

# Women and Revolution



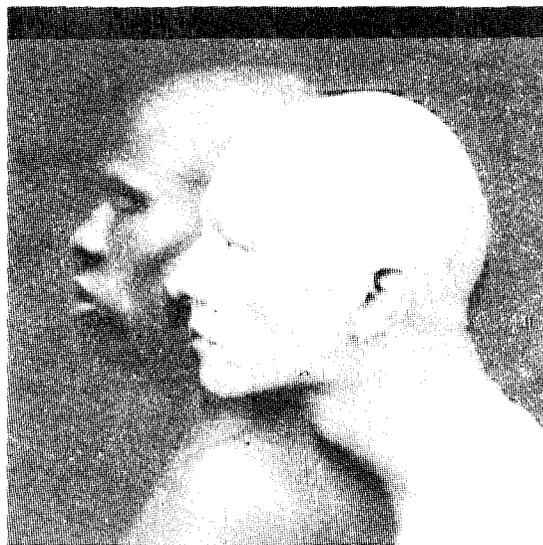
Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

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## Culture, Class and Censorship **Forbidden Art**



Louis Guglielmi, *Subway Exit*, 1946



Robert Mapplethorpe, *Ken Moody and Robert Sherman*, 1984

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## **Stop Persecution of Gypsies! ..... 2**

## Fourth Reich Racism Targets Immigrants

# Stop Persecution of Gypsies!

BERLIN—In the past several years, as the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe began to crumble, tens of thousands of gypsies have crossed the borders to the West from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia. It is the biggest movement of population within Europe since World War II. By far the most come from Romania, where, numbering over two million, they form the largest minority after the Hungarians. Hundreds of refugees, seeking asylum in practically all major German cities, are packed into hastily organized emergency "housing": abandoned subway stations and army barracks, school gymnasiums, tents. Now part of everyday life in Germany is the sight of gypsy families camped in railway stations and gypsy women or children, some with musical instruments, begging on crowded sidewalks. Officials comment blandly, "We don't know where they sleep." The gypsies are harassed by the police, hounded from place to place, beaten and kicked, viciously attacked by skinheads. In their campaign for the December Bundestag elections, our comrades in the Spartakist Workers Party, German section of the International Communist League,

have prominently called to end the deportation of gypsies and for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

The Roma or Romani people, as they prefer to be called, are fleeing Eastern Europe in fear of their lives. They are the No. 1 victims of the torrent of all-sided murderous racism engulfing Eastern Europe with the collapse of the Stalinist regimes and the plunge into an uncontrolled market economy. Bourgeois ideologues hail the "death of Communism," but with the return of capitalist exploitation has come the resurrection of all the nationalist, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist murderous scum which dominated the region before the victory of the Red Army in 1945. Pogromist madness is turned against the highly visible, historically despised gypsies, who have suffered centuries of hatred across all the countries of Europe. Vilified as "criminals," "parasites," a "hygienic menace," the Roma are being squeezed out of the very pores of society in the Eastern European countries. It is not economic collapse that is driving the gypsies out, but murderous attacks on them and their children simply because they are gypsies. So they are fleeing to Germany,



Yad Vashem

**5 October 1979 protest at Bergen-Belsen: 2,000 marchers demand restitution for Roma victims of Third Reich. Above: Roma family in Nazi camp at Volhynia. Nazi Holocaust slaughtered up to 500,000 Roma.**

where they face the bigotry of the Fourth Reich, the heir to Hitler's Nazi Empire which slaughtered 500,000 Roma in the Holocaust.

### Eastern Europe: "Market Economy" Bigotry

The pogroms are tolerated by the present Eastern European regimes. Fifty years ago it was the fascist Milashi in Hungary, Balisti in Albania and Ustashi in Croatia which murdered the gypsies. Today the nationalist-racist slogan "Romania for the Romanians" has been revived from the time of Hitler's ally Marshal Antonescu, whose Iron Guard murdered some 300,000 Roma, reaping florid praise from the *Führer*. The Iron Guard's descendants, the fascistic Vatra Romeneasca, call for another "bloody struggle against the gypsies." In Transylvania last March gypsies came to the aid of Hungarians under attack by Romanian nationalists in a bloody street battle. But when the police arrived, they arrested mostly Roma.

In Czechoslovakia, where there are some 800,000 Roma, anti-gypsy attacks have also escalated. In Jablonec, beatings by skinheads keep Roma children out of school. The Prague state attorney put it bluntly: "The Czechs can't stand the Slovaks; the Moravians can't stand the Slovaks or the Czechs. They only have one thing in common: they all hate the gypsies." In Slovakia gypsy women are paid a premium to undergo sterilization. In many cases it is done without their knowledge or consent in the delivery room. From all areas of Yugoslavia (where there are 750,000 to 1,000,000 gypsies) there are reports of violent attacks, beatings and murders of Roma by fascists/skinheads. And in the Serbian city of Kuršumlija the police dismissed a series of "mysterious" fatal "accidents" with the comment: it doesn't hurt if "even more of them burn" (*Der Spiegel*, 3 September 1990).

This is the real face of "freedom from the yoke of Stalinist oppression" so touted by lying bourgeois ideologues: bloodlust, unleashed from East Germany to Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the rush to build "free market" economies in the wake of collapsing Stalinism. In the absence of an organized class-struggle alternative, economic insecurity is fueling religious, nationalist and ethnic hatred. The "free market" only fosters this bloody strife as it fosters economic competition along national and regional lines. And in all Eastern European countries the gypsies, who number at least four million, are the most impoverished, have the shortest life expectancy and suffer the highest rates of illiteracy and infant mortality.

For the most part, in the past the Stalinist bureaucracies refused to recognize the Roma as an official minority and shrouded their very existence in silence, perpetuating ignorance of even the Nazi genocide against them. Stalinist plans to "help" gypsies end their nomadic life and "assimilate" were often pure coercion and did little to improve the Roma's backward condition of living. Nevertheless, they were protected from open, violent racism; in Yugoslavia, for example, efforts were made to educate Roma children in their own language. All Roma survivors living inside the borders of the former East German deformed workers state were accorded citizenship in 1949, and, like all recognized victims of fascism, received a generous pension. But as we wrote in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 505, 29 June 1990):

"The Stalinist regimes in East Europe could put a lid on some of the reactionary filth that historically plagued the



Spartakist

**Berlin, 19 September 1990—Spartakists protest Bonn's exclusion of Soviet Jewish immigrants. Sign reads: "Stop the manhunt against Roma and Sinti! Full citizenship rights!"**

region but could not lay the material basis for eliminating it. Economic autarky, bureaucratic commandism, nationalism, the appeasement of imperialism, wholesale falsification of history, suppression of the independent political life of the working class—these have been hallmarks of the Stalinist Soviet and East European regimes."

As Karl Marx pointed out, two years before he and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto*, without the development of the productive forces, possible only on an international basis, want is merely generalized; the struggle for necessities begins anew, and "all the old crap must revive." Now, the Roma are once again a people for whom there seems to be no room on the entire planet.

### Lowest of the Low: The Roots of Repression

Today the Romani people number about ten million internationally, settled in major cities or nomadic.

# Women and Revolution

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DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon  
EDITORIAL BOARD: Amy Rath (editor), Helene Brosius,  
Helen Cantor, Marianne Clemens, Elizabeth Kendall,  
Ellen Rawlings, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour  
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Susan Fuller  
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Karen Valdez

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Der Spiegel

**Hagen, the Ruhr: German army erects tent site to hold gypsies fleeing Romania. Across Germany, racists threaten refugees in violent demonstrations against "truck people."**

Persecuted and humiliated, they have been at best tolerated on the fringe of society. Considerable confusion—much of it intended by the Roma themselves—surrounds their history; even the English name “gypsy” derives from the mistaken idea that they came from Egypt. It is usually agreed that the gypsies, speaking an Indo-European language, originated as a group of nomadic tribes in northern India, probably in the basin of the Indus. For unknown reasons groups of them migrated west. Perhaps it was a second migration from India that moved on into Europe. They arrived in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, reaching Serbia in 1348, the German lands between 1414 and 1416, Paris in 1427 and the British Isles no later than the beginning of the 16th century.

Working as tinsmiths and blacksmiths, horse dealers, basket weavers, musicians, dancers and fortunetellers, they brought to Europe their musical and artistic knowledge and skills in metallurgy, which were precious in preindustrial, peasant society. While the Roma were briefly tolerated by the feudal lords, the emergence of centralized feudal absolutist states and then bourgeois nation-states brought centuries of repression. The nomadic gypsies, no respecters of the borders of crystallizing states and resisting, sometimes unsuccessfully, attempts to force them into serfdom or wage-slavery (the Romany term for a non-Rom is *gajo*, “peasant” or “oaf”), were hunted, tortured, hanged.

While the Jews and the gypsies share a long history of brutal hatred and discrimination, the differences are more significant than the similarities. In his historic book *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* Abram Leon, the eminent Belgian Trotskyist who was slaughtered at Auschwitz in 1944, analyzed the European Jews as a “people-class”: they survived not *despite* a 600-year history of persecution, but *because* of their original existence as a caste performing a specialized and indispensable economic function in society. As usurers and merchants the Jews were necessarily concentrated in settled urban communities; later, as the rise of the industrial bourgeoisie eliminated their specialized role, their tendency was to assimilate into modern capitalist society.

The powerful European workers movement took up the battle against anti-Semitism and many of the greatest socialist leaders were Jews, not least Marx himself. But as the triumph of the Nazi horror and the murder of six million Jews in the Holocaust too clearly shows, the Jews could not achieve full equality, and anti-Semitism flourished under capitalist “democracy.”

While the gypsies can be characterized as a “people-class” of traveling artisans, their role in society remained much more marginal. To this day their economic niche is often a remnant of the postfeudal rural market: traveling artisan or vendor of cheap manufactured goods, working in the carnival or country fair. Their distinctive culture—which varies widely from country to country in this truly international people—has evolved as a way of communication and protection in a hostile world. While many gypsies are nomads, their “wandering” has largely been forced on them by bigotry and police terror.

Capitalism only partially assimilated the gypsies, since—to a much greater extent than with the Jews—this



Der Spiegel

**Homeless Roma family in Berlin.**

process intersected the replacement of the artisan by the machine. The gypsies' tenuous relationship with that society was rendered more so as their crafts were wiped out. In a Romanian village it may still be possible to sustain life mending iron pots, but in general the Roma have little left of their traditional trades other than dealing in horses and scrap metal.

The Romany language, the means by which all the customs and taboos of the complicated social organization of this people are regulated, is not often transmitted in writing. Two leaders of the Berlin Sinti Union with whom we talked, one a survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, emphasized that for Roma and Sinti (a Rom tribe historically concentrated in Germany) this is the only protection they have in a hostile and invasive society. One recalls that the last time Romany was "researched" under capitalism, namely in the Third Reich, the Nazis planned to put their linguistic "studies" on a museum shelf along with Dr. Mengele's preserved "specimens," like the fossilized remains of an extinct animal.

### The Gypsies and the Holocaust

No one knows exactly how many gypsies were exterminated by the Nazis, but it has been estimated as up to half a million. The infamous 1935 Nuremberg laws promulgating Nazi "racial hygiene" targeted "gypsies and their bastards" as well as "Jews and Negroes." Nazi "race theory" slandered the Sinti and Roma as "racially" prone to crime, and they were thrown into the concentration camps. There they generally wore the black triangles of "criminal" or "asocial" elements; less frequently they were identified explicitly as gypsies with a brown triangle or a "Z."

Six months after the Nazis formally adopted the policy to annihilate the Jews in January 1942, the "Final Solution" was extended to the gypsies. Many who died in the camps were the children of marriages between gypsies and Jews. Within three months, several thousand gypsies were sent to the camps: after a year, the roundup was considered to be complete. Most of the extermination camps held at least some gypsies: Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Chelmno, Majdanek and Stutthof, but the largest was Auschwitz-Birkenau, where there was a separate gypsy camp. There, with the exception of 3,000 Polish gypsies who were gassed shortly after their arrival, the gypsies were (unlike most Jews) often not immediately sent to the gas chambers. It has been speculated they were to be used for sadistic Nazi experiments until they died out (see Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*).

Under indescribably savage conditions, several thousands died within a few months from typhus and other diseases. More were vivisected by Dr. Mengele, the "Angel of Death," who favored Roma children for his monstrous acts of "Nazi science." In August 1944 the Nazis liquidated the gypsy camp in the "Night of the Gypsies," when 4,000 Roma fought valiantly as they were dragged to the gas chambers. An eyewitness described the horrible night:

"Until far in the night I heard their cries and knew they were resisting. The Gypsies screamed all night.... They sold their lives dearly.

"Afterwards [SS chief] Boger and others went through the blocks and pulled out children who had hidden them-



**Mozambican workers join German Spartakists in demanding full citizenship rights for foreign immigrant workers at 1990 May Day march in Berlin.**

selfes. The children were brought to Boger who took them by the feet and smashed them against the wall.... "We heard outside cries like 'Criminal, Murderer.' The whole lasted some hours.... In the morning there were no more Gypsies in the camp."

An estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Roma were sent to Auschwitz. Only a few hundred survived. The courage with which they faced this horror is movingly described in the novel *And the Violins Stopped Playing*, written by Alexander Ramati and based on the true story of Roman Mirga and his family, almost all of whom perished at Auschwitz.

The spirit of Hitler's "racial hygiene" and "struggle against the gypsy menace" lives on. In 1981 at the annual congress of the German Society for Anthropology and Human Genetics in Göttingen, one of the invited speakers (until protests prevented it) was to be "Professor" Sophie Erhardt, former "researcher" at Hitler's Berlin "Zigeunerzentrale" ("Gypsy Central"). Under the direction of the courts in Frankfurt am Main two "doctors" today perform humiliating "examinations" on naked gypsy and Turkish children.

### "Free World" Racism

The horrifying plight of the gypsies in Western Europe today reveals at one blow the cruel hypocrisy of the "freedom and democracy" the oppressed have to expect in an imperialist "European house." In Britain, "anti-Traveller" laws make life unbearable for thousands of gypsies and Irish Travellers; they must ignore the laws merely to survive. In France, Belgium and West Germany gypsies have carried special registration cards like the masses of black migrant workers in apartheid South Africa—and like the Jews under Hitler. The Roma are perpetually hounded from country to country. Where municipalities designate special campsites for them, these are intentionally isolated and inconvenient, cut off from the local population, shops and schools, with unpaved roads, little or no running water or electricity and often behind barbed wire. Hygienic conditions are horrendous. Tuberculosis and other chronic diseases are common.

Particularly in reunited Germany, triumphant nationalism has unleashed its hysteria. When thousands of gypsies

began arriving, fleeing the wave of terror in Romania after Ceaușescu was toppled at the end of 1989, the fascist press screamed "gypsy invasion." The "liberal" *Der Spiegel* screamed "wave of gypsies seeking asylum," provocatively choosing the slur *Zigeuner*, an affront to Roma and Sinti. In Germany police and other state agencies refer not to "Roma" or "Sinti" but use only *Zigeuner*. The "health menace" the gypsies supposedly represent chillingly recalls the fact that Hitler used forced sterilizations and Zyklon B gas to "solve" it.

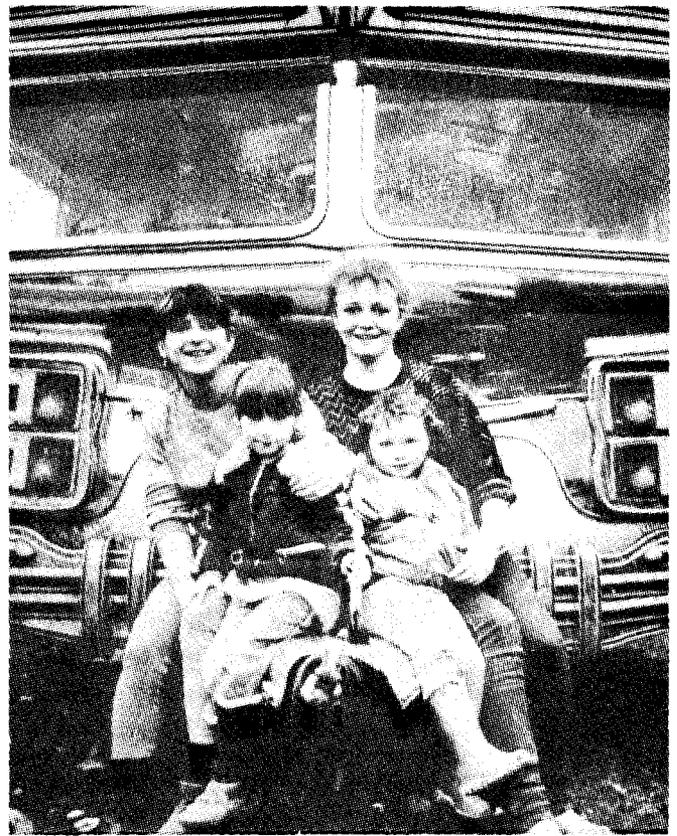
Fascist/skinhead attacks mount, East and West; vigilante groups are formed. Rumors fly that "gypsies spread AIDS," amid threats to burn down the shelters. In Lebach in the Saar basin, there were repeated racist mobilizations in the summer and the mayor barricaded the city hall and the swimming pool to keep out 1,400 Romanian gypsy refugees. In Herford citizens announced an anti-gypsy vigilante squad. In Essen the police reported that inhabitants hired would-be SA skinhead thugs to attack Roma refugees.

Behind the dangerous mobilizations against the Roma, as against all "foreigners," are the racist policies of the Bonn government, which does not even grant automatic citizenship to the German-born children and grandchildren of Turkish immigrants. Only those who are descendants of people who were German citizens before 1938 are recognized as *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) by Bonn. Many East European *Volksdeutsche* prove their "Germanness" with a piece of paper dug up in the Berlin Document Center to show they had an SS member in the family. But some 100 German Jews from the USSR were actually prosecuted for *fraud* because they claimed to be Germans.

The Social Democrats (SPD) are once again the bloodhounds for capitalist reaction. In the autumn of 1986 the East Berlin Stalinist regime bowed to pressure from Bonn, closing its borders to asylum seekers in transit to West Germany. This meant Lankan Tamils, Palestinians, Roma. Two leading lights of the SPD pulled off this "coup": Rhineland-Westphalia's minister president Johannes Rau, and Egon Bahr, a kingpin in organizing the "democratic" counterrevolution in the DDR. Now in united Germany the SPD's designated candidate for chancellor, Oskar Lafontaine, is spearheading the chauvinist "Germany for the Germans" drive, for example with demands to chop the constitutional right to asylum. In the Saar province his new policy is to drive out gypsy asylum seekers by giving them only a miserable food parcel, with *no* cash to survive on. And guess what—it works, since no one can survive on it.

The West German government's "gypsy policy" is a sinister echo of the "racial hygiene" garbage of the Third Reich. In 1948 the Federal Criminal Bureau took over Hitler's "*Zigeuner* files." Criminal police forces in cities like Köln and Frankfurt am Main contain "gypsy specialists"; a standard abbreviation used on police forms in almost all provinces is "ZN" (*Zigeunername*), to identify a "gypsy name" as an explicit "racial feature." In the 1980s some 50,000 Roma lived in West Germany. Although 95 percent have a permanent place of residence, they have been subjected to routine police terror and Gestapo-like total surveillance.

The murder of some 500,000 Roma in the Holocaust was never even acknowledged by the West German gov-



Lesley Howling

**Irish Travellers in southeast London, 1986. Discrimination hounds gypsies in every European country, from Britain to Switzerland.**

ernment until 1983. Bonn still refuses to recognize those Roma and Sinti who survived the Holocaust as *racially* persecuted or to pay them a penny of restitution—along with other "diseased," "criminal" and "asocial" elements like homosexuals and communists. Although the Sinti have achieved paper recognition of their "German origins" and thus the right to remain in Germany, both they and the Roma effectively have the "rights" only of *Untermenschen* (subhumans). Berlin Sinti have told us that when Roma children there attend public schools, they prefer to identify themselves as Turks, as minimal protection from racist threats! But the decrepit remnants of the hideous SS (who re-entered Germany in droves under Adenauer's open "re-Nazification" policy in the 1950s) continue to collect their pensions, forwarded by the Bundesbank even to the far reaches of South America.

### "Integration" Terror from Köln to Hamburg

Between August 1986 and February 1987 some 400 Roma arrived in Köln from Yugoslavia. It took repeated protests to prevent the city from moving the gypsies in autumn 1988 to the enclosed site of a former Nazi forced labor camp! The police conducted constant surveillance and repeated surprise raids; many families fled from Köln's "progressive" solution. In April in a *Kristallnacht*-style raid by police, families' belongings were confiscated and their homes smashed, children were kidnapped and the adults thrown in jail. The Köln cops smear numerous Roma families as "terrorist associations," and family members are liable to prosecution under the infamous Article

129a used against the "Baader-Meinhof gang"—for "membership in a terrorist association."

Numerous cities such as Bochum and SPD-governed Hamburg (with the highest deportation rate in Germany) have followed the "Köln model." About 1,500 Roma and Sinti occupied the Neuengamme concentration camp memorial near Hamburg last August to force their cause into the public eye. Fascists firebombed their cars. On 2 October 1989 Hamburg mayor Voscherau (SPD) called the police to forcibly evict the Roma from Neuengamme. The German section of the ICL, then the Trotzistische Liga Deutschlands, participated in protest demonstrations and sent a protest to Voscherau, which concluded:

"This attack on a people with no home, whose history symbolizes the persecution of the stateless, is a threat to every decent person, because the forces of murderous terror are strengthened by it. The organized workers movement together with immigrant organizations has the power to defend the democratic rights and the right to life of all the oppressed. This power can and must be mobilized to stop the deportation of Roma and Sinti! Full citizenship rights for immigrants!"

—Spartacist No. 64, 8 December 1989

This grows more urgent daily. Now a draconian new "foreigners law" has gone into effect, and authorities are deporting refugees faster than the judges and attorneys can submit a stay. Many hundreds of stateless Roma are immediately threatened, from Nuremberg to the Ruhr and Bremen.

### The Only Road: A Socialist Future

In the epoch of imperialism there is no just solution for the gypsies' persecution. Capitalist politicians blame them for their own plight since they claim no territory as their own. But a gypsy state or "Romanestan" is not only absurd—few gypsies ever wanted it. Organizations like the International Romani Union fight for recognition of the Romany language and culture, for education for Roma children and for full rights for nomadic people, who are usually denied social benefits and political rights. The plight of the Roma must be championed by the workers movement, which has the social power to beat back the onslaught of capitalist reaction. In this fight, which must include the struggle to win democratic rights for these historically despised and slandered people, revolutionary socialists act, in the words of Lenin, as "*the tribune of the people*,...able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects;...able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation...in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat" (V.I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*). Today, across Europe, vicious state repression and pogromist attacks on the Roma embolden the fascist scum, whose unopposed growth threatens *all* minorities, *all* members of the workers movement.

After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Roma in Russia became a recognized minority. Their culture was fostered; Romany dictionaries and grammar books were printed and two Romany-language journals were published. The All-Russian Union of Gypsies, led by Alexander Germano, organized the work of 30 artists' collec-

tives in Moscow and 50 cooperative farms. The largest of these, Krikunovo, had 70 families who worked 4,700 acres and supplied horses to the Red Army. Internationalist to the core, the Russian Revolution thrust open the door to the liberation of the gypsies.

After the Stalinist political counterrevolution smashed the revolutionary internationalist Bolshevik Party, the narrow layer of privileged bureaucrats revived the old chauvinist poison. Ethnic and nationalist tensions were of use to them in breaking the internationalist spirit of the Soviet working class. Thus the Romany language (and shortly thereafter Yiddish as well) was suppressed and the first modest but historic steps of the gypsies toward emancipation were betrayed.

As Abram Leon wrote:

"Today, national-cultural and linguistic antagonisms are only manifestations of the economic antagonism created by capitalism. With the disappearance of capitalism, the national problem will lose all its acuteness. If it is premature to speak of a worldwide assimilation of peoples, it is nonetheless clear that a planned economy on a global scale will bring all the peoples of the world much closer together."

In a world dominated by capitalism, there can be no true equality among nations and peoples. In such a world, claims of respect for cultural differences among peoples are at best a patronizing lie covering up oppression, racism and the potential for genocide. But in an international socialist society—a world without borders—the diversity of human cultures will no longer be an excuse for contempt and violence, but a source of celebration. ■

## SPARTACIST

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# Defend, Extend Abortion Rights!



Spartakist

Berlin, 29 September 1990—20,000-strong demonstration links opposition to West German "Paragraph 218" anti-abortion law with resistance to capitalist restoration. Top banner reads: "A woman who doesn't break the law will be broken by the law."

## German "Fatherland" Against Women

BERLIN, 1 December 1990—Five months after the July 1 economic annexation of the former East German deformed workers state (DDR) by capitalist West Germany, anxiety and anger have replaced D-mark intoxication. To strip the East of any remnants of its planned economy as quickly as possible in order to reap maximum profits, the Frankfurt and Wall Street bankers are instituting a program of mass pauperization. And as plants are privatized or closed altogether, it is the most vulnerable who get the ax first. Already the capitalist rulers have packed planes full of Mozambican, Cuban and Vietnamese workers and sent them back home. Working women, too, are being laid off by the hundreds of thousands, while the social programs for childcare, maternity leave and free abortion and contraception are being massively dismantled. Workers make bitter remarks about Hitler's "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" (children, kitchen, church), knowing this is the "new" future for women planned by their arrogant imperialist rulers, and they don't like it one bit.

On October 3 the capitalist exploiters and their political spokesmen celebrated the formal political reunification of East and West Germany with choruses of the *Deutschlandlied* and church bells ringing "für Volk und Vaterland" (for people and fatherland). But four days earlier, on September 29, women and their allies took the lead in fighting against the socially reactionary consequences of reunification when a protest march of 20,000 people greeted the new "Fourth Reich." Called by feminist and abortion rights activists, the "Demonstration Against the Incorporation of the DDR, for a Self-Determined Life" denounced West Germany's notorious "Paragraph 218" anti-abortion law, one of the most restrictive in Europe, and its imposition on the former DDR where abortion has been not only legal but free since 1972. Banners spoke out against *Grossdeutschland* (Greater Germany) as well as Paragraph 218; one read "A woman who doesn't break the law will be broken by the law!"

Although devoid of immigrant presence and with only token speakers from the powerful unions, the Septem-

# For Workers Resistance East and West!

ber 29 demonstration significantly linked demands for women's rights with resistance to reunification. Anti-woman repression is a spearhead of the all-sided social reaction which the triumphant German capitalist regime has in store for all working people in the ex-DDR. Now the extension of the capitalist system of impoverishment and oppression brings the deadly threat of illegal abortion to women in the East.

### Abortion Rights Under the Ax

There have been continuing protests, East and West, against the universally hated Paragraphs 218 and 219, which allow abortion only in a "social emergency." Kafkaesque "counseling" requirements humiliate women. Draconian prosecutions of doctors and their patients under Paragraph 218 have been the central concern of women's rights activists in the West in recent years. In 1988 in an unprecedented show trial the state of Bavaria tried and convicted the heroic Dr. Horst Theissen, a Memmingen gynecologist, for performing "illegal" outpatient abortions (see "Hundreds Pilloried in Anti-Abortion Witchhunt," *W&R* No. 36, Spring 1989). The case is currently on appeal.

East German mothers and striking West Berlin day-care workers were among the first to march in the streets last February against the threatened extension of Paragraph 218 to the East. Opposition later grew so widespread that Bonn had to agree to a "compromise" for reunification. To dampen protest and buy time, the ruling coalition has temporarily delayed slashing abortion rights East of the Elbe. Thus two laws are now in effect in one country—and the *doctor* is supposed to check a woman's postal code to see which law she is subject to!

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU), screaming about "abortion tourism," longs to prosecute West German women seeking abortions in the ex-DDR. To sidestep the furor over this absurd proposal, the government is concentrating on mandatory pre-abortion "counseling" for *all* women. This means monstrous encroachments into women's private lives, in a health system where intervention in private matters by the state is already Orwellian and in a country where there is no separation of church and state. In an effort to secure a clerical monopoly of Inquisition-like "counseling" boards, the Catholic church has pulled out all the stops against the civil-libertarian "ProFamilia" family planning centers as too "pro-woman"! The demands of the Spartakist Workers Party, German section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), "Priests, cops and judges out of the bedrooms!" and "Abolish the church tax!" speak to the hearts of working women and men in Germany.

Pushing its "right-to-life" bombardment Goebbels-style, the CDU has the Social Democrats (SPD) and the "liberal" FDP (the coalitionist party with the CDU) singing in chorus about "protecting unborn life." The idea is to pass a law against abortion for the whole *Reich* in two years. The pious calls of "down with Paragraph 218," on the lips of all but the CDU when the courageous Dr. Theissen was on trial, have now died away with barely an echo.

In Poland, the capitalist-restorationist government run by Solidarność and dominated by the Roman Catholic church has submitted a law to the Sejm (parliament) outlawing *all* abortions and criminalizing the doctors (see



Spartakist

**Spartakist Workers Party banner at 29 September Berlin protest: "Capitalist Anschluss means slavery for women."**

"Smash Attacks on Abortion Rights!" page 14). But Polish women too are hitting the streets and demonstrating for abortion rights. The struggles of German and Polish working women and men must be linked. The key is to mobilize the powerful union movement through the large, ex-Stalinist OPZZ in Poland and the social-democratic DGB, now the labor federation for all of Germany.

At the September 29 demonstration in Berlin, the SpAD submitted greetings, which read in part:

"Capitalist *Anschluss* means slavery for women. Down with Paragraphs 218 and 219! For the unlimited right to free, safe abortion! Down with the reactionary Paragraph 175 threatening homosexuals!...

"The struggle for the defense of women's rights is inseparably bound up with the struggle against an imperialist *Grossdeutschland*. The power of the working class must be unleashed to defend women and immigrant workers, Roma and Sinti. And the working class has the power to fight against capitalist counterrevolution!"

### Defend the Gains of East German Women!

Last spring we wrote, "Highly educated, highly skilled, with the best maternity and childcare benefits in the world, and over 90 percent employed, women are a key component of the East German working class" (*W&R* No. 37, Spring 1990). The DDR guaranteed full employment and subsidized housing. Single women with children under three years old could not be fired, and single parents could take up to eight weeks a year paid leave to care for sick children. Assured of re-employment at an equivalent job, all women could choose to take the "baby year"—paid leave for up to 18 months after giving birth.

Based on working-class property forms and a planned economy, the former DDR provided a secure and relatively egalitarian existence for all working people. But the East German revolution had not been achieved by a proletariat mobilized to fight for its class power under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party. Social revolution had been imposed by the Kremlin from above in the wake of the Red Army victory against the Nazis in 1945. The result was a society qualitatively similar to the



**Striking East German textile workers in May 1990. Capitalist reunification has meant mass firing of East German women.**

bureaucratically degenerated Soviet Union. With its anti-internationalist dogma of "socialism in one country," the Stalinist bureaucracy undermined the tremendous gains of the collectivized economy and denied political power to the militant working class, imperiling the very survival of the deformed workers states.

This fundamental contradiction surfaced in every aspect of East German life, not least in the treatment of women. The bureaucracy, upholding the traditional bourgeois values of woman as childbearer and homemaker, sees the family as "a fighting unit for socialism." Thus DDR law required state-run enterprises to have full day-care facilities; they were subsidized for all working parents, allowing women to participate fully in the economy. But the facilities closed in the evening, creating a "second shift" of childcare and household drudgery for working women.

According to a recent dispatch by Associated Press, a survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Council in Geneva shows that there are significantly fewer women in the present governments of East Europe than under the Stalinist regimes. In Bulgaria and Hungary, previously 21 percent of the parliamentary seats had gone to women; the figures are now 3.5 and 7 percent respectively. Of course these bodies were mere showpieces for the Stalinist bureaucracies; in no way did they embody the political power of the working class. But the past year's "free" elections have uprooted even this tenuous integration of women into political life. As the bourgeois press agency admitted, "Little sensitivity to women's equality is evident in the new democracies" (17 November 1990).

The status of women in the DDR deformed workers state compared very favorably to their status in the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany. Percentages of working women and access to day-care facilities in West Germany are among the lowest in Western Europe, far behind countries like Belgium and France with considerably lower per capita income. Only 57 percent of West German women work and only three percent of all children have places in day care. Even Bonn's official figures speak of over half a million too few places in day-care centers.

The qualitatively better provisions for women's participation in economic life in the deformed workers states underscores the Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of these states against imperialist attack and domestic counterrevolution. When the East German Stalinist regime began to crumble in the fall of 1989, the ICL

intervened to call for workers and soldiers councils to oust the bureaucrats in a political revolution that would establish the rule of the working class, spread the struggle for socialist revolution to the West and lay the basis for a socialist society based on an internationally planned economy. As the Stalinist ruling party in the DDR, the SED/PDS, began to disintegrate and the rapacious German bourgeoisie moved in to grab the DDR for exploitation, the SpAD fought as the only hard, unambiguous opposition to a capitalist reunification of Germany.

### First Fired: Capitalist Shock Treatment

On October 4, the day after official political reunification, German newspapers ran headlines announcing 2.2 million unemployed in the former DDR, where there are just over 16 million people. Another 1.7 million were working short weeks (often no hours at all), the preferred scheme of the Social Democrats (SPD) for disguised dissolution of the workforce. Now metalworkers union tops speak of achieving 60-65 percent of West German wages by 1992. And beginning 1 January 1991, when rents are allowed to float to "free market" levels, there will be massive homelessness as single parents (95 percent women) and families find they just can't pay.

The proportion of women among the total unemployed has risen from month to month; currently it is 55 percent in the East as a whole and over 10 percent higher in the industrial south of the ex-DDR. Today a common sight at rush hour in Halle, Leipzig and other industrial cities is women crying in the streetcars on their way to work—they know it is the last time. As the West German *Frankfurter Rundschau* headlined on June 12, it is "Women and Children First." The restoration of capitalism in the DDR means a social counterrevolution in which working women have been forcibly removed from active participation in economic life and driven back to "home and hearth."

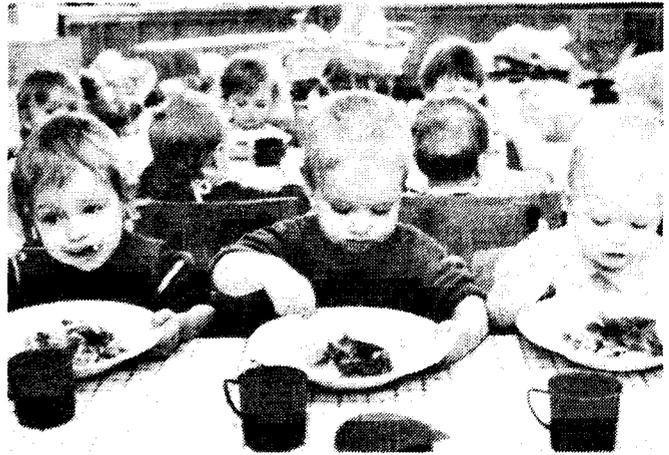
Under the old DDR labor laws, plants could lay off only workers who were given another job. Factory managers all over East Germany have already thrown this on the scrap heap; for months they have been firing pregnant women, women on maternity leave and those who had been sick "too often." Other protective measures, from childcare and maternity provisions to the monthly housework day off, are supposed to continue until January 1, when West German regulations will come into effect.

"Protective" legislation (from the days of the Kaiser) banning women from the night shift also goes into effect on January 1, and then tens of thousands of women in industry, or one-quarter of the night shift, will lose their jobs. In the chemical industry alone, 24,000 women workers are threatened with mass layoffs and plant closures. The capitalists are deliberately destroying the East German textile industry, where some 93,000 women work. And the Social Democratic union tops have been in the forefront of setting up class-collaborationist "plant councils" to throw the onus on the workers to decide whom to ax first. While mouthing off about extending protection to men, they want to retain DDR laws only a little longer—until the plants are shut altogether! Meanwhile, surviving plants, like parts of Berlin's Stern Radio, are working around-the-clock speedup and overtime, including 12-hour shifts on weekends.

In the service sector, traditionally "women's work" in the former DDR, "pioneering" fly-by-night "entrepreneurs" are setting up shop and imposing starvation wages and unlimited, unpaid overtime. The new labor exchanges report that in commerce, banking and insurance establishments "now they only want men." If a woman is single, childless and in her 20s, maybe; but for a woman over 45 the answer is "no way" (*tageszeitung*, 31 July 1990). Anti-discrimination laws prohibiting invasive inquiries into family status never fettered the West German bosses, and now bosses in the East have caught on. As a mother of two children (eleven and three years old) heard at a job interview: "Your qualifications are right, your age is fine, but your little son is ten years too young" (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12 June 1990).

### The "New Germany"—Catch 22 for Women

East German women are trapped in a vicious circle. They must earn more to support themselves and their



Der Spiegel

**Free childcare made it possible for 94 percent of women to hold jobs in the DDR.**

families—but they are losing their jobs altogether. If they do have jobs, those jobs are threatened because there is little affordable childcare available for the kids. A woman can even lose unemployment benefits if she can't prove her children have access to day care! And many don't qualify for unemployment benefits in the first place. A mother of six, for example, who was supported in the DDR in "baby years" and now must find a job to feed her children, cannot get unemployment—she hasn't "worked" long enough in the last five years!

Workplace kindergartens and crèches, previously required by law, are now "voluntary." Although still subsidized, these facilities are being shut down; "non-productive" real estate—including the land set aside for playgrounds!—is being sold off to Western industrialists. Faced with growing protests, local governments are running a shell game, claiming they will assume responsibility for a few day-care centers; but Bonn intends to cut 35 billion D-marks in funding for social programs in the East. In the month of July alone the price of existing day care increased fivefold.

The louder the clerical reactionaries scream about "protection for the unborn," the less protection there is for children *after* they're born. However outmoded, the ex-DDR's socialized medical system of polyclinics provided comprehensive, free medical care and was renowned for its obstetric and pediatric medicine. Now it too is being destroyed by massive layoffs and funding cuts. West Germany's bureaucratic, "cost effective" system of state-insured assembly-line health care is supposed to go East.

Tied to this wholesale loss of health benefits is loss of access to contraceptives. While not universally available, the pill had been dispensed free of charge in the DDR. Starting January 1 it will cost 40-80 D-marks per quarter, more than in West Germany. This is prohibitive—most women factory workers earn less than 900 D-marks a month! With health care slashed, no jobs, no day care available, it's no wonder many East German women are deciding not to have children. The number of abortions in the East has indeed risen dramatically this year.

### German Labor Must Defend Women's Rights!

Working East German women and men have remained leaderless before advancing capitalist misery. Protests against the effects of *Anschluss* have been consistently



1928 poster by German artist Käthe Kollwitz demands, "Down with the abortion paragraphs!" Reactionary abortion restrictions date from Bismarck's Reich.



East German uranium miners on strike, September 1990, over threatened shutdown.

demobilized by the labor misleaders, from the strike-breaking SPD leaderships now policing the unions to the fast self-destructing ex-Stalinist SED/PDS. But the present ferment over abortion could help galvanize the workers of East and West Germany for a political struggle against the "reunified" capitalist onslaught. The fight for *free, legal abortion* is a struggle which must be taken up by the whole German labor movement and linked to the demand for *free, quality medical care for all*.

Sporadic, isolated resistance to the Fourth Reich has begun, but it must be broadened and extended to the powerful West German working class. On 25 November 1990 railroad workers went out on strike, giving workers in the East a taste of their social power for the first time since the 1953 workers uprising against the Stalinist regime. The union tops quickly sold out the strike. To lead these struggles it's necessary to build a revolutionary,

internationalist workers party like Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks. Today our comrades of the Spartacist Workers Party of Germany seek to build such a party. As a platform for the desperately needed program to *win*, they are waging a class-struggle campaign in the December 2 parliamentary elections, calling for *workers resistance East and West* to defend the livelihoods of workers, women and men, German and immigrant.

The plight of East German women starkly reveals that defense of women's rights is part of the struggle against the oppressive capitalist system. For in that system, to paraphrase the Stalinists, the anachronistic institution of the family is nothing less than the "fighting unit of capitalism." Only socialist revolution can achieve the liberation of women from drudgery and oppression by laying the material basis for true social equality. Some hard class struggle lies before us. ■

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**For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky!**

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# Polish Spartacists Oppose Solidarność/Clerical Reaction

*Women and Revolution* is proud to print below "Smash Attacks on Abortion Rights!" from *Platforma spartakusowców* No. 1, October 1990, the newspaper of the newly founded Spartakusowska Grupa Polski (SGP). The militants of the SGP come to the International Communist League (ICL), having arrived at revolutionary Trotskyism after several years of efforts to rediscover the program of authentic communism. Its cadre include some who were politicized by the events of 1980-81 in Poland but were repulsed by the reactionary clericalism of Solidarność. They were among the founders of the Ruch Młodej Lewicy (RML—Young Left Movement), initially a somewhat heterogeneous grouping which sought to function as a left wing within the youth organization of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR—the ruling Stalinist party). Seeking the road to proletarian internationalism, our new Polish comrades came into conflict with the Stalinist nationalist perversion of Marxism and with the deeply nationalist pro-Solidarność left. They were excluded from a May Day demonstration in 1988 for carrying banners hailing Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, revolutionary leaders of the Russian, Polish and German workers. Increasingly attracted to Trotskyism, these comrades were instrumental in seeing that key works by Trotsky like

*The Revolution Betrayed* were translated into the Polish language.

Thus, by the time they first came into contact with ICL literature this summer, the comrades who now constitute the SGP had through their own experiences and struggles arrived at a similar political thrust on several key questions. But it was necessary to draw a sharp political line against the pro-Solidarność outfits like the Mandelites and Morenoites who masquerade as Trotskyists. As the Polish comrades noted in a letter to our German section: "In the Trotskyist movement in Poland, we often meet with activists who have a 'Solidarność' pedigree, or in any case put all their hopes in 'Solidarność.' Until now it is difficult for them to shed these illusions. Either they don't know or they deliberately suppress the reality of our true tradition (for 'tactical' reasons). It is increasingly more difficult for us to have a common language with them."

In October 1990 the ICL and the RML signed an *Agreement for Common Work Between the Young Left Movement of Poland and the ICL*, looking forward to an early fusion, where the now-constituted SGP will become part of a democratic-centralist International. For the ICL, this agreement represents a welcome result of our ongoing propagandistic intervention into the events in

A. Sokolowski

**Plunge to market economy in Poland: Rising numbers of unemployed are forced increasingly to street peddling (below). Social reaction targets women: Marchers protest government attack on abortion rights. Banner reads: "No to a law that makes an object out of women!"**

Le Bolchévik



Poland from without. It is also a modest vindication of our insistence on reviving the historic revolutionary unity of the German, Polish and Soviet proletariat. The beginnings of political revolution in East Germany (DDR) a year ago allowed us for the first time to reach out to Polish workers with Trotskyist propaganda in their native language.

The centrality of the fight against special oppression, including escalating capitalist/clerical reaction targeting women in Poland, was emphasized in the statement of working agreement:

"A Trotskyist party must be a tribune of the people, championing all victims of oppression. The drive to restore capitalism revives and intensifies all the 'old crap' of the prewar social order, from reactionary clericalism to Pilsudskiite nationalism and anti-Semitism. As Rosa Luxemburg wrote in 1905: 'The clergy, no less than the capitalist class, lives on the backs of the people, profits from the degradation, the ignorance and the oppression of the people.' The Catholic hierarchy, conciliated by the Stalinists, has long exercised decisive influence over Solidarność. Clerical reaction particularly targets women. Smash the attacks on abortion rights! For free abortion

on demand! For free 24-hour childcare facilities! For the strict separation of church and state! Down with the conservative Stalinist dogma that glorifies the institution of the family, the main social institution oppressing women. Only the achievement of a genuine socialist society, based on material abundance and egalitarianism, can truly liberate women."

—Workers Vanguard No. 513,  
2 November 1990

Nine years ago our call to "Stop Solidarność Counter-revolution" stood out sharply as a concretization of the Trotskyist insistence that the USSR and the deformed workers states be defended against capitalist restoration. Sundry opportunists sneered that such a principled stance would find no support within the Polish workers movement. The revolutionary regroupment in Poland is therefore particularly satisfying. The adherence of Polish comrades to the ICL, along with fusions of new forces in Canada and Mexico, bears witness to the power of the Leninist program to regroup subjective communists internationally. Forward to the reforging of the Fourth International!

# Smash Attacks on Abortion Rights!

In present-day Poland, as in other deformed workers states, we are facing successive destruction of social gains. The most shocking example of this is the attacks on women and childcare facilities.

While everywhere in the world women fight for legal abortion rights, in Poland the "witches' sabbat," that is, the Senate, supported by the pro-capitalist clerical milieu headed by the eternal enemy of women, the Catholic clergy, has promulgated a law proclaiming the "protection of the unborn child." Their persistent fight to repeal the old law, in existence since 1956, seems to have reached its culmination. The new law is going to push women into still greater oppression and will throw them into the arms of ignorance and superstition. We must destroy these attacks on abortion rights!

The latest amendments to the anti-abortion law (which will not prosecute women) seem to indicate that the authors are conscious of the social repercussions which the law in its original inquisitional/fascistic version would have brought about. Despite the watering down of this law, its results will still be the same, that is, enormous numbers of back-alley abortions. Consequently, it will lead to disease and even deaths of women. All this is in the name of making Christian morality an oasis of social order.

East German women are faced with the same threat. One of the components in the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) platform in March was for "protection of the unborn." The CDU seeks to export to East Germany the vicious witchhunting aimed at abortion rights in West Germany, where the church bells toll for the victims of the "infant holocaust." Together with the *Anschluss* [annexation] of East Germany, West German capitalism is not hiding its appetite to drag East German women back to "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" (children, kitchen, church). Compared to the death penalty for abortion which to this day exists in Bavaria, a hangover from Hitler's time, the law in the DDR was very progressive. Abortion was free on demand. The mortality rates for mothers and infants were the lowest in the world.

After the November "awakening," many women became involved in the women's liberation movement. Under the Stalinist regime they lost the rich teaching of Marxism on the question of women's liberation. For instance, the great proletarian holiday International Women's Day, declared as a holiday by the German Social Democracy (SPD) before 1914, was made into a caricature as a sort of Mother's Day. The present women's movement struggles against the dismantling of social gains, for example, the closure of weekday childcare centers.

Now in Poland, along with the rent increases, crèches and kindergartens are being closed, condemning children



**Spartacist Platform No. 1: Spartacist Group of Poland fights to revive internationalist tradition of Polish working class.**

to much worse conditions of care. The question giving rise to the greatest protest is the question of abortion. Around this issue the Polish women's movement was organized.

In the Marxist understanding the oppression of women is connected to the institution of the family and private ownership of the means of production. Thus in the revolutionary parties women's sections and newspapers were initiated, and a lot of emphasis was given in the party programs to the question of women's liberation. An example of this was the activity of Clara Zetkin, who in the SPD of her time fought to carry out revolutionary work among women. *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) magazine, edited by Zetkin, was a beacon for thousands of women in the struggle for their rights and against imperialist war. The Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, in leading the working class to power, laid the groundwork for the emancipation of women. In a backward war-torn country, the Bolsheviks established 24-hour centers for the care of children as well as municipal laundries and canteens. That opened the possibility for the full participation of women in social and political life. Today full 24-hour childcare is a fundamental demand of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (German section of the International Communist League) as part of the program for the real emancipation of women.

The Spartakusowska Grupa Polski upholds the position for complete separation of church and state, considers

Panorama



**Rosa Luxemburg, leader of revolutionary Polish and German workers movements.**

the family as the main institution for the oppression of women and advances the slogans of free, 24-hour childcare and free abortion on demand. The question of women's liberation is indissolubly connected with the socialist revolution. ■

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# Culture, Class and Censorship

## Forbidden Art

By Helen Cantor

"Modern art is Communistic because it is distorted and ugly, because it does not glorify our beautiful country, our cheerful and smiling people, and our material progress. Art which does not glorify our beautiful country in plain, simple terms that everyone can understand breeds dissatisfaction. It is therefore opposed to our government, and those who create and promote it are our enemies."

—Rep. George A. Dondero

Back in the McCarthy witchhunt days, abstract art was supposed to be a Commie plot, subverting and/or making fools of the American people, as the above 1949 quote from Michigan Representative George A. Dondero indicates. Today, when you can tell exactly, precisely, down to the last hair follicle, what's happening in certain works of art, the same generic yahoo Congressmen still don't like the stuff. Today it's North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms ranting against the late Robert Mapplethorpe's classic, precise photographs because they have sexual themes he doesn't happen to like. Back then it was Dondero and his ilk howling against works they charged were deliberate gibberish done by "germ-carrying vermin," "international art thugs" and "human termites" they darkly claimed were Communist agents boring from within.

Then and now, such hysterical assaults serve the same



Cincinnati rally in April 1990 against local prosecutors' effort to shut down exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's works.

purpose, which isn't art appreciation but an attempt to ensure the government's social control over the population through intimidation and witchhunting. In the first Cold War, the focus was on "the Commie menace" and fluoridation; in the past decade it's been sex (it was also sex then, of course, and some anti-homosexual campaigns rivaled the anti-Communist hunts in their hysteria). Having pretty successfully expunged the "Reds under the beds," during the Reagan/Bush years the government has turned directly to the beds, unleashing an army of sex police to try to overturn the '60s "sexual revolution" and return Americans "to their places," passive and socially obedient. They even tried to shut down the art museums this past summer. But the American public is pretty fed up with this reactionary assault, as the recent stunning jury decisions in favor of the Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center's Robert Mapplethorpe show and for the black rap group 2 Live Crew demonstrate.

Artists need support, and should try to get all they can out of this government, which is supposedly a democracy. The government has no business telling us what we can look at—or telling artists what they should paint. As New York artists rudely and aptly put it in protests at the Metropolitan Museum last year, "Jesse Helms, You Old Fart! Keep Your Hands Off Our Art!"

Congress' current deal is that the National Endowment for the Arts will give you grant money, and you don't have to sign the "no dirty sex" Jesse Helms pledge. But if a local sheriff finds your work "obscene," you have to pay it all back (not to mention possibly going to jail). Joseph Papp, impresario of New York's renowned Public Theater complex, turned down hundreds of thousands of dollars in NEA grants as a protest against this policy, which continues government censorship in only slightly disguised fashion. This is a courageous act, even if he can afford it. For poorer struggling souls, however, it may come down to a Woody Allen "Take the Money and Run" guerrilla approach. But don't kid yourself—they are not nice guys handing out free money up there. As Lenin used to say, "If you're going to sup with the Devil, you'd better bring a long spoon."

Of course performance artists like Karen Finley and Holly Hughes, with their feminist and lesbian themes, have just as much right to NEA grants as anybody else. But it is hard to imagine government policy, wedded to the concept of the monogamous family as the cornerstone of society, really going for "gay and lesbian art." It's unlikely there will be enthusiasm in Congress for some of

**Cover Illustrations:** Louis Guglielmi's painting *Subway Exit* was part of the "Advancing American Art" show canceled by Cold War anti-Communist witchhunters. Today sexual themes, as in Mapplethorpe's photograph *Ken Moody and Robert Sherman*, are targeted.



Courtesy of T. Clay Dickinson

**Portrait of J.R. by Robert Mapplethorpe, 1985.**

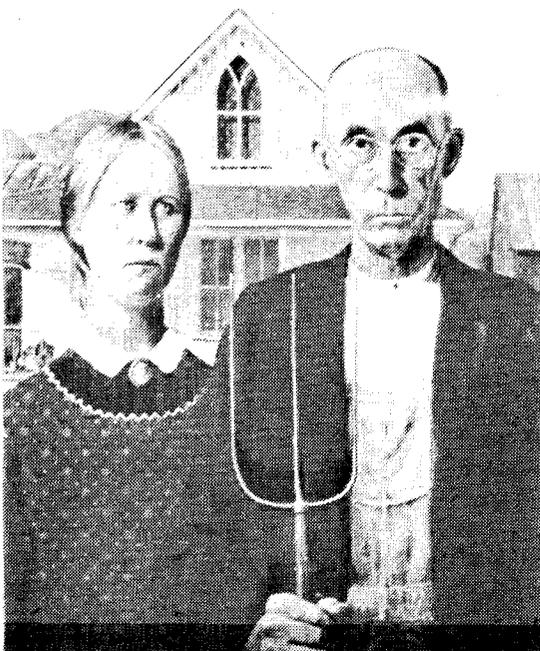
the works, for example, in a recent Soho exhibition titled "Queers"—for good or ill, the gigantic lavender plastic male with the big purple penis is never going to grace the Senate lobby. Judy Chicago's equally massive *Dinner Party*, with its plates representing the vaginas of historical women, lost its home at the University of the District of Columbia. Congress, which still rules over D.C. like a feudal plantation, vindictively cut \$1.6 million from the University's appropriation as punishment for accepting what one Congressman called "ceramic 3-D pornography" (meanwhile, students' protest over their rotten education and lack of funding led the artist to withdraw her work

in sympathy with their demands).

As the sordid history of official support to the arts shows, the politicians, even when they appear to be totally disinterested and liberal, dole out their crumbs with careful control. From the Depression era WPA (Works Progress Administration) up through the Rockefellers' sponsorship of Abstract Expressionism during the 1950s, official interest in art has been reluctant or self-interested. This history hasn't been raised much in the current fights over the NEA, but then, neither the "progressive" artists nor the government bureaucrats come off too well in what's been a tentative, awkward relationship rich with embarrassment, farce and sheer McCarthyite terror.

**The WPA: "A sound, fresh ear of corn"**

What I want, said Edward Bruce, one of the early advocates of massive public arts projects during the Roosevelt administration, is work that has "the same feeling I get when I smell a sound, fresh ear of corn," things that "make me feel comfortable about America." Well, he got the corn anyhow. If American "progressive art" of the 1930s tended toward self-righteous preaching, and state-sponsored "official art" tended toward the horribly dull and morally uplifting, the combination was practically fatal, at least aesthetically. The American Stalinists of the Communist Party, solemnly proclaiming "Communism is 20th Century Americanism" during the heyday of the "Popular Front," contributed their share of turgid murals, all of which seem to be variations on Davy Crockett and Babe the Blue Ox leading oppressed Indians, Negroes picking cotton and starving coal miners reading volumes of Marx by flickering coal lamps as huge tornadoes rage in the dust bowl and floods carry scrawny chickens downstream. As we noted in "Women, Culture and Class Society," an earlier article on feminist art, "The caricatures of 'womanhood' (either the eternally strong or eternally suffering woman) are necessary to their art in



**American Gothic, 1930, by regionalist painter Grant Wood. High Water (no date), by Paul Meltsner, member of "American Artists' Congress" created by CP in 1935 (right).**



joined the WPA's Federal Art Project (FAP). About half the artists in the FAP were in New York City, home of the large and influential Communist Party-inspired American Artists' Congress, also formed in 1935. Earlier New York State and federal art relief efforts had sought to exclude known Communists, by not inviting the "Unemployed Artists Group," connected to the CP's John Reed Clubs, to participate.

The *noblesse oblige* of Roosevelt's cultural overseers was often severely strained, especially in New York, where militant artists' actions sought to extend the benefits of the WPA. In December 1936 (after the national elections), Roosevelt tried to cut the relief programs, but artists packed the Art Project offices in a sit-down strike. Police waded in and arrested 219 of them. In May of 1937, another protest and sit-in was called. Though it didn't win its demands, this protest finally pushed FAP director Holger Cahill, a former bohemian fellow traveler, over the edge: "These people are psychopaths, they are basically unemployable, and you can't do anything with them," he fumed, stating later that "these people were pretty wild...they were left-wingers who thought that if they could get a portrait of Marx or Lenin into a meeting, this somehow would bring about the revolution."

In fact, the American Artists' Congress was not for "red revolution," but was formed precisely because the Communist Party's previous artistic groups, the John Reed Clubs, were too radical for the "Popular Front," proclaimed in August 1935 at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in Moscow. This "front" was supposed to enlist the "Western democracies" (formerly known as capitalist swine) in the fight to defend the Soviet Union against fascism—which for the CP meant in practice calling off the class struggle against the bourgeoisie. The John Reed Clubs were summarily disbanded during the winter of 1935-36, while their emphasis on class struggle and "proletcult" (proletarian culture) was abandoned.

"By building an alliance among Communists, Socialists, independent leftists, and Democrats, artists could feel as if they were part of American society," noted the editors of *Artists Against War and Fascism: Papers of the First American Artists' Congress* (Rutgers University Press, 1986). This novel feeling—both for artists and Communists—was not to survive the war. The organization

reached over 900 members by 1939, with exhibits like "To Aid Democracy in Spain." Though the group took no official position on what style of art it preferred, a paper by Max Weber on "The Artist, His Audience and Outlook" outlined a view close to the party line:

"We must cast away therefore chameleon cleverness, and discard mental and optical illusions born of bourgeois decadence and ennui of a fast expiring civilization.... Let us, instead, turn to the gladiatorial heroism, ambition, and tempo of modern beneficent and yielding industry, science and technology, to scenes of joy and verve of happy toilers in their own made environments, to the new home-life, nursery and school, to the new comradeship and brotherhood hitherto unknown."

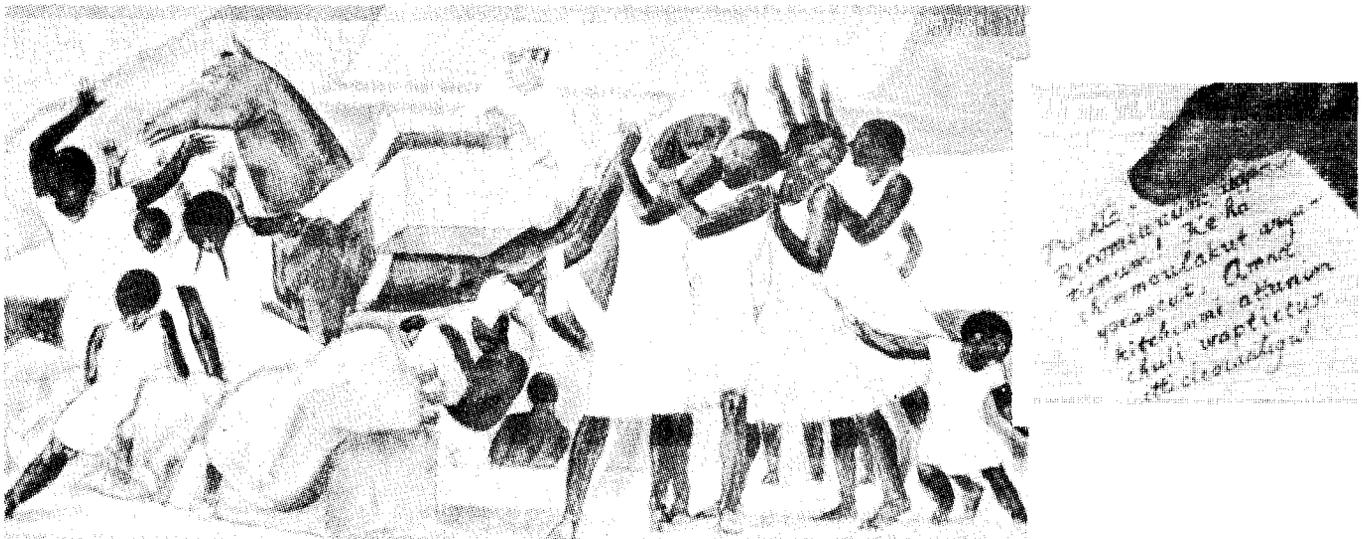
Yech. Following the twists and turns of Stalinist politics, artists in the group put out a letter defending the Moscow Trials, signed by president Stuart Davis as well as Raphael Soyer, William Gropper, Max Weber, Harry Gottlieb and other well-known artists of the period. But the increasing strain of following the Moscow line, especially when in 1938 "modernist" influences in art were officially banned in the Soviet Union, took its toll, as did the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact in August 1939. As well, artists and writers around *Partisan Review* and others were coming to the defense of Leon Trotsky, Stalin's Bolshevik opponent; the 1937-38 John Dewey Commission exonerating Trotsky of Stalin's slanders had an important impact.

The bureaucratic perversion of "socialist realism" imposed by Stalin in the USSR was an especially bitter blow to artists, because the triumphant Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 had been associated with the great cultural upheavals that gave birth to modernism and abstract art. Recalling the heady atmosphere of those days of artistic experimentation and enthusiasm in the midst of poverty and civil war, Trotsky sought to re-establish what had been the Marxist norm when he and Lenin were leading the young workers state. As he wrote in a 1938 letter to *Partisan Review*:

"...a truly revolutionary party is neither able nor willing to take upon itself the task of 'leading' and even less of commanding art, either before or after the conquest of power. Such a pretension could only enter the head of a bureaucracy—ignorant and impudent, intoxicated with its totalitarian power—which has become the antithesis of the proletarian revolution. Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot



**The Fleet's In** by Paul Cadmus, one of the first works censored by FDR's cultural commissars, was banned from a 1934 show at the Corcoran Gallery.



Rockwell Kent's 1937 study for D.C. Post Office mural shows letter from Alaska arriving in Puerto Rico. Inset detail: appeal for Puerto Rican independence (in Eskimo language) was ordered painted out.

tolerate them. Artistic creation has its laws—even when it consciously serves a social movement. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy and the spirit of conformity."

Essentially it was World War II that swept away the CP's art groups and the WPA. The war finally got American capitalism out of the Depression, ending all the Rooseveltian experiments in subsidizing artists. Its conclusion, with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ushered in a new era of American world imperialism.

### "Advancing American Art": Censorship and McCarthyism

In 1947 the State Department organized a big art show, "Advancing American Art," to prove to the not yet totally grateful Europeans and South Americans that the American conquerors were not really the new barbarians. Instead the State Department ended up with egg on its face when it was forced to cancel the successful show in mid-tour by an outbreak of nativist yahooism and anti-Communism in Congress and the Hearst press.

The paintings themselves, bought in 1946 for the show by the State Department, represented a fairly broad range of American painting at that time (a 1989 paperback, *Advancing American Art: Painting, Politics, and Cultural Confrontation at Mid-Century*, published by the University of Alabama Press, includes 36 of the paintings). This was before the smashing success of Abstract Expressionism, so most works had recognizable subject matter, some mildly surrealistic, some still carrying on the '30s and early '40s themes of social injustice, like Ben Shahn's painting of a gaunt boy titled *Hunger*. There was a Georgia O'Keeffe landscape, a seascape by John Marin, a Marsden Hartley, a painting by the black artist Romare Beardon—all artists accepted today as standard figures of American modern painting.

William Randolph Hearst's papers went wild during a preview of the show in New York City. His *New York Journal American* carried a series on the "Red Art Show," attacking "left-wing painters" like Stuart Davis, William Gropper, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and others as "a lunatic fringe." With slashing sarcasm, the Hearst writers de-

nounced works like Karl Zerbe's *Around the Lighthouse*: "SHEER LOVELINESS...Is there anything more beautiful than a dead fish? Of course there is: Two dead fish, for example, or three or five. That's what makes this painting...so wonderful. You get five dead fish. And so did the State Department!"

*Look* magazine ran seven of the paintings under the provocative title "Your Money Bought These Pictures," while *Newsweek* ran a spread originally widely distributed by the Republican National Committee, which claimed that five of the seven works were by artists with Communist connections. The Republican majority in Congress, along with some nativist Democrats, seized on the show to settle scores with old New Deal enemies. Congressmen passed reproductions around the floor to raucous laughter, amidst charges it was a Communist plot because the faces of people in the paintings "are always depressed and melancholy. That is what the communists and other extremists want to portray. They want to tell the foreigners that the American people are despondent, broken down or of hideous shape—thoroughly dissatisfied with their lot and eager for a change of government. The Communists and their New Deal fellow travelers have selected art as one of their avenues of propaganda."

Finally President Truman was moved to denounce the show as "so-called modern art" and "merely the vaporings of half-baked lazy people." He said of Yasuo Kuniyoshi's *Circus Girl Resting*, "If that's art, then I'm a Hottentot." On 4 April 1947 the Hearst papers triumphantly screamed "Marshall Halts World Tour of Red-Linked U.S. Art." Secretary of State George C. Marshall had the 79 art works brought back and sold as government "surplus property" at a gigantic loss—a Romare Beardon painting went for as little as \$5.00!

Enter the evil age of Richard Milhouse Nixon, of the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings, "the Great Fear" era dominated by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. "I have here in my hand a list of 205 that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist party and who, nevertheless, are still working and shaping policy in the State Department," he charged in his famous scare speech of 1950. He never

had such a list, but the "Red Scare" rolled on to full, raging hysteria, as loyalty oaths, flag salutes, enforced finking, "confessions" and witchhunts sought to drive CPers and other leftists out of the trade unions, the schools and every other field of American life, while crushing any sympathy for them. A 1949 *Life* magazine photo spread of "Dupes and Fellow Travelers" of the "Red Peril" was practically a who's who of famous people, including Charlie Chaplin, Albert Einstein, Norman Mailer, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Langston Hughes, Lillian Hellman and Arthur Miller.

This was the heyday of Republican Representative George A. Dondero of Michigan, who served an incredible 25 years in Congress. He was honored by Vice President Nixon at a 1957 dinner saluting Dondero's many contributions to alerting the public to "the Communists' evil designs for pollution of American art." This McCarthy of the art world had a genuine obsession with modern art: "Cubism aims to destroy by designed disorder. Futurism aims to destroy by the machine myth.... Dadaism aims to destroy by ridicule. Expressionism aims to destroy by aping the primitive and insane. Abstractionism aims to destroy by the creation of brainstorms.... Surrealism aims to destroy by the denial of reason," he explained.

### The CIA, the Rockefellers and Abstract Expressionism

This uncontrolled ranting was viewed with dismay by more rational bourgeois ideologues, who knew perfectly well it was making American society look like the revolting combination of terror and idiotic cultural boorishness it in fact was, a dippy "hula hoops from hell" suburban nightmare where a Picasso print on the wall was proof you'd made a pact with the Commie devil. (The FBI, in fact, kept a huge file on Picasso, extending on for years even after his death!) The United States Information



**The passion of Sacco and Vanzetti (detail), 1931-32, by Ben Shahn. The artist's works infuriated professional anti-Communists.**

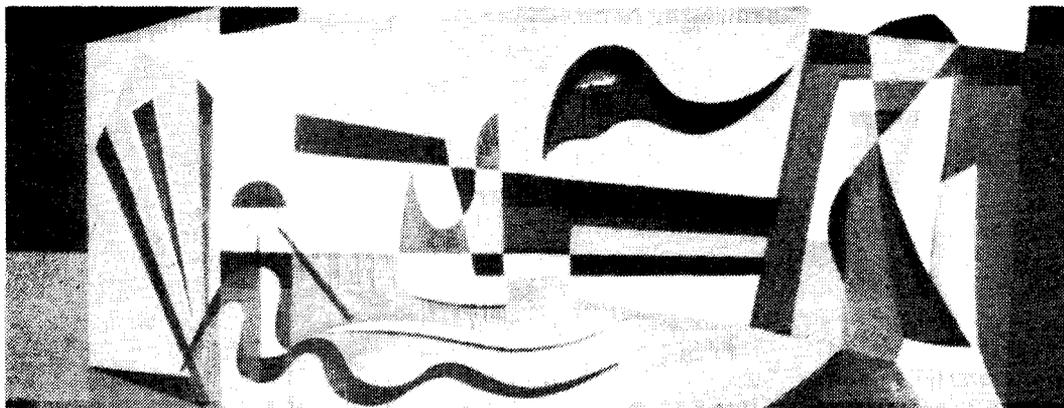
**"If that's art, I'm a Hottentot," said Harry Truman (the U.S. president) in 1947 of Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Circus Girl Resting.**



Agency, perhaps hoping the worst storms had subsided, tried later in the '50s to present some international shows of American artists, but with similar disastrous results, as William Hauptman detailed in "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade" (*Artforum*, October 1973).

The USIA supported a show on "Sport in Art" (partially funded by *Sports Illustrated*), scheduled for the 1956 Olympic Games. A preview in Dallas, Texas was vehemently protested by Colonel Owsley, the Dallas County Patriotic Council and other art-loving ladies of Dallas, because it contained paintings by supposed Communist or Commie dupe painters like Pablo Picasso, George Grosz, Max Weber, Diego Rivera and the seemingly ubiquitous Ben Shahn. The USIA canceled that one. They tried again with "100 American Artists of the Twentieth Century." Again, it was claimed that ten of the artists were politically "unacceptable" and "pro-Communist." The USIA had to cancel that one too. Shortly afterward, the USIA announced in exasperation that it would ban from any of its traveling exhibitions any "American oil paintings dated after 1917"—that is, after the Russian Revolution—to avoid any possible Communist taint!

Somebody had to rescue America's international reputation on the cultural scene, to win over European intellectuals in the Cold War—and it turned out to be the Rockefellers, the Museum of Modern Art and the CIA. A fascinating article by Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," in *Artforum* (June 1974) lays out the connections. The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) was founded in 1929 by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller. In 1939 Nelson Rockefeller became its president, going on to become Roosevelt's coordinator for South and Latin American affairs, and returning to MOMA in 1946. A 1941 wire story called the museum the "latest and strangest recruit in Uncle Sam's defense line-up," quoting the museum's chairman John Hay Whitney on MOMA's mission to "strengthen the hearts and wills of free men in defense of their own freedom." Whitney (a veteran of the OSS, predecessor of the CIA)



**A Dark Thought** by Werner Drewes, a fugitive from Hitler's Germany, was attacked by Republican Party and Hearst press as "fellow-traveler" art, as Cold War hysteria forced cancelation of a 1947 State Department show.

himself set up a trust exposed as a CIA conduit in 1967. Cockcroft details:

"Primarily, MOMA became a minor war contractor, fulfilling 38 contracts for cultural materials totalling \$1,590,234 for the Library of Congress, the Office of War Information, and especially Nelson Rockefeller's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. For Nelson's Inter-American Affairs Office, 'mother's museum' put together 19 exhibitions of contemporary American painting which were shipped around Latin America, an area in which Nelson Rockefeller had developed his most lucrative investments—e.g., Creole Petroleum, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, and the single most important economic interest in oil-rich Venezuela."

Rockefeller's Latin American experts were bodily transferred over to MOMA after the war, including René d'Harnoncourt, who had helped cultivate the Mexican muralists at the time Mexico's oil nationalism threatened Rockefeller oil interests. Head of the art section of Nelson's Office of Inter-American Affairs in 1943, he was brought to MOMA as vice president in charge of foreign activities, and in 1949 d'Harnoncourt became MOMA's director. In 1952 MOMA launched its international program with a \$625,000 grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Under the direction of Porter A. McCray, another Office of Inter-American Affairs veteran, MOMA added its International Council. Reassuringly "modern" exhibitions of contemporary American art were sent to Europe, South America and Japan, as MOMA "assumed a quasi-official character, providing the 'U.S. representation' in shows where most nations were represented by government-sponsored exhibits," Cockcroft points out. At the Venice Biennale, the most important European international art show, MOMA took over the U.S. pavilion, the only privately owned booth, from 1954 to 1962.

Abstract Expressionism, the slashing, dripping, floating huge canvases whose primary subject is the world of paint and canvas itself, became MOMA's favorite art. Not only was it new and artistically avant-garde, in refreshing contrast to the stale old "smell of the soil" Thomas Hart Benton "regionalism" pushed by more primitive anti-Communists, but it was really "American." Many of the leaders of the movement had past left-wing connections: Jackson Pollock was influenced by left-wing Mexican mural painting, Mark Rothko had done paintings of the city poor, Willem de Kooning did work for Artist Union protests, while Ad Reinhardt and Robert Motherwell had "dabbled in Marxism," according to art critic and "Action Painting" advocate Harold Rosenberg. While this may have kept them from getting Congress-

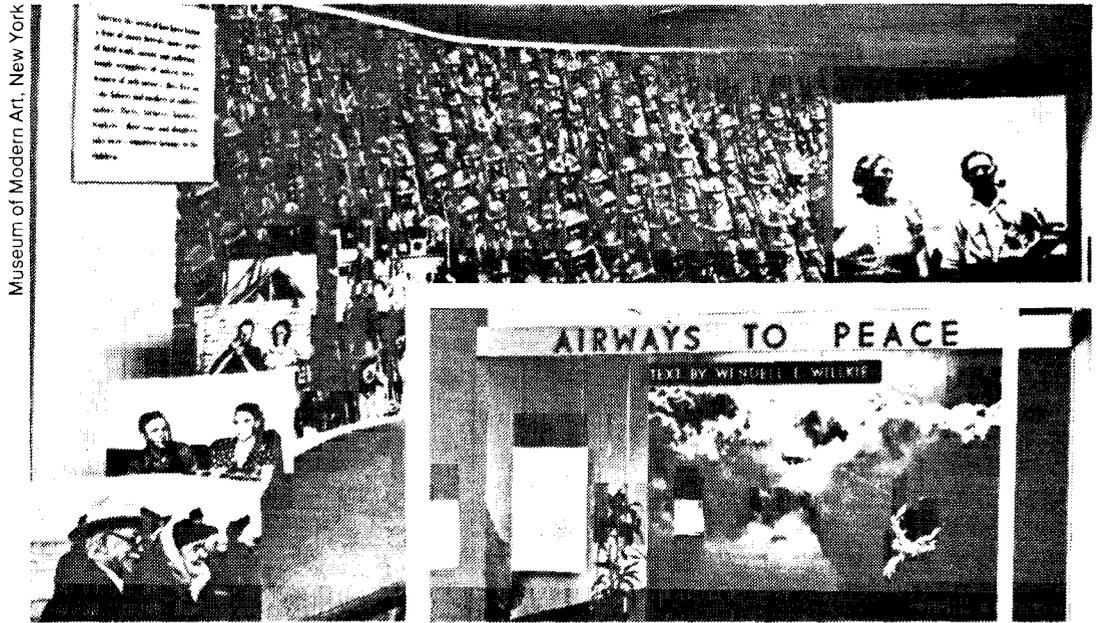
sional approval, it wasn't entirely bad from the more sophisticated Cold Warriors' viewpoint. It heightened the propaganda value of these artists in demonstrating the supposed "freedom of expression" of America, since they ostentatiously avoided "politics" in their new work. Though as Rosenberg noted in *The Anxious Object*, the old impulse wasn't entirely gone: "It is hard to imagine a Johnson campaign billboard in the manner of the late Franz Kline, though in 1952 the Action Painters of the Artists Club in Greenwich Village turned out placards for [Adlai] Stevenson (how much these contributed to his defeat is not known)."

Of course, totally abstract art was safer for the Rockefellers too. Those earlier attempts to woo the Mexican muralists were not a total triumph. In 1933 the Rockefeller family ordered Diego Rivera off the scaffolding at Rockefeller Center, because the artist refused to remove a head of Lenin from his mural *Mankind at the Crossroads*. Later the entire mural was pulverized. At least with a Pollock drip painting or an Ad Reinhardt black-on-black, there was no obviously subversive, rude content. In any case, MOMA began showing the Abstract Expressionists early and often, in 1956 touring a "Modern Art in the U.S." show with works by de Kooning, Franz Kline, Motherwell, Pollock, Rothko and others through eight European cities, including Vienna and Belgrade.

MOMA also sought to influence intellectuals behind the so-called "Iron Curtain." In 1961 the museum gave the Polish painter Tadeusz Kantor and other "nonobjective" Polish painters an exhibition at MOMA. The CIA funded cultural institutions like the National Student Association, *Encounter* magazine and even a 1952 Paris tour by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Gloria Steinem, one of the founders of the bourgeois feminist *Ms.* magazine, knowingly took CIA money as director of the "Independent Research Service," which sponsored young Americans going to youth festivals in Vienna and Helsinki in 1959 and 1962. "I found them liberal and farsighted and open," she said of the CIA agents with whom she collaborated, according to the *Washington Post* (18 February 1967).

MOMA's executive secretary from April 1948 to November 1949, Thomas W. Braden, joined the CIA in 1950, supervising its cultural activities from 1951 to 1954. In "I'm Glad the CIA is 'Immoral,'" in the 20 May 1967 *Saturday Evening Post*, Braden said that "dissenting opinions within the framework of agreement on cold-war fundamentals" made effective propaganda abroad, and in any case "the idea that Congress would have approved

**The Rockefellers' Museum of Modern Art showcased World War II propaganda. Above, "Road to Victory" exhibition, 1942. Inset, "Airways to Peace," 1943.**



of many of our projects was about as likely as the John Birch society's approving medicare." This initial suave CIA impression was later buried in the swamps of Vietnam, as they were revealed as the bloody killers they were and are. And Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York in 1971, will go down in history as the "Butcher of Attica."

One of the few bright lights in this sick period between McCarthyism and the explosion of the New Left was the stand-up comedian Lenny Bruce. "The most beautiful body I've ever seen was at a party in 1954," Lenny would occasionally muse on stage, "I was in the bedroom getting the coats...and I viewed the most perfect bosom peeking out from the man-tailored blouse above a tweed pegged skirt. 'You like what you see? They are nice, aren't they?' she said, caressing the area near her medalion. 'Yes, they are very nice.' 'Would you like to touch them?' 'I'm—I'm—' 'You're shocked,' she said, 'aren't you?' Indeed I was. Eleanor Roosevelt had the prettiest tits I had ever seen or dreamed that I had seen." For this gentle satire, Lenny was arrested at Greenwich Village's Cafe Au Go Go for giving an "indecent performance."



**Ninth Street, 1951, by Franz Kline. The Abstract Expressionist school was used by cultural Cold Warriors to tout "free world individualism."**

The legal complaint was headed "Eleanor Roosevelt and her display of tits"! Lenny Bruce died on 3 August 1966, after having been unable to get work for months, harassed and hounded by the state's vicious censors.

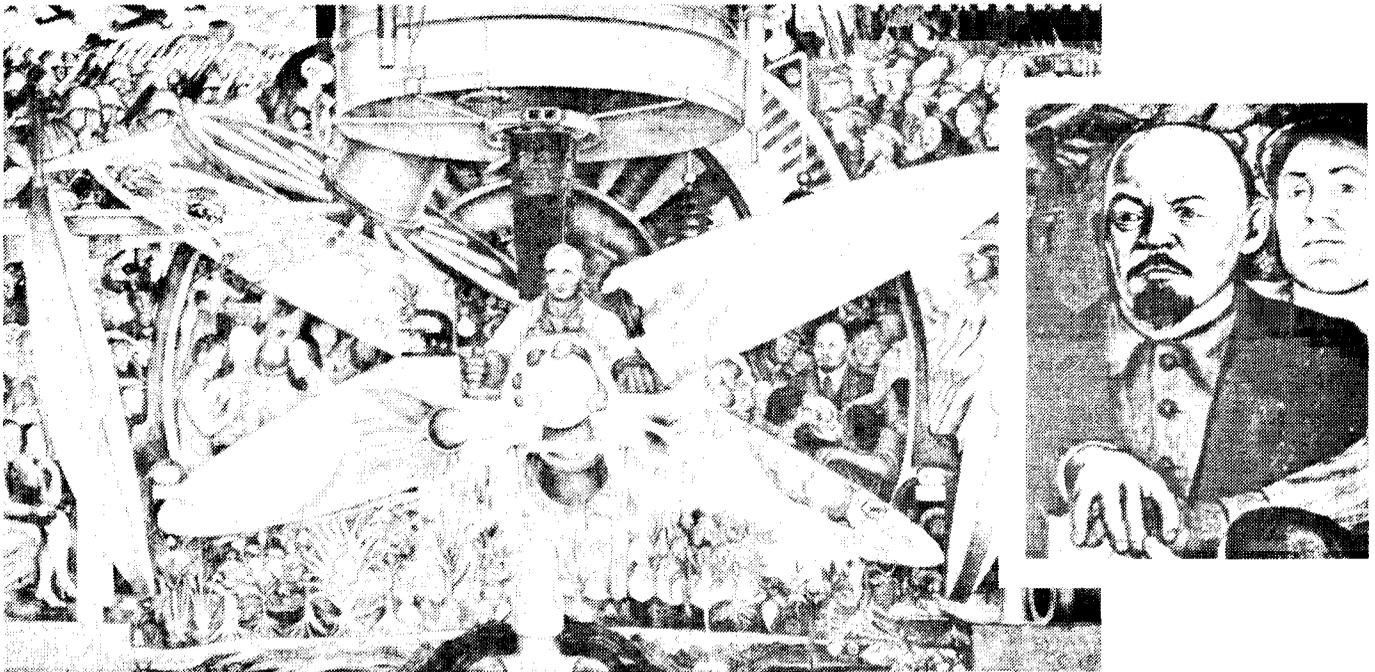
**No to Censorship!**

The current debate over whether the National Endowment for the Arts, itself a creation of the Kennedy-Johnson "Great Society" days, should place conditions on its grants seems like a somewhat paler repeat of this turbulent past. The total amount of money being debated isn't much—military bands get more money than the entire arts budget—but the point, as we've said, is attempted political repression. Jesse Helms is every bit as reactionary a piece of work as the Donderos and McCarthys of the 1950s, and the spectacle last summer of Senator Alfonse D'Amato ripping up an Andres Serrano art catalogue on the Senate floor was a chilling replay of earlier witchhunts.

There are encouraging signs that the "heartland of America" is finally getting fed up with the lying cant and censorship shoved down its throat for the past decade. The six-year-long ghastly expensive trial against teachers at the McMartin Preschool in Southern California finally ended early this year as a jury acquitted the defendants of some 52 counts of child abuse, renouncing the prosecutors' witches brew of hysteria over the devil, drugs and day care. The jury in the Washington, D.C. Marion Barry trial refused to be suckers for the feds' attempted frame-up of the black mayor in a drug/sex sting.

And in early October an eight-person jury in Cincinnati, Ohio, acquitted the city's Contemporary Arts Center and its director Dennis Barrie of obscenity charges for its retrospective exhibit of Robert Mapplethorpe's photos. "High art" devotees had plenty to cheer about, since this was the first-ever obscenity case against an art museum. The prosecution strategy of picking people they thought were hicks from the sticks backfired, as one juror said afterward: "We thought the pictures were lewd, grotesque, disgusting. But like the defense said, art doesn't have to be beautiful or pretty."

Then "low art" got its licks in, as a jury in Broward



**The Rockefellers ordered Mexican artist Diego Rivera off the scaffolding and destroyed his commissioned Rockefeller Center mural because the artist refused to delete a portrait of Lenin (inset detail). Rivera recreated the work in Mexico City, shown above.**

County, Florida (home of fun-in-the-sun Ft. Lauderdale) completed the one-two punch, acquitting the rap group 2 Live Crew of obscenity charges on October 20. "You take away one freedom, and pretty soon they're all gone," said one juror in that case, while others noted they thought the black group's raunchy lyrics were really a gas. This tendency toward common sense, decency and tolerance on the part of ordinary citizens is deeply disturbing to our rulers.

Government censorship is going to continue as long as

### I Paint What I See

It's no good taste in a man like me,  
 Said John D's grandson, Nelson.  
 To question an artist's integrity  
 Or mention a practical thing like a fee,  
 But I know what I like to a large degree,  
 Tho art I hate to hamper.  
 For twenty-one thousand conservative bucks  
 You painted a radical. I say, shucks,  
 I never could rent the offices—  
 The capitalistic offices.  
 For this, as you know, is a public hall  
 And people want doves, or a tree in fall,  
 And tho your art I dislike to hamper,  
 I owe a little to God and Gramper,  
 And after all,  
 It's my wall . . . .  
 We'll see if it is, said Rivera.

— E.B.W.

*Excerpt of poem printed in The New Yorker, 20 May 1933*

this capitalist government goes on. The heart of it is that this system of government is not neutral. It was created to uphold capitalism, the system of private ownership of the means of production. Pared down to its essentials, the state is an executive committee of the capitalists as a whole, for keeping the ruling class on top through state coercion of those at the bottom, mainly through the selective use of cops and prisons and murder. State subsidies for health care, education and the like are given reluctantly, as part of the necessary overhead to keep the population minimally content and at least a section of it competent to work. Subsidies for artists are extra frills, given or taken away depending on how the political winds are blowing. It's especially so in this country, where the Puritan legacy still hangs heavy with its dour suspicion of the arts, especially live theater, as agencies of sin and the devil.

Meanwhile, as the hogs at the public trough complain they don't want to spend our "taxpayers' money" on sexy art, but would really rather use it for strange new weapons and to bail out their buddies in the savings and loan scandals, there is some poetic justice around to relish. While the Mapplethorpe show's director was acquitted, the man who gave "Censornati" its nickname, the founder of various Cincinnati Legions of Decency, is himself under indictment today, the Lincoln Savings & Loan's own Charles H. Keating Jr. And another figure in this latest farcical episode in American cultural life has met her appropriate end as well: Christina Orr-Cahall was the curator who canceled the Mapplethorpe show at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., ostensibly to avoid Congressional ire, in the Vietnam-era spirit of "bombing the village in order to save it." She was last heard from in a *New York Times* Travel Section, down in the Nancy Reaganland of West Palm Beach, curating the no doubt culturally deep show "Pools," a survey of swimming pools in recent American art. ■

# Down with Anti-Porn Law in Mexico!

The following article is translated from the forthcoming first issue of *Espartaco*, newspaper of the *Grupo Espartaquista de México*, sympathizing group of the *International Communist League*.

Pope Karol Wojtyla's recent visit to Mexico was the occasion for an escalation of the reactionary campaign to reassert the political power of the clergy. Clerical reactionaries are targeting the gains of the *Reforma* [the mid-19th century civil war led by Benito Juárez which broke the back of the church's political power and confiscated its lands]. The government of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari has taken the first steps toward re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The Pope's diatribes against abortion, condoms and "lust" inflamed the local followers of Dominican inquisitor Torquemada [the notorious leader of the 15th-century Spanish Inquisition, which flung thousands into prison and brutally expelled the Jews to "purify" Spain for the Catholic church]. The rightist, pro-church PAN (National Action Party) took advantage of the opportunity to renew its longstanding attempt to censor "obscenity." Instigated by these self-proclaimed enemies of women's liberation, a "feminist" bloc was formed in parliament, including all the women legislators from the popular-frontist fake-left to the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) and the religious rightist PAN. On July 12 the feminist bloc got a bill against sex crimes and "obscene" images passed in the lower house of parliament. This "feminist popular front" shackles women who seek to fight against their oppression to the parties and ideology of the bourgeoisie.

The bill grants judges the power to prosecute and to punish authors and individual owners of books, films, magazines and works of art on the charge of "obscenity," thus crippling freedom of expression and intervening flagrantly in private life. The government could close down publishing houses for the "crime" of printing a single publication branded "obscene." If this bill is approved by the Senate, the capitalist state—which has tortured and "disappeared" innumerable dissidents, political activists and fighters for the rights of the working people—will have a new weapon to repress whatever political and artistic expressions it considers "dangerous" to the status quo. In fact, cases of censorship under previous regimes are notorious: under former president Echeverria, for example, the government closed down the magazine *Eros* for "crimes" such as "inciting to carnal pleasures" and "paving the way for social anarchy" (*Proceso*, 24 September 1990).

No government should have the right to legislate consensual sexual practices and individual preferences, which are eminently subjective. Inquisitors out of the bedroom! What is pornographic or obscene in the eyes of a priest or a PAN congresswoman may be a piece of art or humor in the eyes of others. Not long ago the ultra-reactionary clerical organization Pro-Vida ("Pro-Life") succeeded in shutting down an exhibit in the Museum of Modern Art, surrounding the building with an intimidating mob that howled for censorship of "sacrilegious" paintings (such as a portrait of the Virgin of Guadalupe with the face of Marilyn Monroe). This is not just a question of freedom of expression. The reactionary mob chanted "Long live Christ the King!", the war cry of the *Cristiada* [participants

Mexico Journal

Cambio 16



**Mexican Catholic church hierarchy, the principal force for anti-woman reaction, preaches acceptance of suffering to desperately poor families in shantytowns.**



in the bloody, rightist religious *Cristero* revolt of 1926 to 1929]. In Mexico, a country where religious reaction is deeply rooted despite a history of official anticlericalism, these issues can become the focal point of a *counter-revolutionary* mobilization. Remember the lynchings in San Miguel Canoa in 1968 [peasants, incited by the local priesthood to kill "communists," brutally murdered a group of young people who ventured into the area for a camping trip].

In the United States the far right has waged a censorship campaign against works of "homoerotic art," putting a museum director on trial as part of the repressive offensive of the Reagan-Bush years. In Mexico, clerical obscurantists claim that ads advocating the use of condoms are "obscene." What is truly obscene and criminal is the campaign—laden with anti-homosexual bigotry—of the church, PAN and Pro-Vida to ban the few existing educational announcements about AIDS, thereby threatening to condemn to death tens of thousands of people who might contract the virus. It is obscene that women are forbidden the right to abortion. It is obscene that in this capitalist society banking magnates and bosses live in majestic estates, squandering fortunes, while thousands of children sleep in the street and millions suffer from malnutrition. Now the censorship bill gives additional weapons to those who seek to silence the voices denouncing this capitalist society.

The simplistic and reactionary argument that united the votes of the PAN, PRI and representatives of the popular front led by populist ex-PRI politico Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is that sexual violence against women—which in Mexico assumes epidemic proportions—is caused by the

influence of "obscene" illustrations. This reaches absurdity with the slogan "pornography is the theory, rape is the practice." (The falsity of the claim that pornography "causes" violence against women can be proven with a glance at the Scandinavian countries, which for years have had the greatest abundance of what is considered "pornography" along with the lowest level of violence against women.) It is indisputable that "pornography" reflects social reality, including women's oppression, in the same way that books and films reflect not only "lofty" sentiments but also the war, violence and misery of the real world. But to claim that these images are the cause of violence is the purest anti-scientific idealism and only covers for the real origin of oppression, which is class society.

The root of women's oppression is not in these images but rather in the institution of the family, a pillar of capitalist society. The bourgeois morality that seeks to reinforce and "defend" the patriarchal family also breeds hateful anti-homosexual bigotry. Women's liberation cannot be achieved through the program of feminism, which seeks to tie the women workers of the *maquiladoras* (free trade zone factories) and the militant *compañeras* of the Modelo brewery strikers to bourgeois congresswomen and high-society ladies. Neither is the reformist nationalism of the fake-left any answer. Only socialist revolution can lay the basis for a society of equality and abundance, and emancipate women by replacing the family with voluntary collective institutions. Far from contributing to women's liberation, the obscene censorship bill only strengthens the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state. Down with the anti-porn bill! ■

## International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Correspondence for:

Address to:

**Spartacist League  
of Australia** .....

Spartacist League  
GPO Box 3473  
Sydney, NSW, 2001  
Australia

**Spartacist League/Britain** ....

Spartacist Publications  
PO Box 1041  
London NW5 3EU  
England

**Trotskyist League  
of Canada** .....

Trotskyist League  
Box 7198, Station A  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5W 1X8, Canada

**Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei  
Deutschlands** .....

SpAD  
Postfach 2002  
O-1026 Berlin, Germany  
Verlag Avantgarde  
Postfach 11 02 31  
2000 Hamburg 11, Germany

**Ligue Trotskyste de France** ...

Le Bolchévik, BP 135-10  
75463 Paris Cedex 10  
France

Correspondence for:

Address to:

**Spartacist Group  
India/Lanka** .....

write to Spartacist,  
New York

**Dublin Spartacist  
Youth Group** .....

PO Box 2944, Dublin 1  
Republic of Ireland

**Lega Trotskista d'Italia** .....

Walter Fidacaro  
C.P. 1591  
20101 Milano, Italy

**Spartacist Group Japan** .....

Spartacist Group Japan  
PO Box 18  
Chitose-Yubinkyoku  
Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 156  
Japan

**Grupo Espartaquista  
de México** .....

P. Linares  
Apdo. Postal 453  
06002 México 1, D.F.  
Mexico

**Spartakusowska Grupa  
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A. J.  
SKR 741  
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Spartacist League  
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# Mexico

## Women's Rights Activists Face Torture, Jail

*Today the imperialists and their political spokesmen gloat over the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, proclaiming the supposed "death of Communism" and extolling the virtues of "democracy" as the bosses stampede to exploit Eastern European labor. But in Third World countries like Mexico the savage face of capitalism cannot be hidden: the masses suffer ever-increasing impoverishment and the brutal ripping away of the few rights and social services available. Across the planet women's fundamental right to abortion has been a front-line target of capitalism's war to break working-class struggle and indoctrinate the masses in religion, social conformity and sexual, ethnic and racial scapegoating. In Mexico the capitalist state has waged this war against women with particular viciousness, as is described in this article updated from Workers Vanguard No. 489, 10 November 1989.*

Today in Mexico abortion is illegal and dangerous. In having a clandestine abortion, a woman faces the life-threatening risk of hemorrhage or massive infection, and on top of that the threat of torture or imprisonment by

the armed thugs of the state. The nightmare of police terror became a reality for eight women in March of 1989, when cops of the dreaded *Dirección de Inteligencia* (Intelligence Agency—the most notorious of Mexico's many secret police units) abducted them as they returned from an abortion clinic in Naucalpan, the huge million-plus shantytown city on the outskirts of Mexico City. Two of the women were activists of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT). The women were grabbed as they were riding home in a *colectivo* (VW minibus). The cops stripped, beat and verbally abused them, screaming "murderer," "bitch" and "whore."

The women were denied food, water, sleep and the anti-inflammatory medication and antibiotics which had been prescribed for them, although some were soon burning with fever. While being brutally subjected to crude vaginal exams, they could hear the horrifying screams of an elderly clinic doctor being tortured with electric shocks in a nearby room. They were forced to watch while the sadistic cops humiliated and beat the naked and terrified clinic nurses. Held incommunicado



Workers Vanguard

**International Women's Day march in Mexico City on 8 March 1989. Militant Seamstresses Union was formed to defend working women left homeless and jobless after 1985 earthquake devastated Mexico City.**

for almost 24 hours, the women were tortured for over half that time in a "secret" jail run by this infamous terror squad in Tlaxcoaque, while their increasingly panicked families and friends searched for them.

The missing women were finally located after they had been transferred to an official Investigation Agency of one of the districts of Mexico City. Rosario Ibarra, head of the "Eureka" committee for the disappeared and former presidential candidate of the PRT, accompanied by members of the PRT and several women's organizations, went to the police stations and agitated for the women's release. The women later recounted how the Tlaxcoaque police "said if we said anything, they would kill us." After "confessing" to seeking illegal abortions, they were finally released (*La Jornada*, 20 March 1989).

In every aspect, the fight for women's rights in Mexico involves the broader struggle for social liberation. Currently there is agitation to amend the legal code of the Federal District (Mexico City) to partially decriminalize abortion. But the question of abortion goes far beyond legislative action: women's rights activists face the combined forces of reaction from vicious police repression to church-led mobs, *machista* (male-chauvinist) violence in the family, the weight of religious prejudice, the barrier of widespread ignorance, and the ravages of a medical system which provides grossly inferior care for working-class women and men, and none at all to the jobless poor. The fight for free, safe abortion on demand is a key part of the fight for socialist revolution.

### Capitalist Crisis Means Hunger and Death

The eight women tortured at Tlaxcoaque are among over a million women in Mexico who receive abortions each year. Estimates range up to two million, but who can tell, given the veil of terror-enforced clandestinity? The "fortunate" ones who can afford it get their abortions in clandestine medical clinics under the ever-present threat of police raids. Many urban poor and peasant women attempt to terminate pregnancy through the use of traditional herbal home brews (ineffective and often extremely dangerous), douching with cleaning fluid, self-inflicted trauma (such as throwing themselves down stairs), or the introduction of objects into the uterus. Yet whether abortion is legal or illegal, the women of the bourgeoisie are able to obtain safe abortions—in many cases flying out of the country to private clinics in Arizona or California.

In more advanced capitalist countries, the highest incidence of abortion is among young women who have not previously had a child. In Mexico the majority of abortions are sought by older women for whom having one more child gravely threatens their health and the well-being of the children they are already struggling to house, feed and clothe. In many rural areas it is still common for women to continue having children after they have become grandmothers. It is estimated that 80,000 Indian women are raped each year in the countryside where political bosses, *pistoleros* and the Judicial Police still regard women as part of the spoils of the land. In a recent survey of Mexican housewives, 61 percent reported physical abuse by their men, and this was across the economic scale, from domestic workers to professional women.

In a country where the crisis of Mexican capitalism has sent real wages plummeting to barely 40 percent of what they were a decade ago, the ability to afford and raise a child is no abstraction. Consumption of milk products has vastly declined, as the number of milk cows has fallen by more than half and in Mexico City alone there is a deficit of 10 million liters a day (*La Jornada*, 20 October 1989). In affluent shopping areas of the capital, haggard Indian women from the countryside, exhausted from malnutrition, beg for their small children. If the kids are still alert, it is because their mothers are giving them most of the food. From 1982 to 1988, over one million children under the age of five died. Now President Salinas de Gortari, a Harvard-trained technocrat who is fulsomely backed by George Bush and the International Monetary Fund, plans to further reduce the standard of living of the working class.

Women are often faced with the choice between dangerous abortions (frequently causing sterility) or giving birth to unwanted children, thousands of whom die of hunger or become mentally retarded or physically stunted as a result of malnutrition. It is particularly obscene to preach about "saving babies" in the context of forbidding abortions, in a country where the primary causes of infant mortality are malnutrition and gastroenteritis caused by the lack of food and by polluted water. Moreover, thousands of women lose their jobs each year when they are found to be pregnant. In U.S.-owned *maquiladoras* (free trade zone factories) on the border, young women workers must show bloody sanitary napkins to the factory nurse or doctor every month to prove they are not pregnant (see "Class Struggle in the 'Global Sweatshop,'" *Women and Revolution* No. 34, Spring 1988).

In no state of Mexico do women have the right to abortion without stringent legal obstacles. Experts of the World Health Organization estimate that as many as 1,000 out of each 100,000 illegal abortions in Mexico result in the death of the woman (*Fem*, May 1988). These are deaths from a medical procedure which, properly performed under decent conditions, is one of the safest forms of surgical intervention! A 1983 medical study indicated that 60 percent of the beds in obstetrical/gynecological units of government hospitals were filled with the victims of unsafe abortions. And in 1986, according to a survey by the Mexican Social Security Institute, of women admitted to Mexico City hospitals because of complications from clandestine abortions, 62 percent died.

### Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

We assert that a woman's right to abortion is a basic democratic right. But the struggle for abortion rights is a struggle against the state, which in turn panders to the church hierarchy. The ruling PRI (Revolutionary Institutional Party) has long pushed birth control as part of population control programs which were the Kennedy-era "Alliance for Progress" pseudo-answer to Third World poverty. Under the previous PRI administration of Miguel de la Madrid, Mrs. de la Madrid's pet project was the DIF ("Integral Family Development") program, with numerous clinics and propaganda for "responsible parenthood." Contraceptive pills and IUD birth control devices are

widely distributed. But abortion is another matter, because here is where the battle line has been drawn by the Catholic church, the principal force for anti-woman backwardness in Mexico.

The anti-abortion reactionaries of the clerical-led Pro Vida ("Pro-Life") movement seized on the Tlaxcoaque raid in March 1989 to step up their agitation against abortion, pressuring government officials to raid more clinics. They offered to provide the addresses of 12 more clinics in the area to the government, which declared itself "open to the proposals of the Pro Vida committee" to eradicate abortion (*La Jornada*, 26 March 1989). In 1988, clerical reactionaries of the National Synarchist Union led a demonstration of 100,000 in the capital threatening to lynch artist Roland de la Rosa and burn the Museum of Modern Art for displaying de la Rosa's montage which superimposed the face and bare breasts of Marilyn Monroe over the Virgin of Guadalupe. The church has built a cult around the "brown virgin," the "little mother" of Mexico, to foster humility, patience and passive endurance of suffering—held up by reactionary forces as the model for Mexican womanhood.

In the last few years there has been a good deal of agitation for abortion rights in Mexico. On 9 April 1989, as hundreds of thousands of women marched in Washington, pro-abortion activists picketed the U.S. embassy in Mexico City. Recent magazine and newspaper ads calling for legalization without qualifications have appeared, signed by leftists and feminists, and well-known artists and writers. In 1983 an amendment to the Penal Code of the Federal District (Mexico City) was defeated which would have granted the right of abortion within three months of conception, under various circumstances including rape, severe physical or mental deformation of the fetus, or "grave and proven" economic hardship. But in a 1989 proposal to amend the Penal Code with a qualified decriminalization of abortion, in open capitulation to the church hierarchy the clause on grave economic hardship was omitted.

In 1979 the deputies of the ostensibly Trotskyist PRT, along with various feminist deputies and members of the former Communist Party, put forward a bill in Congress for "voluntary maternity" which called for complete legalization of abortion. Reactionary forces organized demonstrations against this bill, even attacking its known supporters in the streets. But reflecting nationalist opposition to birth control as an imperialist plot, a view widespread in the *machista* Latin American left, the PRT repeatedly emphasizes that abortion "is not, therefore, a method of birth control nor a contraceptive method, which governments have used in accordance with the interests of the bourgeoisie in certain historic periods," but rather it can only be "the last recourse in the face of an unwanted pregnancy" (*Bandera Socialista* pamphlet, July 1989).

The punk/surrealist popular-frontists of *La Guillotina* (June 1989) go even further along these lines, saying "if contraceptives were 100 percent sure, free, and there was effective education and true sexual freedom perhaps we could all be anti-abortionists." In fact, the bourgeois-nationalist Revolutionary Democratic Party of ex-PRI leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has a more forthright defense of "decriminalizing voluntary abortion to be regulated as a free and technically qualified health

service" (Draft Program of the PRD). We Trotskyists are for free and safe abortion on demand, and full access to all available birth control procedures. Notably, the RU 486 "French abortion pill" has the potential of making abortion an essentially private matter for the woman concerned.

But to win such a demand will mean a full-scale battle with the forces of reaction, beginning with the church, which neither the reformist left nor the Cardenista popular front will undertake. In fact, as part of their bloc with the rightist and Catholic-dominated PAN (National Action Party), the former Stalinists who are now the organizational apparatus for Cárdenas' PRD sought to overturn the 1917 constitution's prohibition on clerical participation in politics. The ostensibly revolutionary left, meanwhile, has traditionally ignored the struggle against women's oppression or, in recent years, relegated this to the status of a special "woman's issue." Yet the struggle for the liberation of women is integral to the class struggle for socialist revolution. Significantly, the only country in Latin America where abortion is legal, aside from the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico, is Cuba.

Women played an important role in the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17, symbolized in the figure of the *soldadera* peasant fighter. Today, women are in the forefront of many struggles, from the community groups and September 19 Seamstresses Union which arose after the 1985 earthquake, to the insurgent teachers who led marches of hundreds of thousands of opposition unionists in Mexico City in the spring of 1989. The revolutionary vanguard party, as the most consistent fighter for the emancipation of women and champion of all the oppressed, will win the most conscious women militants to its program of socialist revolution. The emancipation of women will be won through the victory of all the working class. Free, safe abortion on demand! End forced sterilization! Free quality health care for all! For women's liberation through socialist revolution! ■

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# Dublin Spartacist Youth Group Founded

The following article is adapted from *Workers Hammer* No. 117, October 1990, newspaper of the Spartacist League of Britain.

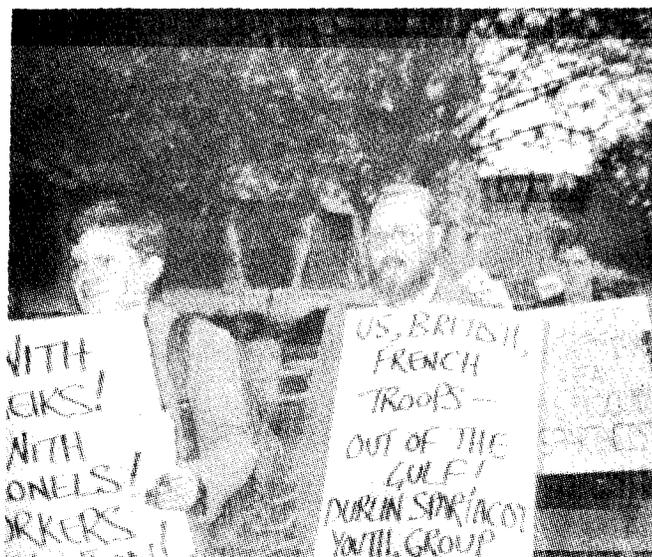
*Women and Revolution* is proud to announce to its readers the founding of the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group. It was formed by a small group of students at Trinity College in Ireland on the weekend of 6-7 October 1990. The adherence of young Irish revolutionaries to the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a modest but significant extension of our tendency. Participating in the founding meeting were representatives of the Spartacist League/Britain, and messages of greetings were sent from ICL sections including the Spartacist groups in Japan and Mexico.

The comrades of the DSYG have been active in college groups such as the Socialist Society and the Labour Society over past years, participating in a united-front protest which stopped British fascist "historian" David Irving from speaking at Trinity in 1988. Recently the group organised the painting-out of fascistic anti-Semitic slogans. They were also part of an ongoing struggle to distribute abortion information, including distributing a leaflet with others calling for free abortion on demand and women's liberation through socialist revolution.

The work of the International Communist League in Germany was instrumental in convincing the comrades of the correctness and urgency of Spartacist politics, particularly in counterposition to the rightward-moving centrists of the Irish Workers Group/Workers Power. The IWG had published an 18-page pamphlet "Sectarianism and Stalinophilia: The Politics of the Spartacists." Where we fought tooth and nail against imperialist reunification, the IWG/WP were soft-core capitalist restorationists, tailing Social Democracy, calling for Soviet troops out and hailing anti-Stasi riots in which skinhead fascists were prominent. The Dublin comrades rejected the IWG/WP's Stalinophobia for the authentic Trotskyism of the ICL.

Discussions over the national question in Ireland and the nature of reformist parties such as the Irish Labour Party were also key. The founding meeting endorsed the Spartacist document "Theses on Ireland," which has stood well the test of time since its adoption in 1977. Against Labourite chauvinism and Green nationalism, the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group is committed to raising the banner of proletarian internationalism, not least in the context of Northern Ireland.

The DSYG also addressed the imperialist war buildup in the Persian Gulf, a decisive question facing revolutionaries throughout the world today. For years the sham "neutrality" of the Irish Republic has made it a crucial component of United Nations military forces, such as those which acted as Israel's northern border guards until the Zionist butchers brushed them aside in their 1982



Workers Hammer

**Spartacists at antiwar protest outside the U.S. embassy in Dublin, 20 October 1990.**

invasion of Lebanon. The meeting called for trade unions to black (boycott) imperialist war preparations and for mobilisations to "Stop the refueling of U.S. warplanes at Shannon!"

The DSYG adopted positions on several questions of special oppression in Ireland. The fraternal greetings of the ICL's German section, the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, underlined the vital need for the DSYG to reach out to and recruit those whom the Irish revolutionary James Connolly referred to as "the slaves of slaves"—Irish women. There was much discussion of the centrality of the fight for women's liberation to the struggle for socialist revolution in a country where social policy, health care and education basically remain in the grip of the Catholic church hierarchy.

The denial of legal rights to abortion and divorce and the severe restrictions on the availability of contraceptives hugely exacerbate the double oppression of working-class women. In this context the call for free abortion on demand—which much of the Irish left shrinks from raising—has great importance. The hundreds of pounds required to obtain an abortion in England are simply out of reach for low-paid women workers and housewives lacking any financial independence whatsoever. This demand must be coupled with the call for free quality health service and 24-hour childcare to permit full integration of women into social production. Both demands are mandatory for obtaining genuine social equality for women and are unachievable without the overthrow of capitalism.

The fight for full democratic rights for gays and lesbians

is also integral to the struggle against the main instrument for the oppression of women under capitalism, the family. And the DSYG adopted a resolution underlining the defence of the horribly oppressed Travellers (a minority grouping treated similarly to gypsies in Britain and on the

very bottom rung of Irish society). Their persecution echoes the vile British chauvinism directed against the Irish. As what Lenin described as "the tribune of the people," a Marxist revolutionary party must combat all oppression and inequality produced by capitalist society. ■

## Defend Irish Students Fighting Abortion Ban

*The following article is adapted from Workers Hammer No. 117, October 1990, newspaper of the Spartacist League of Britain.*

Students in the Republic of Ireland earlier this year achieved a partial victory against the anti-woman, anti-sex campaign orchestrated by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC)—winning the bulk of a series of campus referenda on whether student unions should distribute "abortion information" (see "Irish Students Fight for Abortion Rights," *Women and Revolution* No. 37, Spring 1990). But the Irish Supreme Court, reflecting the priorities of this deeply reactionary clericalist state, has come down against those defending even the most minimal rights for women, victimising the student activists.

In October 1989 the High Court had rejected an attempt by SPUC to secure injunctions against 14 named student leaders to stop the distribution of phone numbers and other information on how women may obtain abortions in Britain. (The case was also referred to the European Court in Luxembourg where it awaits judgement.) But SPUC managed to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court, which ruled in December that temporary injunctions could be obtained in the meantime against individuals deemed to be "assisting" or "facilitating" a woman in "the destruction of the life of her unborn child" (*Irish Times*, 20 December 1989). The legal basis for this hideous ruling is the 1861 Offences Against the Persons Act and the 1983 national referendum which enshrined the "right of life of every unborn child" in the constitution.

The Supreme Court has since awarded all costs of the December 1989 appeal to SPUC as well as costs in a previous case dating from 1988. In all a total of 17 students—from the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and from Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin—will be forced to pay over £60,000.

The students have taken a courageous stand in defiance of clericalist reaction. Currently a number of student unions and individuals around the country are continuing to distribute abortion information despite the court ruling. Some have been threatened with expulsion from university. At Trinity, while the union is no longer "officially" giving out information, a number of students, including supporters of the newly formed Dublin Spartacist Youth Group, are continuing to do so.

In recent months the possibilities for linking the student-centred fight to the labour movement have been made more palpable by the beginnings of working-class resistance to the austerity measures of the "Programme for National Recovery." As we wrote last spring: "This latest battle has underlined the need for a mass, mili-

tant mobilisation centred on the working class to break the chains of clerical reaction and win, among others, the elementary right of free abortion on demand." It is through the power of the proletariat that the grinding oppression of women in Ireland can be fought to a successful conclusion.

USI has organised a "Student Defence Fund" to raise money for the ruinous costs imposed by the court. Sponsors include prominent gay activist Senator David Norris, journalist Nell McCafferty and Dr. Noel Browne. The Partisan Defence Committee in Britain—a class-struggle legal and social defence organisation whose purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League—has contributed to the fund, as has the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group. Stop the SPUC bigots' offensive! Defend the victimised students!

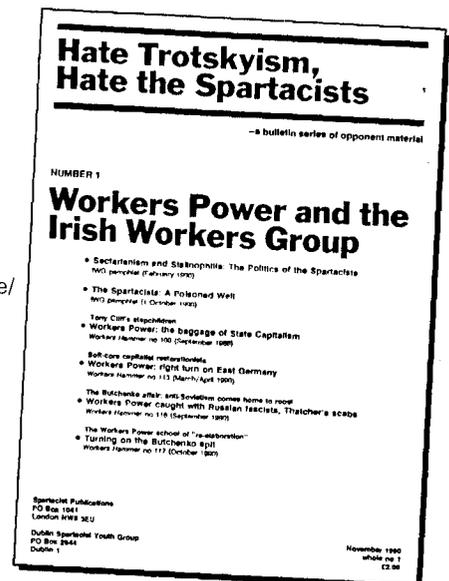
Checks towards the court costs should be made payable to: USI Student Legal Fund, c/o Students Union, Trinity College, Dublin 2; or sent directly to Bank of Ireland, Rotunda Branch, Dublin 1, Account No. 15967150 and Branch No. 90-00-68. ■

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# Report from India

We print below a report from two supporters of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) who live in southern India. The communication, received in New York on 13 October 1990, outlines the major elements of political and social turmoil that have shaken the countries of the subcontinent in the last period, prefiguring both the collapse of the Singh government in India and the installation as prime minister in Pakistan of Nawaz Sharif, a rightist closely connected to the former military regime of General Zia, in early November.

Another supporter, in the north of India, noted more recently: "The period of August to October was dominated by the agitation against the government policy of implementing recommendations of B.P. Mandal Commission. The recommendations were submitted six years ago and called for reservations [affirmative action] for certain castes (numbering 1,173) in government (and non-government) jobs and admissions to educational institutions. More than a hundred people, mostly teenagers and young adults, immolated themselves. The 'left' failed to unite the youth on a program of 'jobs for all' as it should have; and castism, manifesting itself in pro- and anti-reservations rallies and confrontations, is rising. The rightist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) agitation for destroying the mosque in Ayodhya has also taken a heavy toll, and the fall of V.P. Singh and emergence of the Chandra Shekhar ministry is a minor episode in contrast to the lives lost. West Bengal has remained peaceful so far, but there is nothing to be complacent about. Fundamentalists are busy with their dirty work and may create trouble any time if people are not vigilant."

Our comrades' summary underscores our insistence on the need for a Bolshevik vanguard party that can give political leadership to transcend the present genocidal communal divisions by uniting the workers and oppressed on a class basis against capitalist rule throughout South Asia.

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The political scenario in the subcontinent in general and in India in particular is fluid. A weak minority government at the centre has to perform all kinds of populist acrobatics in order to maintain its stability; and the ruling National Front, which is a conglomeration of heterogeneous political and ideological followings, has to accommodate each and every one of its partners by leniently adhering to their demands and pressures.

A few months ago the very survival of the Janata Dal party as a political entity was threatened, due to the rivalry that ensued between [Prime Minister] V.P. Singh and the deposed Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal and his followers. But V.P. Singh could survive the typhoon only with the solid support extended by the ideologically opposite and politically opportunist parties of both right and left, such as the BJP and the Communist parties [CPI and CPI(M)]. They saw in the survival of V.P. Singh's

Janata Dal-led National Front the very survival of their own camps.

Devi Lal, in spite of his influence and followings in Haryana and Rajasthan, could not rally support from the Janata Dal members of parliament who are known beyond doubt to be his supporters. The obsession with the Choutala affair [Devi Lal's attempt to have his son succeed him] still hampers his ability to mobilise considerable support within the Janata Dal. V.P. Singh, encouraged by the support extended unconditionally by the BJP and CPs, boldly took action against his senior cabinet colleague by dismissing him from the ministry. The [bourgeois opposition] Congress (I) Party has been patiently waiting for the disintegration of the National Front and is now toning up its party units to be prepared to face elections at any time.

In order to divert the focus of attention from the burning issues afflicting the people, V.P. Singh announced his decision to implement the recommendations of the "Mandal Commission" report which emphasised reservations of up to 27 percent job quotas for the "backward classes" (castes considered to be socially and educationally backward). There is already an 18 percent reservation for the castes and tribes who belonged to the most oppressed among the lower castes (Pariah caste is one such). The new announcement has infuriated many, including students whose aspirations for government employment are threatened.

The BJP, which is a pro-Hindu-chauvinist outfit, strongly opposes the decision, since their very ideology advocates bringing back and preserving the age-old Hindu caste system wherein the "Varnasrama Dharma" [religious creed] stipulates society on caste lines in the order of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. They are afraid that the hold of upper castes will wear away if the 27 percent reservation policy is implemented. Hence they want the government to do away with the present criteria for the job reservation policy and take up an economic criterion irrespective of caste. Although this demand is seemingly in accord with the principle of equality, in practice it deprives thousands from lower castes of any assistance, since socially and educationally they are still backward and cannot compete with members of the upper castes who may be economically backward but otherwise very forward. The backwardness of centuries of oppression cannot be redressed by overnight reservation policies.

The CPI and CPI(M) support the reservation policy in general and want the government also to consider reserving some seats for the economically weaker sections.

In the state of Tamil Nadu, the anti-reservationists have no hold since a 31 percent reservation is already in force there for government appointments.

But the climax of this is the upheavals it has brought into the majority of the northern Indian states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and



Gamma



Sakellariou/JB Pictures

**Communal violence erupts in India: Army troops patrolling Kashmir. Kashmiri student bloodied by Indian border guards.**

also Orissa, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. These states have a strong caste-oriented social base where the upper castes are, by their status and wealth, also the ruling classes in their respective states. Against this background, the agitation is spearheaded and influenced by the BJP which wants to capitalise on anything that can catch votes for them in future. The anti-reservation agitation is paralysing normal life in all the northern Indian states.

Lately, the V.P. Singh government has modified its stand by announcing that the new legislation will not be binding on the state governments to implement in their recruitment policies. Also a 10 percent reservation was announced for the economically backward sections, irrespective of their caste background.

As the wave of anti-Mandal Commission agitations slowly ebbs, the BJP-sponsored issue of the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid temple is gaining momentum and picking up in the northern states.

The BJP has announced its strong support for building a temple for Rama, the Hindu "Avatar," at his so-called birthplace at Ayodhya. The temple proposed to be built by the Hindu ultras is the site where a mosque built by [Mogul emperor] Babar is situated. The pro-BJP Vishwa Hindu Parishad [World Hindu Council] has announced October 30 as the deadline for resolving this stalemate. The V.P. Singh government has declared that it will abide by court verdicts, whereas the combine of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the paramilitary communalist wing] and the BJP have initiated a campaign in which the BJP president, L.K. Advani, will himself spearhead a *padayatra* (travel by foot) covering the entire length and breadth of India in support of their demands.

The minority Muslim community which is scattered throughout the country is afraid for their peaceful life. The pro-Muslim chauvinists are fanning the fire by rousing their youths for a *jihad* [holy war]. The "Jamaat-e-Islami" is spreading anti-Hindu sentiments among the Muslim people, aiming for a fight. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad organised a rally in Kashmir to make the Muslim majority within the state feel insecure by raising anti-Islamic and anti-Pakistani slogans, and thus showed

off their patriotism.

Recently in the city of Madras, where centuries of communal amity have been preserved, the RSS hooligans were able to create violence during a festival day. When a religious procession was passing through a thoroughfare where Muslims were performing *namaz* [prayer] in a mosque, the RSS cadres deliberately uttered provocative slogans against the Muslim faith. An equally agitated group of Muslims threw *chappals* [sandals] and pelted stones. This ended in a bloodbath. Now the situation is calm but tense.

While on the one hand these developments disturb the political climate, on the other the economic policies of the minority National Front government have made the people openly speak in favour of the Congress Party. The prices of essential commodities are increasing steadily without check. The raise in train and bus fares has greatly affected the people. The economy is in the doldrums. The pro-capitalist policy pursued by the bourgeois alternatives of the Congress Party have not solved a single problem. The small-scale industries are becoming bankrupt and sick. The foreign exchange reserve is fast dwindling. Corruption and red-tapism are still rampant. With the exception of a few sectors of organised industrial workers, the majority of the unorganised industrial workforce is not even getting a living wage.

The youth, educated and talented but without jobs, are lured by the insurgent nationalist movements which involve them in violence and separatism. Dacoity [banditry], robbery and smuggling are on the increase. Without a proper programme, the Communist parties are not able to provide an alternative platform for the dissenting youth. Atrocities against women are increasing unabated: more and more incidents of rape and bride burning are reported in the media, only a few of which are officially known. Many educated young girls are lured into the flesh trade; brokers posing as agents of big companies give false promises and kidnap young girls to far-off places and involve them in prostitution by force.

With the situation so dark and gloomy in India, the neighbouring countries are not much different.

In Pakistan, after the dismissal [as prime minister] of

Benazir Bhutto, the military generals have asserted their traditional role in politics. The Pakistani generals may even try to have an adventure in Kashmir in order to "unite" the people for thwarting Indian aggression.

The Gulf events have made Pakistan a more open ally of the Yankee imperialists. The Pakistani generals will once again allow the U.S. military in the Gulf to make use of Pakistani ports for repair and recreation facilities.

The dominance of the Punjabi generals has caused dissent among other nationalities, such as the Baluchis and Sindhis. The target of attack is the Muslim settlers of Indian origin, called "Mohajirs," in the recent violence in many parts of Pakistan.

The possibilities of Pakistan returning to even bourgeois democracy in the near future are doubtful. Even if an election is conducted, the role of the military is a major factor; large-scale rigging will take place, and a fair and free election will be out of the question. Only a pro-military capitalist puppet regime in the garb of a parliamentary government will be installed. The military-oriented domestic and foreign policy, without the illusion of reform, will continue as before when Zia was in power. The "Islamisation" process will proceed, and all forms of feudal oppression of women will curtail their involvement in national life. The national minorities are oppressed, and Pakistan will continue to witness many

struggles in coming days.

In Bangladesh the military factor is dominant, and the military man in civilian garb will continue to dominate politics where there is no effective opposition to his rule.

The Sri Lankan scene is as ever before tense and uncertain. The [Tamil separatist] Tigers are fighting a losing battle with the well trained and armed men of the government forces. With no rear defence, the Tigers are retreating to their jungle hideouts. The general sympathy for their struggle is fast waning in Tamil Nadu after the murder of Padmanabha [leader of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam] in Madras city in broad daylight sometime earlier. Also, the Indian government's open condemnation of the Premadasa government for its attack on civilians in the name of eliminating the Tiger rebels is encouraging the Sinhala chauvinists to continue their onslaught. Thousands of refugees are pouring into Tamil Nadu every day from across the gulf. Ineffective opposition and failure of the left in the island nation is giving sufficient room for manoeuvre for Premadasa.

In these circumstances only a genuine vanguard party, built on Leninist-Trotskyist principles with an international outlook and programme, can liberate the enslaved nationalities in this part of the globe to form a society based on socialist ideals. ■

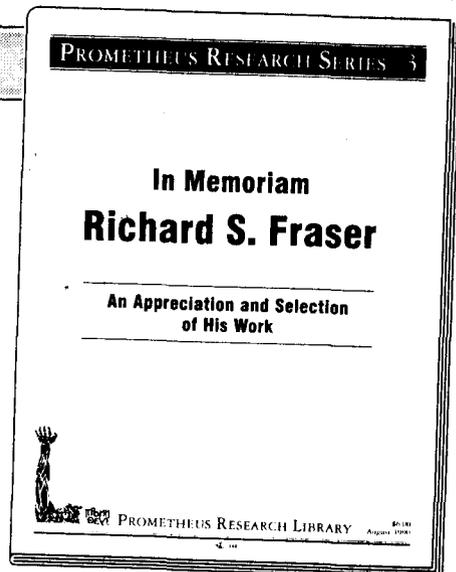
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# USA: Black Mothers Jailed, Women Workers Banned “Fetal Protection” Fraud

A Nevada woman who drank before the day she went into labor lost custody of her child because hospital workers smelled alcohol on her breath; minority women are now prosecuted for using drugs while pregnant; scores of women are denied abortions because they're afflicted with the AIDS virus; now the Supreme Court is deciding whether an employer can bar all fertile women whether they're pregnant or not. Under the guise of “fetal protection,” the capitalist rulers are slamming poor working-class and minority women up against the wall with an increased viciousness and brutality. When poor children are born in the U.S., they face a life with no decent housing, no education, no job prospects, no guaranteed social welfare provisions; their civil liberties have been increasingly taken away, and “justice” is more and more frequently the marauding of the racist cops on the streets. For our rulers only fetuses have “rights”—once a kid is born, it's entitled to nothing.

In September 1989, when Hurricane Hugo destroyed her home, LaVerne Singleton had three children and was expecting her fourth. Moving in with her sister, she struggled to care for her family on \$224 a month in welfare payments. But the nightmare was only to worsen when on November 9 she gave birth to a boy, Arneal—and she became another victim of a racist, anti-woman vendetta sweeping this country. The next day, as she was recovering from childbirth at the public hospital of the Medical University of South Carolina, the hospital called the police. Singleton described her ordeal:

“They didn't even wait until I was healed.... I didn't have any clothes on. I was sitting in a wheelchair with a sheet over it, and there was blood all over my hospital gown. A lady detective read the arrest form to me, and then handcuffed me and took me around the back of the hospital and put me into a cruiser. I had never been arrested before, and I was scared. They took me right to the jail. I got mug shots taken off me, and they took me into a sleazy cell. It was filthy there, very rough and nasty. My sister came to the jailhouse and brought me some clothes. But they would not let me see my baby. I cried many nights. When I finally did see him, he was one month old.”

—*Southern Exposure*, Summer 1990

And what was Singleton charged with? Delivering drugs to a minor through the umbilical cord!

In the last year, 60 pregnant women have been prosecuted on charges of “child abuse,” “endangering an unborn child” and even “pushing drugs” to their own fetuses. Many have been jailed or have lost custody of their children. Seventy percent of those prosecuted for “prenatal crimes” are poor and black. Kicked around from homelessness to the slave-labor workfare program, oppressed black women are driven to the bottom of the



Harvey Finkle/Impact Visuals

**Homeless shelter in Philadelphia. Anti-abortion “pro-lifers” don't care about poor kids once they're born.**

capitalist dung heap. Studies have shown that drug use during pregnancy is equally prevalent among white, middle-class women—but minority women are ten times more likely to be turned in to the cops.

Acting as front-line cops for the state, callous officials at public hospitals in the black community single out these women for vicious punishment, under the lying pretext of “protecting” fetuses. But when Jennifer Johnson, a pregnant addict concerned for her unborn baby's health, called an ambulance, she found herself arrested and charged with being a drug pusher—a felony punishable by 30 years in prison. Johnson said, “I thought that if I tell 'em I use drugs they would send me to a drug place or something. I really didn't have nowhere to stay. I just wanted to get some help” (*Southern Exposure*, Summer 1990).

In fact, most drug treatment programs will not accept pregnant women. Already only *half* of black American women get adequate prenatal care, and many of those most in need of help will be driven away by this



600 cops storm MOVE's Powelton Village home in Philadelphia, 8 August 1978. This siege was a prelude to the deadly bombing of the MOVE commune on 13 May 1985 by the racist government.

witchhunt out of fear of the humiliating, degrading and punitive "search and seizure" of their bodies. Today the United States ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> among developed countries in infant mortality and low birth weight babies. Babies weighing less than five and a half pounds are born to blacks at about twice the rate as to whites at virtually every income and educational level, the legacy of generations of malnutrition and inadequate medical care.

The vendetta against pregnant women and their babies has nothing to do with "protecting" children and everything to do with the anti-abortion crusade and the anti-drug witchhunt unleashed by capitalist reaction over the last decade and a half. While prattling about restoring "family values," the capitalist rulers are ripping people's children away from them, and the kids often end up with no family at all. In New York, for example, thousands of children suffer lifelong damage from neglect in city orphanages where they wait while the courts determine whether their parents can "properly" care for them!

### Labor Must Defend Women's Rights!

Now the same hypocritical code word—"protection"—is being invoked as the bosses try to run women out of jobs they claim will endanger fetal health. Since 1982, the Vermont-based Johnson Controls Inc., the leading U.S. maker of lead automobile batteries, has had a policy of hiring for its factory only those women who are too old to become pregnant or who have had surgery to ensure the same results. The company cites levels of lead contamination which they claim are safe for adults but dangerous for developing fetuses and children, who are more vulnerable to lead poisoning. The real issue is that Johnson Controls does not want to fork out the cash to protect its workers from levels of lead contamination that may violate even the inadequate standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). When the United Auto Workers challenged Johnson's policy, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit upheld it as a "business necessity" not in violation of any civil rights laws. Yes, that's the way it is in capitalist

America—they're all for "equal employment opportunity" but not when it hurts the bottom line: *profits*.

As a dissenting judge on the case wrote, "by one estimate, 20 million industrial jobs could be closed to women, for many substances in addition to lead pose fetal risks" (*New York Times*, 2 September 1990). This bigoted policy is an attack on all workers, men and women, who stand to lose hard-won safety gains as the greedy bosses drive toward maximum profits. Women have *already* paid for this reactionary policy through loss of jobs, promotions and wholesale assaults on their personal privacy, dignity and rights.

Class-conscious workers must fight to bury the cynical anti-woman "fetal protection policy" that means *isolating women from the rest of the working class*. The labor movement should call militant demonstrations against the capitalist swindlers to demand equal protection of all workers, men and women, black and white, against hazardous working conditions. For years, industries have criminally poisoned thousands of workers and their families, often with the government's grimy stamp of approval on company health and safety violations. At the Bunker Hill mining complex in Smeltonville, Idaho, for example, generations of men, women and children were poisoned by heavy doses of lead, and entire mountainsides were deforested. In the single year of 1973, 30 tons of lead per square mile were deposited on communities clustered beneath the smelter. In testing conducted by the Centers for Disease Control, nearly 200 children were found to be suffering from acute lead poisoning, with contamination levels so high that many required hospitalization. Today, nine years after the smelter was closed down, the town's children are still subject to the risks of nerve, brain and kidney damage from the lead in the soil.

In 1987 and 1988 alone 21,000 workers died in workplace accidents throughout the U.S., while Reagan and Bush have slashed budgets for OSHA. Union-controlled plant safety committees with the power to shut down production are critical for the defense of all workers exposed to dangerously intolerable levels of lead contamination. Only a class-struggle leadership whose bottom line

is the fundamental interest of the workers can launch this urgent struggle.

The Supreme Court has agreed to review the pro-company verdict in the Johnson Controls case. But nine black-robed judges can't win this struggle for women's rights and safe job conditions. This Supreme Court has made it abundantly clear that they are overwhelmingly concerned with death, not with the protection of life for children, for women and especially for minorities. Chief Justice Rehnquist has been the most outspoken proponent of speedup on death row; his court says it is "irrelevant" that the death penalty is given to blacks far more than their proportion in society. As for the elected "representatives of the people," the Congress waxed eloquent about "the rights and lives of women" when they tried to flush out David Souter's position on abortion in his confirmation hearing for the Supreme Court. They gave him the green light despite his evasions—they'd made their "record" for abortion rights which they know wins elections these days. *Nobody* in Congress flinched when Souter indicated his support for the racist death penalty. In fact, both houses just passed bipartisan crime legislation mandating more and expedited state executions.

On 13 May 1985 eleven members of the MOVE commune were murdered in Philadelphia by the government. Their "crime" was that they were an interracial group which called itself a family and took the name Africa, that they advocated the right of self-defense, and that they continued to accuse the ruling powers of Philadelphia of holding in prison their brothers and sisters jailed after 600 cops stormed MOVE's Powelton Village home in 1978. For this "crime," on May 13 the Philly cops dropped C-4 plastic explosive supplied by the FBI on the MOVE home on Osage Avenue, incinerating a whole black neighborhood. MOVE members seeking to flee the inferno were driven back inside to die. Five of the dead were children. Mothers and fathers grieved from behind bars for the dead children they had been separated from years earlier. Ramona Africa was jailed for being the sole adult survivor of the Osage Avenue massacre. Before dropping the bomb, the cops announced on the loudspeaker: "Attention MOVE. This is America." We will never forgive or forget this bloody crime carried out on 13 May 1985, Mother's Day. We will never forget this message from our rulers: in the blood of the MOVE martyrs is written the true measure of this society's concern for the protection of mothers and children.

If the anti-woman outfits like Operation Rescue had met with massive militant labor/minority mobilizations from the start, today the arrogant reactionaries in the White House, the halls of Congress and the corporate boardrooms would think twice before attacking working-class women and children in the name of motherhood and apple pie. But the racists, the woman-haters and the union-busters have been emboldened by the criminal passivity of the labor "leaders." The no-struggle experts atop the AFL-CIO won't even pass a paper motion in support of abortion rights for women—but they stand 100 percent behind their commander in chief in the Persian Gulf. The organized working class must become a forceful defender of democratic rights for the oppressed!

The Bolshevik Communist leader Leon Trotsky pointed out that "To Build Socialism Means to Emancipate

Women and Protect Mothers." Trotsky's appeal to the class-conscious workers to carry out their class duty by waging an implacable struggle against the special oppression of women is relevant right now to the U.S. working class which must and will take up this fight in order to go forward in the life-and-death war against our common class enemy:

"Historical experience shows that even the proletariat, already struggling with the oppressors, is far from prompt in concentrating the necessary attention on the oppressed position of woman as housewife, mother and wife. Such is the terrible force of being accustomed to the family slavery of woman!...

"To alter the position of woman at the root is possible only if all the conditions of social, family and domestic existence are altered. The depth of the question of the mother is expressed in the fact that she is, in essence, a living point where all the decisive strands of economic and cultural work intersect. The question of motherhood is above all a question of an apartment, running water, a kitchen, a laundry room, a dining room. But it is just as much a question of a school, of books, of a place for recreation."

—Leon Trotsky, *Women and the Family*

Even these minimal requirements for daily existence can only be achieved by the working-class struggle for power led by a communist internationalist vanguard party. For women's liberation through socialist revolution! ■

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## Iraq...

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the Emir dissolved the token National Assembly in 1986.

As Germaine Greer pointed out in "Our Allies, the Slave Holders" (*New York Times*, 14 November 1990), British and American troops are supposed to "restore an idle and luxurious life style that depends upon the daily humiliation and degradation of hundreds of thousands." She notes, "Now and then *The Kuwait Times* reported spectacular cases of servants thrown from rooftops, burned or blinded or battered to death; the systematic abuse they endured every day was unworthy of remark. Occasionally, desperate servants ran away, but with no money, no documents and no command of Arabic they had nowhere to go but to the police, and the police would promptly return them to their employers."

Who is the Emir of Kuwait? Greer tells us, "For one thing, he is the kinsman of Sheika Faria el-Sabah and Sheika Samiya, who stole their servant's passport and her two gold teeth, kept her a prisoner in their Bayswater apartment [in London] for four years and gave her no bed but the floor outside the locked kitchen door, and very little sleep in any case, very little food and no wages but daily whippings that have left her scarred for life."

We note, however, that Germaine Greer's indignation at the hideous oppression of these working women is to be taken with a large grain of salt. In 1984, the era of Ayatollah Khomeini, she followed the fashion among petty-bourgeois fake-leftists and declared that "the veil is now a symbol of liberation through self-discipline" (*Sex and Destiny*).

### Saudi Arabia: "The earth is flat" and Women Can't Drive

Saudi Arabia, which includes the most holy Muslim cities of Medina and Mecca, was created in 1925 by a coalition of the extremely conservative and zealous Wahabi sect of Islam and Ibn Saud, who named the region after his family. The Islamic religious strictures (the *Sharia*), in their strict Wahabi interpretation, are law in this feudal dictatorship. Murderers are beheaded, thieves' hands cut off, adulterers stoned and anyone caught drinking is publicly flogged. This last prohibition has even been applied to foreigners: a British woman was sentenced to 80 lashes for serving drinks at a private party in 1980 (the British embassy intervened to prevent the sentence from being carried out).

Saudi women must wear head-to-toe stifling black veils. They are forbidden to appear in public with men or to travel anywhere without permission from fathers, husbands or brothers. A shocking double execution in 1977 demonstrated that even their lives are subject to their male relatives. Although the *Sharia* courts refused to rule on the case of a Saudi princess who married a commoner, they allowed her to suffer the terrible revenge of her grandfather, Prince Muhammad bin Abdul Aziz, who disapproved of the marriage. His bodyguards hacked off the head of Princess Misha's husband in the public square of Jedda, while the princess herself was put upon a pile of sand and shot dead.

The upper-class ladies of the Saudi court may be drip-

ping with jewels under their Parisian-designed veils, may have advanced academic degrees, but they are miserably entrapped nonetheless. Saudi schools are strictly sex-segregated; women can use the library only one day a week at some universities. Saudi Arabia is the only Muslim country where women are forbidden to drive, as a *fatwa* (religious edict) handed down by official religious leader Sheik Abdul al-Aziz bin Abdallah bin Baz confirmed on November 5. The next day some 50 wealthy women met at the Tamimi Safeway parking lot, ordered their chauffeurs to hand over the keys and drove off in their Mercedes-Benzes. Interior Minister Prince Naif Abdul bin Aziz condemned this first-ever protest by Saudi women as "intolerable," declaring that "no laxness would be permitted" (*Libération*, 16 November 1990). A royal decree suspended at least six of the women from their university teaching jobs.

At the other end of the social spectrum, poor and degraded working women endure a litany of unspeakable backwardness and brutality far more silently than the bejeweled princesses.

Some apologists for the Saudi monarchy claim it would like to inch toward reform, but, as the *New York Times* (18 November 1990) noted, "Sheik bin Baz, who is remembered here for proclaiming that the world is flat, is a powerful man." He is the leader of the Committee to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice, which patrols the streets to make sure women's veils cover them properly and that the prayer times are strictly observed. These robed sheiks and emirs and their fanatical advisers must seem to Americans like fantastic creatures out of some fearful dream, like Salman Rushdie's new fairy tale *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. The author, still stalked by a *fatwa* death edict issued by Iran's mullahs, has produced from hiding a fable inhabited by characters with unmistakable Khomeini-like features, a fictional dark land ruled by the evil Khattam-Shud (meaning "completely finished"), "the Arch-Enemy of all Stories, even of Language itself," who threatens to tear out the tongues and sew up the lips of dissenters.

It's a sad comment on American life that some women in the U.S. armed services volunteered for Persian Gulf duty, no doubt hoping for the kind of exciting foreign adventures that men are traditionally supposed to enjoy. But as the *Washington Post* (23 August 1990) headlined, instead they found "Desert Culture Shock: For Female Soldiers, Different Rules." The article, by Molly Moore, points out that in U.S. military exercises elsewhere, men and women sleep in the same tents, but in Saudi Arabia they are segregated. When temperatures soar over 120 degrees, men work in T-shirts, but women must wear fully-buttoned desert jackets.

American women who seek relief in a gymnasium swimming pool may use it only a few hours a week (when men are banned), and must wear loose-fitting blouses and knee-length shorts. A female soldier "can run errands only if escorted by a male who must pay for her toiletries while she stands nearby, eyes focused on the floor to avoid offending Arab shopkeepers." "We work long hours, it's hot, and we can't even have the release of going across the street to the store," said Air Force Lt. Col. Lois Schwartz, who runs the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing's field hospital. On the other hand, the massive



Nogues/Sygma

### Saudi women shrouded in veils under feudal absolute monarchy.

presence of the troops with their modern equipment and lifestyle must be sending deep shock waves through the insular kingdom. Saudi women's desire to drive in their own country must have been sharpened by the sight of young women from Nebraska or Harlem regularly maneuvering their huge fuel trucks over the desert sands.

### For Class Struggle—Here and the Near East!

The vestiges of pre-capitalist oppression and colonial domination have been given new life in this century by imperialism, which must be uprooted by workers revolution to lay the basis for true equality. To bolster its imperialist domination, the U.S. has had a *conscious policy* of encouraging the forces of reaction. Since the end of World War II America's rulers have sought to use religious fundamentalism and reaction as an organized force for counterrevolution. John Foster Dulles, the architect of nuclear "brinkmanship" against the Soviet Union, wrote of Eastern religions: "Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us and our task is to find and develop it."

In Afghanistan, that policy meant that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia armed and financed the *mujahedin* cutthroats, including the Saudi Wahabi fundamentalists, who rape and murder "infidel" women. The U.S. and its feudal allies waged war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Army in defense of illiteracy and women's enslavement. We said "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" in 1980, calling on the Soviet Army to defend and extend the social gains of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution to backward, tribalist Afghanistan. But following the ultimately suicidal logic of Stalinism's appeasement of Western imperialism, Gorbachev criminally withdrew Soviet troops from Afghanistan

in 1989. In 1990 he followed up this betrayal by acquiescing to the capitalist appetite to reconquer Eastern Europe. Now, as he busily dismantles the collectivized property forms of the USSR, this architect of "perestroika" gives his dubious blessings to the U.S. invasion of the Gulf, only 700 miles from the rapidly disintegrating borders of the Soviet Union.

When the U.S. has supported supposedly "modernizing" forces in the Muslim Near East it has been only as a bulwark to hold off imminent workers revolution. The shah of Iran was one such client, as was Saddam Hussein himself. In Iran, the bloody, torturing Shah Pahlavi was installed by the U.S. in 1953, in order to behead the powerful Iranian workers movement. The CIA, then in alliance with the mullahs, brought down the liberal bourgeois nationalist Mossadeq, who threatened to nationalize the oil fields. The shah thought anti-Communism alone would keep him in power, while he instituted a few cosmetic "reforms" in his so-called "White Revolution," and some upper-class women went without veils. But even these token gestures alienated the deep forces of reaction in the country, the bazaar merchants and powerful mullahs, who rose up in a tidal wave of reaction under the fundamentalist Ayatollah Khomeini.

In Iraq in 1958, the working class literally had power in its hands. It was armed and led by the powerful Iraqi Communist Party. But on orders from the Stalinists in Moscow, workers revolution was derailed, and the "Arab nationalist" Ba'ath party of Saddam Hussein came to power in a bloody wave of repression. In 1963 the CIA helped the Ba'ath party murder 5,000 members of the Iraqi CP. Now the U.S. wants to dump him only to install another dictator they hope to manipulate more easily. Hussein is indeed a butcher of his own people, especially militant workers and Kurds, and should be brought down by the Iraqi working masses in alliance with the national minorities who have suffered so terribly under him. Such a perspective would be brought immeasurably closer by a military defeat of the U.S. imperialists who now seek to depose their former ally through bloody subjugation of the Arab peoples.

In the U.S., the outbreak of war will ignite tremendous social explosions in a population still deeply cynical after the Vietnam War. The American working people are already ground down by the Reagan/Bush era of union-busting, budget-cutting, resurgent KKK terror against blacks and fundamentalist terror against women seeking abortions. They have no enthusiasm for this war, even before it's started. Against the fake-leftists and their timid "rad-lib" figureheads desperately seeking Democratic "doves" to tail while whining "No More Vietnams," we Spartacists have raised the slogan, "Vietnam was a victory! Two, three, many defeats for U.S. imperialism!"

At the October 20 antiwar demonstrations we marched under the banner: "Break the Blockade of Iraq! Defeat U.S. Imperialism!" Our strategy is to mobilize the American working class, allied to youth and minorities, against the capitalists' war machine: For a new, class-struggle leadership of the labor movement—For labor political strikes against the impending war! Above all, we of the International Communist League declare that the only way out of this system that spawns poverty, racism and war is through international socialist revolution. ■

# Break the Blockade of Iraq!

1 DECEMBER 1990—Bush, the Pentagon and the Democratic-controlled Congress are plunging into war in the Persian Gulf. The massive U.S. military buildup has now reached almost half a million troops, over half of the total U.S. combat strength worldwide. Washington's bipartisan war policy seeks to reassert American imperialism's military dominance over the whole planet—to stick it to the Soviet Union and to regain economic clout against its "allies" Germany and Japan by seizing Persian Gulf oil fields. Gloating over the "end of the Cold War," Washington has rushed to start a hot war; Bush's "new world order" is to be a free market for unlimited American exploitation. Now Bush, issuing his ultimatums through the mouthpiece of the UN Security Council, has threatened to start the shooting if his former ally Saddam Hussein does not get out of Kuwait by 15 January 1991.

Seldom has it been clearer that this is a rich man's government, sending the poor off to die for it. We say, working people and minorities have no interest in dying so this racist ruling class can lord it over the Near East and perpetuate women's oppression under the veil. The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs fight for class struggle here and in the Near East to drive the U.S. out of the Persian Gulf and topple all the sheiks, colonels and Zionist butchers. The working class internationally has a side—with Iraq and against the U.S. government! A defeat for U.S. imperialism would be a victory for the workers and the oppressed, not least the women of the Persian Gulf.

## Why Die for Kuwaiti Slaveowners?

"What are we fighting for?" asks an increasingly anxious and cynical U.S. population, while troops stuck in the desolate Saudi deserts constantly ask when they can go home—certainly they yearn to get out of a country whose ruling elite rejects the 20th century. The oil-rich, absolute monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait despise blacks, women, Jews, Christians, "American secularism," and foreigners in general. They forbid alcohol and shun any social contact with the soldiers. For women troops especially, the idea of dying for the barbarous tribal chieftains



New York, 20 October 1990—Spartacist contingent marches in protest against U.S. invasion of Persian Gulf. Imperialist war is not a "mistaken policy" but a consequence of reactionary, racist capitalist system.

of Saudi Arabia, where chattel slavery still exists, is surely repugnant.

Why should American citizens—especially blacks, many the descendants of chattels held in bondage under the Southern slavocracy—want to restore the Emir of Kuwait to his throne? Kuwait is an artificial country whose entire workforce is imported, its oil wealth created by Palestinians, Pakistanis, Indians, Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis and others with no rights. The British and French created Kuwait as part of the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, giving the area to the Sabah family in order to limit Iraq's access to the sea. Of some 1,400,000 people living there in 1980, only 570,000 were Kuwaiti; of those, only "first-class citizens" (male descendants of males resident there in 1920) were allowed to vote—some 3.2 percent of the population! Not that there was much to vote for, since political parties were banned and

*continued on page 38*