chief on the Volga front unilaterally declared war on Germany. The Bolshevik response was very restrained: a handful of mutinous Left SR Cheka officers were executed and the Left SR leaders responsible for the adventure were imprisoned, and generally released shortly thereafter.

Around the same time, the Mensheviks and SRs were excluded from the Soviet Central Executive Committee—though not outlawed—and even this measure was re-

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General Lavr Kornilov, a "left-winger" by Schapiro's standards. Right: Armed workers detachments on their way to crush Kornilov's counterrevolutionary coup attempt, August 1917.



Viktor Bulla

Dietz Verlag Berlin



Putilov metal workers listen to report from the Soviet the day after the seizure of power.

scinded several months later following pledges that they would forswear counterrevolutionary activity. Under the best of circumstances, the Mensheviks had hardly been homogeneous. Now Martov in particular served to provide a "socialist" cover for what had become a shelter for outright counterrevolutionaries. In a published letter to Martov dated April 1921, Axelrod still maintained their "moral and political right to combat the Bolsheviks by all methods, including armed force" (*The Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution* [1976]). As a former Marxist, Axelrod at least acknowledged:

"If it were true that the Bolsheviks and they alone are properly carrying out the historic mission of the Revolution in Russia, as the Jacobins once did in France, then our fight against them would be essentially counter-revolutionary; it would be our plain duty to join their ranks and, if we acted in any way as an opposition, to do so in a cautious, loyal and constructive manner."

Counselor Schapiro sees no counterrevolution and hears no counterrevolution, but listen to his client—"essentially counter-revolutionary."

In neighboring "democratic" Georgia, the Menshevik government was a bastion of anti-Communist terror, outlawing the Communists in February 1918, and providing a beachhead first for German and then British troops. Georgian Menshevik leader Zhordania declared: "We prefer the imperialists of the West to the fanatics of the East." Schapiro hastens to note that the Russian Mensheviks severed organizational relations with them—though not until December 1918. Other Mensheviks participated in the Yaroslavl rising in July 1918 and in the short-lived White government in Samara. They were expelled—but only months after the Mensheviks had already been put on notice by being ejected from the Soviet Executive. So the Mensheviks were not quite the pristine virgins presented by counsel. But too damn pristine for Schapiro, who briefly

removes his black robe to castigate his clients for refusing "to resort to anything but strictly constitutional means to overthrow" Lenin (*Origin*).

As for the Right SRs, even Schapiro acknowledges that they were involved "in many of the plots, conspiracies, or other anti-communist activities within or outside Russia" (*Origin*). While the Left SRs had a base among the landless and poor peasantry, the Right SRs were the party of the kulaks, the grain traders, the professional classes like teachers and lawyers. Only a month after the revolution, they participated in a Kadet-inspired rising in Petrograd. At a May 1918 conference in Moscow, they declared for a policy "to overthrow the Bolshevik dictatorship" (E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, Vol. 1 [1950]). Within the next several months, the SRs assassinated two Bolshevik leaders and seriously wounded Lenin. In June 1919 one wing of the party finally renounced support to armed counterrevolution ("outright capitulation," grouses Schapiro) and split away. After two years of intimate collaboration with bourgeois and tsarist counterrevolutionaries, those who remained, it is safe to say, were pretty deep into it.

The Kronstadt Rebellion and the Ban on Factions

By 1921, the imperialist armies had been driven out and the Whites defeated. However personally painful this may be to Schapiro, he salvages from it another polemical weapon: "That the real reason for the suppression of political freedom was neither intervention nor the civil war is evident from the fact alone that it was extended and consolidated only well after the end of both" (*Origin*). But if the immediate military threat to the workers state had subsided, its situation was no less precarious. The country had endured seven years of war; the best elements of the

proletariat which had made the October Revolution had either died in the Civil War or were running key aspects of government and party work, while what there was of an industrial working class often had no factories in which to work. The economy was devastated, with production at a fraction of its 1913 level. The peasants, who no longer faced the danger of White armies coming and restoring the property of the landlords, also no longer felt the compulsion to hand over their crops to the starving cities for nothing in return. And then Kronstadt exploded.

Again, Schapiro tries to wipe away dirty fingerprints: "While émigré organisations were certainly looking for an opportunity to overthrow Soviet Communist rule, there is no scrap of evidence of any links between the Kronstadt rising and any of these émigré groups," he writes (*The Listener*, 4 June 1981). In the first place, the Kronstadt of 1921 was no longer the bastion of revolutionary proletarian consciousness it had been in 1917; it consisted overwhelmingly of peasants in uniform and, moreover, those who had been far from the front lines of the Civil War. Even if there had been no direct links with the Whites, this was still an insurrectionary takeover of the key garrison guarding the approaches to Petrograd. But White involvement was clear even at the time, when the White Guard organ *Obschye Dyelo* gave a detailed description of the rebellion over two weeks before it began.

However, by the time of Schapiro's article, there was a lot more than one "scrap of evidence." *Kronstadt 1921*, by Paul Avrich, an anarchist sympathetic to the uprising, was published in 1970 (see "Kronstadt and Counterrevolution," *WV* Nos. 195 and 203, 3 March and 28 April 1978). Avrich established that a few weeks before the revolt, a

White agent stationed near the base reported the recruitment of a group of sailors on the inside who were preparing to take an active role in a forthcoming uprising. One Stepan Petrichenko, the son of a Ukrainian kulak, was the key leader of the uprising, the author of a resolution which became the charter of the insurrection, the instigator centrally responsible for turning a protest meeting at the garrison into a platform for anti-Communist insurrection. Petrichenko had "tried to join the Whites" the previous summer, and only weeks after the rebellion was suppressed, he openly did join them in Finland. Did Schapiro not know of Avrich's book, or was he engaged in retrospective "damage control"?

Kronstadt erupted right in the middle of the Tenth Party Congress, where the Bolsheviks adopted the New Economic Policy aimed at undercutting peasant unrest by replacing requisitioning of food with a tax in kind and allowing private trade relations. It was also at this congress that the ban on factions was voted. Schapiro writes:

"In the political sphere Lenin was faced with two alternatives. He could either bring about a political reconciliation by sharing power with the socialists and by permitting freedom of opinion and discussion inside his own party. Or he could ensure the monopoly of power for the Communists, but in that case a more disciplined party had to be created, in order to enable an unpopular minority to rule in the teeth of national opposition. It was consistent with the whole of his faith and past practice that he should have chosen the latter course and there is no evidence to support the view subsequently put about by Stalin's opponents, such as Trotsky, that the measures he put through at the Congress to this end were only intended as temporary."

—*Government and Politics*

Ever solicitous about the welfare of the socialist revolu-

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tion, Schapiro counsels Lenin himself, advising from the vantage point of hindsight—and Whitehall—that the Communists had an alternative to the monopoly of power, namely, committing suicide. “Share power” with whom—émigrés in Paris and Berlin, people who had laid waste to the country in an attempt to overthrow the Soviet power and lost? Even Victor Serge, an anarcho-liberal who ultimately broke with Trotsky in a “hue and cry” over Kronstadt, recognized that had the Bolsheviks lost power in 1921 it would have been “only a short step to chaos, and through chaos to a peasant rising, the massacre of the Communists, the return of the émigrés, and in the end, through the sheer force of events, another dictatorship, this time anti-proletarian” (*Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941* [1963]).

In the inexorable logic of revolution and civil war, as the other parties rallied behind the counterrevolution, many of their working-class followers flocked to the Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks and SRs became little more than empty shells. By 1921, the soviets as multi-party organs of workers democracy had for all intents and purposes ceased to exist. In effect, the Communist Party had taken the place of the soviets, its tendencies and factions reflecting the social pressures and programs that would have otherwise been expressed by non-Communist but pro-soviet parties. Schapiro suggests that the “Resolution on Unity” passed at the Tenth Party Congress mandated Stalinist “monolithism,” outlawing “freedom of opinion and discussion” within the party. This is, simply, a lie. The resolution imposed a ban on factional activity, i.e., the right to *organize* within the party around an independent platform and to stand for election to party bodies on that basis. Even while calling for dissolution of factional groupings, Lenin insisted that representatives of both major factions—the Workers Opposition and the Democratic Centralists—be included in the new Central Committee. What a devious, uniquely Leninist way to stop free discussion!

As for whether the ban was intended to be temporary, let's see what Lenin said. Lenin made it absolutely clear that he was seeking only to prevent a *split* in the party at that critical moment when it might threaten the very existence of Bolshevik rule and, thus, the workers state. Arguing for the Central Committee's new power to discipline or expel its members “in cases of breach of discipline or of a revival or toleration of factionalism,” he nevertheless warned that “our Party has never allowed the Central Committee to have such a right in relation to its members. This is an extreme measure that is being adopted specially, in view of the dangerous situation.” When Ryazanov moved an amendment that would have banned “any election to the Congress by platform,” Lenin was even more explicit:

“We cannot deprive the Party and the members of the Central Committee of the right to appeal to the Party in the event of disagreement on fundamental issues. I cannot imagine how we can do such a thing! The present Congress cannot in any way bind the elections to the next Congress. Supposing we are faced with a question like, say, the conclusion of the Brest peace? Can you guarantee that no such question will arise? No, you cannot. In the circumstances, the elections may have to be based on platforms... But your resolution says: No elections according to platforms. I do not think we have the power to prohibit this.”

Stalin's subsequent claim that the banning of factions was a “precedent” to justify crushing inner-party democracy is



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Jewish workers' self-defense unit in Odessa, April 1918. The Bolshevik Revolution purged Russia of pogromist Black Hundreds.

of no more consequence than Schapiro's claim that it was evidence of Lenin's dictatorial ambitions. So Schapiro doesn't believe Lenin? What about at least quoting him and letting the reader decide?

Schapiro argues not only that Stalinism was a logical outcome of Leninism, but that “the system devised by Lenin could really only work effectively where one man was in undisputed command” (*Government and Politics*). He depicts the Bolshevik Party as a hermetically sealed apparatus standing apart from and above the working class—issuing orders, manipulating, intimidating. Such a party could not have led a revolution. In his reply to Schapiro, Rabinowitch noted “the party's internally relatively democratic, tolerant, and decentralized structure and method of operation, as well as its essentially open and mass character” (*New York Review of Books*, 9 June 1977).

What passes for “Leninist organization” in the eyes of anti-Communists and Stalinists is not democratic centralism but Stalinist bureaucratic centralism. Lenin's party was not a machine of unthinking automatons trained to believe that the reward for critical or independent thought was a bullet to the back of the head. Discipline in a Leninist party is voluntary, flowing from adherence to a common *revolutionary* program. It was the Bolshevik program that carried the day in Russia on 25 October 1917. This is incomprehensible to those who disdain the proletariat, anti-Communists and Stalinists alike.

Who Was Leonard Schapiro?

Schapiro pronounces judgment on the Bolshevik Revolution according to the standards of English common law. In the preface to *Origin*, he graciously allows that the

Bolsheviks, at least initially, were animated by a "passion for justice, for the ultimate liberation of mankind, for the utopia of the future," but adds: "I take the view that their passion for justice was bound to lead to disaster when once they failed to see the need for reconciling all the conflicting interests which will always exist in practice in every state, (whatever Marx and Engels may have said on the subject) in a form of stable legal order."

The state does not "reconcile conflicting interests," it defends the interests of the dominant class. Schapiro was well aware of this, whatever *he* said on the subject. Leonard Bertram Schapiro earned his CBE (Commander of the British Empire) from the Queen: he was a witting apologist for the English ruling class—not the young and vibrant Cromwellian bourgeoisie which dispersed the Parliament and beheaded the king, but the senile and bankrupt imperialist bourgeoisie with its Peerage and its Royal Family and its murderous empire in deep decline. The "stability" of England's legal order—that best of all possible worlds—derives from centuries of rape, pillage and mass murder of the peoples who occupy much of the globe, from Ireland to India. English "legality" did not embrace the 26 Baku Communists murdered in cold blood by British interventionists in 1918, an incident which does not sit well with Schapiro's one-sided account of the Civil War and therefore goes unmentioned. It was not the Bolsheviks who conspired behind the backs of the masses, but the Kerenskys, the Kornilovs and their imperialist patrons. The counterrevolution prattled about "democracy," while slaughtering Communists and Jews by the hundreds of thousands. The Bolsheviks openly avowed their class dictatorship and their class terror to defend the revolution.

For Leonard Schapiro, any "comparison between the communist bureaucracy and that of imperial Russia was unfair to the old régime, in which some elements of legal order and of restraint over the executive had already begun to take root" (*Communist Party*). To him the White general Denikin was a man of "personal integrity," Kolchak "a man of complete integrity," Kerensky's policies were "dictated by principle," the Kornilovite adventurer Savinkov was a "romantic patriot" and Kornilov himself a "simple soldier." When Stolypin, the author of the counterrevolutionary terror following the 1905 Revolution, rigged elections (by Schapiro's admission), we hear no outrage, only a dismissive "whatever one's view of Stolypin's methods." When socialists were tried under the tsar, "in secret, the evidence adduced included that of a police informer and was in part manufactured, and the sentences were severe," we hear no denunciations of "show trials" (*Communist Party*).

Had Schapiro's "romantic patriots" and "men of integrity" seized Petrograd in 1919, his family might well have met the same horrible fate suffered by thousands upon thousands of Jews at the hands of White pogromists like Wrangel, Denikin and the Ukrainian Petliura. If the Russian Revolution was a beacon to the world's exploited and oppressed, it was particularly so for the Jews of East Europe. The revolution opened the portals of emancipation to this people whose existence had been defined by the tsarist knout and the Black Hundreds' cry of "Beat the Yids!" Nor is it an accident that Jews constituted a disproportionate element in the revolutionary movement. The Bolshevik program of revolutionary internationalism provided a magnet of attraction to a people without a

homeland. And, in its victory, it created a state whose foundations were inherently internationalist.

Why would a scion of a St. Petersburg Jewish family support pogromist reactionaries? It was of little concern to a Leonard Schapiro that "lower-class" Jews perished at the hands of White reactionaries in Russia and Poland so long as he—and his capital—could find sanctuary in England. He saw himself in the mold of the Rothschilds, whose financial empire saved them from the gas chambers to which millions of other Jews were consigned. Schapiro consciously loathed internationalism. His first loyalty was to capital. When the question of communism vs. fascism was posed with razor sharpness, people like Kim Philby and Donald Maclean went one way, becoming traitors to their class and heroes to the proletariat, while Schapiro went the other, becoming an even more groveling servant of the English aristocracy.

As "an undergraduate and for some time after," i.e., in the period of Hitler's rise to power, as he recalled in "My Fifty Years of Social Science" (1980), he underwent a "*Neigung* [inclination] to the Right." This ever-so-kindly professor who wrings his hands over "totalitarianism" unswervingly insisted that "the first requirement of a civilized society is order." You can almost feel the arm stiffening, ready to rise in salute. But, wait—Schapiro had a problem with Hitler. Hitler combined "the worst aspects of mass democracy"—Hitler the democrat!—"with a pseudo-elitist political doctrine." Only *pseudo-elitist*! Schapiro, on the other hand, was *fully* elitist, convinced that "the achievements of human culture are always produced by an elite... and that the preservation of this elite is more important for human values than social and economic equality." No, Leonard Schapiro did not go halfway when it came to elitism! Indeed, he could tell you that the level of "human culture was directly related to the rise or decline of the best breeding" in the "leading families." This parvenu aristocrat never came to terms with the bourgeois revolutions of the 18th century, much less the proletarian revolution of the 20th!

Schapiro's loaded, biased account of Bolshevism was crafted knowingly. He was a professorial disseminator of "disinformation," a training he acquired not only in the courtroom and the British Museum Reading Room. His "introduction to the study of the Soviet Union" came as a British intelligence officer in Germany assessing Soviet military strength in the brief interregnum between World War II and the first Cold War. How many Nazi mass murderers did Schapiro's intelligence unit channel through the "rat line" to continue their crusade against "Jew-Bolshevism" for the "democratic" West? For Schapiro, the Nuremberg trial of Nazi war criminals was an "appalling travesty," because the Soviets were not in the dock—"a tacit acceptance by the Western powers" of "the grim record of the Soviet Union." He set out to stiffen the spines of those leaders of Western imperialism who were tempted to treat with the Soviet "evil empire":

"This illusion that at bottom the Soviet Union is reasonable and basically motivated by the same aims as the Western nations—such as security, extension of its influence, trade and co-operation—persists to this day, and has at times influenced US or British policy. It is, I believe, the most dangerous illusion that Western statesmen can suffer from...."

How inspiring Schapiro must have found Winston Churchill's tirade at the time of the signing of the NATO pact:



L. Y. Leonidov

Bolshevik leaders Lenin and Trotsky stand among soldiers sent to suppress Kronstadt mutiny in March 1921. Mutiny leaders were linked to White Guard counterrevolutionaries.

"The failure to strangle bolshevism at its birth and to bring Russia, then prostrate, by one means or another, into the general democratic system lies heavy upon us today." It was to the aim of reversing that "failure" that Leonard Schapiro devoted his wretched life.

Reforge World Bolshevism!

Schapiro reserves his last poisoned arrow for Leon Trotsky: "Objectively, as the communists would say, the posthumous voice of Trotsky is really that of Stalin—*malgré lui* [in spite of himself]" ("Trotsky, As He Really Was" [1982]). He rails that Trotsky's "blatant hypocrisy and dishonesty are matched only by Lenin's demagoguery," denounces "Trotsky's repeated compromises with an evil system and men before 1927," and argues that it was Trotsky who first defined the function of Communists to be obedient and unthinking. His "evidence"? Trotsky's appeal to Lenin from the Civil War front in 1918 to "Send me Communists who know how to obey." Having denounced Lenin for his intolerance, Schapiro paradoxically lauds Bukharin as one of Lenin's "closest followers," who "regarded the duty to preserve peace and harmony between social classes... as paramount" (*Government and Politics*).

The paradox is superficial. In inviting the kulaks to "enrich themselves," Bukharin had become, objectively, the standard-bearer of capitalist restoration. The genuine

continuity of Lenin's Bolshevism was to be found in the Trotskyist Left Opposition. Schapiro simply dismisses Trotsky's programmatic struggle against bureaucratism and "socialism in one country." He claims that already with the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Lenin had propounded "socialism in one country," and that the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921 not only "sounded the retreat from world revolution" but strengthened its disciplinary powers in order to purge "dissident left-wingers." Trotsky "rescued Stalin from defeat" in 1923 for fear that without the "Gensek" the strong centralized party apparatus might flounder.

In 1923, there was no way Trotsky, nor probably even Stalin himself, could anticipate the full significance of the ascendancy of the bureaucracy and where it would lead. We think in hindsight that Trotsky should have fought harder, earlier, but what he was fighting for was communism—and that's why Schapiro loathes him so violently. Trotsky went on to fight the programmatic issues as they arose, in defense of party democracy, for planned industrialization and voluntary collectivization, against the capitulations and betrayals in the name of "socialism in one country." And, when it became clear that only civil war measures could remove the bureaucracy, he advanced the program of proletarian political revolution. That remains the answer to the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union. Within the context of the struggle for international socialism, there is no other.

The "democratic socialist" alternative to Leninism which Schapiro claimed that Menshevism represented was ultimately denied even by the Menshevik Dan. Though never reconciled to Leninism, Dan acknowledged before his death (in *The Origins of Bolshevism*) that by the time of the revolution Menshevism had degenerated into "democratic reformism," prepared "by its principled refusal to struggle for power against the bourgeoisie, and hence also by its inner reconciliation with the 'abridged' formulae of democracy." On the other hand, he acknowledged Bolshevism "not as an accidental phenomenon... that interrupted the liberating struggle, which had been going on for decades, of the Russian intelligentsia, working-class and people as a whole, but, on the contrary, as a natural product of that struggle and an historically inevitable stage on the road to its consummation."

Schapiro's thesis that Leninism is ultimately guilty for the crimes of Stalinism has found a pervasive echo among Soviet intellectuals today. They likewise join in denouncing Trotsky as "another Stalin" while looking to Bukharin as the "humane" face of Communism. They would do well to ponder the ideological company they keep.

If nothing else, Schapiro makes it clear through his views and through his writings that prerevolutionary Russia faced only two alternatives: a continuation of tsarist reaction—whether under a Nicholas II or a Kornilov—and Bolshevism. In the words of Rosa Luxemburg, the choice was socialism or barbarism. Today the choice facing all of humanity is international socialist revolution or nuclear annihilation. The decisive battles will be fought out under the banners of communism and anti-communism. Leonard Schapiro was a willful and calculating apologist for a dying system, a system based on savagery and lies. The future of humanity lies with the struggle to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International, the continuity of Lenin's Bolshevism. ■

Political Bandits ...

(continued from page 2)

issue of their newspaper *Workers News*. The WIL is the only one of the remnants of the implosion of Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party (there are currently at least seven publishing journals in Britain) to have made the report available to the international workers movement. Interested readers who wish to obtain a copy of the report can order one directly from the WIL (1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE, England).

From the time Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) imploded spectacularly in the fall of 1985 (see "Healyism Implodes," *Spartacist* No. 36-37, Winter 1985-86), it has been clear that *none* of the myriad cliques and tendencies which spun out of it were interested in a real reckoning with the WRP's despicable record of political banditry. For 20 years the Healy cult, with a brutal internal regime held together by mind-numbing "dialectical" mumbo-jumbo, violence and security fetishism, was a mill for the cynical destruction of those leftists who made the mistake of joining it. Healy was infamous for his capacity for wild swings in political line in pursuit of egregious and often mutually contradictory opportunist appetites. (In "Wohlforth Terminated," *Workers Vanguard* No. 61, 31 January 1975, we cited the Healyites' high-turnover operation in lumpen youth milieus as the political context for their programmatic oscillations in the early 1970s.) By the late 1970s the WRP had become shameless apologists for Near Eastern dictators and oil sheikdoms. But to the extent that the Healyites had a coherent political core they were cringing legalist/Labourite economists and virulently anti-Soviet in concrete program. Those who had stuck it out for years with Healy, through every twist, turn and betrayal, could not be expected to function very differently without him.

Soon after the implosion the dubious David North, who came to replace Tim Wohlforth as leader of the tiny American Workers League in 1976, stepped into Healy's misshapen shoes as *líder máximo* of the WRP's "International Committee" (IC). North claimed the allegiance of the German and Sri Lankan IC sections, the majority of the Australian section led by Nick Beams, and a minority of the old WRP under David Hyland. North expelled the rump of the post-Healy WRP led by Cliff Slaughter, which retained in its international orbit only a minority of the old Australian IC led by Phil Sandford.

The Northite IC has clung to every despicable hallmark of Healyism, from the use of the capitalist cops and courts against opponents in the workers movement, to the "Security and the Fourth International" slander campaign against leaders of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who the IC claims are and were (even in Trotsky's time!) agents of the capitalist and Stalinist secret police. Not only does the shadowy North, who won his spurs in the Healyite organization as mouthpiece for "Security and the Fourth International," continue to retail the Stalinist slander that Trotsky was killed "by his own people," but his organization has made its sinister efforts to aid the American capitalist state in railroading SWP member Mark Curtis on phony rape charges into its chief international activity (see "The Workers League and Mark Curtis," *Workers Vanguard* No. 480, 23 June 1989).

From the time the old WRP started up its subsidized daily *News Line* in May 1976, its pages full of uncritical adulation of the Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, it was clear that Healy's organization was on the take from the Libyan regime. Slaughter's rump WRP was forced to admit as much in the aftermath of the implosion, and with the membership clamoring for the truth, an International Committee Control Commission was convened to investigate. The Commission's "Interim Report," dated 16 December 1985, was more of an exercise in damage control than a real attempt to get at the truth: its revelations were used by David North in his cynical IC power play and the Commission didn't even attempt to investigate allegations that other IC sections had also received Near Eastern oil money. Moreover, the Commission never aimed to hold accountable the WRP leaders who *were* implicated. All names were deleted from the report except those of WRP members who had split along with Healy, presumably so North would have plenty to hold over Slaughter et al. in the future.

The report documents the WRP's receipt of a total of £1,075,163 from the Palestine Liberation Organization as well as the governments of Libya, Kuwait, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Iraq from 1977 to 1983. No surprises here. More damningly, the report reveals some of the concrete services to be provided by the WRP to obtain the alliance with Qaddafi: *in an April 1976 secret agreement with the Libyan government the WRP agreed to provide intelligence information on the "activities, names and positions held in finance, politics, business, the communications media and elsewhere" by "Zionists."* Even the Control Commission report acknowledges that this agreement had "strongly antisemitic undertones, as no distinction is made between Jews and Zionists and the term Zionist could actually include every Jew in a leading position." So the WRP agreed to *spy on leading British Jews* in return for Arab gold. Healy's organization became *agents* for Qaddafi, and a lot more than publicity was involved.

The Control Commission reports that in connection with this agreement, the WRP demanded £50,000 from the Libyan government to buy a web offset press. The Control Commission says it was unable to find any documentation that this money was received. But the WRP did launch the daily *News Line* a month after the agreement was signed and *did* (according to the report) spend £188,500 to buy two Hunter offset presses some time in the period between September 1974 and April 1981.

The London *Sunday Times* (7 February 1988) obtained a copy of the report and exposed the WRP as having been "paid to spy for Gadaffi." An ex-WRP member told them that the WRP had culled information on leading "Zionists" from the *Jewish Yearbook* and the *Jewish Chronicle* and sent it to Libya. What was the response of the Slaughter WRP to the *Sunday Times* revelations? A statement (*Workers Press*, 13 February 1988) that "no worker with any sense will believe such rubbish. ... There is no evidence that the party when led by Healy ever spied on 'Jews', prominent or otherwise." On the contrary, the £542,267 that the Control Commission documented the WRP got from Libya is a hell of a lot of evidence. The April 1976 spying agreement is what *cemented* Healy's alliance with Qaddafi.

Perhaps the most vicious crime of the Healy-led WRP

LETTER AND REVIEWS THE IRAQI REVOLUTION AND STALINISM

Dear Editor,

This is a straight case of Moscow trying to set up cells in Iraqi armed forces for the purpose of undermining the regime. It must accept the consequences. It ill-behoves Mr. A. and the British



Bulletin

16 March 1979



Workers Press

David North and his mentor Gerry Healy in 1982. From 1976 Healy determined the WRP's political line in accordance with money received from Near East regimes. North's *Bulletin* reprinted WRP article justifying 1979 Iraqi execution of 21 Communists (left).

was the fulsome support they gave to the Iraqi Ba'athist government's execution of 21 Iraqi Communist Party members in 1979. Both the Australian and American IC sections reprinted articles from *News Line* hailing the execution of these working-class militants: the Healyites positively gloried in it, portraying the Communist oil workers, the most class-conscious section of the Iraqi proletariat, as agents of counterrevolutionary Stalinism. When the WRP imploded, some members reported that they had been assigned to take photographs of a London protest against the Iraqi government, photographs which they believed had been turned over to the Iraqi embassy. About this deed, the Control Commission reports, "a receipt for £1,600 for 16 minutes of documentary footage of a demonstration is in the possession of the Commission." Who was the receipt made out to? Needless to say, we aren't told. The perpetrators should be brought to proletarian justice. But that is the *least* concern of *any* of the Healyite remnants.

What Are North and Beams Covering Up?

After the IC Control Commission delivered its report, Cliff Slaughter and his followers immediately began to cry foul. In a 14 January 1986 letter to all WRP members, Slaughter wrote:

"Is it only the WRP which received financial assistance from one or other Middle Eastern bourgeois national governments? Which other sections did so?"

"Is it not a fact that the Australian section did receive a sum of (tens of thousand [sic] of dollars) in 1983? (We do not say of course, that to seek such assistance is always wrong, it is wrong when political principles are sold for the maintenance of such relations)"

"Is it not a fact that the receipt of this money by the Australian section [was] reported to the Central Committee of the SLL (Australia) only in the month before the IC meeting of Dec 16? And is it not a fact that the IC delegate, Cde Beams, was told by his CC in Australia to report this matter to the IC?"

"Is it not true that Cde Beams failed to report the matter to

the IC or to the WRP delegates, but that he *did* report it to at least some of the delegates who supported the WRP suspension and certainly to Comrade North? That is what happened.

"Finally: is it not true that Comrade North and Beams agreed the matter should not be raised at the IC because they considered it did not constitute a "class betrayal"? How did they differentiate between the class betrayal of the WRP in this matter—on which was based the argument for suspending the WRP from the IC without charges and without a hearing—and the actions taken on behalf of the SLL (Australia)?"

Slaughter's accusations have the ring of (self-serving) truth. The Central Committee of the Australian SLL *did* censure Beams, at a meeting held in February 1986, for failure to report receipt of money from Arab regimes to the IC, and according to Phil Sandford, Beams even voted for the motion (*Socialist Labour League Internal Bulletin*, February 1986). Sandford, who soon after led a split from the Northite SLL to found the Communist League in solidarity with Slaughter, claims in the same bulletin that "the SLL carried out a class betrayal in *identical terms* to that carried out by the WRP, but it is not possible to discuss that here for obvious reasons." In an article in the December 1986 *Socialist Press* (journal of the Communist League), Sandford recounts the story of SLL leader Greg Adler's 1979 trip to Baghdad, where Adler had been instructed to ask for \$100,000 to buy a printing press. Sandford claims that Adler didn't ask for the money, but nonetheless Gerry Healy gave him quite a dressing down for daring to poach on his preserve. Sandford goes on to report:

"The SLL's relations with the Libyan regime require a separate article. Suffice to say they were more productive financially thanks to an even more slavish public relations job in the pages of *Workers News* and such things as the memorable, Libyan-financed brochure entitled *Libya—the true story*."

As part of their turn to "commercial enterprise, commercial print work," the SLL also took money to print *The Bell*

of Saigon, organ of the fascistic Vietnamese thugs who have attacked Australian leftists and labor meetings.

One thing is for sure, the Australian Healyite remnants are complicit with North and Slaughter in hiding the real truth. A letter of Simon Pirani (for the Slaughter WRP Central Committee) to the Northite IC dated 21 July 1986 cynically asks "whether the Control Commission has completed its work." The equally cynical Peter Schwarz replies for the Northites, "You know as well as I do that the ICFI Control Commission was refused any access to any further information as soon as it had given its interim report" (correspondence published in March 1987 issue of Northite *Fourth International*). Both sides blame each other for the "incomplete" work of the Control Commission because neither side wants the whole truth revealed.

Why Did the Healyites Implode When They Did?

Another document in our possession sheds a lot of light on events in the WRP in the fall and summer of 1985, immediately predating the implosion. It is a "Financial Report" by Corin Redgrave, dated 8 October 1985. While Redgrave's testimony must be taken with a grain of salt, he certainly gives the flavor of things:

"In the financial year 1984-85 scarcely a single rent or rates demand was paid on time. Bailiffs took walking possession of the contents of the party's printshop in Runcorn, the party bookshops, and on one occasion at least, the party headquarters at Clapham. The total cost to the party in one financial year from court charges, solicitors' fees, bailiffs' fees and interest, was more than £7,000."

On 3 April 1985 British Rail, to whom the WRP owed £25,515.58 for carriage charges, suspended credit to Astmoor Litho, publishers of *News Line*, and demanded cash payments before it would ship the newspaper. By 1 July 1985, not a single major wholesale supplier would deal on credit terms with New Park Publications. By October, the WRP owed £30,000 in back fees to their accounting firm, which was refusing to keep up the books. Redgrave claims that the mess was all the fault of the WRP financial apparatus who, unbeknownst to Healy (!), had been

financing WRP operations through a £35,000 bank overdraft negotiated in October 1982. Redgrave also claims that from 1984 on, the financial apparatus had been selling and mortgaging party property, all apparently in a desperate effort to keep things afloat.

By the summer of 1985 the whole stinking house built by Gerry Healy was about to come tumbling down. And everyone in the leadership knew it. It was doubtless no accident that Aileen Jennings, whose infamous letter charging Healy with sexual misconduct touched off the implosion, was a linchpin in the WRP's financial apparatus. The WRP Political Committee originally labeled her letter a "provocation." It was only when the WRP's financial debacle could no longer be hidden that Slaughter et al. decided to use its revelations against Healy.

An emergency meeting of the International Committee was called in August 1985 to discuss the WRP's financial crisis. Healy tried his usual trick of soaking more money out of the tiny IC satellites. The slimy David North, who was in on all the backstabbing intrigues in the WRP leadership from the beginning, saw that things were about to explode. North pledged to contribute £30,000 and, according to Savas Michael (leader of the Greek IC section who stuck with Healy), he then didn't turn over the money (*Marxist Review*, May 1986). North knew exactly what he was doing with this maneuver, and in the aftermath of the implosion his "Control Commission" smugly documented the WRP's financial impasse, confirming the picture painted by Corin Redgrave.

Redgrave dates the WRP's escalating financial crisis from October 1982. The "Interim Report" of the IC Control Commission details the drastic dropping off of Near Eastern oil funds between 1982 and 1983 (£271,217 in 1982, only £3,400 in 1983; nothing in 1984 and 1985). Thus the immediate motive seems clear. Healy's longtime lieutenants, none of whom ever objected at the time to any of the betrayals perpetrated by the WRP in order to get money from Near Eastern bourgeois governments, moved in to depose Healy not *because* of the receipt of that money, but because that money *dried up*. ■

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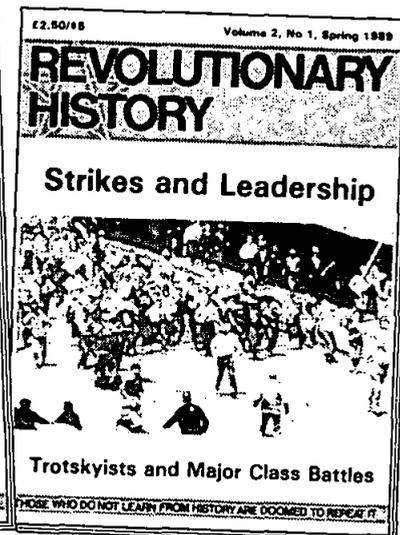
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Second Amendment...

(continued from page 56)

What's new here is the *active political campaigning* by the country's police chiefs to disarm the civilian population. Heading them up is Los Angeles chief Daryl Gates, notorious for his racist defense of the LAPD's use of the deadly choke hold against blacks and Latinos. The campaign has been picked up by the Bush administration's anti-drug "czar" William Bennett, and the federal government has now banned imports of 49 models of semiautomatic "military-like" weapons. In Washington, D.C., curfews are being imposed on youth while the president drops hints of calling out the National Guard in the name of the "war on drugs." The drift toward police bonapartism in the U.S. has just lurched into a higher gear.

"I don't want that gun on the street," Chief Gates decreed (*New York Times*, 28 January), and he quickly received backing from police groups across the country. For the TV cameras, cops staged demonstrations of the supposedly "excessive" power of these "assault" rifles by blasting away cinder blocks and watermelons, not telling viewers that virtually any good hunting rifle could do the same thing. The police claim they are "outgunned" by drug gangs on the streets, but anyone who's seen the L.A. cops' paramilitary operations, using an arsenal of gunship helicopters and tanks, knows that's baloney.

The guns they are talking about banning are civilian versions of military-style rifles, such as Colt's AR-15, which is patterned after the army's M-16. They can carry large magazines of 20 or more bullets, but the civilian version is only semiautomatic, meaning a single bullet is fired with each trigger pull; in the fully automatic military version, a stream of bullets is fired as long as the trigger is pulled back. The distinction between a common semiautomatic hunting rifle and an "assault rifle" is blurry, since the former can also accept large magazines and many of them are more powerful than the military weapons. Thus the popular .30-06 *manual, bolt-action* hunting rifle packs *twice* the kinetic energy of a "military-style" AKS.

Polls show that even people who favor banning "assault rifles" know it will not stop the "drug mafia" from getting their guns the same way they get their drugs—smuggling them in with the help of corrupt police departments and army commanders with friends in high places. (In the Iran/contras scandal, the Reagan/Bush/CIA team in Central America smuggled guns to the contras and returned with drugs for profit.) So the anti-gun propagandists resort to loaded questions, asking "whether there is any purpose in civilians' owning military-style weapons except to kill people and why law-abiding people would want to own them" (*New York Times*, 3 April).

It's really not news that guns were invented to kill people. And in this class-divided society, it has more than occasionally been necessary for "law-abiding" citizens to defend themselves with violence, even against the so-called legally constituted authorities. Are memories really so short? Recall the bloody Ludlow, Colorado massacre of 1914 in which 21 men, women and children, families of striking miners, were killed by the machine gun fire of the state militia, who were really Rockefeller's hired guns. But the workers were armed by the United Mine Workers, and to the bosses' horror for ten days some 1,000 strikers fought



UMW

After 1914 massacre in Ludlow, Colorado, United Mine Workers organized to fight back against state militia, matching bullet for bullet.

back bullet for bullet.

Recall as well the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre at Republic Steel in South Chicago. On May 30 of that year, in the midst of a national strike against the "little" steel companies (i.e., all the companies except the giant United States Steel Corporation), 1,500 protesters, mostly strikers and their families, marched in a holiday mood toward the Republic Mill. They were met by a solid line of 200 cops and a sudden volley of tear gas shells. As the marchers broke and ran, the cops charged with blazing guns and swinging clubs. Ten workers were shot dead, and another 40 were wounded—all of them shot in the back. An additional 101 protesters, including an eight-year-old child, were injured by clubs. In this case the strikers had been politically disarmed by their union misleaders with the line that the cops, sent to keep order by the Democratic "friends" of labor, should be "welcomed."

We also remember the 1979 Greensboro Massacre, in which five leftist civil rights workers and labor organizers were gunned down in cold blood by a Klan/Nazi group. An FBI informer led the fascists to the murder site, and an agent of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms showed them how to use and transport the semiautomatic weapons. Or in the Philadelphia of black mayor Wilson Goode, where the cops in 1985 raked the MOVE commune with 10,000 rounds in 90 minutes, using fully automatic M-16s and M-60 machine guns, and incinerated eleven black people, including five children, in a fire ignited by C-4 plastic explosive provided by the FBI. But of course none of the "concerned" anti-gun lobbyists are advocating taking away guns from the *cops*.

White middle-class liberals preach total pacifism from the relative safety of their condos and suburban ranch houses—they don't expect the cops to come bursting into *their* homes. But the ruling class does not believe in pacifism and has carefully armed *its* state to the teeth. The whole issue of gun control revolves around the question: do you trust *this state* to have a monopoly of arms? And the

answer is refracted through the deepening class and racial polarization of this society. The core of the state, after all, is "special bodies of armed men," as Lenin explained in his 1917 pamphlet *The State and Revolution*, commenting on the writings of Marx and Engels. And this is *not our state*, but the capitalists'; they assert the state's monopoly of armed force in order to maintain their class rule.

To Disarm the People

The whole history of gun control is the story of the ruling class trying to *disarm* the population, particularly in periods of social struggle. The ban on automatic weapons is usually linked to gangsters like Al Capone, but it never stopped them from getting their hands on Thompson sub-machine guns, just as the mob today has its Uzis. More to the point, the 1934 ban on automatic weapons came in the Great Depression when the spectre of working-class revolution haunted Washington (in fact, that year saw three citywide general strikes led by ostensible communists). The federal gun control act of 1968 came at the peak of black ghetto upheavals. And the perennial push to ban the cheap handguns known as "Saturday Night Specials" is just an attempt to make guns more expensive and hence less accessible to the poorer classes.

Gun laws are fossilized traces of the evolution of society and the state. In a recent book on Afghanistan, Pakistani leftist Raja Anwar writes: "In a society where every group and every citizen is armed, no government can possibly function" (*The Tragedy of Afghanistan* [1988]). Anwar knows whereof he speaks in his richly detailed firsthand account of this country of heavily armed tribal peoples, but his conclusion is wrong. The conclusion should be that the government must have some relation to the governed, good or bad. Thus in Nicaragua there are several hundred thousand guns in the hands of the population, and while the shooting range outside Managua is filled every weekend

with people practicing their (fully automatic) AKs, these guns have been used to defend a revolution against the contra terrorists.

Today the police are concerned about "assault rifles" mainly because they are turning up in the black ghettos, at least in California. What gets cops upset is that a semiautomatic rifle might have given a Malcolm X the chance to defend himself, or might let a housing project resident fend off cop assaults when a "TNT" anti-drug squad comes illegally bursting through the door. In the recent period cops have run amok across the country, gunning down people at will. And when a Larry Davis managed to defend himself against the murderous cops, and was acquitted by a Bronx jury last year, the killers-in-blue staged a massive armed demonstration of cop power.

For years, as liberals railed against every sort of firearm, opposition to gun control was led by the National Rifle Association, which brags about training police. But this time the NRA's right-wing political and cop connections were of no avail against the "bipartisan" consensus of the capitalist parties—concerned about "violence" as the economy spirals downward—to push for civilian disarmament. So in quick succession unprecedented bans have been passed on "assault rifles"—dubbed "Rambo guns" by the same media which promoted the Rambo image during the Reagan years. First Stockton, then L.A., and in March the California legislature voted a statewide ban. In New York City, which already requires strict licensing of rifles and shotguns, the city council is considering a similar ban, pushed by racist mayor Ed Koch and police chief Ben Ward.

On the national level, the day after Bennett announced the import ban, Colt Industries said it would voluntarily stop selling its AR-15 to civilians (police and military can still buy it) in order to be "consistent with U.S. Government policy." (Colt is a scabherding outfit whose workers



Chicago Historical Society

**May 1937,
South Chicago:
Unarmed workers
were shot in the
back on Memorial
Day when cops
charged march
of striking steel
workers. Ten
were shot dead;
40 were wounded;
108 other protesters
were brutally
clubbed.**

have been on strike for over three years.) And in Congress, Democratic Senator Howard Metzenbaum, among others, is pushing a bill which would treat semiautomatic weapons like fully automatic weapons (already banned). Liberal Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy endorsed the anti-gun ban under the slogan "Support Your Local Police" (*New York Times*, 22 March). And sensing the political winds, President Bush, a life member of the NRA, backhandedly endorsed the "outcry" against the guns, "semiautomated [sic] weapon or automated, whichever it was."

In an attempt to justify this massive assault on Americans' constitutional right to "keep and bear arms," the bourgeoisie is rewriting its own Constitution in the media. We are told civilians can own arms only if they are "particularly suitable for, or readily adaptable to, sporting purposes," as specified in the 1968 federal gun control law. A "stricter" interpretation of this act was the administration's basis for cutting off imports of the "assault" weapons. So we are told it's OK to use firearms to hunt deer or shoot at paper targets but not for self-defense. "I do not believe that an AK-47, a machine gun [sic], is a sporting weapon," was the line ex-president Reagan mouthed for the TV cameras.

From Feudalism to Capitalism

Four centuries ago the Renaissance and the Reformation combined with the "gunpowder revolution," as military historian John Keegan noted in his book *The Mask of Command* (1987). This threatened the state by putting untold power in the hands of the common man, Keegan noted, particularly when combined with the proclamation of a right to bear arms, "a genuinely seditious principle." Military power could no longer be confined to a few skilled noblemen and their retinues. A precursor to the gun was the crossbow: "In seconds an amateur with a crossbow could wipe out years of costly training, to say nothing of generations of noble (even royal) breeding," wrote Robert L. O'Connell in the *Military History Quarterly* (Winter 1989).

Both the Church and the English aristocracy tried to ban the crossbow, but the rifle was a far more serious threat, particularly after the Industrial Revolution made mass production possible. Under the Saxon and Norman feudal systems every freeman had not only a right but a duty to keep arms. In 1181 Henry II issued an Assize of Arms which specified what type was to be kept by what type of person. The late feudal, centralizing proto-absolutist Tudor monarchy took measures to protect the declining skills of longbow archery (symptomatic of the declining feudal order) by passing laws against handguns and crossbows, limiting possession to the wealthy. The 16th and 17th century rulers in Madrid, Vienna, Paris and London met the threat posed by the new weapons by establishing standing armies "to monopolize the power unleashed by the gunpowder revolution" (Keegan). The French absolutist king Louis XIV made laws against pistols, and later only the aristocracy was permitted to carry arms, while firearms production and supply was heavily state-controlled.

In Japan the Tokugawa Shogunate succeeded in disarming the peasantry in the late 16th century. The old order was retained into the 19th century by closing the society to European mercantilism, Christian missionaries and fire-



Valerio/Philadelphia Inquirer

Massacre of Philadelphia MOVE, May 1985: cops opened up with machine guns, while firebomb was dropped on black commune, killing eleven, including five children.

arms. In the 1850s about the only firearms in Japan were primitive matchlocks replicating 300-year-old Portuguese designs. But new and overpowering Western imperialist pressures led to the Meiji Restoration in 1868, opening the road to capitalist development. The Shogunate itself had disarmed the old samurai caste; it was itself overthrown by a rifle-equipped conscript army. The Japanese citizenry never acquired any significant stock of non-military firearms, making it easier for the Japanese ruling class to apply the sweeping bans on firearms and other weapons which it retains to this day.

In Europe and America it was the struggle against absolutist, reactionary tyrannies which produced the revolutionary principle of the "right to keep and bear arms." One of the first acts of the French Revolution was to seize weapons and ammunition from the arsenals. And every subsequent revolutionary upsurge has been accompanied by similar actions. The right to bear arms was codified by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. What's going on today is a calculated *counterrevolutionary* attack by a decaying ruling class on these constitutional guarantees.

The Second Amendment's Revolutionary History

The clear intent of the Second Amendment (ratified in 1791), as expressed in its language, was not sport or hobby but a people's militia:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

The constitutional right is not about hunting or target practice; the American colonial revolutionaries wanted the whole people armed, centering on military arms—in today's terms something like the AK-47—in order to be able to *kill British soldiers*, and to forestall the threat of any



Workers Vanguard

November 1979: Spartacist-initiated united front in Detroit stopped Klan from celebrating Greensboro slaying of five civil rights and labor activists.

standing army, which they rightly regarded as the bane of liberty and the basis of tyranny. Indeed, what triggered the American Revolution were attempts by the British army, in particular General Thomas Gage, to force colonialists to surrender their arms. As noted in a recent article by Stephen P. Halbrook:

"The Revolutionary War was sparked when militiamen exercising at Lexington refused to give up their arms. The widely published American account of April 19, 1775, began with the order shouted by a British officer: "Disperse you Rebels—Damn you, throw down your Arms and disperse!"

—*American Rifleman*, March 1989

There is a continuum between the English Civil War, the American Revolution and the American Civil War. The question of the standing army and the king's attempts to raise taxes to finance it against the opposition of Parliament and the emergent bourgeoisie was central to the outbreak of the English bourgeois revolution. Oliver Cromwell beheaded the king in 1649 and the revolution gave birth to democratic principles, codified decades later in the English Bill of Rights of 1689 when the revolution was already ebbing and after a renewed drive to absolutist reaction under James II. As a guarantee against the Catholic/royalist threat, the English Bill of Rights listed "true, ancient and indubitable rights," including:

"6. That the raising or keeping a standing Army within the Kingdom in Time of Peace, unless it be with Consent of

Parliament, is against Law.

"7. That the Subjects which are Protestants, may have Arms for their Defence suitable to their Condition, and as are allowed by Law."

—quoted in Stephen P. Halbrook,
That Every Man Be Armed (1984)

This principle was reiterated in the 18th-century Blackstone's Commentaries, still regarded as a definitive bourgeois statement on the English Common Law. The 1689 Scottish Claim of Right reiterated an identical point about the right to bear arms. In Scotland this assertion was underpinned by a widely accepted custom of bearing arms. This reflected among other things the recognition that the ability to mobilize forces of equipped and experienced fighters at short notice had often been the margin between independence and English invasion and conquest. In addition the Scottish Reformation had faced the challenge of attempts to impose French-backed Catholic absolutism.

Carrying forward the English tradition, the American revolutionaries expanded on this right, in light of their own experience in struggle against the British king, when they drew up the Constitution in 1787. In the state conventions which ratified it, a "militia" was understood to mean the armed people, not a "select" militia like the present-day National Guard (which can be federalized and keeps its arms stored in armories controlled by the government). The right to "keep and bear arms" was universally recognized as an *individual* right. As Patrick Henry summed it up, "The great object is, that every man be armed."

As in any class society, there were some big, categorical exceptions to these "universal" rights. The Second Amendment assumed it was English-speaking white Protestants that had the guns, to be used against Indians, black slaves, Spanish, Dutch and French invaders and, needless to say, the British former colonial masters who continued to threaten the young republic. Thus in South Africa today the white population is individually heavily armed as one of the means to maintain their status over the black majority. Similarly in the English Revolution the right to bear arms was directed against Catholics as perceived and frequently real representatives of reaction. Applied in Ireland this was an instrument of exploitation and terrible oppression. In Ireland after 1688, among other anti-Catholic measures, no Catholic could serve in the army or possess arms. In the later 18th century armed militias were raised in Ireland and Britain. In Ireland these mainly Protestant "Volunteers" took up the struggle for reforms. Then an "Arms and Gunpowder Bill" was passed requiring the Volunteers to turn in their arms. The radical wing, inspired by the American and French Revolutions, and led by Wolfe Tone, took up the call for universal suffrage and the removal of all laws against the Catholics. The United Irishmen uprising of 1798 was Ireland's failed bourgeois revolution.

Despite these limitations on the concept of "universal rights," the American War of Independence released a world-shaking democratic spirit, reflected in the military sphere by the arming of masses of civilians who could be trusted, out of ideological conviction, to fight for their government in loosely-controlled guerrilla-type units. As was noted by Friedrich Engels, who was no mean soldier himself (being a heroic and able officer on the revolutionary side in 1848):

"While the soldiers of European armies, held together by compulsion and severe treatment, could not be trusted to

fight in extended order, in America they had to contend with a population which, untrained to the regular drill of line soldiers, were good shots and well acquainted with the rifle. The nature of the ground favored them; instead of attempting manoeuvres of which at first they were incapable, they unconsciously fell into skirmishing. Thus, the engagement of Lexington and Concord marks an epoch in the history of infantry."

—"Infantry," an article for *The New American Cyclopaedia* (1859)

Abolition of Slavery by Arming the Slaves

But the Americans' so-called democracy accepted slavery, written into the Constitution itself. It was generally recognized that if the slaves got guns it would mean the end of slavery, so they were denied this legal right through the device, juridically approved by the Supreme Court in the infamous Dred Scott case in 1857, of claiming that "the people" meant only "citizens," and "citizens" did not include black slaves. Chief Justice Taney noted with horror that if blacks were citizens they would be entitled to a long list of rights, including the right "to keep and carry arms wherever they went."

John Brown was among a small vanguard in the 1850s who saw that only force of arms would put an end to slavery, and he became a prophetic martyr for leading the famous raid on a federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859. Meanwhile, ex-slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, a close friend of Brown, openly defended a man's "right of self-defense" when fugitive slaves were being hunted by agents of the slaveholders, even if this meant "shooting down his pursuers," as occasionally happened. "Slavery is a system of brute force," he said. "It must be met with its own weapons."

Thus when the Civil War came, and the Northern bourgeoisie became so militarily desperate in 1862-63 to crush the slaveholders' rebellion against the Union that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and agreed to the forming of black regiments, Douglass seized on this historic opportunity. "Men of Color, To Arms!" was his slogan as he campaigned for black volunteers for such famous regiments as the 54th Massachusetts. And it wasn't only in the army that blacks fought—during the racist anti-

draft riots in New York in 1863, according to one black newspaper of the time:

"The colored men who had manhood in them armed themselves, and threw out their pickets every day and night, determined to die defending their homes.... Most of the colored men in Brooklyn who remained in the city were armed daily for self-defense."

—quoted in James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War* (1965)

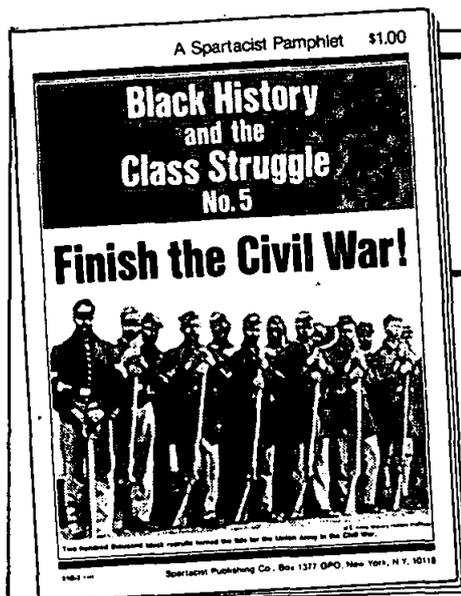
In the post-Civil War Reconstruction period, the central struggle in the South was between the newly emancipated blacks seeking to exercise political power and the remnants of the slaveholders' government seeking to put the former slaves back "in their place." This struggle pivoted on black people's possession of arms. Hence the reactionary "black codes" passed in various Southern states tried to outlaw possession of firearms by blacks. An 1865 Florida statute, for instance, made it unlawful for "any Negro" to possess "firearms or ammunition of any kind," the penalty for violation being the pillory and the whip.

In response, the federal government's Freedmen's Bureau widely distributed circulars which read in part, "All men, without distinction of color, have the right to keep and bear arms to defend their homes, families or themselves." But the question would be decided by military power: the racist white state militias, aided by the private Ku Klux Klan, were already disarming blacks, whose only defense was their own arms and/or the occupying Union Army. What was going on in the South was graphically described in one letter cited in Congressional hearings in 1871:

"Then the Ku Klux fired on them through the window one of the bullets striking a colored woman... and wounding her through the knee badly. The colored men then fired on the Ku Klux, and killed their leader or captain right there on the steps of the colored men's house...."

In this case, as in many others, the Klan leader turned out to be "a constable and deputy sheriff."

While Congress adopted all sorts of paper measures protecting blacks, including the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution which guarantees "equal protection of the laws," it betrayed the promise of black liberation in the Compromise of 1877, when Union troops were withdrawn



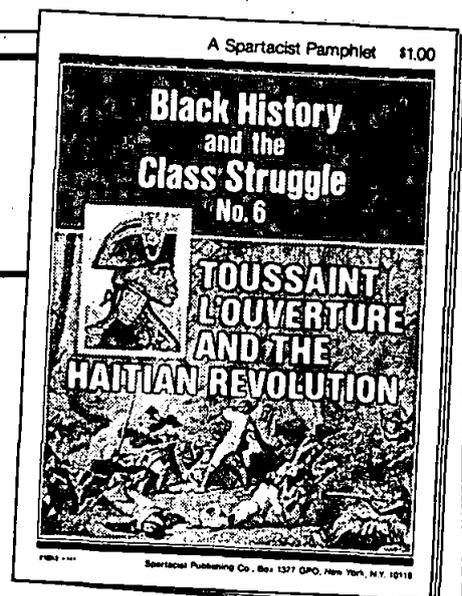
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from the South. Because they could not defend their rights by force of arms, black people were denied all their rights. It took a long and often bloody struggle for the civil rights movement 80 years later to restore some of the blacks' rights won in the "Second American Revolution" which was the Civil War.

Disarming the Population

In the 19th century Karl Marx had expressed the hope that America would be one of the few countries where working people could take power more or less peacefully because the ruling class had virtually no standing army but relied on militias. Yet by the turn of the century the U.S. had entered the imperialist club and quickly developed a standing army. And over the years Second Amendment rights; supposedly inviolate, have been increasingly constricted by layer upon layer of laws which made gun-owning and armed self-defense more and more of a class privilege.

The most notorious example is New York State's Sullivan Law, which makes it illegal to carry a pistol for self-defense, unless you're one of a handful of well-connected people who can get a license to "carry" from the police department, people like real estate mogul Donald Trump and *New York Times* publisher Arthur O. Sulzberger ("Businessmen Opt to Pack a Gun," *New York City Business*, 11 March 1985). The law was passed back in 1911 after a man who felt he had been unjustly fired from his city job as night watchman shot the mayor with a revolver. Hizoner survived, but the incident was seized upon by "prominent" citizens such as John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (the same one responsible for the Ludlow massacre) to launch a campaign for gun control. And the *New York Times* led the pack.

Today, also, while "Punch" Sulzberger has armed guards, as well as a pistol stashed in his desk drawer, his newspaper editorializes against "Rambo Guns" (15 March)—all in the name of fighting "crime," which certainly hasn't decreased in New York City since 1911. The

Times has an amazing capacity for nonsensically disconnecting the question of guns from its social context. Thus Stephen Kinzer, for five years the *Times'* man in Managua, calls it a "social problem" that in Guatemala "300,000 people are licensed to carry firearms and another 300,000 do so illegally" ("Guatemala: What Has Democracy Wrought?" *New York Times Magazine*, 26 March). He doesn't relate this to the fact that there have been rightist death squads, a guerrilla insurgency for 20 years, and an insanely savage, heavily armed army.

The *Times'* A.M. Rosenthal has gone a step further by suggesting (17 March) that today the Second Amendment means nothing but arming a "drug militia." And on April 7 the paper printed a letter from a Catholic bishop explicitly calling for repeal of the amendment. The *Times'* unstated goal is in all circumstances a thoroughly armed government and a thoroughly disarmed population.

And it's not only such mainstream imperialist spokesmen, but also the rad-libs and even "left" groups, which want gun bans. The *Nation* (3 April) front-paged their position: "How Citizens Can Beat the Gun Lobby." And most of the reformist left has kept mum on this issue, because they're closet liberals. After eight years of the Reagan/Bush administration, the days are gone when social activists at least made the obvious observation that "crime" is rooted in social conditions and cannot be eradicated by police measures.

In talking about who is "outgunned," the real balance is, in Jeffersonian language, how many guns are in the hands of the people, and how many in the hands of the government. Yet today the reformists are all signing up for the Democratic/Republican "war on drugs," which is a rationale for vicious police repression of the whole population, particularly blacks and Hispanics. In fact, street crime could probably be cut in half overnight simply by decriminalizing drugs and giving them out, free to addicts. But such a measure would fly in the face of bourgeois "morals," as well as undermine the rationale for increased police powers.



Workers man the barricades during the Paris Commune, March 1871.

no credit

Behind the renewed call for gun bans is racism; as we have said before, gun control kills blacks. With the rise of the civil rights movement, gun control again became closely associated with ruling-class fears of black liberation. Robert F. Williams, the head of the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP, was hounded out of the country for organizing a black defense squad against racist attacks. When Malcolm X tried to get around the stringent New York pistol law by carrying a carbine for self-defense, the city quickly passed an ordinance against carrying "long-arms" in public. Not long after, in 1965, Malcolm was assassinated. In Louisiana and a few other Southern states in the mid-'60s the Deacons for Defense and Justice were successful in using firearms to protect the civil rights movement from Klan attack. Among the Deacons' standard weapons was the M-1 carbine, an "assault rifle" which black men had learned to use in the army in World War II and the Korean War.

While the U.S. formally upholds on paper the right to "keep and bear arms," there still are a number of capitalist countries where the right is much more of a reality because of exceptional circumstances (mainly a more muted class struggle). Switzerland has 600,000 "assault rifles" capable of full-auto operation in private circulation, and in Denmark the Home Guard militia keeps their "assault rifles" and submachine guns in private homes (there are bitter memories of the Nazi occupation). Yet a total of 13 killings in 25 years have been linked to the 60,000 Danish Home Guard weapons in circulation.

The Turning Point: 1848

As the call for a people's militia was adopted by the rising proletarian movement, the bourgeoisie abandoned its own slogan that "every man be armed." As noted by Friedrich Engels, the workers' demands for social equality contained "a threat to the existing order of society":

"... the workers who put it forward were still armed; therefore, the disarming of the workers was the first commandment for the bourgeois, who were at the helm of the state. Hence, after every revolution won by the workers, a new struggle, ending with the defeat of the workers. "This happened for the first time in 1848."

—Engels' 1891 introduction to Marx's
The Civil War in France

With the appearance of the proletariat as an independent actor on the scene, "the armed people" became archaic as the population was polarized along class lines. 1848 marked the beginning of the modern world in which we still live, and the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat remains historically unresolved to this day.

The defeat of the 1848 revolutions in Europe was followed by a bloodbath revealing the "insane cruelties" of which the bourgeoisie is capable, wrote Engels. "And yet 1848 was only child's play compared with the frenzy of the bourgeoisie in 1871," when the workers of Paris rose up and formed the Commune. One of the Commune's key decisions came on 30 March 1871, when it "abolished conscription and the standing army, and declared the sole armed force to be the National Guard, in which all citizens capable of bearing arms were to be enrolled." When the Commune fell in May 1871 before the troops of the French government, behind whom stood the more substantial forces of the Prussian army, the disarming of the working class was followed by a massacre of defenseless men,



no credit

Massive general strike on the Glasgow Clydeside in 1919 was met with armed troops.

women and children in which some 30,000 died.

Legislation against the possession of arms and for gun control precisely correlates with the social situation. Besides the seminal events of 1848 and 1871, the whole history of France since 1789 demonstrates the way in which the ruling class has resorted to firearms control in accord with the felt threats to its position. After the restoration of the monarchy in 1816, Louis XVIII sought to disarm the population by ordering all arms turned in. Louis Philippe in 1834 and Napoleon III in 1858 passed laws to restrict access to arms. A 1939 emergency decree of the Daladier government remains the basis for all subsequent French gun control laws, and new restrictions were imposed in 1958, 1960 and 1961, during the crisis surrounding the Algerian war for independence. However, the memory of the armed insurrection of the Communards remains alive in the French working class. And the Resistance during WW II, despite the Communist Party's nationalist, class-collaborationist role, did not exactly leave a pacifist anti-gun legacy.

Anti-Gun Legislation in Britain

Such is the social-democratic complacency and respect for the established ruling-class order among many British leftists, that they often see a concern with the right to bear arms as a peculiarly American fixation. Yet Britain presents a centuries-long history of anti-weapons threats



Soviet Writer

Petrograd, 1917: Red Guards with banner, "Long Live the Universal Arming of the People and the Workers First of All."

tightly associated with counterrevolution and fear of the working class. It was the spectre of the Russian Revolution and national uprising in Ireland which prompted the introduction of the 1920 Firearms Act, which remains the basis even today of the sweeping gun controls in Britain.

In 1939 George Orwell noted the direct correlation between stricter gun control legislation and rising class struggle in Britain:

"When I was a kid you could walk into a bicycle shop or ironmonger's [hardware store] and buy any firearm you pleased, short of a field gun, and it did not occur to most people that the Russian revolution and the Irish civil war would bring this state of affairs to an end."

In fact the right to bear arms was preserved by Parliament throughout the 19th century. But faced with the example of the French Revolution, and new upheavals associated with the growth of industrial capitalism, the capitalist ruling class resorted to a number of other measures. Particularly following the Luddite disturbances and the 1819 Peterloo massacre (in which Hussars killed and wounded hundreds at a popular demonstration in Manchester), laws were passed banning drilling, "seditious" meetings and the publication of "seditious libels."

The Arms Act of 1820 allowed Justices of the Peace to seize arms which might be used by revolutionaries but it applied only to industrial areas like Lancashire, Nottinghamshire and Durham which had been at the center of the unrest. Opponents of the 1820 Act denounced it in Parliament as an attack on the right to bear arms and the government admitted such a right. Later in the century, there were repeated attempts to introduce gun control, all of which

failed in Parliament. In 1889 an ambassadorial report commissioned by the government noted: "If a Montenegrin has a six barrelled revolver in his belt, he knows that his neighbour is similarly provided. Consequently, it may be said that all start fair" (quoted in Colin Greenwood, *Firearms Control*). And during the 1893 debate over pistol legislation, one MP asked: "Why should Englishmen not arm themselves? It was natural and parliament ought not to interfere with such a right" (*ibid.*). In 1903 an act was passed making it necessary to obtain a license for a pistol, but obtaining a license was still relatively easy. In 1911, following an armed robbery by "Russian anarchists" in which three police were killed and the ensuing siege of Sidney Street for which the army was called in, an Aliens (Prevention of Crime) Bill was presented to Parliament. This sought to restrict the right of "foreigners" to bear arms, but this also failed to carry in Parliament.

During World War I the Defence of the Realm Act included restrictions on the sale, purchase and transfer of arms, but it was applied only in Ireland: All army officers were still expected to buy their own revolvers, except with the mass conscription and slaughter at the front, they were not all "gentlemen" anymore. But events during and after the war began to loom large in the mind of the ruling class: the 1916 Easter Uprising in Ireland, Scotland's Red Clydeside, army mutinies, October 1917 and the revolutionary turmoil in Central Europe, unrest in the colonies. A 1920 government report focused on the danger to the "British Empire" of arms in the hands of "savage or semi-civilised tribesmen" and "the anarchist or 'intellectual' malcontent of the great cities" (quoted in Greenwood). Among other weapons, 15,000 machine guns had been *officially* awarded to ex-servicemen as trophies of the world war. By the time the 1920 Act was debated in Parliament only one MP, a Lt. Commander Kenworthy of Hull, clearly expressed concern about the right to bear arms: "The very foundation of the liberty of the subject in this country is that he can, if driven to do so, resist. You can only govern with the consent of the people." He was roundly denounced by other MPs for suggesting that redress might be sought through "armed resistance to the State" and the legislation was carried at its second vote by 254 to 6. Needless to say, after the Firearms Acts of 1922 and 1937 (directed against the IRA) the British-imposed gun control laws in Ulster, among the hardest in the world, have not dented the widespread use of arms in that never-ending fighting rooted in Britain's centuries-old oppression of Ireland.

More recently, following the 19 August 1987 "Hungerford massacre," when a licensed gun holder ran amok killing 15 people, even more sweeping gun controls were introduced, banning not just automatic weapons but also semiautomatic and pump-action rifles, and adding new restrictions on shotguns. The very wide police discretion on licensing and control is enhanced. Meanwhile the "unarmed bobby" increasingly resorts to the use of firearms even in connection with traffic offenses.

The Bolshevik Revolution

It was an armed working class which made the Bolshevik Revolution, in accordance with Lenin's call:

"Following the path indicated by the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1905, the proletariat must organise and arm *all* the poor,

exploited sections of the population in order that they *themselves* should take the organs of state power directly into their own hands, in order that *they themselves should constitute these organs of state power.*"

—"Letters from Afar, Third Letter Concerning a Proletarian Militia" (March 1917)

The Soviet Red Guard workers militias fought the first battles of the ensuing civil war. Like all militias, the Red Guards were not much good at first, but in war one's strength is always relative to the enemy's, and the Whites suffered from low morale. Militiamen can become professional fighters if they survive long enough to gain experience. As the founder of the Red Army, Leon Trotsky, commented in December 1921, "In the initial stages we learnt manoeuvring from them [the Whites]." And the Soviets eventually triumphed over the combined strength of 14 imperialist/Allied expeditionary forces and the tsarist White Guards.

Though the Bolsheviks advocated a socialist militia "in connection with the abolition of classes," they were forced by the fight against counterrevolution to build a standing army. Trotsky explained in the foreword to the fifth volume of his military writings (*How the Revolution Armed, 1921-23* [1981]) that the problem was rooted in the poverty and backwardness of Russia, wherein "the Red barracks constitutes an incomparably higher cultural setting than that to which the Red Army man is used at home." But when Stalin usurped political power at the head of a conservative bureaucracy, he made the standing army into a fetish, going so far as to mimic the Western capitalist armies' ranks and privileges. Trotsky denounced this:

"No army...can be more democratic than the regime which nourishes it. The source of bureaucratism with its routine and swank is not the special needs of military affairs, but the political needs of the ruling stratum."

—*The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

Having restored the officer caste 18 years after its revolutionary abolition, Stalin then beheaded the Red Army on the eve of Hitler's invasion.

In the shadow of the oncoming world war, Trotsky's Fourth International insisted in its 1938 *Transitional Program*: "The only disarmament which can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers. But to disarm the bourgeoisie the workers must arm themselves." Its program for revolutionary struggle against imperialism

and war included the call for: "Substitution for the standing army of a *people's militia*, indissolubly linked up with factories, mines, farms, etc." Its demands for military training and arming of workers and peasants under the control of workers' and peasants' committees were coupled with the demand for "complete independence of workers' organizations from military-police control."

The American bourgeoisie of the 18th century could afford the Second Amendment when there was not much wage labor, blacks were not free and a small farmer class approximated "the people." But today, in capitalism's death agony, as the economy falls apart and labor/black explosions threaten, they want to take the masses' guns away. In this atmosphere, the NRA lobbyists now find themselves politically disarmed in Congress, state legislatures and city councils as they plead for their "sporting" weapons while urging an even greater "War on Crime" by the cops and the feds (*American Rifleman*, April 1989). Marxists, in contrast, oppose racist gun control and defend the right of labor/black armed self-defense. And over the years women too have gained from Second Amendment rights—as the old saying goes, "God created man and woman, and Colonel Colt made them equal." But, guns were designed for killing people. The desire for a socialist world order—i.e., the abolition of society based on class division and national oppression—is in part the desire that the use of guns might indeed become a mere hobby.

The guns the working people had better worry about today are those in the hands of the capitalist rulers, who want a total monopoly, at home and in the world. The former chief of the U.S. Strategic Air Command, General Curtis LeMay, called for bombing Vietnam back to the Stone Age, which the Pentagon attempted. And Washington howled against Soviet Marshal Malinovsky for declaring that the USSR must be prepared to defend itself with nuclear weapons. Yet only the Soviets' own development of an atomic arsenal has been able to deter the first-strikers in Washington who are gearing up for a final nuclear *Götterdämmerung*.

Having guns is no magic talisman, but an unarmed population faces merciless slaughter at the hands of this vicious ruling class whose state is armed to the teeth. For as Karl Marx summed it up in *Capital* (1867), "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with the new." ■

Nuclear credibility:
Marshal Rodion Y. Malinovsky, Soviet defense minister in the 1960s, infuriated Pentagon by advocating and deploying nuclear forces to counter imperialist first-strike threat.



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Port Hudson, Louisiana, 27 May 1863: First major battle of the U.S. Civil War in which black Union troops took part.

Revolution and the Right to Bear Arms

The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

EXPANDED FROM WORKERS VANGUARD
NO. 475, 14 APRIL 1989

"Remember that the musket... is better than all mere parchment guarantees of liberty. In your hands that musket means liberty; and should your constitutional right at the close of this war be denied... your brethren are safe while you have a Constitution which proclaims your right to keep and bear arms."

—Frederick Douglass appealing to blacks to join the Union Army, August 1863

America's capitalist rulers are taking aim at the fundamental right of the people to arm themselves. This right to bear arms was born of revolution, constituting a vital defense against tyranny. Naturally, despotic regimes prefer to rule over defenseless subjects: an armed people can fight back. Today, the government which sponsors counterrevolutionary terrorists and drug traffickers in a crusade against Communism wants to disarm the population in the

name of a "war on drugs and terrorism." Though the United States with its widely popular and constitutionally recognized right to bear arms provides a sharp example, this is no issue of "American exceptionalism" but a historic and living question elsewhere internationally. And it is the Marxists, who champion the cause of all the exploited and oppressed, that oppose gun control from the standpoint of the struggle for workers revolution.

Currently spearheading the gun control drive in the United States is the ban on so-called "assault rifles." As usual, the gun-ban forces seized upon an emotion-packed criminal incident to fuel a campaign of hysteria—the January massacre of five Asian American schoolchildren by a racist nut wielding a semiautomatic AK-47 rifle in Stockton, California. Needless to say, the maniac might just as well have misused an ordinary shotgun for his horrible slaughter, but the fact that he used a military-type weapon was played to the hilt in the media to whip up support for a ban of this particular category of weapon.

continued on page 47.