

Women and Revolution



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From East Berlin to Tashkent: Capitalist Counterrevolution Tramples on Women

SEE PAGE 22

Letter: On Fighting Female Genital Mutilation in France	2
Mobilize Now to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!	4
Murderous Bigotry Against Gays in Mexico—Stop the Killings!	6
Torture of Native Women in Canada . . .	14
Australia: Capitalist Attacks Target Immigrant Women Workers	18
USA: Immigrant Women Workers Expose Racist Abuse.	40
Clinton Bows to Anti-Gay Hysteria . . .	44
Defend NAMBLA!	47
Pro-Death Penalty Clinton: No Friend of Working Women	48



Eastern Germany, April 1992: Media industry workers demand equal pay east and west, protesting starvation wages forced on former DDR workers after capitalist reunification.

Punctured Equilibrium

Stephen Jay Gould and the Mismeasure of Marx

SEE PAGE 8

Letter

On Fighting Female Genital Mutilation in France

Le Bolchévik, the paper of the Ligue Trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League, carried in its September 1992 issue "The Crime of Female Genital Mutilation," together with the companion piece "France: Racist Segregation Perpetuates Ritual Mutilation," both of which appeared originally in *Women and Revolution* No. 41 (Summer/Autumn 1992). The need to publicize and combat the practice of genital mutilation, inflicted on over 90 million women, largely in sub-Saharan Africa, is particularly acute in France where an increasing number of people have sought refuge from the poverty and strife of Africa. Although they are among the most combative members of the French working class, many of these immigrants still follow the cultural practices of their countries of origin. Thus the GAMS, French affiliate of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices, estimates that as many as 25,000 women and girls in France today have either been excised or are at risk of having this barbaric ritual performed on them.

Since the publication of our article last summer, the French state has continued to prosecute those who perform this hideous mutilation on girls. On January 8, a Parisian court sentenced a 34-year-old woman from Gambia to one year in prison (and four more years suspended) under Article 312. In 1987 Teneng Jahate, a ten-year resident of France, paid a midwife \$70 to excise her two daughters, aged one and two years. Both children had to be rushed to a clinic one week later and treated for hemorrhage and infection. While Jahate is free pending appeal (an exceptional legal procedure), she is the first such parent to be sentenced to do time in prison.

Within a month, convictions were handed down in three additional trials, all against Malian immigrants. In Seine-Saint-Denis, Koumba Diané was given a five-year suspended sentence on January 15 for the infibulation of her one-month-old daughter, and three weeks later an

unnamed man was sentenced to a month in prison, with three years suspended, and his two wives to four years suspended, for the excision of their two infant girls. In Paris, Take Traoré and Kura Doukouré, who had their children excised in 1989, each got five-year suspended sentences (although the prosecution had asked for a prison term).

We reprint below our translation of a letter to *Le Bolchévik* in response to our articles by Linda Weil-Curiel, an attorney, spokesman for the women's rights organization SOS Femmes Alternative and militant opponent of the practice of female mutilation in France. She is well known for her defense of Aminata Diop, the 22-year-old Malian woman who fled to France rather than submit to genital mutilation. Diop was denied political asylum by the French state in an overtly racist decision, which proclaimed that such mutilations were not a violation of the Geneva Accords. While an appeals board later overturned the general ruling on mutilations, it upheld the decision to refuse refugee status to Diop herself, who was told to seek protection from...the Malian government! Weil-Curiel's letter is followed here by a reply from *Le Bolchévik*.

* * * * *

Paris

1 October 1992

Dear Madam,

I read with great interest the issue of *Le Bolchévik* which you sent me and I delivered to Aminata the one you sent for her.

The main article is remarkable.

The second one contains several inaccuracies.

For example, I am unhappy that certain views were ascribed to me, especially where it says on the bottom of page 11 that, according to me, "excisions were seen by the French government as a 'cultural problem' rather than a crime."

That is the position adopted by some intellectuals, among whom are numerous ethnologists like M. Meillassoux, who is mentioned in the article, certain judges and unfortunately many doctors.

On the other hand, many members of the government, notably M. Kofi Yamgnane, Secretary of State for Settlement, and M. Michel Rocard, who was then prime minister, have taken clear positions against excision.

Furthermore, when excision cases come before the courts, they are now open to criminal charges.

Contrary to the article's further assertions, the press did not have a voyeuristic attitude but in the main strove to emphasize the cultural and social context of the accused parents, in order to show broadly mitigating circumstances.

Finally, it is not legally correct to write that the Koulibalys were "retroactively judged"; it is false to say that they could not follow the arguments in French in the court, because they were accompanied by interpreters, and you must remember that M. Koulibaly has been in France for

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Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

more than 20 years; and his first wife, Semite, came to France in 1979 and Mme. Keita as well.

Thus there exists a fine difference between the refusal to speak or to understand French and a real incapacity.

Cordially yours,
Linda Weil-Curiel

P.S.: I just received the news that the Counsel of State has declared admissible the appeal lodged against the decision rejecting Aminata's demands.

The inquiry into the case can now go to the Counsel of State.

* * * * *

31 March 1993

Dear Linda Weil-Curiel,

We appreciate your comments on our article in *Le Bolchévick* and regret if we misconstrued any of your remarks in our conversations with you last summer. Our thanks for your update on Aminata Diop's situation; we hope you'll keep us informed so that we can continue to pass on the information to our readers.

There are a few specifics that we'd like to take up in response to your letter. The law introduced into the Penal Code in 1981 (Article 312) concerns "blows and violence against children less than 15 years old." It was only in August 1983 that a decree by the Court of Appeals ruled that excision of the clitoris is a mutilation as defined in Article 312. The Koulibalys had their daughters excised between 1982 and 1983, that is, before the act was declared a crime under French law. Moreover, the Koulibalys were initially charged in 1985 with a misdemeanor offense; by the time they were actually brought to trial in 1991, the magistrates court had handed over the case to the assize court and they were tried on felony charges. The Koulibalys were indeed "retroactively judged."

Our assertion that the Koulibalys did not get the translation assistance they needed is backed up by an article in the *Le Monde* supplement to the *Guardian Weekly* of 24 March 1991:

"The three accused listened to the proceedings without understanding them. Their two interpreters did not translate the debate being conducted in court—which occasionally took on the air of a symposium.

"Occasionally the woman public prosecutor Dominique Commaret would ask a question. The interpreters rose to their feet...."

Our insistence on the racist and undemocratic nature of French bourgeois justice should not be construed, however, as opposition to the prosecution of those who mutilate their little girls. We are in favor of laws against genital mutilation, even though the laws are promulgated by the bourgeoisie, a class whose aims are counterposed to those of the world proletariat and the oppressed. In fact, our



Marc Chaumel

October 1992: French cops surround encampment of African immigrants at Vincennes in Paris. Government-enforced racist segregation of immigrants reinforces cultural isolation and the practice of female genital mutilation.

article objected to the casual manner in which these prosecutions were pursued, and noted that while the press ran sensational headlines like "Circumcision on Trial," the parents who performed or paid for others to perform these mutilations were not being put behind bars. In addition, we are in favor of a law specifically against excision and infibulation. The 1981 law under which these brutal acts are being tried today does not mention any word associated directly with the mutilation of sexual organs. It is very vague and therefore is subject to misunderstanding and arbitrary interpretation.

You ascribe the attitude that genital mutilation is a "cultural problem" to some intellectuals, certain judges and doctors. We acknowledge this to be the case as well. But it certainly has also been a feature of the French government. As the 16 October 1989 issue of *Time* magazine reported: "Wary of being labeled cultural imperialists, French officials have been loath to bring Africans like Traoré to book for having their daughters circumcised, even though at least four baby girls in France have died since 1978 as a result of the operation." Recently the government has become more aggressive in their prosecutions—witness the outcome of the Jahate case. And we have no reason to doubt that there are some government officials who are genuinely concerned with the plight of young African girls in France.

At bottom, however, we have a real difference with you over the nature of the French capitalist state. Unlike countries of the Third World which have not undergone industrial revolutions, the Western "democracies" have accorded to women and children certain fundamental legal rights which we defend. But these same states offer

continued on page 17

Abolish the Racist Death Penalty! Mobilize Now to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is in a struggle for his life. A lifelong fighter for black equality, Jamal is one of more than 140 men and women waiting on Pennsylvania's death row, where Democratic governor Robert Casey is gearing up that state's murder machine. Casey, the "pro-life" signatory of the draconian anti-abortion law upheld by the Supreme Court in June 1992, has made no secret of his intent to preside over Pennsylvania's first "legal" lynching in 30 years. All opponents of the racist death penalty must mobilize now to fight to stop the executions and demand that Mumia Abu-Jamal must not die!

By the time of his 1981 arrest, Jamal's political activities had made him a target of Philly mayor Frank Rizzo's racist cops for more than a decade. At the age of 13, Mumia was beaten and arrested for protesting a rally for Alabama governor George "Segregation Forever" Wallace, held in the white racist bastion of South Philadelphia. At 14, Mumia was cofounder and Minister of Information of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party. At his trial, prosecutors seized on a statement he made as a young militant of 16 that "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" to argue that Jamal must be a cop-killer. A classic Southern-style racist frame-up trial on charges of killing a cop sent Jamal to death row.

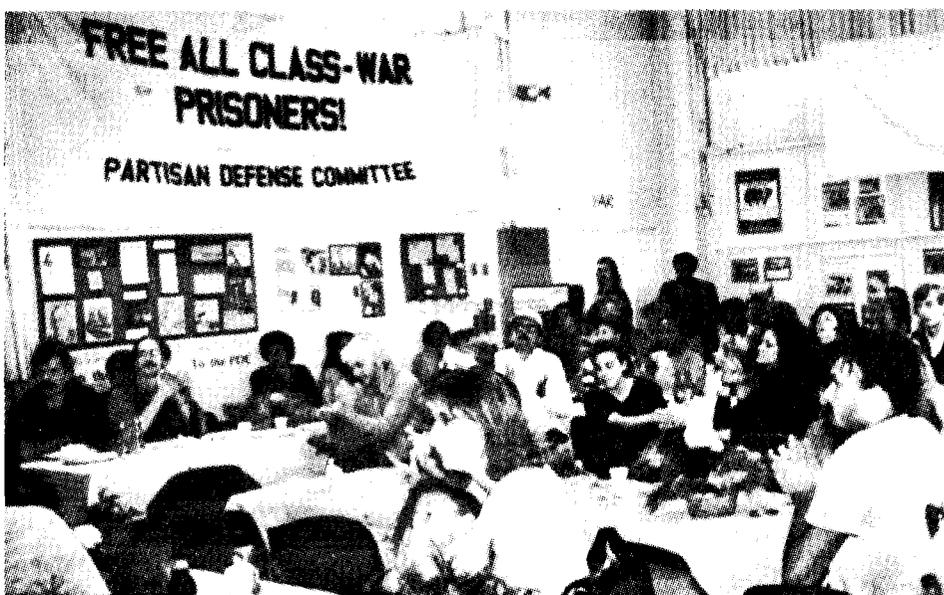
A widely acclaimed journalist since 1970, Jamal broadcast on national radio networks, becoming known as the "voice of the voiceless" for his searing critiques of American racism. He is a well-known supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization, itself the target of a

murderous vendetta unleashed by Rizzo's cops. In 1978 Jamal was targeted as one of a "new breed of journalists" covering Rizzo's campaign against MOVE, including the siege of the Powelton Village MOVE home by more than 600 heavily armed cops. In 1985, this vendetta culminated in Mayor Wilson Goode's FBI-abetted murderous bombing of MOVE, which left eleven black people, including five children, dead.

American Way of Death

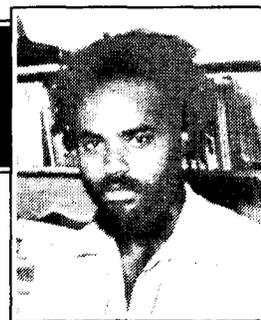
The witchhunt against Mumia Abu-Jamal is what the racist death penalty is all about. The U.S. leads all industrialized countries in executions. As American urban centers become increasingly deindustrialized, throwing hundreds of thousands out on the streets, the government's bloodlust grows ever greater. For over a dozen years the Supreme Court has been greasing the assembly line of death—discarding judicial precedents, shredding what reality there was to the Bill of Rights, even stripping a federal appeals court of power in order to "get on with it." Now, even innocence is no defense. On January 25, the Supreme Court baldly declared in the case of Mexican American Leonel Herrera that evidence of innocence is not constitutional grounds for overturning a death sentence!

To the bloody rulers of this country, innocence doesn't matter when the victim of state murder is poor, black or Hispanic, like most of the more than 2,500 men and women on death row. And this campaign for death is *bipartisan*. Clinton took his own oath of loyalty to the



Partisan Defense Committee fund-raising benefit in San Francisco on 13 December 1992 heard a taped message from Mumia Abu-Jamal, a black political prisoner and journalist fighting for his life on Pennsylvania's death row.

From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal



Down With Flags of Racism!

If the saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words," is even remotely true, then the picture I saw must be worth, at least, two thousand words.

The picture, published in the *Workers Vanguard*, shows a man with suspenders, holding a long metal pole with a scythe-like cutting device on its end, ripping a huge flag from a wall mounting in June 1992.

The flag?

A dark field with a light circle in the center, boasting a massive black swastika—the symbol of Germany's fascist past; the symbol of the Third Reich, the Nazis.

The wall from which it was hung? Not a dingy beerhall, where neo-Nazis gathered, but high, on a public wall near the Brandenburg Gate, in the heart of Berlin, part of a so-called government "historical display."

The man-in-suspenders, a supporter of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (or Spartakist Workers Party of Germany), instead of being publicly applauded, found himself and several SpAD comrades taken into police custody for daring to disrespect the symbol of the Nazi terror.

He, Toralf Endruweit, Werner Brand, Ronald Krüger and Renate Dahlhaus, found themselves under arrest, until the spontaneous demonstration formed by people who witnessed the action, including supporters of the Kurdish Workers Party, demanded and got their immediate release.

Now Endruweit, Brand, Krüger and Dahlhaus are going on trial, by a state that seems bent on honoring and resurrecting the symbol of Nazi state terror—the swastika.

The picture of Endruweit ripping the Nazi death symbol down brought to mind pictures of southern

black legislators, climbing atop state capitols in Dixie, to tear down the flag of the Confederacy, a symbol of slavery. Several were arrested.

As offensive as the crossed bars and stars of the Confederate flag was to African-Americans, so too must the swastika flag enrage and offend Jews, Romani (Gypsies), Communists and homosexuals, all of whom were fed to the gas chambers and death ovens, while the Nazi banner flew above carnage.

In the ripping down of the Nazi flag from the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, the SpAD supporters did the right thing—better still by burning the racist rag.

For over a year since the flag was torn down, newly reunited Germany has exploded in a murderous orgy of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (German for hostility to foreigners) aided, abetted and exploited by unprincipled politicians from the major parties.

Since Reagan's salute to the Waffen SS in the Bitburg cemetery a mushrooming of neo-Nazi and skinhead terror has gripped Germany, marked most recently by the firebombing murder of a Turkish family of longtime immigrants several months ago.

In this hour then, as the state tries to embark on its Fourth Reich, progressive forces must put aside their partisan interests and applaud the ripping down of the racist rag bearing the swastika.

Demand freedom and acquittal for Endruweit, Brand, Krüger and Dahlhaus!

Support the SpAD defendants!

Down with the flag of racism and reaction!

Aus der Todeszelle, hier spricht Mumia Abu-Jamal.
From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

14 January 1993

death penalty when he left the campaign trail to oversee the execution of brain-damaged black prisoner Rickey Ray Rector in Arkansas.

The Partisan Defense Committee has played a leading role in the campaign to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal and to abolish the racist death penalty. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. We must mobilize now to save Jamal! It will take an international campaign of protest to stop the killing machine, and it will take a workers revolution to put it out of business once and for all. Mumia Abu-Jamal must not die!

We urge our readers to support and build the PDC. Become a monthly sustaining contributor. Send a donation of \$5 or more and receive a subscription to *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*. Write to the Partisan Defense Committee at Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, or call (212) 406-4252.

Join the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal! Jamal and his attorneys, led by Leonard Weinglass, are preparing a new legal challenge in the Pennsylvania courts to expose the frame-up conviction and sentence of death. Please help! Tax-deductible contributions for the defense should be made payable to the Bill of Rights Foundation and sent to the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001.

Murderous Bigotry Against Gays in Mexico—Stop the Killings!

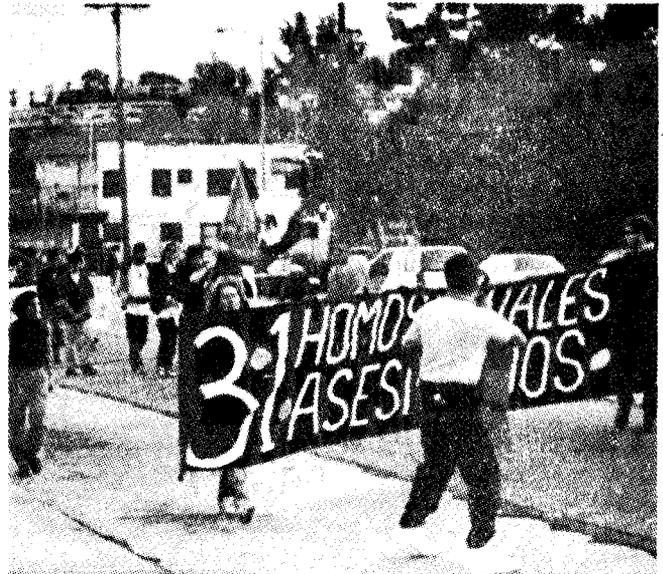
For the past two years a series of sinister, execution-style killings of homosexuals in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas has shocked and terrorized the gay community there and become nationally notorious. So far 31 men have been gunned down, most of them transvestites working in the city's widely popular nightclubs, but also witnesses to prior murders, as well as AIDS activists and gay rights leaders—the more highly visible members of the gay community. "A systematic campaign has been waged...seemingly to eliminate homosexuals and especially transvestites," declared the Department of Human Rights of the Archdiocese of Mexico (*Reporter*, 3 March).

No isolated aberration, the Chiapas murders are part of a frightening upsurge in gay-bashing attacks throughout Latin America: in Brazil, 1,200 gay men and 37 lesbians have been murdered in the last 12 years, while in Colombia, murders of gays total 328 in five years. Gay and civil rights activists have documented at least 50 violent attacks on gays in Mexico in the same period, including the execution-style killings of five gay men in Mexico City. In July 1992 Dr. Francisco Estrada, a prominent AIDS activist, and two other medical specialists were found dead, bound and gagged with their throats slashed, in Estrada's Coyoacán apartment. The tabloid press sensationalized the killings to whip up bigotry, speculating on the sex lives of the victims, insinuating they had AIDS (they did not) and had been murdered by someone they had infected.

Protests against the murders have included a small, angry demonstration last November 17, organized by the Gay Cultural Center and endorsed by several gay rights groups, in front of the Chiapas government office in Mexico City. In deeply homophobic Mexico, it takes considerable courage to demonstrate against anti-gay violence. Shamefully, virtually the entire ostensible left (including most of those groups who claim to be defenders of gay rights) was conspicuous by its absence. When members of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), sympathizing group of the International Communist League, arrived, they were warmly welcomed by the protesters.

Demands from gay rights and civil rights groups have centered on pressuring the governor of Chiapas to "seriously investigate" the murders and calling for a special prosecutor to look into police complicity in the crimes. Gay groups are even participating as official advisers in the government "investigation." Yet the murders smell of government and police involvement at the highest levels.

Last summer, Mexican human rights activist Teresa Jardí, member of a delegation looking into the Chiapas murders investigation, denounced the killings as characteristic of extrajudicial executions carried out by the police. At a March 19 protest in Mexico City, the Lesbian-Homosexual International Community said that the killers' professionalism pointed to connections with police and/or military forces. León Corrales, a parliamentary deputy of the Cardenista popular-frontist Party of the Democratic Revolu-



W&R Photo

Los Angeles, March 19: March against murders in Mexico raises banner protesting "31 homosexuals assassinated."

tion, said that most of the killings have been perpetrated with "professional methods and arms restricted to the use of police and military bodies."

The cops have used the official investigation only for arbitrary detentions and torture of gays, while Chiapas governor González Garrido smeared the victims as guilty of "an act of trickery...provoking violent reactions." Furthermore, the government's first act in response to the murders was to close the nightclubs, forcing many transvestites into even greater danger as prostitutes in the streets. According to Russ Gage of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, "There has been no investigation. There were only ploys to take the heat off the police."

After dragging in gays and other unlikely suspects for questioning, the Chiapas police claimed in December 1992 they had "solved" the murders, arresting Martín Ramón Moguel López on two murder charges dating from November. Later claiming his confession had been extracted under torture, Moguel López implicated Alfonso Sarmiento, a former judicial police chief, and Germán Jiménez Gómez, a former federal deputy for the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and a pro-government peasant leader, as the masterminds of the crimes.

Meanwhile, civil rights workers have documented ongoing, brutal repression throughout Chiapas of political activists who dare to protest the PRI. In the course of a few days in October 1992 alone, dozens of people were beaten and arrested in violent police attacks. In the town of Amatán on October 16, 500 police broke up a road blockade organized by citizens protesting the mayor, im-

prisoned 87 people (including three babies) without arrest warrants, beat protesters and sacked two cooperatives and a health center. In Simojovel on October 14, 800 police forced Tzotzil Indians off land they had been occupying for weeks, arresting nearly 60 people. In Chilón on October 16, police punched, kicked and beat with rifle butts some 12 people, mostly women, protesting the power monopoly over the local water supply. In the southern part of Mexico there is also the crucial issue of immigration rights; thousands of Guatemalan refugees who fled death squad terror live in virtual police-state conditions under the heavy hand of the Mexican authorities.

Two years ago, Chiapas was the focus of an important battle over abortion rights, when an attempt to liberalize the state's abortion code drew furious opposition from the Catholic hierarchy and its ultrarightist allies. The role of the church in fomenting reaction and bigotry is underlined by the Vatican's beatification last December of 24 Mexican "martyrs" of the Cristero Revolt, the ultrarightist clerical rebellion that bloodied large parts of rural Mexico in the 1920s and '30s. This flamboyant spitting on the limited gains of the Mexican Revolution goes hand in hand with President Salinas de Gortari's efforts to subordinate the country ever more fully to U.S. imperialist domination through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The Chiapas murders turn a spotlight on explosive social

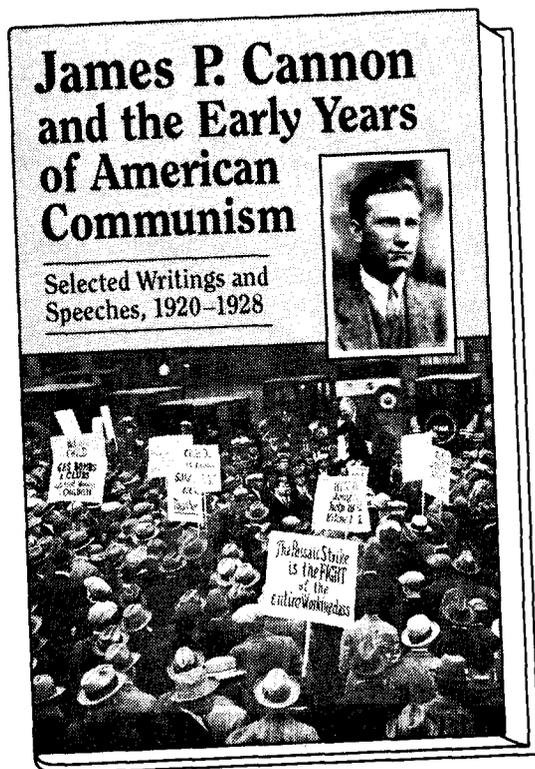
issues in Mexico. Widespread violence against homosexuals accompanies the deepgoing oppression of women; *machismo* and bigotry against gays accompany ruling-class ranting about "defense of the family." In a statement published in the Mexico City papers *El Día* and *Generación*, our comrades underscored the urgency of mobilizing the Mexican proletariat against the rise of anti-gay bigotry. As against futile appeals to the government to "defend" gays, the GEM emphasized the power of groups like the CNTE, the mass dissident movement within the national teachers union, scores of whose supporters in Chiapas have been murdered and "disappeared":

"The vile murders of homosexuals in Chiapas and other parts of the country, fueled by the barbaric homophobic statements of the Catholic hierarchy and government officials, demand an energetic response from all defenders of democratic rights. These crimes affect all the oppressed and exploited. The working class has the duty and the power to defend the democratic rights of homosexuals."

The Mexican left overwhelmingly subscribes to one version or another of a mythical "democratic revolution," but it will take a socialist revolution to lay the basis for eliminating the systematic oppression of homosexuals. It is the duty of Trotskyists to fight for a united class-struggle defense of all victims of right-wing attacks; the struggle for equality and justice for some cannot be separated from the struggle for the rights of all. ■

Prometheus Research Library Book

James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928



James P. Cannon (1890-1974) was a founding leader of American Communism and later a central collaborator of exiled Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky. A leader of the IWW, he was later a founder of the International Labor Defense and active in its defense campaign for the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. This new volume of Cannon's writings covers the period when Cannon was one of the principal leaders of the American section of the Communist International, filling a gap in his published works. A supplement to Theodore Draper's two-volume history of American Communism's first decade and to Cannon's own *The First Ten Years of American Communism*, this book provides new and revealing documentary material on the American party and sheds new light on the Stalinization of the Communist International.

624 pages, Smyth-sewn binding, the book includes:

- Extensively documented introduction
- Explanatory footnotes for Cannon's text
- 16 pages of rare historical photographs
- Glossary of names and terms with over 200 entries
- Bibliography of Cannon's works, 1912-1928
- Index

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Punctured Equilibrium

Stephen Jay Gould and the Mismeasure of Marx

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 563, 13 November 1992.

Stephen Jay Gould describes himself as a teacher of biology, geology and the history of science. He is a rare commodity in the contemporary scientific world: one who is both an original thinker in his field and a facile communicator of science to the general public. He brings to mind another great popularizer of science, the late Isaac Asimov, who combined an academic career as a biochemist with a prodigious literary output (nearly 500 books), especially of science fiction, which attracted an entire generation of future scientists. Gould has dealt with science fact rather than fiction. His writings on natural history, which we Spartacists have found thought-provoking, are perhaps best known in his collections of essays (e.g., *Ever Since Darwin*, *The Panda's Thumb*) and books including *The Mismeasure of Man* and *Wonderful Life*.

Gould is also quite unusual in contemporary American science for forthrightly acknowledging that Marx and Engels had prescient insights on human biological and sociological evolution—a question which fascinates both Gould and ourselves. We were struck, therefore, by how far Gould strays from a scientific approach in his October 1992 column in *Natural History*, where he writes that the “Soviet collapse” signifies that “Marx’s economics has failed spectacularly, at least in the largest and longest experiment ever carried out in its name.”

Gould’s column, “Life in a Punctuation,” extensively quotes from an article by David Warsh, “Redeeming Karl Marx” (*Boston Globe*, 3 May 1992). Warsh begins with the statement, “So much for communism, Russian-style.” But then he asks, “what has happened to Karl Marx?... Does that mean that Marx will be consigned to the intellectual scrap heap? Probably not. As a symbol, he’ll be around as long as people hunger for justice—a tarnished but evocative figure, in whose name great crimes have been committed, not unlike other great religious figures, Jesus and Mohammed.” It’s hardly “redemption” to reduce Marx, the dialectical materialist and revolutionary, to the role of a religious figure. But Warsh acknowledges the enduring power of Marx’s ideas, adding that “you don’t need even a smattering of recondite economics to understand Marx’s enduring place in the modern world. His memorial is the word revolution....”

Warsh in his article cites Marx as the father of the “idea of punctuated equilibrium,” which was developed



Steve Liss

Stephen Jay Gould

by Gould and his associate Niles Eldredge in the early 1970s in the field of evolutionary biology. This is an application in the field of natural science of Marx’s refutation of gradualism and his understanding that the development of history proceeds through revolutionary leaps. Gould describes the counterrevolutionary transformation taking place in the former Soviet Union also as a “punctuation.” Drawing on observations gleaned during a brief trip to Moscow and Leningrad last summer, he arrives at his conclusion about the “failed experiment” of Marxist economics. Gould’s wrongheaded conclusion is based on a misunderstanding of what Marxism represents, and ignores the whole historical development which led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The 1917 October Revolution and its subsequent development was no isolated lab test in a Petri dish! Any evaluation of what happened in the former USSR that leaves out the historic context, the tremendous external pressures upon it and its impact on the rest of the world, cannot be scientific, and will certainly be wrong.

Gould does not pretend to be a political theorist per se, but when he addresses such questions, we can ask that he do so with the rigor that he would apply in his own field. We doubt that he would make such sweeping statements about scientific opponents without a careful study of their works. Gould’s view of the Soviet collapse

Swersey/NY Times



Results of capitalist counterrevolution: no money, no lines. Price-gouging petty entrepreneur in Moscow fruit market.

reminds us a bit of a would-be biologist coming upon a mass of drowned caribou at a river crossing and, upon viewing the evidence before his eyes, pronouncing the species not viable. Gould has trenchantly pointed to the influence of political bias in shaping scientific views. In a 1978 workshop on dialectics at Harvard, he remarked that "it's not irrelevant that my daddy raised me a Marxist" (*Science and Nature* No. 2, 1979). But what did he learn as Marxism?

And why does Gould, a member of the advisory board of the journal *Rethinking Marxism*, lend credence to the current bourgeois brouhaha over the "death of communism"? Let us put forward our own hypothesis: that Gould confuses Marxism with its falsification, Stalinism, which has indeed been struck a mortal blow. We find it remarkable that in his remarks on the Soviet Union he never mentions the name Leon Trotsky. Even conservative bourgeois historians recognize the need to address Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution,

if only in an attempt to refute it. And in a broader methodological sense, Gould accepts the Stalinist caricature of Marxism as a kind of mechanistic determinism. "He was still a child of his mechanistic age," writes Gould, and "embodied a related conviction that directions of change are progressive, predictable and well-nigh inevitable." Marx "hoped for a predictive theory of history, with progressive stages proceeding in a punctuational manner from primitive communism to slavery to feudalism to capitalism and finally to true communism."

This comes not from Marx but from Stalin's primer on *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, 1938 edition, or one of those unreadable Soviet "diamat" manuals that present a mechanical and deterministic distortion of dialectical materialism. Marx, in his 1857-58 manuscripts on pre-capitalist economic formations, the *Grundrisse*, also wrote of an "Asiatic mode of production" in ancient Mesopotamia, India, China and elsewhere. Yet these writings were suppressed by the Kremlin for decades, because



Progress Publishers

no credit

Karl Marx regarded the 1871 Paris Commune as the first expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Commune (right) inspired the 1917 October Revolution in Russia.



Peter Newark's Historical Pictures

Bolshevik Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky (at right) looked forward to worldwide socialist revolution. Workers councils (above) were base of soviet government.



Wide World



VAAP

Banner of the Putilov factory workers reads, "Long Live the Russian Revolution as a Prologue to Social Revolution in Europe!"

they didn't fit into Stalin's simplistic schema, which reduced Marxism to a pseudo-materialist catechism. In contrast, Trotsky wrote, in his speech on "Radio, Science, Technology, and Society" (March 1926):

"Liberal scholars—now they are no more—commonly used to depict the whole of the history of mankind as a continuous line of progress. This was wrong. The line of progress is curved, broken, zigzagging. Culture now advances, now declines. There was the culture of ancient Asia, there was the culture of antiquity, of Greece and Rome, then European culture began to develop, and now American culture is rising in skyscrapers."

Or consider Rosa Luxemburg's poignant phrase from *World War I*, that mankind faces the stark alternatives: socialism or barbarism.

In fact, even in the first lines of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels noted that class struggles ended "either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes." This is a theme which echoes throughout their later writings. Engels' 1891 introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France* warned of the dangers of a European war involving tens of millions of men at arms. This was written over two decades before the cataclysm of World War I. Marx and Engels' dialectical outlook showed how existing and developing economic forces pave the way for social change but don't automatically "determine" that this or that political leadership will accomplish a particular historically possible task.

Gould acknowledges his intellectual debt to Marx—and

to Engels—whose dialectical and materialist analysis unlocked an understanding of historical forces, and has been clearly shown to apply equally well to the natural sciences. Lenin, in his 1913 biographical sketch of Marx, quoted from Engels, with his own bracketed notes:

"Marx and I were pretty well the only people to rescue conscious dialectics [from the destruction of idealism, including Hegelianism] and apply it in the materialist conception of Nature...."

"Nature is the proof of dialectics, and it must be said for modern natural science that it has furnished extremely rich [this was written before the discovery of radium, electrons, the transmutation of elements, etc.!] and daily increasing materials for this test, and has thus proved that in the last analysis Nature's process is dialectical and not metaphysical."

This has been proved in virtually every field of science, from quantum mechanics to mathematics to recent developments in the understanding of how consciousness and perception occur in the human brain, and to Gould's own area of biology.

Consciousness and Contingency

The basic premise of Gould's theory of "punctuated equilibrium" is that species are stable for long periods, on the multimillion-year scale of geological time, until some geographical isolation separates a formerly genetically "homogeneous" population, or some climatic change or catastrophic event opens up new niches into which new species rapidly evolve. This "punctuation" is then

followed by a new stasis. The nature of the changes during the "punctuation" are governed by what Gould calls "contingency"—i.e., along the rocky road of evolution, genetic change is essentially random and nature's path unpredictable, subject to the impact of powerful environmental events.

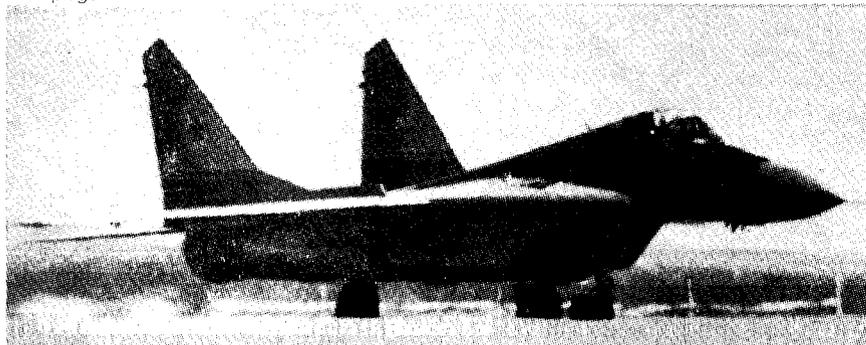
This is fine, so far as natural history is concerned. But when Gould considers a complex social question such as the USSR, his concept of "punctuation" guts Marxism of its key factor: the "contingent" factor is not nature's random choice but rather the presence or absence of conscious leadership. Take the work Gould cites, Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Marx describes in great detail how at many key points in the period 1848-51, the faction-ridden French bourgeoisie could have moved to prevent Bonaparte's coup d'état. Marx lays bare that the fundamental question was a clash of class forces: the proletariat lacked the strength and leadership to take power in its own name, while the bourgeoisie, in fear of the ghosts of 1789 (and the proletarian masses of 1848), dawdled and surrendered political power to Bonaparte in order to preserve its economic class interests. And the bourgeoisie's response was no accidental fluke of "contingency"—the big financiers made a conscious choice that their sacred property was better defended by the empire than by the republic.

One might ask Gould, if Marx and Engels were such mechanical determinists, convinced that communism inevitably follows from capitalism as night from day, why then did they devote so much time to organizing a revolutionary political party, from the Communist League to the First and Second Internationals?

What does it mean, as Gould claims, that "Marx's economics has failed"? The economic system which issued out of the October Revolution proved the power of centralized planning. In describing his visit to Russia, Gould describes the Moscow subway system as "the world's best," and applauds "the wonderful paleontological museum in Moscow...one of the world's best both in content and display." How does Gould account for these achievements? Is it "Marx's economics" or capitalist market forces that are responsible for the fact that the museum is now closed indefinitely? Central planning performed wonders in transforming the Soviet Union from a backward peasant country to a modern industrial and military power that was capable of defeating the Nazi juggernaut

From Dnieperstroy hydroelectric station to MIG-29s: achievements of planned socialized economy—despite Stalinist bureaucratic mismanagement—which transformed USSR into modern industrial society.

Der Spiegel



in World War II and was the first to launch satellites into space. As American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon said in 1939:

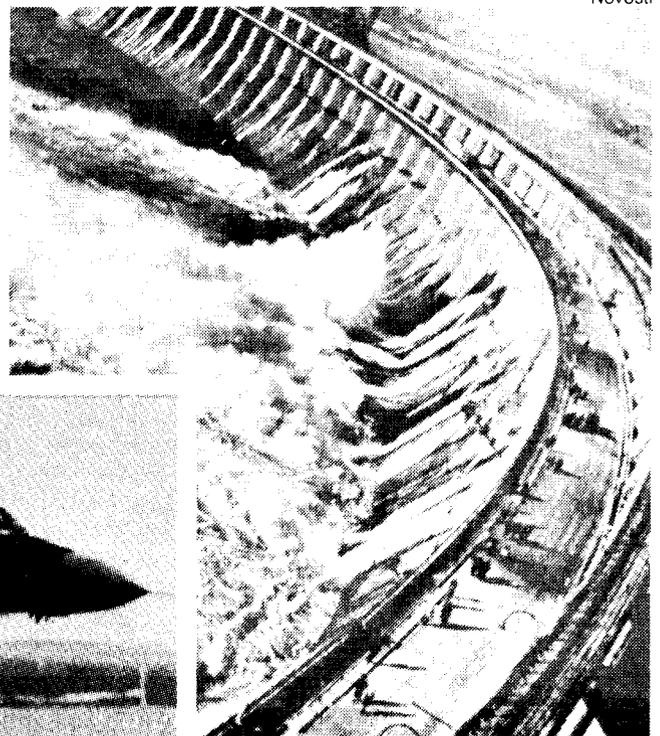
"The Russian revolution showed in practice, by example, how the workers' revolution is to be made.... By its victory, and its reorganization of the social system, the Russian revolution has proved for all time the superiority of nationalized property and planned economy over capitalist private property, and planless competition and anarchy in production."

—*The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*

So what *did* happen in the USSR? Where Gould claims that the Soviet collapse proved Marxism wrong, Trotsky long ago predicted that the continued domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy would necessarily lead to capitalist restoration. In his article, "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (October 1933), he wrote: "The further unhindered development of bureaucratism must lead inevitably to the cessation of economic and cultural growth, to a terrible social crisis and to the downward plunge of the entire society. But this would imply not only the collapse of the proletarian dictatorship but also the end of bureaucratic domination. In place of the workers' state would come not 'social bureaucratic' but capitalist relations."

Trotsky pounded away at this theme, warning in his article "The Workers' State, Thermidor, and Bonapartism" (February 1935) that: "The inevitable collapse of the Stalinist political regime will lead to the establishment of Soviet democracy only in the event that the removal of Bonapartism comes as the conscious act of the proletarian vanguard. In all other cases, in place of Stalinism there could only come the fascist-capitalist counterrevolution." And again in his comprehensive analysis of the Stalinist degeneration, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), he sharply posed the two alternatives: "Will the bureaucrat devour the workers' state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucrat?" How Gould missed this and other writings

Novosti



by Trotsky is a mystery to us, particularly since Trotsky's archives are located in Harvard's Houghton Library, just a short walk from the buildings in which Gould works.

Stalinism vs. Marxism

The program of Marxism is *world proletarian revolution*. Marx insisted that the construction of socialism would occur on the basis of an international division of labor and on the highest level of development of the productive forces, "because without it only *want* is made general, and with *destitution* the struggle for necessities begins again and all the old crap must revive" (*The German Ideology* [1846]). Only with the "universal development of productive forces is a *universal* intercourse between men established," he wrote, for without this "each extension of intercourse would abolish local communism." Lenin and Trotsky stood for this internationalist perspective; they looked on the Russian Revolution as the first step in a European-wide revolution. In fact, none of the Bolshevik cadres thought that the Russian Revolution could survive without international extension, above all to Germany.

The idea that "socialism" could be built in a single country (and a backward one at that), surrounded by imperialist enemies, is a nationalist perversion of Marxism. One of the early exponents of such a "theory" was the revisionist German Social Democrat Georg Vollmar; at least he was honest about his revision of Marxism and sought to apply it to advanced capitalist Germany, not backward Russia. Even Stalin himself repudiated the very idea in his pamphlet "Foundations of Leninism" issued in the spring of 1924:

"The principal task of socialism—the organization of socialist production—has still to be fulfilled. Can this task be fulfilled, can the final victory of socialism be achieved in one country, without the joint efforts of the proletarians in several advanced countries? No, it cannot. To overthrow the bourgeoisie the efforts of one country are sufficient; this is proved by the history of our revolution. For the final victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of a peasant country like Russia, are insufficient; for that the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are required."

Several months later, Stalin reversed himself and the first edition of his pamphlet was withdrawn. Now Stalin declared that the Soviet Union "can and must build a socialist society" within the confines of a single country.

Stalin's dogma of "socialism in one country" was the ideological afterbirth of a political counterrevolution which defeated Leninist internationalism and brought to power a nationalist bureaucratic caste. The failure of the German Revolution of 1923 greatly assisted the consolidation of this conservative stratum. The fact that Stalin had to ruthlessly purge and murder all the Bolshevik cadres who had led the October Revolution should be sufficiently sanguinary evidence of the gulf between the bureaucracy and Marxism. Trotsky characterized the Soviet Union under Stalinist rule as a degenerated workers state and called for a proletarian political revolution to restore soviet democracy.

The October Revolution was an enormous leap forward for mankind—the first time that the proletariat took state power in its own name. Such a conquest had to be defended; Trotsky and the Left Opposition fought the



Spartacist

Moscow, 7 November 1991: Trotskyists protest closing of Lenin Museum. ICL sign calls for "Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky."

degeneration of the revolution, and they fought to unconditionally defend the Soviet Union against counterrevolution, despite and against Stalin. The Soviet system hardly developed in a bell jar. The Civil War of 1918-20, in which 14 foreign armies invaded the young Soviet republic, devastated the country. A generation later the Nazi invaders killed 27 million Soviet citizens and turned much of Russia into scorched earth. Twice the economy was rebuilt on socialized property forms, despite the constant capitalist economic pressure, most recently manifested in a colossal arms race designed to bankrupt the Soviet economy.

In the absence of soviet workers democracy, the planned economy could only go so far. As Trotsky predicted, when the period of extensive growth under Stalin gave way to the need for intensive development, for qualitative improvements in productivity, the bureaucratic "command" economy began to founder. Congenitally hostile to promoting the spread of revolution internationally, the Stalinist bureaucracy finally saw no way out but the introduction of market relations. Under Gorbachev the bureaucracy scuttled central planning as a conscious choice. The result of *abandoning planning in a planned economy*, however bureaucratically distorted, was economic chaos that spurred the drive for power by emerging capitalist forces. Compounding that problem are the consequences of the fragmenting of the USSR: the economy had been organized on an all-Union basis.

Today various Stalinist remnants are arguing that the Soviet Union was a "failed model of socialism," the result of the proletariat seizing power in backward Russia. This completely abstracts the question from its historical context. Amid the carnage of the First World War, the imperialist chain broke at its "weakest link," in Lenin's words. The key to the Russian Revolution was the conscious factor: the Bolshevik Party, rooted in the working class and with a program for proletarian power. In contrast, that very "contingent" factor was lacking in Germany—the Communist Party there was only constituted in December 1918, and it proved inadequate in the 1923 revolutionary

crisis. Had the German proletariat made its October, subsequent history would have been very different. The isolation of the Soviet Union would have been broken and the way opened for socialist revolutions throughout Europe, cutting off the consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy. And a certain Austrian-born corporal would have spent the rest of his days hanging out in Munich beer halls.

But that's not the way it worked out, and mankind has suffered greatly with the outcome. Gould's essay cites Marx's aphorism from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please." He might also have included the rest of the sentence: "they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."

"Punctuating to a Better Place"

Gould astutely observes that "Russia is presently in the midst of a punctuation that must soon resolve itself in one way or another—into some form of promise or prosperity, or some species of chaos and dissolution." In his own way, Gould sees something that we have insisted on since Yeltsinite counterrevolution gained the ascendancy in August 1991: that this ushered in an *unstable* interregnum. From our statement then that Moscow workers should have torn down Yeltsin's barricades, to our call for workers committees to seize control over food supplies last winter, we have called for workers political revolution to sweep away the capitalist-restorationist regimes and place the proletariat in power.

Gould reports on the economic and social disintegration in the rush to capitalist counterrevolution; this is apparent even in his anecdotal observations from July 1992. Institutes and museums are closed for lack of rubles to pay the staff; people meet in impromptu market areas desperately seeking otherwise unobtainable items. The cataclysmic descent into the "free market" has already provided such capitalist virtues as homelessness, unemployment, street crime and the collapse of medical care. The *New York Times* (4 October 1992) reports that 60 percent of Soviet children now have rickets. According to the bourgeois sages, these and other ills are related to the previous Communist (Stalinist) regime's environmental crimes, but rickets is not due to mercury or PCBs—it is due to *malnutrition*: the lack of vitamin D.

Gould has done great service in his voluminous writings debunking wrongheaded and outright racist ideas found in the scientific literature, noting that scientists are influenced by the dominant ideologies of the societies in which they live. In *The Mismeasure of Man* he states:

"Scientists needn't become explicit apologists for their class or culture in order to reflect these pervasive aspects of life.... I believe that science must be understood as a social phenomenon, a gutsy, human enterprise, not the work of robots programmed to collect pure information."

Yet when considering the situation in Russia, Gould himself is held in thrall by the triumphalism of bourgeois anti-communism. He takes the "pure information" of the Soviet collapse to assert the failure of Marxism.

Gould applies contingency to human society in a mechanistic fashion, downplaying the role of consciousness, historically and materially conditioned. Human beings are not snails. In the October Revolution, accident played its

role, yet it was the greatest achievement of human consciousness playing itself out on the stage of history. We Trotskyists seek the revival of the liberating goals of the October Revolution, not only in the former USSR, but across the planet. Socialism will make modern technique, science, culture and education available to all, with a corresponding explosion in creative human achievement.

In the end, Gould offers what amounts to a pious hope, "Perhaps we will punctuate to a better place." Or maybe not. Rejecting the mechanistic determinism which he falsely ascribes to Marx, Gould opts for what is essentially a religious outlook, hoping that "accident" will be beneficial. But the "punctuation" could be very negative: instead of evolution, there could be involution, or a cataclysmic descent into barbarism. It is upon the resolution of the crisis of proletarian leadership that the future of humanity depends.

We have enjoyed Gould's articles in the past and we look forward to more. Regarding Marx and the Soviet developments, his conclusions are impressionistic. Can he apply to those questions the scientific approach he applies in his own field? As Plekhanov said of the misconceptions of Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Labriola: "We should be very glad if it were so; it is pleasant to have intelligent people agree with you. And if he did not agree with us, regretfully we would repeat that this intelligent man is mistaken." ■

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Racism, Anti-Abortion Bigotry

Torture of Native Women in Canada

The following article is expanded and updated from Spartacist Canada No. 89, Fall 1992, newspaper of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League.

In late March 1992 in the town of Iqaluit, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reporter Danielle Kappele exposed the medical torture of Native women at Stanton Yellowknife Hospital in the Northwest Territories. Since 1985, she revealed, in all abortions performed at Stanton, the only hospital in the Territories offering the service, patients were given no anesthetic. Within a few days some 83 women, most of them Native Indians and Inuit (Eskimo), came forward to testify about the agony and racist abuse they suffered at the hands of doctors whose sadistic medical practices could have been inspired by Nazi Josef Mengele. Investigators now believe that as many as 972 women endured unanesthetized abortions.

Candy Brown, director of the Native Friendship Centre in Fort Simpson, told of her experience three years ago:

"I was on the operating table when the doctor leaned over and said, 'The anaesthetist doesn't believe in abortions, so we'll give you the anaesthetic for the tubal ligation after we've done the abortion.' I was so angry. The pain was so sharp, worse than childbirth. Tears were rolling down my cheeks. They were saying, 'C'mon, it's only a few minutes. Hold still. It doesn't hurt so much.' Did I complain afterward? No. I just wanted to get out of there and get home."

A few complained and were ignored. Most, young women with little education, from remote villages, were afraid to speak up. As Lynn Brooks, executive director of the NWT Status of Women Council, said:

"They thought the pain was supposed to be part of it. How were they to know? The dentist, the doctor, the nurse, the RCMP [police]. They're God in some of these northern communities. It's still a real colonial mentality."

—*Globe and Mail*, 3 April 1992

One woman, a rape victim, said the abortion had been far worse than the rape. Another bent the metal stirrups out of shape as she thrashed about in pain. Patients begged for anesthetic but were refused. Yet hospital officials blandly asserted that the doctors were "completely unaware that the patients had suffered pain." When questioned by the *Toronto Star's* Michele Landsberg, Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the longtime fighter for women's right to abortion, said it would be impossible for a doctor to be "unaware" of such pain. Even after the story became a national scandal, the NWT health minister gave the practice his blessing, saying "no one is forced to have an abortion." Hospital officials claimed the policy was "standard medical practice."

These doctors deliberately tortured their patients. Did they groove on seeing brown-skinned women writhe in agony? Racist slurs accompanied the torture: one patient's doctor predicted she would be back for another abortion within months, saying, "Your kind always are" (*Ms.*, November/December 1992). Yet the NWT government's inquiry, the Abortion Services Review Commission, not only exonerated the doctors, but positively defended them! Incredibly, chairman Carol Clemenhagen wrote that "there was no evidence of professional malpractice, and no basis for recommending disciplinary action." She slammed the lone dissenter on the commission, Iqaluit lawyer Anne Crawford, for exposing the fact that hospital staff had ignored patients' complaints since 1991.

Native Women Face Grinding Oppression

This state-sanctioned barbarism illuminates the cruelty of life under decaying capitalism for so many women. In Canada, where abortion is ostensibly not illegal, the procedure is generally available only in the metropolitan centers, where access is often limited. Fascistic anti-abortion terrorists relentlessly plague women seeking abortions, and Dr. Morgentaler, a survivor of the Auschwitz death camp, has been a special target—in May 1992 his Toronto clinic was destroyed by a bomb.

The Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste calls on labor to defend abortion clinics against anti-woman terror. We fight for free abortion on demand, free contraceptives (including RU 486, the safe, non-surgical "abortion pill" still being withheld from Canadian women by the government) and free quality health care for all.

The bourgeois feminist calls to "keep the right to choose" are totally hollow given the conditions faced by poor, minority women. Consider the incredible, tragic story of Myrna George, a 19-year-old Native woman from Terrace, British Columbia. A mother of two, Myrna George died last year following a botched abortion. Racist medical indifference killed her: it took the attending physician eleven hours to recognize that she had a ruptured uterus. After surgery to stop the massive hemorrhaging, Myrna fell into a coma, but her family was told she was merely sleeping. Doctors and hospital officials have stonewalled, refusing to answer the family's questions. This is the stuff of the back alley, yet it occurred in a modern hospital in northwestern British Columbia.

Abortion rights alone cannot even begin to address the brutal oppression that bears down on Native women. On the reserves and in the cities, life for Native women is even more desperate than for the Native population as a whole. And by every social yardstick, Native women

living in the Far North fare the worst. There, the death rate from violent causes is ten times that in the rest of the country. The life expectancy of a baby girl is 20 years less than if she were born in an urban center.

Apartheid Canadian-Style

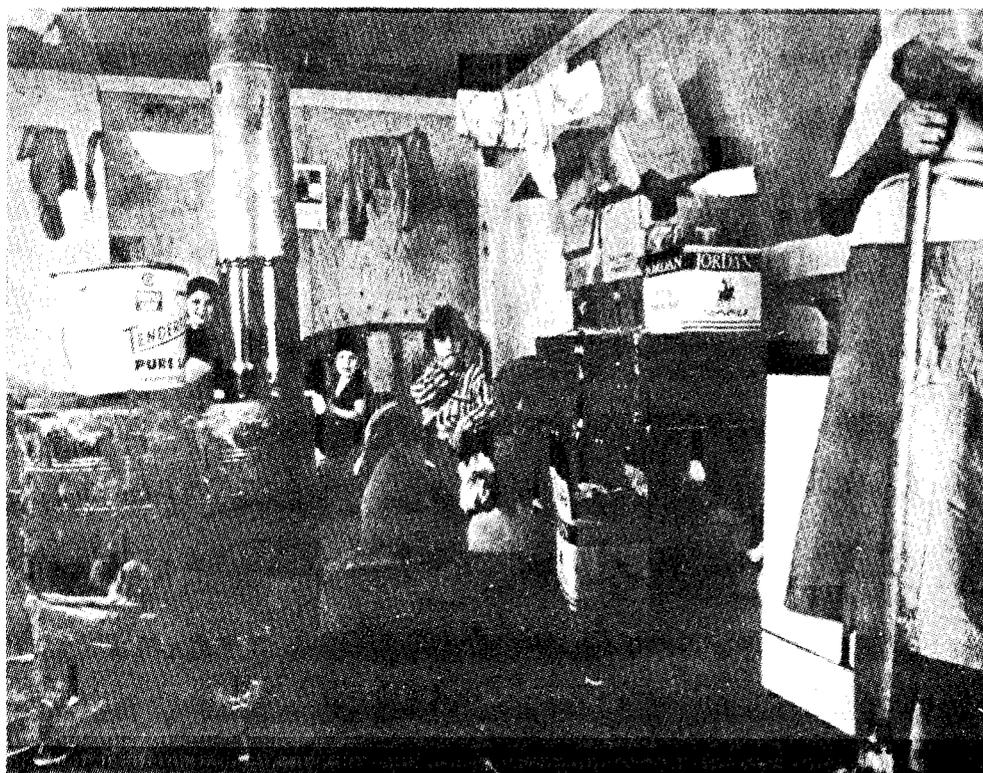
The tragic situation of Canada's indigenous peoples is the creation of the capitalist ruling class, who, having committed genocide on a massive scale, stole the survivors' land, destroyed their way of life and segregated them on isolated, barren and unproductive reserves. Priests and missionaries took kids from their families and threw them into residential schools where they were beaten and sexually abused. In the cities, on the reserves and in the northern outposts, Natives confront profound poverty, unemployment, terrible education, chronic alcoholism, and health care that ranges from indifferent to barbaric. Now AIDS and epidemic levels of tuberculosis are ravaging the population. Unemployment on many reserves runs at 90 percent—97 percent for women—and Canada's Native peoples have the highest suicide rate in the world.

Any attempt to challenge this profound oppression brings down the full force of the racist Canadian state. In 1990, when Mohawks threw up barricades near the Quebec town of Oka to defend their historic burial ground which was slated to become a private nine-hole golf course, they were met by an army of cops. While racist mobs in Quebec rioted for Mohawk blood, 4,000 combat-ready soldiers, backed by armored vehicles and helicopters, surrounded the Mohawk defenders. With the defiant Mohawks facing the might of the racist and vindictive capitalist state, the TL/LT demanded, "Get the army and cops out, now, all of them! Hands off

the Mohawks! Defend Native rights!" When more than 150 Mohawks were charged for defending their land and communities, we demanded, "Release the prisoners—Drop the charges!"

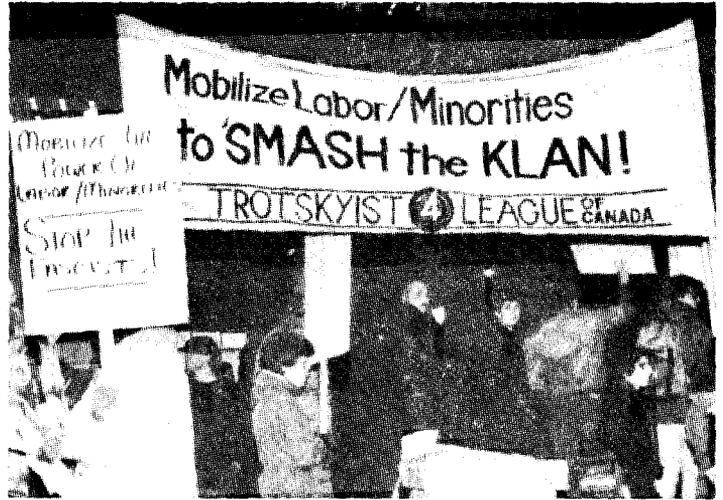
The options for Native people are often presented as a choice between "traditional culture" and racist capitalist society. But this is a false choice, not least because the vibrant pre-European culture is irreparably lost. The real choice is between the perpetuation of the crimes of the past—centuries of racist genocide and wholesale destruction of the Natives' way of life—or the creation of a future in a society not based on brutal exploitation and all-sided racism. The unremitting proletarian defense of Native people's lives and rights as equal citizens is part of the fight of the multiracial working class to overturn this whole brutal and violent capitalist system. We defend Native land claims, and in those cases where claims have run up against socially useful developments like railways, hydroelectric projects and oil pipelines, the Native peoples should receive generous compensation for deprivation of land or disruption of activity, based on completely consensual agreement. We are fighting for a socialist world in which the diversity of human cultures will be not an excuse for contempt and violence, but a source of enrichment.

Unlike much of the fake-left we reject the idealization of "traditional culture" as liberal racism and a patronizing glorification of backwardness, where it is not *purely* cynical. Last May, in the town of New Aiyansh in British Columbia's Nass Valley, a local doctor colluded with Native elders to prevent a 16-year-old Nisga'a woman from getting an abortion. In line with the clinic's "mandate," but in gross violation of doctor-patient confidentiality, the physician expressed his hesitations to a village elder and



Frederik Stevenson

Canada's remaining indigenous peoples today are forced onto isolated and barren reserves, their vibrant pre-European culture irreparably lost.



Spartacist Canada photos

Mass mobilization of 3,000 unionists, minorities and students drove off fascist skinheads in Vancouver on January 22. The Trotskyist League of Canada raised call to unite labor and minorities to smash racist provocations.

consultant to the clinic. The elder decided that in the name of *hawatkw*, an unwritten code which, it is claimed, enshrines traditional cultural relations among the Nisga'a, "there was no way she will have this abortion." This interference in a young girl's personal life is vicious and reactionary.

The federal government today spouts hypocritical platitudes about Native "self-government," which many Native people have been driven to demand as a despairing response to the horrible conditions and the wall of racism erected by the Canadian rulers. But many Native women understandably worry that with "self-government" the endemic violence and abuse on the reserves will simply be codified in some kind of constitutional deal. Moreover, federal "self-government" schemes have all the makings of a South African bantustan-like solution to the "Indian problem."

Parallels with South African bantustans are not coincidental: the National Party architects of apartheid explicitly patterned their racist system on Canada's. When South African officials came to Canada in the 1940s, they found a pass law system in place, whereby Natives were forbidden to set foot outside the reserves without the permission of the justly hated government Indian Agents. This system, imposed after the brutal suppression of the 1885 Riel Rebellion, when M tis (French-speaking people of mixed race) and Natives rebelled against Canada's seizure of their lands, wasn't revoked until the 1950s.

Nationalist Antagonisms Split Canada

In Canada, the oppression of the Native population goes hand in hand with vicious anti-immigrant assaults, race-terror against blacks and bigoted chauvinism against the French-speaking Qu b cois. In an attempt to stop the endless constitutional bickering and quell the centrifugal disintegration of the country, last fall decisive sections of the bourgeoisie in both English Canada and Quebec sought to rally the population behind a referendum to "save Canada." The TL/LT called for a "No" vote in this constitutional con game, stating that the accord offered

"vague, meaningless sops which will do nothing to redress the special oppression of the Qu b cois, Native people and other minorities. Its purpose is to strengthen the power of the Canadian state to prepare for stepped-up attacks on the unions, social programs and the rights of women and minorities in the name of capitalist 'competitiveness'" (*Spartacist Canada* No. 90, Winter 1992/93). The Canadian ruling class claimed its constitutional deal represented a historic gain for Native rights, yet last fall Native Canadians voted "No" by an overwhelming 62 percent.

A class-struggle fight for the rights of *all* the exploited and oppressed must encompass the fight against Native oppression. Against the chauvinists in both English Canada and Quebec we call for *equal language rights for all*, including the Native peoples. We defend the rights of immigrants and demand *full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families*. We unconditionally defend Quebec's national and language rights on the basis of our internationalist commitment to remove barriers to the class unity of the French-speaking and English-speaking workers of North America. But we do not at this time advocate the exercise of Quebec's right to self-determination (national independence), which would split off the historically militant Qu b cois working class from the English-speaking proletariat.

We fight to build a vanguard party to lead the proletarian revolution that will finally put an end to the system of private property and capitalist exploitation. Such a party will be, in V.I. Lenin's words, a *tribune of the people*, targeting every instance of the racial and national oppression endemic to capitalism. It will fight for women's liberation, possible only with the revolutionary transformation of society and the emancipation of women from slavery in the institution of the family. The inauguration of the era of socialist development can ensure the all-sided voluntary integration of Native people into a new society on the basis of the fullest equality and will meet the special needs created by centuries of injustice and oppression. ■

Letter...

(continued from page 3)

immigrant workers nothing but racist discrimination and bigotry born from a colonial order directly imported into the metropolitan centers. The recent excision trials take place in the context of anti-immigrant pogroms across the continent, unleashed by increasing nationalist antagonism and interimperialist rivalry in the wake of counterrevolution in East Europe and the former Soviet Union. The French state, still covered with the blood of two million victims of its dirty colonial war against Algeria, has imposed more than a decade of increasingly restrictive immigration laws, daily police intimidation of dark-skinned citizens, and a permanent siege of the ghettos.

The government's lack of interest in the protection of children was amply demonstrated last October 29 when 1,200 cops, CRS and riot police pulled a dawn raid on an area in front of the Vincennes château inhabited by otherwise homeless Africans. Seven hundred, mainly women and children, were rounded up; the young were taken off by the juvenile police, the adults deposited in hospitals and shelters throughout the city—where they were promptly thrown back onto the streets. The bourgeois courts' concept of justice can be seen by the acquittal last year of a racist baker in Reims who shot a young Maghrebian in the head because he allegedly tried to steal a croissant. And the French state's apathy over putting an end to genital mutilations is nowhere better revealed than in their scandalous rejection of Aminata Diop's plea for asylum.

The greatest single obstacle to the eradication of female genital mutilation in France is the government-enforced racist segregation of immigrants. As we noted in our article,

"Race discrimination and prejudice isolate immigrant workers and their families from the rest of the working class, reducing integrationist tendencies and reinforcing pressure from the culture of origin." This is particularly true for women immigrants, often brought here by their husbands clandestinely, unable to speak French, kept isolated in overcrowded housing projects in remote outskirts of the towns. *Libération* (5 February) reported on the trial of an immigrant man and his two wives. Asked by the president of the tribunal what she did all day, the mother's interpreter responded, "She stays in the F2 [one-room apartment in public housing]." "She never goes out?" "Yes, when she goes to the PMI [Mothers' and Infants' Protection]."

It is not so much whether immigrants know what the law is or are able to understand the penalties, but that there is little countervailing force against the pressures of tradition from their native country. With little prospect of being accepted into French society, why should Malian parents flaunt the elders of their native village and, as they see it, expose their daughter to being viewed as a prostitute, unfit for marriage, and thus condemned to starvation?

The French government has no interest in the integration of the immigrant population into the social life of this country. On the contrary, the bourgeoisie seeks to promote racial divisions, the better to ensure that the working people and oppressed cannot unite against its iron rule. The barbaric practice of female genital mutilation will be eradicated only through the integration of the immigrant population into the French proletariat in class struggle against the capitalist system.

For the liberation of women,
Myriam, for *Le Bolchévik*

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Capitalist Attacks Target Immigrant Women Workers

Amid the "New World Disorder" of capitalist counter-revolution and intensified interimperialist rivalries, the Australian bourgeoisie is caught in the middle of heightened economic tensions between Japan, its biggest trading partner, and the U.S., its big brother "protector." With its economy in a shambles, the rulers of this remote white imperialist enclave are seeking new fields of exploitation under the code words "enmesh with Asia." Trade war abroad means war on the workers at home, as both the social-democratic Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Tory party seek to administer capitalist depression through draconian anti-union laws and job-slashing attacks.

The ALP came to power under Bob Hawke in 1983 as U.S. imperialism's loyal ally in anti-Soviet Cold War II, pledging to use its "special relationship" with the unions to bolster the bosses' profits by holding down wages. Under the class-collaborationist Accord, a social contract binding the unions to endless austerity schemes and wage slashing, industrial disputes dropped to the lowest level in decades. When workers got out of line the ALP government, assisted by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, carried out open union-busting, as happened to the powerful, militant Builders Labor Federation in 1986 and the strategically placed airline pilots union in 1989.

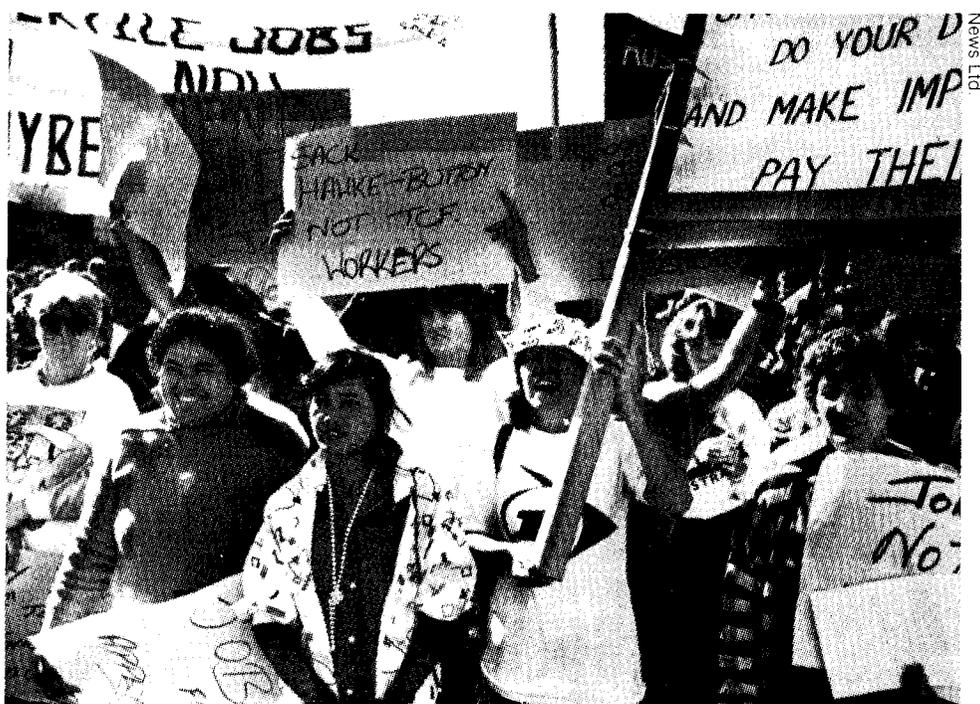
Against the racist protectionism, anti-immigrant scapegoating and anti-woman bigotry pushed by the Laborite tops in the service of their bourgeois masters, the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Commu-

nist League, calls for a class-struggle fight to unite all the exploited and oppressed against the capitalist onslaught. In the March federal elections, the SL/A opposed a vote to the ALP traitors, calling for "No vote to Labor! Build a revolutionary workers party! For a workers republic of Australia, part of a socialist federation of Southeast Asia!"

The following article is adapted from "For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!" (*Australasian Spartacist* No. 148, Winter 1993) and describes the intensified exploitation and oppression of women, especially immigrants, which have been fueled by renewed social reaction.

Nineteenth-century French socialist Charles Fourier observed that the degree of women's emancipation in any given society is a measure of its general progress or retrogression. This is starkly confirmed in this imperialist enclave with its "little Australian" social-democratic nationalism, which we have described as not only "white racist, but proud of its brutally male-chauvinist and self-indulgent, parochial philistine 'national character'—best described as the culture of white pigs" (*Australasian Spartacist* No. 101, April 1983).

Spiralling recession has intensified the oppression deeply felt by women in this country. Today, in the State of Victoria, job slashing by Tory Jim Kennett's government is centred on industries where women workers predominate—public servants, teachers and health care workers.



Australian "Textile Clothing and Footwear" (TCF) industry workers—including women from Southern Europe, Asia and the Pacific islands—protest job cuts. Spartacist League calls for forging international working-class solidarity across Australia and Asia.

At the massive Melbourne demonstration of 150,000 in November last year, and in the demonstrations and strikes that followed, thousands of women workers, from immigrant women textile workers to nurses to clerical and public service workers, have shown their will and capacity for struggle.

The groundwork for Kennett was laid by a decade of federal and state Australian Labor Party government attacks, Accord givebacks and capitulations by the union tops. Accord "restructuring" has meant massive loss of jobs and erosion of wages and conditions that has hit women hardest, striking particularly at the mainly immigrant women who work in manufacturing industries. They are often the lowest paid, least skilled and have the least union protection. In the last decade women have been forced into the burgeoning part-time, casual and contract workforce which has grown alongside the increase of piecework in the home and largely unregulated work. Alongside attacks on jobs, women have felt most intensely the wholesale downgrading of social services and health care.

The Myth of Equal Pay

Despite the formal existence of "equal pay," expressed in 1972 Arbitration guidelines, women's wages are 87 percent of men's wages. More than half of working women earn less than \$21,000, while two-thirds of men earn above this figure (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 May 1992). Immigrant women workers from the Middle East, southern Europe and Southeast Asia, concentrated in retail, textiles, clothing and footwear industries, earn the least of all. In 1991, women process workers earned on average 30 percent less than the average women's wage—without any basic award entitlements such as sick pay and maternity leave. Yet today Laborite bureaucrats peddle the lie that Arbitration—the "independent umpire"—is the cornerstone of defence and equality of wages and jobs.

The establishment of compulsory arbitration early this century was based on a historic racist pact between the Laborite bureaucracy and the ruling class which institutionalised tariff-protected industries and a "whites only" labour force. Arbitration also enshrined anti-woman chauvinism, providing the legal basis for paying women lower wages, declaring in 1912 that "a man was paid to support a family and a woman only to support herself." When large numbers of women entered the workforce as a result of World War II, equal pay became a fighting issue as women stepped into traditional "male" jobs, often engaging in industrial action for the same pay as men. Labor prime minister John Curtin declared women were to be employed in "male" areas "only for the duration of the war and shall be replaced by men as they become available."

The union bureaucracy rests upon the most craftist, Laborite and white male sector of the class, and maintains at best a racist indifference to the plight of immigrant workers. The White Australia Policy is a cornerstone of Laborism. Even the wretched social-democratic Second International refused the ALP entry for decades because of this racist policy. In 1990 immigrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds constituted 16 percent of trade unionists in Australia and a full quarter of unionists in Victoria. They are counted among the strongest and most militant members. However the complaint of one female



no credit

South Korean workers at Westpac strike for union recognition, 1990.

textile worker in Melbourne expressed the all too common reality: "I think that our union is weak. We pay our money and then nothing.... When union officials come, they come to tell us about who will be retrenched next" (quoted in *Hard Labour*).

During the 1980s union membership plummeted by over 10 percent, and the bureaucracy has completely abandoned the bulk of non-unionised immigrant workers. Solid union-wide action could be the spearhead of a desperately needed battle to *organise the unorganised*—predominantly the tens of thousands of mainly women immigrants in non-unionised sweatshops across the country. For this it is necessary to throw off the shackles of Arbitration, which binds the working class to the bosses' state.

The Laborite union tops' "answer" to capitalist depression is to push racist company-loyal protectionism and anti-immigrant racism. Peddling the lie that it will save jobs, they blame Asian workers for company closures and mass unemployment. Yet the most highly protected industries in this country are the sweatshop manufacturing concerns, which have carried out mass sackings of the mainly immigrant women workforce. Workers in this country have more in common with their class brothers and sisters in Asia than they do with their exploitative bosses at home.

Women form the backbone of the workforce in Asia's new superexploitative manufacturing industries and increasingly are entering heavy industry. Revolutionaries fight for international class solidarity with the struggles of workers in Asia, such as the fight of Korean women workers for union recognition against Australian-owned Westpac in 1990 and the recent Cathay Pacific women flight attendants' 16-day strike against attacks on their work conditions. Forging international class solidarity is the foundation stone for the fight for a workers republic of Australia, part of a socialist federation of Asia!

The union bureaucracy's role as a cop for racist capitalism was highlighted in 1990 with the media exposé of the Darwin Trade Development Zone. With the agreement of the federal and Northern Territory governments

and the Australian Congress of Trade Unions, a Hong Kong jeans manufacturing company, Hengyang Pty Ltd, brought some 74 mainly female workers to Australia, indentured to the Guangdong External Manpower Services Corporation in the People's Republic of China. They worked under horrendous slave conditions, denied the right to unions or union organisers, and were paid a tenth of the wages of Australian workers. Their plight was exposed after one worker escaped and revealed the truth to the media. The union movement should have fought for the Trade Zone workers to be unionised with union-scale wages and conditions, plus back pay, with the right to remain with full citizenship rights. But, predictably, the despicable union tops demanded that they return to China lest they "take Australian jobs"!

Keating's Reactionary "Family Values"

Along with immigrants, women are scapegoated for capitalist depression as Laborite Paul Keating's reactionary moralist "family values" pushes the basic message that women belong at home to raise the next generation of wage slaves. The institution of the family is a fundamental pillar of bourgeois rule. The fraudulent 11 percent official unemployment figure excludes the tens of thousands denied Social Security because they have lost hope of ever finding a job or who don't fancy being hounded by the Department of Social Security. Seventy-five percent of this hidden unemployment is made up of women, many of whom are officially discounted as "housewives." While the majority of Australian women are only entitled to 12 months unpaid maternity leave, many employers refuse to grant any! And don't expect the sellout Labor bureaucrats to bat an eyelid. New South Wales Labor Council secretary Michael Easson opposes a proposal to give women 16 weeks paid maternity leave because he is "concerned" about the "cost to employers"!

In order to woo the female vote, Keating (under advice from feminist Anne Summers) promises to increase child-

care to a paltry 250,000 places. But as a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics survey showed, unmet demand for childcare has doubled since 1987 to about 17 percent. The huge majority of childcare, for some 1.3 million children, is provided by family, friends or neighbours because childcare is simply unavailable or too expensive. Working women are forced to return home for a "second shift" of childcare and hours of household drudgery. Echoing the sentiment of many women, a Melbourne textile worker remarked, "The women have it hard. We should get sick leave to look after our sick children. The factory should give us maternity leave. It would be good to have a creche at work too" (*Hard Labour*).

Savage health care cutbacks, by Labor and Liberal governments alike, are aimed squarely at working-class areas. Sydney's western suburbs are hit with a lethal mix of air pollution, unemployment, poor health and a lack of community services. One senior local doctor likened the casualty department at Liverpool Hospital to an "under-resourced outpatients' department in a poor Third World country" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 August 1992). Even Keating's Office of the Status of Women acknowledges that immigrant women suffer higher rates of work-related illnesses and injuries and experience the least accessible and most inappropriate health service of all Australians, except Aborigines (*Australian*, 7 February 1992).

The previous Victoria Labor government of Joan Kirner, while closing hospital wards, gave the administration of a newly built hospital over to the Catholic church, which means that no abortion operations will be performed. The Spartacist League fights to mobilise the working class around demands for full 24-hour childcare, free abortion on demand and free, quality health care for all.

Life in a Remote White Imperialist Enclave

Last year a Victoria court ruled that it was "less heinous" to rape a prostitute than a "happily married woman." More recently a South Australian judge said in a rape-in-marriage court trial that he saw nothing wrong with a husband's attempt to "persuade" his wife, by "rougher than usual handling," to engage in sexual intercourse! This is the view of the legal fraternity in misogynist, racist Australia where, in 1988, 20 percent of the population were found to condone wife beating!

Exemplifying the mean-minded bigotry, prejudice and rampant sexism of capitalist Australian society was the state-sponsored anti-woman witchhunt of Lindy Chamberlain. When Chamberlain's baby daughter was carried off and killed by a dingo (a large wild dog) in central Australia in 1980, the grieving mother was dragged through endless inquests and inquiries and convicted for the murder of her daughter in a bizarre and ugly witchhunt (the subject of the Meryl Streep movie *A Cry in the Dark*). As we wrote in *Women and Revolution* (No. 34, Spring 1988):

"The media campaign to crucify Lindy Chamberlain fed into the mean-minded bigotry and prejudice that gives capitalist Australian society its nasty small-town quality. That the Chamberlains are members of the Seventh Day Adventist church, a small and devout millenarian sect which has suffered victimization for practicing vegetarianism and celebrating Saturday as the Sabbath, made them easy targets.... The bourgeois media focused on the fact that Lindy is an intelligent, assertive woman who displayed enormous reserves of strength.... It is precisely these qualities which

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were used to portray Lindy as an aberration in Australian society, where it is held that women should be dumb, passive subjects."

Lindy spent three years in jail and fought through endless court battles before finally winning exoneration and compensation after over a decade of state and media harassment.

The struggle for women's emancipation is inseparable from the struggle for the emancipation of the working class from capitalist exploitation and oppression. Only the social ownership of the means of production can lay the basis for replacing the institution of the family, central to the oppression of women in capitalist society. After the 1917 October Revolution, the Bolshevik government immediately granted women full political and legal equality with men; in 1920 abortion was legalised. And to the extent that they were able in a backward and war-torn country, the Bolsheviks sought to replace the social functions of the family with free, 24-hour childcare centres and communal laundries and canteens, thus beginning to lay the basis for the full integration of women into social and political life.

In the former German Democratic Republic (DDR), despite the bureaucratic stranglehold of Stalinism over the economy and society, women were highly educated,

highly skilled, with the best maternity and childcare benefits in the world, and over 90 percent employed—from truck drivers and crane operators to surgeons and judges. They were a key component of the DDR working class. These gains were a testament to the power of the planned, socialised economy of the workers state. Today, they are being ripped away and women are being driven out of the workforce as the socialised industrial economy of the former DDR is dismantled by a vengeful German bourgeoisie. The Trojan horse for this counterrevolution was the German Social Democracy (SPD). From Australia to Germany, the role of social democracy is to prop up and sell this decaying capitalist order to their working-class base.

Only the sweeping away of capitalist society and its replacement by the planned economy and state power of the working class will open the road to building an international socialist society where production would be for the needs of all. A multiracial Trotskyist party, rooted in the proletariat and acting as the tribune of all the oppressed, will win to its banner the working masses and lead the way forward to a decent world. And from among the massively oppressed working women will come many of the greatest fighters for proletarian revolution. For women's liberation through socialist revolution! ■

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From East Berlin to Tashkent: Capitalist Counterrevolution Tramples on Women

Nothing more clearly demonstrates the reactionary nature of the capitalist counterrevolutions which have swept across East Europe and the former Soviet Union than the degradation of women. The right-wing nationalists now in power believe that women in the workplace is a communist plot to undermine the traditional family and that their rightful place is in the home as childbearers.

The deterioration in the position of women with the "New World Order" in East Europe is so striking it is recognized even by the mainstream Western bourgeois press. "It is clear that the importing of capitalism into the former East Germany," writes Hamburg's liberal *Der Spiegel*, "is hitting women harder than it is hitting men." "Poland: No Place To Be a Woman," quips the snide Tory London *Economist*. "Three years after the triumph of the Solidarity movement," reports the *New York Times*,

"Poles are once again helping one another to circumvent the authorities.... Now, the aim is to evade new restrictions on abortion imposed by the doctors' association and the Health Ministry." Of course, these mouthpieces for Wall Street, the City of London and Frankfurt strongly backed the annexation of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) by West German imperialism and loudly championed clerical-nationalist *Solidarność* in Poland.

The same is true of Western feminists and pseudo-leftists who proclaim their fidelity to women's liberation. The American rad-lib journal *The Progressive* (February 1991) ran an article by feminist scribe Peggy Simpson entitled "No Liberation for Women—Eastern Europe Turns Back the Clock." Yet this and many similar articles in the Western feminist press see no connection between turning the clock back for women, and capitalist counterrevolution.



Paul O'Driscoll

June 1991, eastern Germany: workers cleaning trains reflect on their future. Capitalist reunification means mass unemployment and dismantling social programs such as free childcare.



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."

Instead of attacking the new anti-Communist regimes for oppressing women, Simpson blames the former Stalinist bureaucracies for suppressing American-style feminism:

"East European women, whether at the high ranks of government or on the factory floor, don't know about burden-sharing in the West. They missed out on the entire consciousness-raising element of the women's political movement."

As if "consciousness-raising" is a solution to mass unemployment, the elimination of childcare and the outlawing of abortion! This fatuous piece, so typical of Western feminist thinking, blames the women victims of capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe. A parallel argument is made by Western bourgeois economists who explain mass unemployment in East Europe's new "free market" economies on the grounds that the workers had grown lazy and inefficient under conditions of guaranteed job security.

The left social-democratic journal *Against the Current*—which for years denounced the Soviet Union in the strongest terms as an exploitative class society and imperialist state—has now discovered that women fared better under its planned, collectivized economy. The July/August 1992 issue reprinted an article by Moscow sociologist Anastasia Posadskaya, who points out: "While the deterioration in the position of women [in Russia] was anticipated by a few feminist-oriented researchers, its actual scope during the beginning processes of marketization seems unprecedented."

These pseudo-leftists—who call for a socialist movement that among other things would be "feminist"—supported the very forces which led to the unprecedented deterioration in the position of women in the former Soviet Union and throughout East Europe. *Against the Current* joined the Reagan/Bush White House (and Pope John Paul Wojtyla and Ayatollah Khomeini) in championing Solidarność in Poland and the Islamic *mujahedin* fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan. In the name

of "democracy" and anti-Sovietism they endorsed the capitalist reunification of Germany and Boris Yeltsin's seizure of power in Moscow in August 1991.

Afghanistan, Poland and Cold War II

The fundamental cause of the capitalist counterrevolution is the cumulative effect of the military, economic and political impact of world imperialism on the bureaucratically ruled workers states of the Soviet bloc. That pressure was greatly intensified when in the late 1970s/early 1980s Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan launched Cold War II. The initial major battlegrounds were Afghanistan and Poland, where in both cases the anti-Communist offensive was directly linked to the oppression of women.

The pro-Moscow, modernizing Afghan nationalists who took power in Kabul in 1978 sought to partially emancipate women from their enslavement in traditional Islamic society symbolized by the *chador*, the head-to-toe veil. They reduced the bride price to a nominal sum and opened schools to teach young girls to read. These measures incensed the tribal chiefs and Muslim mullahs, who, backed by Washington, Khomeini's Iran and Zia's Pakistan, launched a *jihad* against the "godless Communists" in Kabul.

In late 1979 Moscow intervened militarily to prevent its left-nationalist client state in Afghanistan, which shares a lengthy border with the USSR, from falling to Islamic reactionaries armed and organized by U.S. imperialism. The international Spartacist tendency (now the International Communist League) raised the slogans: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples! In contrast, practically the entire left internationally lined up behind Reagan, Thatcher and Mitterrand in denouncing Soviet "expansionism" and calling for the withdrawal of Soviet forces.

Far from seeking to annex Afghanistan, the Kremlin oligarchy fought the war halfheartedly. Brezhnev and his



Afghan mujahedin, fighting to keep women enslaved in the veil (above), report to U.S. imperialist boss Reagan at the White House (below).



Kabul, 1979 (below): Afghan women honor Noor Mohammed Taraki, enlightened pro-Soviet intellectual who sought to modernize backward, patriarchal Central Asian country.



successors held out the prospect of withdrawing from Afghanistan as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the NATO powers. As part of Gorbachev's global appeasement of Western imperialism, in early 1989 Soviet forces were pulled out unilaterally. There quickly followed the disintegration of Soviet power in East Europe, beginning with Poland.

The strength of the Catholic church made Poland especially vulnerable to an internally generated counterrevolution. The unprecedented selection in 1978 of a Polish pope—the former archbishop of Cracow—was a key part of Jimmy Carter's "human rights" campaign to subvert the Soviet bloc. At the same time, the Stalinist regime of Eduard Gierek was so desperate to preserve social peace that it borrowed massively from Western banks to maintain consumption levels and full employment.

Thus the stage was set for the rise of *Solidarność*. When in the summer of 1980 the Gierek regime announced a moderate austerity program under pressure from Wall Street and Frankfurt, Polish workers went into action under the symbol of the eagle and cross. The traditionally secular and socialist Polish proletariat now looked to the Vatican and the American White House for salvation. When in the fall of 1981 *Walesa & Co.* were driving to seize political power on behalf of Western imperialism, we raised the call: Stop *Solidarność* Counterrevolution!

General Jaruzelski's crackdown in December 1981, strongly backed by Brezhnev, prevented a counterrevolution in Poland at that time. The Reagan/Bush White House (assisted particularly by the AFL-CIO and German Social Democratic unions) then kept the underground *Solidarność* alive with massive secret funding, while liberals, radicals and leftists hailed in rapturous tones this "free trade union" for the CIA and Western bankers. The very same radical feminists and self-styled socialists who marched in the U.S. and West Germany to protest the Catholic hierarchy's opposition to abortion also called for "Solidarity with *Solidarność*," that is, for a papal dictatorship in Poland.

Today, it is clear to the whole world that the clerical-nationalist leaders of *Solidarność* are enemies of the democratic rights of women. Recently, a group of Polish women activists issued a protest that "Polish democracy is a masculine democracy" (*Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1992). As Marxists we understood the true nature of the *Solidarność* gang long before they took power. Right after the Jaruzelski crackdown we wrote an article entitled "Solidarność: A Man's World":

"Walesa likes to boast a madonna lapel pin, symbolic of *Solidarność*' close ties to the Catholic church. The historic role of that institution in keeping women tied to the family hearth, Polish pope's Wojtyla's aggressive campaign against abortion, the strong pro-family attitudes of *Solidarność*—can these forces be liberators of Polish women? Never!"

—W&R No. 24, Spring 1982

The heading off of *Solidarność*' bid for power in 1981 could not eliminate Poland's susceptibility to counterrevolution by clerical-nationalist forces. To break the stranglehold of Western bankers on the Polish economy it was necessary to repudiate the debt. To be effective, debt repudiation by Poland would have required the close economic cooperation of the entire Soviet bloc, and appeals to the working class in the West to counter the inevitable capitalist retaliation. Organically incapable of



Workers Vanguard

International Communist League waged 1989 campaign to defend besieged Afghan city of Jalalabad against CIA's mujahedin cutthroats.

such an internationalist program, the Warsaw Stalinist bureaucracy further depressed the Polish economy to meet the demands of the Wall Street and Frankfurt loan sharks. In 1988-89 another austerity program provoked a new wave of worker unrest. Without any point of support in Polish society, demoralized and at an impasse, the Jaruzelski regime, with Gorbachev's approval, abdicated power to Walesa & Co. in the summer of 1989. Within a year capitalist counterrevolution engulfed all of East Europe as the DDR was absorbed into an imperialist German Fourth Reich.

Sexual Equality and the DDR

The position of women in East Germany was in important respects the most advanced in the world. Not only did over 90 percent of working-age women participate in the labor force, but many held jobs that are monopolized by men in the capitalist West. At the same time, exceptional social programs were available for working mothers, such as "the baby year"—extended, paid maternity leave. Some West German feminists and social democrats pointed to the DDR—its legal abortion on demand, free day-care facilities, generous leave to tend sick children—to lobby for similar measures in their own far wealthier capitalist state.

Along with the economic and social benefits for women in the DDR was a climate of opinion more supportive of sexual equality than elsewhere. In 1991, several months after German reunification, the Times Mirror Center of Washington conducted a broad-ranging survey of public opinion in 13 European countries, East and West. Only 18 percent of East Germans polled preferred a marriage in which the wife stayed home and took care of the children, compared to 41 percent in West Germany, 48 percent in Russia and 56 percent in Poland.

Why was support for sexual equality in the DDR so much stronger than in the rest of Stalinist-ruled East Europe? In this region the status of women was inversely proportional to the strength of nationalism within the bureaucracy and in society at large. Significantly, the only East European country in which abortion was outlawed

was Ceausescu's Romania, that grim caricature of national-Stalinist despotism. The country's orphanages were full of unwanted children that families could not afford to raise. Yet for two decades the murderous megalomaniac Ceausescu was Washington's favorite Stalinist ruler, lauded and rewarded for his "independence" from Moscow. George Bush once called Romania's Great Conductor "one of Europe's good communists."

For Washington and even more so for Bonn, the DDR's Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker were among Europe's worst communists, because they maintained the front line state of Soviet military and political defense on the continent. East Germany confronted a powerful imperialist state, which in the name of German nationalism denied the DDR's right to exist at all. To a significantly greater degree than their counterparts in East Europe and the USSR, the Ulbricht/Honecker regimes appealed for legitimacy by emphasizing the "socialist" character and achievements of the DDR, especially its commitment to the equality of women. For example, the Polish Jew Rosa Luxemburg was honored as a forebear of the DDR.

The favorable conditions for women in the DDR were not simply a result of its political-ideological competition with bourgeois West Germany. It also expressed the fundamental difference between a collectivized economy, even under bureaucratic mismanagement, and a capitalist economy. Given the sexual tracking from early childhood in bourgeois society, it is generally more expensive to train women for skilled industrial jobs than men. Further, they are more likely to quit work in order to raise a family. Hence, a typical capitalist firm finds it more profitable to hire men unless women can do the same job at substantially lower wages.

The overriding goal of a collectivized economy is to maximize total output (not the profitability of an individual firm) and therefore the employment of both men and women. Furthermore, the DDR suffered from a labor shortage since its formation in the late 1940s, for, unlike Soviet Russia or Poland, it did not have a large surplus peasant population. The labor shortage was greatly aggravated in the 1950s by the large-scale emigration,

especially of skilled male workers, to the more affluent West Germany. The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 was a bureaucratic defense measure to stop this hemorrhaging of skilled labor.

Thus the DDR had a vital economic interest in maximizing the number of women engaged in social production and their individual capacity. By the mid-1970s, for example, 75 percent of apprentices for skilled jobs in the chemical industry were women, compared to 20 percent in West Germany. Thirty-five percent of butcher trainees were women, whereas this was strictly a man's job west of the Elbe.

In one significant area, however, government policy toward women in the DDR was for many years more reactionary than in the other major Soviet-bloc countries. A 1950 law allowed abortion only where there were medical, ethical (e.g., rape) or social grounds, such as large families who could not afford another child. In the Soviet Union, Poland and other East European countries, abortion on demand was legalized in the mid-1950s during the political liberalization and turmoil which followed Stalin's death. However, the regime of old-line Stalinist Walter Ulbricht continued to oppose abortion for depriving the "socialist state" of its future citizens.

Ulbricht was ousted in 1971 for resisting Brezhnev's moves toward détente with Washington and Bonn, and was replaced by his longtime number two Erich Honecker, who instituted a relative political liberalization. With typical Stalinist hypocrisy, the new line was presented as an expression of fundamental democratic principle (which in this case it was): "the equality of women...demands that a woman has the right to decide for herself about pregnancy and whether or not she wants to bear and deliver the child."

But the DDR was a far cry from having achieved full sexual equality even at the basic economic level. In 1988, the average net monthly income for women working full time was 76 percent of that of their male colleagues (still better than the 66 percent earned by women in West Germany). More fundamentally, women in the DDR and throughout the Soviet bloc complained bitterly of their "double burden" or "second shift." After work, they were expected by their husbands to do the housework and take care of the children. The burden was aggravated by

the scarcity of housing and the shortage of many consumer goods, resulting in long lines for shopping.

In East Germany, the burden on women was perhaps not quite double, as some men believed that socialist egalitarianism applied in family life too. In the somewhat more open intellectual climate of the late 1980s, Irene Dölling of East Berlin's Humboldt University made a liberal Stalinist/feminist critique of family life in the DDR: "Women continue to do two-thirds to three-fourths of the housework, and they are responsible for the larger share of caring for and raising children. Changes are indeed discernible in the division of functions within the family.... But these have not yet become dominant trends" (quoted in Marilyn Rueschemeyer and Christiane Lemke, *The Quality of Life in the German Democratic Republic* [1989]). This is precisely what a Marxist would expect as long as the family remains the basic institution for socializing children. Only when the family is gradually displaced by collective forms of child-rearing will the age-old division of labor between men and women and its inevitable psychological effects be overcome. But this will require generations of a global socialist society immeasurably more economically productive than the most advanced capitalist country of today.

It was liberal Stalinist utopianism to believe that complete sexual equality could be achieved in the front line state of the Cold War under implacable pressure from world imperialism. In 1989 that pressure finally cracked the Soviet bureaucratic caste, and the DDR was faced with a fateful historic alternative: either the working class had to seize political power with the prospect of a united socialist Germany, or the DDR would be absorbed into an imperialist Fourth Reich with devastating consequences for the working class, especially women.

The Degradation of East German Women in the Fourth Reich

At this critical moment in contemporary history the International Communist League mobilized its full resources to intervene in the political battle for East Germany. Our propaganda and agitation for a government based on workers councils (soviets), as a springboard to a unified German proletarian state within a Socialist United States of Europe, received a sympathetic hearing

In 1991, the Times Mirror Center of Washington conducted a major survey of European public opinion, putting 128 questions to 13,000 people in 13 countries. In reporting on the poll, Martin Linton (London *Guardian*, 4 October 1991) noted, "The poll seriously undermines any western illusion that eastern Europeans have fallen in love with privatisation," and found worrying "the signs of cynicism and disillusionment already beginning to emerge" in East Europe. Notably, the survey showed that on a range of social and political/economic questions East Germans had more progressive attitudes than others.

The following percentages answered that they "never doubt the existence of God":

Belief in God

Poland	83
Italy	80
Spain	72
West Germany	59
Britain	58
Lithuania	57
Ukraine	53
Bulgaria	50
Hungary	49
France	47
Russia	46
Czechoslovakia	45
East Germany	27

And in response to the question of "what kind of marriage is more satisfying, one where the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of house and children, or one where both have jobs and take care of house and children together," the following percentages preferred women staying at home:

Prefer Wife at Home

Lithuania	62
Hungary	59
Poland	56
Czechoslovakia	54
Ukraine	53
Russia	48
West Germany	41
Bulgaria	40
Italy	34
France	30
Spain	30
Britain	28
East Germany	18

Spartakist



**East Berlin, January 1990—
Spartacists initiated
250,000-strong rally against
fascist desecration of Treptow
Park memorial to Red Army
liberators from Nazi scourge.
ICL mobilized against
Deutsche Bank takeover of
DDR and its devastating
consequences, especially
for women.**

from socialist workers and intellectuals as well as soldiers and officers in the East German army. These efforts resulted in the 250,000-strong anti-fascist demonstration in East Berlin's Treptow Park in early January 1990, which for the first time posed the possibility of organized working-class resistance to capitalist reunification.

The liberal Stalinist caretaker regime of Gregor Gysi and Hans Modrow—fearful of leftward working-class motion from below and under enormous pressure from West German imperialism and its Social Democratic henchmen—moved quickly to conciliate the forces of counterrevolution. In late January Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would accept the dissolution of the DDR into a unified capitalist Germany, a position seconded by DDR premier Modrow. These announcements shocked and demoralized workers and intellectuals who wanted and expected a revitalized socialist society.

At the same time, the East German masses were bombarded with a Big Lie campaign by the ruling West German Christian Democrats and opposition Social Democrats that reunification would bring instant prosperity. Bonn chancellor Helmut Kohl promised that Eastern Germany would reach Western living standards in five years. A sense that capitalist *Anschluss* (annexation) was inevitable, along with illusions in West German economic largesse, produced a decisive victory for the Christian Democrats in the March 18 East German elections, the political death knell for the DDR.

Shortly thereafter we warned: "...without a class-struggle fight against the privatization of production and the dismantling of the social programs, women will be driven from the workforce as unemployment and social austerity measures soar in pursuit of capitalist profits" ("Defend the Gains of East German Women!" *W&R* No. 37, Spring 1990). A year after the July 1990 currency union, which marked the dissolution of the DDR's collectivized economy into an expanded German capitalist state, almost 5 million workers out of a labor force of 9.5 million were unemployed outright, on "short-time" work or forced out of the labor market. Hardest hit were single women with children and older women.

Today, two-thirds of those officially registered as unem-

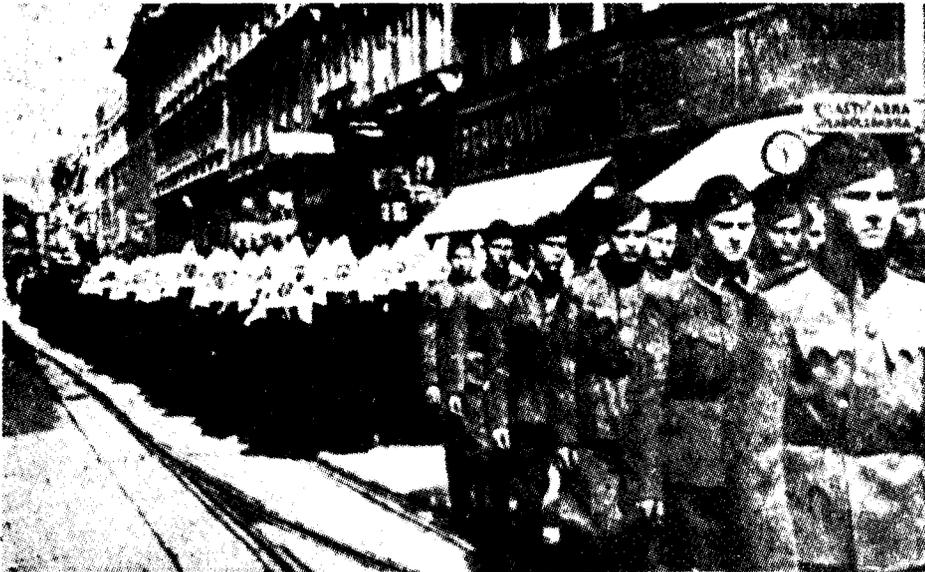
ployed are women. Part-time jobs, largely held by women, were among the first to be done away with in the "cost-cutting" drives of the Treuhand, the West German agency which took over the enterprises of the former DDR. Men thrown out of the factories began competing for jobs in which women had predominated, such as bank clerks, mail carriers and public transit workers. Whereas enterprise managers in the DDR had discriminated *in favor of* women, especially in job training, women are now the victims of undisguised male chauvinism.

East German women became accustomed to a considerable degree of economic and social independence, and that is what the bourgeois rulers of the Fourth Reich cannot stand. Thus, the dismantling of the industrial base of the DDR has gone hand in hand with the dismantling of those programs which enabled women to engage in social production while raising children. Far and away the most important step in driving women out of the



Bolesch/Fotoarchiv

Nazi skinhead provocation in East German city of Halle, 1991. Capitalist annexation fueled rising fascist terror against immigrants.



Catholic nuns in Croatia march behind clerical-fascist Ustasha, killers of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies during WW II. Today's "Christian nationalists" in East Europe are the successors to the clerical-fascists of the 1930s-1940s.

labor force and into the household has been the elimination of inexpensive childcare. Scores of crèches disappeared when the Treuhand closed down the enterprises which supported them, and others were closed down when the enterprises were sold to West German capitalists. Women who lose their jobs but cannot place their children in day care are *not* entitled to unemployment insurance, since they are regarded as incapable of working by their new capitalist masters.

East German women are also being deprived of contraception. The entire East German health system, based on polyclinics, has been bulldozed. The pill (which was free in the DDR) has become prohibitively expensive for most; sterilization is rapidly becoming the only remaining contraceptive method which is (still) free.

Abortion is the last significant gain which East German women still retain from the DDR. West Germany's abortion law was based on the notorious Paragraph 218 dating back to the penal code of Bismarck's Reich. Women were subject to criminal prosecution for abortions unless a physician declared them to be in medical, psychological or social distress. In a modern-day version of the Inquisition, in 1988 a gynecologist in Bavaria was tried and convicted for violating Paragraph 218. The West German working class has long been hostile to legal restrictions on abortion. However, mass mobilizations against 218, for example in the mid-1970s, were sabotaged by the Social Democratic tops.

Hostility to the criminalization of abortion in East Germany was so strong that the Christian Democrats were forced to postpone a confrontation on the issue at the time of *Anschluss*. Instead, the two fundamentally incompatible abortion laws were to coexist in the eastern and western *länder* (states) for two years until replaced by a new unitary law.

After bitter debates and an East-West split among the Christian Democrats, in June 1992 a draft law was passed in the Bundestag (parliament). Abortion with forced "counseling" to "protect unborn life" would not be illegal in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The new law would be an unambiguous defeat for women in the former DDR; for West German women it would potentially be a limited reform, since the arbitrary diktat by a doctor

would be eliminated. Right-wing Christian Democratic politicians contested the draft law before the constitutional court, and in early August the judges, overriding parliamentary democracy, suspended its implementation.

The continuing furor over the new abortion law is but one symptom of the growing social and political turmoil in post-*Anschluss* Germany. Working-class women in the former DDR in particular constitute a powerful reservoir of hatred for the masters of the Fourth Reich. Their husbands, brothers and fathers are also suffering mass unemployment, or if they have jobs are treated with contempt—like the natives of a colonial country—by their new West German bosses. In the spring of 1991 angry East Germans of both sexes poured into streets to protest as Kohl—now dubbed "the chancellor of lies"—was pelted with vegetables in Halle.

Western Germany, too, now in a recession, is becoming a seething mass of discontent. The long-complacent social-democratic labor movement is facing capitalist attacks on wages and benefits to pay for the Deutsche Bank's leveraged buyout of the DDR and the intended establishment of a German neocolonial empire in East Europe and the former Soviet Union. The two million Turkish, Yugoslav and other immigrant workers—who have always been alienated from the German bourgeois order—now face murderous neo-Nazi terror and the threat of expulsion from the country. The Spartakist Workers Party of Germany is aiming to build a party that can unite all working people—from the unemployed and impoverished women of Leipzig to the Turkish steel workers in the Ruhr—against the brutal Fourth Reich.

Poland: Clerical-Nationalist Crusade Against Women

Patricia Clough of the London *Independent* (14 April 1992) wrote that Polish women are being hurled "out of the safe world of guaranteed jobs and a pretence of equality and back, decades upon decades in time, into a frightening world of discrimination, prejudice and oppression." As in eastern Germany, they are being driven out of the labor force by the combined effects of the economic collapse, the closure of childcare centers and male-only hiring practices.

In addition, women are the main target in a drive to transform Poland into an East Europe version of Ireland or a Roman Catholic analogue of Khomeiniite Iran. Marcin Libicki of the Christian National Union—presently part of the governing coalition—proclaims: “We wish to return to the ethos of woman as a mother. Nature created women to bear children.” In the spring of 1991, Pope Wojtyla ranted and raved across Poland, comparing the “vast graveyard of unborn children” to the Nazi Holocaust.

Poland is today in the forefront of a clerical-nationalist crusade throughout East Europe against abortion and more generally against the “hedonism” and “consumerism” of the West. Given the relative economic backwardness of the region, the nationalists see no other road to political and military strength than maximizing the population of their sacred nation-state. For East Europe’s mutually hostile “Christian nationalists,” abortion reduces the number of potential Polish or Hungarian or Romanian soldiers capable of killing neighboring peoples. That is why they regard it as the crime of crimes.

There is a widespread misconception that the Vatican’s position that abortion equals murder is based on the ancient dogma of the early church fathers. In fact, it is an adaptation by the Catholic hierarchy to *modern bourgeois nationalism*. In the 1860s, Napoleon III of France—the prototype of bonapartist despotism in an imperialist state—thought that a higher birthrate was essential to provide workers and soldiers to expand the French Empire. He appealed to Rome, and the Pope duly revised the traditional church doctrine that life begins at “quickening” to the present immediately-following-conception view. This transformed abortion from a venial to a mortal sin and provided the “moral” basis for anti-abortion laws in France and the rest of Catholic Europe.

The close ties of the Solidarność leadership to the Vatican were well known from the outset, as was Wojtyla’s aggressive campaign to criminalize abortion. Yet among Solidarność partisans were Polish women who rejected the role which the church prescribed for them, believed in the right of abortion and generally shared an outlook similar to Western petty-bourgeois feminists. Why did these “liberated” Polish women make common cause with Walesa, Wojtyla & Co.? An explanation is provided by Malgorzata Tarasiewicz, the former head of the

Solidarność Women’s Commission, who has since become a self-styled anarchist:

“It was a common belief that as soon as we got rid of communist rule the aid and investment would start pouring in from the Western countries. It turned out not to be true. The majority of Western businessmen interested in Eastern Europe are interested in quick profits only. “They do create jobs but on their conditions: no trade unions, no complaints about work conditions, and low wages.”

—*Off Our Backs*, August/September 1991

The illusion that an anti-Communist government in Warsaw would receive tens of billions of dollars and deutschmarks in economic largesse from Western bankers and industrialists was shared by much of the working class and, indeed, largely explains worker support for the openly pro-capitalist Solidarność. Instead Western financiers ordered the new regime to carry out an economic “shock treatment,” producing mass unemployment and general impoverishment. Polish workers were politically as well as economically shocked, and they quickly turned against the Solidarność government the same weapons—strikes and protests—which they had used against successive Stalinist regimes. Since early 1990, Poland has experienced a high and fairly constant level of labor struggle, while Solidarność has splintered into bitterly hostile parties.

The economic shock treatment dictated by Western bankers has been paralleled by the Vatican’s drive to criminalize abortion. This issue has gotten heavy coverage in the Western mainstream bourgeois, feminist and left press. Almost all these articles point out that abortion on demand was legalized in Poland in 1956. Yet almost none indicate why this emancipatory measure occurred at that time and not before.

The Christian Nationalists et al. contend that legalized abortion was imposed by the Communists (i.e., Stalinists) against the will of the Polish people. Exactly the *opposite* is the case. In Poland and throughout the Soviet bloc, abortion was outlawed during the later years of the Stalin era (1945-53). In the first decade of its existence, the People’s Republic of Poland retained the 1932 anti-abortion law of the fascistic Pilsudski dictatorship of the interwar period. Under this law women could be imprisoned for three years, and doctors and midwives for five.

Der Spiegel



Under the banner of clerical reaction and Polish nationalism, Lech Walesa led counterrevolutionary Solidarność against the discredited Polish Stalinist regime.



Platforma Spartakusowców

Solidarność counterrevolution has provoked a strong current of anti-clerical sentiment in Poland. Warsaw, 1991: demonstrators gather around a statue of the scientist Copernicus to protest reintroduction of mandatory religious training in public schools.

In the early postwar period the Warsaw Stalinists believed that a high birthrate was desirable to provide the manpower needed to rebuild the war-devastated country.

Stalin's death and the succession crisis in the Kremlin unhinged the brittle bureaucratic order in the East European "People's Republics," beginning with the East Berlin workers uprising in June 1953. In Poland, the faction-riven regime faced an increasingly rebellious mood among the working masses and intelligentsia as police-state controls broke down.

It was under these circumstances that the Abortion Admissibility Law was passed in April 1956 by the tottering Stalinist regime. It was immensely popular among Polish women, and allowed the Stalinists to claim that henceforth they would carry out their professed policy of emancipating women. Additionally, it undermined the authority of the church, which during the period of Stalinist totalitarianism was the only tolerated institution independent of the bureaucracy.

The hesitant steps at liberalization by the despised old-line Stalinists did not in any way dampen popular unrest. A budding proletarian political revolution—later called "the Polish October"—was headed off at the last moment only by the accession to power of Wladyslaw Gomulka, who had a reputation as a victimized "national-liberal" Communist and an honest workers leader. Gomulka managed to save the bureaucracy by initially making sweeping concessions to all sections of Polish society, from the pro-socialist workers councils to the smallholding peasantry and the church hierarchy.

To its credit, the Gomulka regime institutionalized free abortion on demand, partly because it believed that a lower birthrate would benefit economic growth by allowing a shift in resources from consumption to investment. Throughout the Soviet bloc (except for the DDR) effective contraceptive devices were hard to come by, a situation aggravated in Poland by pressure from the church. According to Hanna Jankowska of Pro-Femina, an abortion rights

group, only 10 percent of Polish women use modern contraceptives. Thus, abortions—estimated at between 500,000 and a million a year—became the principal means of birth control.

Ever since 1956, prohibition of abortion has been the key demand of clerical anti-Communism in Poland. When the Warsaw Stalinists were clearly giving up the ghost in the "Round Table" talks with Solidarność in the spring of 1989, Catholic deputies in the Sejm (parliament) introduced the Unborn Child Protection bill, which prohibits abortions under *all* circumstances and carries a three-year prison term for both a woman and her doctor. It was worse than the 1932 law of the Pilsudski dictatorship, which allowed abortion in cases of rape, incest, juvenile prostitution and danger to the mother's health.

While clerical-nationalists try to identify the Polish people with Catholic fundamentalism, opinion surveys have consistently shown some 60 percent of the population favors retaining abortion on demand, while less than 10 percent support a total prohibition. For the first time in decades a strong current of popular anti-clericalism has re-emerged in Poland, especially among women. For example, protesters outside the Sejm in 1990 carried signs like "Into Europe by Way of Iran." But instead of forthrightly defending the right of abortion—which was even popular as well as principled—Poland's erstwhile Stalinists, now social democrats, stalled by tying the new legislation up in endless parliamentary committees.

However, the church hierarchy and clericalist parties moved to suppress abortion whether it was lawful or not. In 1990 religious instruction was reintroduced into Polish schools, and priests immediately mobilized children against their mothers. Children as young as eight were pressured into signing anti-abortion petitions. Many a Polish woman has had her young child ask, "Mummy, is it true that you want to kill my little sister?"

The last-ditch tactic of the main political opponents of the anti-abortion law was to call for a popular referendum on the question, assured they would win. Predictably, therefore, the church hierarchy, President Lech Walesa and the clericalist parties blocked this move. To force a referendum against the opposition of those forces would have required a mass mobilization centered on the working class—strikes, big militant demonstrations, the occupation of the Ministry of Health and public hospitals which refused to perform abortions. Given the angry and desperate mood of the Polish working class, taking the battle to defend abortion rights into the streets could have ripped apart the fragile counterrevolutionary regime; last December's coal miners strike already forced the government to postpone the Sejm debate on the anti-abortion law. This was precisely what the liberal, pro-"European" leaders of the referendum campaign like Zbigniew Bujak and Barbara Labuda were afraid of. For Poland's liberals and social democrats, fear of destabilizing the fledgling bourgeois state far outweighs their distaste at the country's becoming an East European Ireland or worse.

Now both houses of the Sejm have approved the long-dreaded anti-abortion law. As a "compromise," women will not be imprisoned, only their doctors, and abortion will be permitted in cases of rape, danger to a woman's health, etc.

In the fall of 1990, amid the first big workers' struggle against the new Solidarność regime, a small group of

Trotskyist militants in Poland adhered to the ICL. The founding document of the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski stated:

“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.... 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.”

—Spartacist (English Edition)
No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91 .

Today in Poland the emancipation of women is immediately, directly and intimately linked to proletarian socialist revolution.

Women in Soviet Russia from Stalin to Brezhnev

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917—the greatest victory for the proletariat in world history—emblazoned on its banner the emancipation of women. Under the early Soviet government of Lenin and Trotsky, divorce was made free and easily accessible; discrimination against children born out of wedlock was eliminated; free communal day-care centers were established; equal pay for equal work was decreed; abortion was made legal, free and available on demand; and thousands of schools were opened to women for the first time on the basis of preferential treatment. In Central Asia and Azerbaijan heroic efforts—which cost many a communist woman militant her life—were made to liberate women from the enslavement of traditional Islamic society.

The usurpation of power in the mid-1920s by a parasitic bureaucracy under J.V. Stalin—a political counterrevolution ultimately reflecting the pressures of world capitalism on the isolated Soviet workers state—soon led to a decisive step *backward* for women. An all-out offensive was undertaken to reconstitute the family structure based on female subordination. In 1934 the Women’s Section of the party was abolished and all mass women’s organizations were dissolved (except, significantly, in the Central Asian republics). Immediately thereafter came the illegalization of abortion and the virtual impossibility of obtaining a divorce, along with a propaganda offensive sanctifying “the socialist family.” As Trotsky wrote at the time in *The Revolution Betrayed*: “The marriage and family laws established by the October revolution, once the object of its legitimate pride, are being made over and mutilated by vast borrowings from the law treasuries of the bourgeois countries.”

Nonetheless, Trotsky argued that such borrowings did



W&R Map

not make the Soviet Union a bourgeois state. During the 1930s and subsequently it was common for liberals and social democrats to equate Stalin’s Russia with Hitler’s Germany under the blanket heading of totalitarian police states, thereby ignoring their very different social bases. Yet the position of women in the two societies was fundamentally and obviously different.

The Nazi regime forcibly imposed on German women a life of “Kinder, Küche, Kirche” (children, kitchen, church). Even during the desperate conditions of World War II, German women were not drawn into the factories, partly out of fear that Aryan motherhood would be “contaminated” by contact with forced foreign laborers, mainly Slavs. A leading economic historian of the war has written:

“Germany was the one exception to the rule that the war brought about a great increase in the employment of women.... In spite of the insatiable demand for labour in Germany the social ideas of the National Socialist party prevented any fuller mobilization of women. Since race and blood were paramount in the creation of the new society breeding was vital.”

—Alan S. Milward, *War, Economy and Society 1939-1945* (1979)

The condition of Soviet women was diametrically opposed to that of their German sisters. The first Five Year Plans, which transformed the USSR from a largely peasant country to an industrial power, mobilized women en masse, and could not have succeeded without them.



Gustav Klutsis

1927 Soviet poster honoring skilled women workers. Stalin regime later sought to glorify "the socialist family."

The number of female workers *more than quadrupled* between 1928 and 1940, increasing from less than 3 million to more than 13 million. This trend was accelerated during the war, when women displaced men sent to the front. By 1942 a third of all lathe operators, 40 percent of all dock workers and almost half the tractor drivers on collective farms were women.

Further, Soviet women participated in combat, an integral part of the mass mobilization of the entire population against the Nazi invasion of their country in World War II. Soviet airwomen, the first women in history to fly planes in combat, were organized into three all-women air combat regiments and were known as the "Night Witches" by Nazi troops who feared their nightly sorties.

With the Red Army's victory over the Nazi Wehrmacht, Stalin moved to restore a more patriarchal order. A high birthrate was viewed as a priority to make up for the terrible population losses of the war. In 1944 coeducation was eliminated and replaced by sexually segregated schooling. This measure was not only socially reactionary but also retarded Soviet economic development, since that generation of young women received an education inferior to that of their male coworkers.

The position of women in Stalin's Russia clearly expressed its *contradictory nature* as a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. Reactionary laws designed to enforce women's role as housewife and childbearer coexisted with the highest female labor force participation rate in the world. The glorification of the "socialist family" coexisted with

pronouncements of sexual equality based on the principles of Marx and Lenin. These contradictions would enable Soviet women to make significant gains when the political situation changed after Stalin's death in 1953.

Stalin's successors and heirs in the Kremlin feared a popular revolt such as that which had shaken East Germany in 1953. One of their first acts was to announce a "New Course" marked by a sharp increase in the availability of consumer goods. However, to sustain a rising living standard for the Soviet masses required increasing economic productivity and a more efficient utilization of labor.

Women were the major untapped source of skilled labor power, the most productive generations of men having been decimated in the war with Nazi Germany. In 1955 not only was coeducation reinstated, but a major effort was launched to train women as skilled workers and technicians as well as for professions. To encourage women to devote the time and energy necessary to acquire these new skills, childbearing was de-emphasized.

Thus also in 1955 abortion was again made legal. The official reason given was to eliminate illegal and dangerous abortions, rather than to recognize a woman's right to decide whether or not to have a child. The widespread recourse to illegal abortions had amounted to a form of resistance by Soviet women to Stalinist totalitarianism and eventually forced the bureaucracy to abandon a particularly oppressive policy.

The new Kremlin regime which consolidated around Nikita Khrushchev in the mid-1950s sought popular support and moral authority by claiming that henceforth the Soviet government and ruling party would live up to its professed socialist principles, including sexual equality. An effort was made to demonstrate that Soviet women were the equals of men in all spheres. In 1963 cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova gained worldwide acclaim for her pioneering space flight at a time when American astronauts all had names like Scott, Neil and Gus. The Khrushchev era also revived anti-religious campaigns, which in the traditionally Muslim region of Soviet Central Asia were directly related to the continuing difficult struggle for the freedom of women.

The promises of the Khrushchev era—in 1961 the impulsive Kremlin leader declared that the Soviet Union would achieve "full communism" in 20 years—generated expectations and demands which the bureaucracy could not meet. In 1964 Khrushchev was ousted by the more conservative Leonid Brezhnev, whose conception of social order rested on mass political apathy.

Under Brezhnev, the bureaucratic elite (the *nomenklatura*) became flagrantly corrupt, nepotistic and self-serving. No one took its ideological pronouncements seriously. The socialist idealism which animated Soviet workers and intellectuals in the 1950s/early 1960s—the period of "de-Stalinization," Sputnik and the Cuban Revolution—gave way to widespread cynicism among all social layers.

While paying lip service to "Marxism-Leninism," the real ideology of the Brezhnevite bureaucracy might be termed "superpowerism"—the belief in a strong Russian-centered state capable of negotiating the shape of world politics on an equal footing with U.S. imperialism. Official propaganda on the national question within the USSR invariably referred to Russians as the "elder brothers" (*starshie bratia*) of the other Soviet peoples. To counter the influence of pro-Western "dissidents" like Andrei

Sakharov, the Brezhnev regime selectively tolerated and even promoted reactionary Russian nationalist ideologues, including open anti-Communists like the "village writer" Valentin Rasputin, who idealized the traditional patriarchal society of the medieval Rus.

From the mid-1960s onward there was a growing gap between the ritual declarations for equality between the sexes and the increasingly male-chauvinist attitudes in Soviet Russian society, from top to bottom. While about 30 percent of the seats in the rubber-stamp soviets were automatically allocated to women, no woman exercised real political power. No woman sat on the Politburo—the supreme governing body—in the entire 18-year Brezhnev reign. This lack of authority for women at the top of Soviet society was paralleled at its base, in everyday family life. Being beaten at the hands of a drunken husband was by no means uncommon. Drunkenness was the most frequently cited reason given by Russian women who were divorced for the breakup of their marriage.

If some Russian women experienced physical abuse, almost all were oppressed by the unequal division of labor within the typical marriage. If married women in East Germany did three-quarters of the housework after working all day in a factory or office, their Russian sisters did closer to 100 percent under far more economically



Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova pioneered space flight in 1963. She later criticized absence of women in positions of authority during the Brezhnev era.

primitive conditions. For example, efficient public laundries were few and far between. The bureaucracy's failure to invest in an efficient distribution network combined with the arbitrary pricing of consumer goods meant that shoppers (mainly women) had to spend hours in line to buy necessities.

The "double burden" borne by Soviet women was routinely acknowledged and routinely denounced in official publications, even in the pre-glasnost era. "Sociological studies carried out in our country," wrote three Soviet women academics in 1978, "reveal the relative persistence of this old, patriarchal point of view on the distribution of family duties" (in Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, ed., *Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union* [1982]).

But such patriarchal views were not simply a "persistence" of the bygone tsarist era. They reflected the foul socio-political climate of Soviet Stalinism in its terminal decay—the identification of "socialism" with a strong Russian-centered state, the increasing "respectability" of

Great Russian chauvinism, the rising level of anti-Semitism, the pervasive and often hysterical hostility to homosexuality (which among men was subject to criminal prosecution).

Russian women sought to reduce their "double burden" in the only way they could short of a political revolution: by having fewer children. By the 1970s the Russian and Ukrainian populations (frequently intermarried) were barely reproducing themselves, much to the distress of the Kremlin oligarchy. Discussion of the woman question within the bureaucracy and official intelligentsia in the latter half of the Brezhnev era and early Gorbachev years was dominated by the so-called "population problem." The view that a woman's participation in social production impaired her duties as mother would become a key element in Gorbachev's perestroika.

There was in reality *no* population problem from the standpoint of the *objective needs* of the Soviet Union and its economy. The perception that such a problem existed revealed only the Great Russian chauvinist prejudices of the Kremlin leadership. The rural areas of Turkic-speaking Central Asia—the poorest regions in the USSR—suffered from overpopulation.

The hue and cry about "the population problem" exposed the lack of integration between the Turkic and Slavic peoples of the Soviet Union. This was demonstrated by the key and related indices of birthrate and female participation in the industrial labor force. By the late '70s the one-child family had become the norm for urban Russians and Ukrainians, while four or more children were common among Uzbeks and Tadzhiks, even those living in cities. Women made up slightly over half the industrial labor force in the Russian republic and the Ukraine, compared to 40 percent in the Central Asian republics (and many of these were Slavic women in the major cities like Tashkent and Samarkand).

A genuinely socialist government in the Soviet Union would have promoted a mass out-migration from rural Central Asia to the labor-short regions in European Russia, the Ukraine and Siberia. Even more important than the economic advantages of such a program would have been its social effects. The immersion of hundreds of thousands of young Uzbek and Tadzhik men and especially women in Leningrad, Kiev and Vladivostok would have presented an obstacle to the re-emergence of Islamic traditionalism and encouraged intermarriage among the various Soviet peoples.

Yet such a policy was *not* pursued. According to the 1989 census, there were only 250,000 members of the four largest Central Asian nationalities—Uzbeks, Tadzhiks, Turkmens and Kirghiz—in the vast Russian republic, including Siberia. The failure to effect a progressive solution to the combined problem of a labor shortage in the Slavic republics with overpopulation in rural Central Asia would soon lead to reactionary consequences, especially for women, throughout the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's Perestroika: Prelude to Capitalist Counterrevolution

Since the beginning of the first Five Year Plans, Soviet economic development has been based on extensive growth. New factories and other productive facilities were built, drawing the additional labor needed to operate them from the surplus population in the Russian and



Der Spiegel photos

Russian Orthodox priest on Yeltsin's barricades in August 1991. Yeltsin and Bush (above) celebrate capitalist counterrevolution.

Ukrainian countryside. With the falling birthrate in the Slavic republics, by the mid-1970s the Soviet economy was suffering an acute labor shortage as the growth rate slowed to a crawl. The Brezhnev regime and its economists proclaimed the need to switch to *intensive* growth by retooling existing enterprises and increasing labor productivity.

In the 1930s Trotsky predicted that the Kremlin bureaucracy would reach an impasse on the economic front when it became necessary to shift from crude quantitative increases to improvement in quality, from extensive to intensive growth. The 1938 Transitional Program of the Fourth International calls for "A revision of *planned economy* from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers!"

However, the new regime of Mikhail Gorbachev, which took over the Kremlin in 1985, sought to restimulate the Soviet economy through market-oriented "reforms," that is, the selective importation of capitalist norms into the collectivized system. Wages were to be geared to enterprise profitability, managers to be given the right to lay off "redundant" workers, unprofitable enterprises to be closed down and a dose of unemployment to be introduced into the Soviet economy for the first time in living memory. Most of the unemployed were slated to be women, who were then expected to devote their energies to raising more children.

Gorbachev was far better regarded among Western radicals, including feminists, than his predecessors in the Kremlin. Yet his 1987 tract *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* anticipated the American right wing's campaign for "family values." He saw the "weakening of family ties, and slack attitude to family responsibilities, as a paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything." This most "liberal" Stalinist then called for "women to return to their purely womanly mission."

American left-wing economist Judith Shapiro, a former supporter of our tendency, pointed out the organic link between the market-oriented program for a "slimmed-

down industrial labour force" and the Russian version of "family values." She quoted Tatyana Zaslavskaya, a leading ideologue of perestroika and adviser to Gorbachev:

"It would seem that the high level of employment of women in social production is socially unjustified. It has had a negative effect both on the birth rate and on the upbringing of children...the one-child family is becoming the prevalent model, which does not even ensure that the population reproduces itself."

—quoted in Mary Buckley, ed., *Perestroika and Soviet Women* (1992)

This statement demonstrates an implicit Russian-nationalist point of view. Zaslavskaya can be referring only to the Slavic population of the USSR, since the Turkic population was more than reproducing itself. If an adviser to the American president expressed concern that white Americans were not reproducing themselves or a Bundestag deputy spoke in favor of a higher birthrate among Germans, leftists in these countries would scream racism. Yet Gorbachev, Zaslavskaya and the perestroika gang were initially lionized by most Western leftists, who then shifted their enthusiasm to even more reactionary political forces like Yeltsin and the various anti-Soviet nationalist secessionists.

Despite the propaganda campaign to glorify childbearing and rearing, Soviet women were not buying it. An opinion poll in 1989 indicated that only 20 percent of Soviet women would give up their jobs even if they could afford to. This is all the more significant since the mass of women in the USSR had the lowest-paid, most labor-intensive, most exhausting and tedious work. But the logic of the proclaimed "transition to a market economy" was to send women back to the family, whether they wanted to go or not. When on New Year's Day 1988 centralized planning was scrapped and replaced by enterprise "self-financing," managers looted the state property entrusted to them. Industrial supplies were diverted into the black market, while consumer goods could be found only in the newly legalized private stores at extortionate prices.

Enterprise managers also used their new freedom to play by market rules to rid themselves of "redundant"

workers, almost always women. A letter to the press in 1988 from the textile center of Ivanovo—known as the “city of single women”—exposed the true face of perestroika:

“There are a lot of young women with small children in our collective. Most of them would prefer to work part-time but this doesn’t suit the management.... The management is simply forcing us to resign. The director even said, ‘They’ve turned the place into a children’s nursery—we can do without workers like that.’”

—quoted in Linda Edmondson, ed., *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union* (1992)

Gorbachev, however, shrank from imposing mass layoffs, closing major enterprises and eliminating all price controls, for fear of igniting a social explosion. He was denounced for resorting to “half-measures” by Boris Yeltsin, a former Gorbachev lieutenant, who in 1989-90 emerged as the leader of the openly capitalist-restorationist forces. Yeltsin’s seizure of power in August 1991, following a botched coup by Kremlin conservatives, marked the ascendancy of capitalist counterrevolution in Russia and the breakup of the USSR into mutually hostile nationalist regimes.

Since then things have gotten far worse. On New Year’s Day 1992 the Yeltsin regime, in order to demonstrate its “free market” bonafides to its Western imperialist godfathers, quadrupled the price of most consumer goods and services. Whole sections of the population—pensioners, single mothers, families with many children, invalids—have been driven into dire poverty. The economic chaos triggered by Gorbachev’s perestroika deepened under Yeltsin into wholesale looting and the breakdown of the industrial economy. With the ruble practically worthless, the new robber barons of Russia are smuggling everything from precious metals to weapons to the West, the proceeds going into Swiss bank accounts. Manufacturing output, which plummeted 20 percent last year, is now in a free fall.

In the textile center of Ivanovo, with its predominantly female labor force, output has been cut in half, the warehouses are empty and raw cotton is unavailable due to the disorganization of the transport system and civil war in Tadzhikistan. Thousands of workers, although nominally still employed, are on “forced vacations,” trying to survive on 20 percent of their normal income under conditions of hyperinflation now approaching 50 percent a month!

Such desperate conditions can easily provoke a social explosion. However, a popular upsurge against “free market” impoverishment could be exploited and directed by reactionary nationalist demagogues calling for a strong Russian state not subservient to the Western powers. The multinational working class in Russia can stop the ravages of capitalist restoration only by smashing the nascent bourgeois state of Yeltsin and returning to the principles of proletarian political power and internationalism of the October Revolution. As we wrote in “How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 564, 27 November 1992): “Only as part of the struggle to reforge an authentic world party of socialist revolution can the workers of the former Soviet Union cohere the leadership they need to sweep away the grotesque horrors they now confront.”

In the non-Russian republics of the former USSR, the devastating economic effects of the counterrevolution on

women are reinforced by the unashamedly patriarchal program of the ascendant nationalist parties. A few years ago women supporters of the Lithuanian Sajudis told feminist-minded British academic Mary Buckley that it was men’s role to engage in politics while theirs was to make “beautiful homes” in a new independent Lithuania.

Come independence after August 1991, Lithuanian women got to stay home whether they wanted to or not. But their homes were hardly beautiful. They were freezing for lack of heating oil and the cupboards were bare, as the insane national isolationism of the Sajudis regime produced total economic collapse. Recently, Lithuanian voters kicked the Sajudis out of power and replaced them with the former Communist Party turned social democrats, who promised to restore close economic ties with Russia.

A leading Ukrainian nationalist ideologue has berated modern Ukrainian women for preferring rock music to



Jim Richardson

Textile worker in Dushanbe, capital of Tadzhikistan. Extension of the October Revolution to Soviet Central Asia, albeit deformed by Stalinism, liberated women from barbaric conditions of the old society.

folk lullabies. All of the anti-Communist nationalists in East Europe are *anti-cosmopolitan*. The self-declared mission of the Sajudis and the Ukrainian Rukh is to purge the Lithuanian and Ukrainian peoples of all elements of their recently common Soviet culture, which had become open to cultural influences from around the world. Both right-wing Ukrainian nationalists and the nativist Russian fascists of Pamyat are appalled that the youth of their countries appreciate and imitate rock music, as this explodes the myth of a uniquely Slavic soul resistant to the siren songs of Western “hedonism.” We recall Adolf Hitler’s hateful dismissal of American jazz as “decadent nigger music.”

A few years ago Ukrainian nationalist-feminists called on Rukh to “reject the patriarchal values of the past, to fight for genuine equality of women and men in society, in guarding the home hearth, in bringing up children, and in political and social activities” (quoted in *Perestroika and Soviet Women*). This is rather like calling on the American Ku Klux Klan to reject racism and respect the civil rights and social equality of black people. All of the



Central Asia, late 1920s: Soviet court hears 16-year-old woman in head-to-toe veil testify that her husband beats her.

new East European nationalist movements are fiercely patriarchal. All believe that the role of women is not only to maximize the progeny of the sacred nation-state, but also to imbue their children with age-old national and religious traditions derived from feudal and prefeudal times.

Social Progress and Islamic Traditionalism in Soviet Central Asia

Nowhere in the former Soviet Union is capitalist counterrevolution more directly and immediately linked to the degradation of women than in Central Asia. For here the Bolshevik Revolution, even in its Stalinist degeneration, liberated women from the most hideous forms of oppression symbolized by the *paranja*, a veil covering the whole body with only a mesh for sight or breath. The *kaly*m, or bride price, was a near-universal practice. A woman was bound, often from childhood, to the husband who satisfied her father's price. If she ran away, she could be pursued as a criminal and punished by her husband and his clan. A runaway wife might be punished by having her legs broken or by other barbaric tortures. For a woman so much as suspected of infidelity, the punishment was branding on the genitals with a hot iron.

In the early 1920s the Soviet government launched a major campaign to emancipate the women of Central Asia and Azerbaijan from the terrible conditions enshrined in Islamic traditionalism. The main agency for this work was the Zhenotdel—the Communist Party's Department of Working Women and Peasant Women. Half a century later, an Azeri veteran of the Zhenotdel in Baku recounts with pride: "We felt we were bringing light to women. We were 'cultural soldiers' fighting on a front in a real war. We were soldiers who had to bring light to the darkness. We freed women" (quoted in Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* [1989]).

The term "cultural soldiers" was no mere turn of phrase. These women communist militants were risking a horrible death. In fact, the discovery of numerous dismembered bodies of Zhenotdel organizers finally compelled

the Soviet government to reinstate the death penalty for explicitly "anti-feminist" murder as a counterrevolutionary crime. Tribalist and traditionalist guerrillas called the *basmachi* (similar to modern-day Afghan *mujahedin*) terrorized unveiled women in Central Asia, until they were suppressed by the Red Army in the early 1930s.

While Stalin liquidated the Zhenotdel in 1934, special work continued to be carried out among Muslim women in the Central Asian republics. This was not because the "Great Helmsman" felt an inner mission to liberate the women of the East. Rather it reflected the vital needs of the Soviet Union's collectivized economy. For Turkic women to operate the new textile mills constructed during the first Five Year Plans, they had to shed the veil and achieve a certain independence from their husbands.

Trotsky recognized the close link between economic construction and social progress in the backward regions of the USSR, even though both were deformed by Stalinist bureaucratic parasitism:

"It is true that in the sphere of national policy, as in the sphere of economy, the Soviet bureaucracy still continues to carry out a certain part of the progressive work, although with immoderate overhead expenses. This is especially true of the backward nationalities of the Union, which must of necessity pass through a more or less prolonged period of borrowing, imitation and assimilation of what exists. The bureaucracy is laying down a bridge for them to the elementary benefits of bourgeois, and in part even pre-bourgeois, culture."

—*The Revolution Betrayed* (1937)

In Central Asia, the contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state produced a sharp urban/rural dichotomy. The major cities, like Tashkent in Uzbekistan and Leninabad in Tadzhikistan, became quite Europeanized. They attracted a large number of Slavic and also Jewish immigrants, and were melting pots for the various Central Asian nationalities. Women went unveiled, and many wore Western dress and participated freely in public life. Even a staunchly anti-Communist American academic, Martha Brill Olcott, acknowledged:

"A female born in an urban setting [in Central Asia] can expect to receive virtually the same education as her male

counterpart.... Women are equal to men before the law, and there is at least token female presence in all spheres of public life."

—in William Fierman, ed., *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (1991)

While 45 percent of the total population in Soviet Central Asia live in the cities, most of the indigenous peoples live in rural areas. There was also progress toward the emancipation of women in the countryside—economically geared to the production of cotton on collective farms. In most rural areas the veil was seldom seen. But Islamic practices and clan loyalties remained an undercurrent in Central Asian society.

The experience of Soviet Central Asia demonstrates the absolutely critical importance of industrialization, even in a rural setting, for the emancipation of women in traditional patriarchal societies. The Soviet ethnographer Sergei Polyakov did a study of two villages in northern Tadjikistan. In the first, hundreds of women worked in a local rug factory and in cottage industries making textiles. Here women appeared in public without covering their faces or heads, and teenage girls and boys went out together. In the second village, where women were engaged solely in agriculture, they covered their faces and heads, did not talk to men in public or go about unescorted, and girls were barred from extracurricular school activities.

However, the Soviet government did not have the resources to construct factories in every Tadjik or Uzbek village, even if it had wanted to. The emancipation of Muslim women in rural Central Asia was possible only on the socio-economic basis of the USSR as a whole: through large-scale out-migration and the intermingling of Soviet peoples.

In Soviet Central Asia, the Brezhnev era saw a gradual deterioration in the position of women. Such deep-rooted practices as arranged marriages and the bride price could not be eradicated purely through legal-administrative means. This would require the *active political mobilization* of progressive forces in society, which had been falling off since the Khrushchev era. Teenage girls facing forced marriages must be able to turn to a strong women's organ-

ization supported by state authorities. Men who bought their brides should feel the hostile social pressure of their peers, for example, by being scandalized in a newsletter in the factory or collective farm where they worked.

However, the Brezhnev regime discouraged any kind of political mobilization, for fear of disrupting the bureaucratic order. The Central Asian branch of the bureaucracy, which set the standard of corruption for the USSR, allowed a resurgence of Islamic traditionalism at the household level, as long as it didn't challenge their political sinecures and illicit wealth. To piece off the mullahs, they illegally diverted government funds to build mosques and "tea houses," which served as unofficial mosques. William Fierman, an American Cold War expert on Soviet Central Asia, has written: "Despite the continuation of anti-religious propaganda under Brezhnev, the regime also tolerated widespread observance of many practices popularly associated with Islam."

Some of these practices, such as male circumcision, burial in a shroud rather than a coffin, and not eating pork, simply reflect the diversity of human cultures. But, other practices associated with Islam—such as the forced marriage of teenage girls—are fundamentally oppressive and should not be tolerated. Soviet law forbade the marriage of girls under 16. However, in many cases this prohibition was gotten around by having a religious ceremony and waiting till the birth of a child, preferably male, to register the marriage with the civil authorities.

With the corrupt Stalinist bureaucracy turning a blind eye to their democratic legal rights, Muslim women resorted to suicide—often by the traditional method of self-immolation—to avoid a forced marriage or escape an abusive husband. In the spirit of glasnost, the Uzbek government acknowledged that almost 900 such self-immolations took place between 1987 and 1989. In 1987 *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the paper of the CPSU youth group, reported why so many Central Asian women were driven to self-destruction:

"One girl's father would not let her go to school and she could not bear it. A second girl's relatives, with whom she lived, tried to force her to marry. A third was beaten by her husband, taunted by his relatives and unable to see any way out...."

—quoted in *Women Against Fundamentalism*
No. 3, 1992

Also cited were cases of fathers killing disobedient daughters.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that *secularized* Central Asian men, who had broken with Islamic tradition, were generally *more enlightened* toward women than the typical Russian male. Slavic women who had married Uzbek or Tadjik men in Tashkent told the American geographer Ronald Wixman a few years ago that their husbands, unlike many Russian men, never got drunk or abused their wives and children. However, the minority of secularized, cosmopolitan Central Asian men and women were about to come under attack from resurgent Islamic fundamentalism, encouraged by the "liberal" Gorbachev regime.

The Battle for Central Asia

At a 1987 all-Union women's conference in Moscow, G.B. Bobosadykova, a secretary of the CPSU Central Committee in Tadjikistan, denounced "indifference and



Industrialization and collectivization of agriculture in Soviet Central Asia helped to undermine Islamic traditionalism.



Ahmed Rashid

Islamic fundamentalism is resurgent in the former Soviet Central Asian republics. Uzbek schoolgirls in Tashkent wear the white head scarf as a symbol of "purity."

compromise with vestiges of the past" and called for stepped-up "atheistic propaganda and education." In addition to such propaganda and education, stern measures were clearly necessary to reinstall among Muslim patriachs respect for Soviet laws protecting the democratic rights of women. However, just the opposite happened. The live-and-let-live attitude of the Brezhnev regime gave way under Gorbachev to the active conciliation of religious reaction—the Christian Orthodox church in the Slavic republics, Islam in Central Asia. Militant anti-Soviet fundamentalism was thus tolerated by the government while in part fueled by the arrogant, colonialist mentality of the more recent Russian immigrants. (The older generation of Europeans in Central Asia—many of them forced into exile there under Stalin—were generally more respectful toward their Turkic and Tadjik neighbors and fellow citizens.)

In 1990 self-styled "Wahabbis" at Samarkand University threatened to kill any female student in Western dress who attended the May Day demonstration. The same year, during anti-government riots in the capital of Tadjikistan, eyewitnesses reported that women in Western dress were raped. The fundamentalist Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) emerged from the underground to challenge the Stalinist regimes in Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan.

When the USSR broke up after August 1991, the Central Asian ruling cliques were sufficiently well-entrenched to retain political power. They immediately renounced Communism and declared themselves in favor of a Western-oriented, "secular" state modeled on Turkey. Özal's Turkey, a NATO member with a language related to that of most Central Asian nationalities, has become the main agency for Western imperialist intervention in the region. At the same time, the Ankara regime is competing for influence with Saudi Arabia and Khomeiniite Iran, which are backing the fundamentalist oppositions.

While the old Stalinist mafias held on to the government ministries, fundamentalism is on the rise at the base of the Central Asian nascent bourgeois states. For the first time in decades, some Uzbek schoolgirls in Tash-

kent—the most Europeanized city in the region—who used to wear Western clothes now don the white head-to-toe scarf as a symbol of Islamic "modesty." In Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley—the cotton-producing center of Central Asia—fundamentalist gangs called the *Adolat* have become a law unto themselves. They've set up unofficial courts where the hands of alleged thieves are amputated.

In neighboring Tadjikistan the conflict between the old Stalinist bureaucrats and the fundamentalists has produced a bloody civil war. This former Soviet republic consists of two distinct regions separated by a mountain range. Northern Tadjikistan was dominated by the industrial center of Leninabad (since renamed Khujand). The working class consisted of Uzbeks, as well as Tadjiks, while Central Asian engineers and technicians worked alongside their Slavic colleagues. This cosmopolitan city was the main indigenous base of political support for the Tadjik Stalinist regime. Last year even a supporter of the Islamic Renaissance Party admitted: "The IRP is still very weak. Our people aren't yet developed for religion. Communist Party ideology was always stronger here" (*London Guardian*, 19 May 1992).

Southern Tadjikistan—where the capital of Dushanbe is situated—is predominantly rural and largely ethnically Tadjik, and Islamic traditionalism and clan loyalties are therefore far stronger. Unlike other Central Asian nationalities, Tadjiks do not speak a Turkic language but rather Farsi, the dominant language of Iran. Hence, the Islamic Renaissance Party (though Sunni rather than Shi'ite Muslim) received the patronage of the fundamentalist Teheran regime. More directly, Afghan Tadjik *mujahedin* acted as shock troops for the fundamentalists in this former Soviet republic.

In the fall of 1991 the Brezhnev-era party boss of Tadjikistan, Rakhman Nabiyeu—who uniquely at the time kept the Communist label—won a freely contested election for president against an unholy alliance of the Islamic Renaissance Party and a handful of anti-Communist "democrats." But the following spring the fundamentalists staged bloody riots in Dushanbe, and Nabiyeu capitulated by offering the IRP the lion's share of ministries in a coalition government. The riots were staged by bused-in mobs led by "militias" armed by Tadjik *mujahedin* who had infiltrated across the border from Afghanistan.

At that point the American social-democratic *In These Times* (10 June 1992) ran an article from Tadjikistan by Moscow-based journalist Vladimir Klimenko, who triumphantly proclaimed: "The collapse of the Communist Party's monopoly ushers a new era of hope and uncertainty for the former Soviet Union's smallest and poorest republic." These swinish social democrats—who are so politically correct when it comes to the concerns of American petty-bourgeois feminists—hail "a new era of hope" in Central Asia under the fellow clansmen of the Afghan *mujahedin*, who shoot schoolteachers for teaching young girls to read. However, Klimenko/*In These Times'* anti-Communist triumphalism proved premature.

In September the IRP forced Nabiyeu to resign and he fled to his main political base of Leninabad/Khujand. A few months later, military forces loyal to the old Stalinist regime, now renamed the Tadjik People's Front, retook Dushanbe. A foreign ministry official of the new government, who sports a poster of Madonna on his office wall,

told the *Los Angeles Times* (2 February), "we want to live in an enlightened, democratic society, not like in Iran." Now it was the turn of fundamentalists to flee to their main political base, across the border to the Tadzhik region of Afghanistan, which has disintegrated into all-against-all tribal warfare.

The Western bourgeois press has generally treated the civil war in Tadzhikistan as a conflict between rival clans, with the labels "communist" and "fundamentalist" having no real meaning on the ground. No doubt the Nabiye gang rallied its fellow clansmen against the southern-based IRP. The former Stalinist apparatchiks also commanded a loyal military apparatus built up through decades of patronage. But it is incontestable that Tadzhikistan's small and ethnically mixed proletariat and secularized intelligentsia, concentrated in Leninabad/Khujand, supported the People's Front against the fundamentalists. It is also incontestable that an IRP/*mujahedin* government would reduce all women in Tadzhikistan to the degraded and enslaved conditions of women in Afghanistan and Iran.

A recent *New York Times* (14 January) piece on Tadzhik refugees in Afghanistan reveals the enormous progress made by Muslim women—even the most backward and tradition-bound—in the former Soviet Union:

"Tajik women wear head scarves, but shun chadors, the head-to-toe covering worn by women in the most conservative Islamic societies. Tajik women also do not hesitate to contradict men in public and are vigorous in expressing their views. Many of the women here held jobs in Tajikistan, in sharp contrast to the situation of women in strict Muslim countries, who usually remain at home."

The effects of seven decades of economic development and social progress ushered in by the October Revolution, albeit deformed by Stalinism, were too strong in Soviet Central Asia to permit a quick and easy victory for the Islamic fundamentalists following the breakup of the USSR. However, the fate of this region is today, as it has been for over a century, directly linked to that of its powerful Russian neighbor.

The consolidation of the nascent bourgeois state in

Russia, most likely in a nationalist-bonapartist form, would enormously strengthen the forces of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia. If, however, the working class in Russia, under the leadership of a genuine communist party, can overthrow the capitalist-restorationists, this would galvanize all of the progressive social forces in Central Asia and revive the liberating goals of the Bolshevik Revolution.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The October Revolution proclaimed among its basic goals an end to the oppression of women, the oldest and most deeply rooted form of subjugation in human society. The policies of the early Soviet state—devastated by the effect of the Civil War and besieged by hostile capitalist powers—were nonetheless a model of social emancipation. As Trotsky wrote: "The revolution made a heroic effort to destroy the so-called 'family hearth'—that archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labor from childhood to death."

However, in the name of the "socialist family" and "socialism in one country," Stalin and his heirs in the Kremlin dragged the liberating goals of communism through the mud. Seven decades of bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state have now culminated in capitalist counterrevolution trampling on the social gains and democratic rights of women from Central Europe to Central Asia.

A communist movement must be reformed, a movement driven by hatred of capitalist exploitation and oppression, and inspired by the liberating program of revolutionary Bolshevism. The emancipation of women is integrally bound up with the struggle for a global communist order overcoming all forms of national and racial inequality, and guaranteeing the freedom of all individuals to maximize their capabilities on the basis of mankind's collective control over the forces of nature. ■

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USA: Immigrant Women Workers Expose Racist Abuse

The Clinton administration's "Nannygate" scandal put a harsh spotlight on the condition of immigrant domestic workers in racist America. While feminists bemoaned the "plight" of Zoë Baird and Kimba Wood, who lost the chance to become the first woman attorney general because they had hired "illegal aliens," the real victims are the thousands of immigrant workers who find themselves facing increased persecution, as symbolized by Baird's former servants, set up for deportation by their yuppie boss.

At a hearing on International Women's Day (March 8) in San Francisco on human rights abuses against immigrant and refugee women workers, personal testimony by victimized women exposed hellish conditions of virtual indentured servitude, starvation wages (if they get paid at all), long hours, and in many cases beatings and sexual assault. "We are supposed to have evolved, to have left slavery behind. It has just become more sophisticated," said Clara Luz Navarro, a Salvadoran woman who worked as a maid after coming to this country (*San Francisco Examiner*, 11 January). Claudia Garate, a Chilean au pair, described her ordeal:

"They made false promises to get me to come to this country.... They were to pay me for my work, and I would have the opportunity to study and learn English. Instead, it was a nightmare. I had no rights. I was sleeping on the floor, afraid. I was treated very badly, and not allowed to go anywhere, speak to anyone, or even watch TV."

—*Bay Guardian*, 3 March

The case of Maria Hernández, a 21-year-old undocumented worker from Mexico, is a chilling example of the exploitation often suffered by immigrant women. Hernández was employed as a housekeeper by a chiropractor in California who brutally and repeatedly raped her. Her two predecessors had been treated similarly, but because they feared deportation they never reported these crimes.

Written testimony, handed out by an immigrant rights committee, from Mexican American Alicia Lambert described the increased racist persecution against foreign-born workers. Returning from a trip to Mexico in 1991, Lambert was detained and searched by the INS at U.S. Customs. When she protested this humiliation, three men threw her to the floor:

"I didn't know who these men were cause they didn't identify themselves. So I tried to get away. But that didn't work.... Then they dragged me to another room, one had me by my hair, one had my arm, and one had my legs.... Then one ANGLO man picked me up off the floor by my throat, using both his hands around my throat, and held me against the wall without my feet touching the floor. I told him to let me go and he screams 'SHUT UP YOU FUCKING MEXICAN'.... I got real scared then cause I thought they were going to RAPE me or even KILL me. So I saw an arm close to

my mouth and I bit it as hard as I could.... He got off my chest and grabbed me and turned me on my stomach and twisted my arm so hard that I thought he was going to break it. My body just went limp, I couldn't do anymore. They put the handcuffs on me and one man picked me up by my clothes and threw me against the bench.... They just left me there, bleeding and crying."

The liberal feminists who organized the San Francisco hearing presented the wrenching testimony of these women as an appeal to the "conscience" of the Clinton administration. But Clinton has already made his anti-immigrant position abundantly clear: he's not only continued Bush's racist exclusion of Haitian refugees, but ordered a naval blockade to keep them imprisoned in their police-state hellhole. The bourgeois state—whether under Democratic or Republican administrations—is the enemy of all the oppressed.

Moreover, "buy American" protectionism, pushed by the Democrats and their kept labor and minority "leaders," has encouraged attacks by anti-Asian and anti-Hispanic racists. Reactionary "citizens" groups threatened to mobilize to shut down the hearing, and called on the hated INS to raid it and report "illegal aliens" who dared to testify. While this threat did not materialize, it was later revealed that the INS sent in an undercover surveillance agent.

Full Citizenship Rights for Foreign-Born Workers!

The defense of immigrant women workers can only succeed as part of the class struggle and on the basis of a revolutionary internationalist program. Domestic workers are especially vulnerable since they are isolated from social production, shut up in their employers' homes and cut off from the labor movement. Yet they form part of the growing and increasingly combative immigrant sector of the American working class. Recent militant struggles in Southern California by Latino janitors and drywall workers—coming both shortly before and after the multiracial Los Angeles upheaval against the racist verdict in the Rodney King case—have underlined the potential of immigrant workers to help spark a class-struggle counteroffensive of labor, together with their black, white and Asian brothers and sisters. The workers movement must take up the fight against racist deportations and for full citizenship and union rights for immigrant workers, mobilizing its power against attacks by the anti-immigrant and "English-only" bigots and the INS. United class struggle on both sides of the border is increasingly urgent as U.S. capitalists prepare to implement their "free trade" rape of Mexico. Far from being helpless victims, immigrant women workers will play a powerful role as revolutionary fighters in the multiracial, internationalist party of the working class we Marxists are striving to build.

Clinton...

(continued from page 48)

American population at the "greed decade's" looting of the economy (as did the sinister Ross Perot), profitability is his bottom line. Hillary Rodham Clinton's vaunted health care reforms promise to tighten the grip of the vulturous insurance companies over medical care in this country: "managed competition," the insurance giants' new name for medicine for profit, means medical care rationing—and rationing in this society means less for the poor, for blacks, for women, for immigrants.

"Pro-Choice" Democrats Won't Stop Anti-Abortion Terror

The difference is this: Clinton exploited the opposition of women from all social layers to the Republican right's campaign against abortion and sexual equality in general. The chauvinist demagoguery of the two Pats, Buchanan and Robertson, outraged even wealthy heiresses and women business executives who are as racist as Jesse Helms and as greedy as Michael Milken. Clinton got campaign contributions from businesswomen who had bankrolled right-wing Republicans since the days of Barry Goldwater.

Shortly after coming into office, Clinton signed a series of executive orders reversing Reagan-Bush restrictions on abortion rights, like the gag order on clinic doctors and the bans on the abortion pill, RU 486, and on fetal tissue research. On March 29 the Clinton administration announced plans to ask Congress to overturn the Hyde Amendment, which has banned federal financing for poor women's abortions for 16 years. But no stroke of the pen can erase the deep-seated reactionary campaign against abortion rights and privacy generally in this society, as the tragic murder of Dr. Gunn underscores. The Pensacola leader of the murderer's outfit, Rescue America, is one John Burt, a "former" Ku Klux Klansman who participated in the lynch mob violence against school integration in St. Augustine, Florida in the 1960s. In December 1984, when three Pensacola abortion clinics were bombed, Burt called the bombers "heroes."

Anti-abortion terror is the extralegal arm of a crusade that was orchestrated straight from the Reagan-Bush White House, encouraging the domestic contras. The combined impact has been chillingly effective in the campaign to close down the clinics and cut off access to abortion for countless thousands of women. In 1992, the Democrats' "Year of the Woman," attacks on abortion clinics reached a record high: more than 180 acts of violence were made against abortion providers, *double* the level for 1991. An article in the *SF Weekly* (17 March) notes that in 1993, legal abortions are not available in 83 percent of the counties in America. Medical schools are also intimidated: in 1985 some 22.6 percent of obstetrics programs in the U.S. trained doctors to perform abortions; by 1991 this was down to only 12.4 percent.

Notably, bourgeois feminist groups which have fervently supported Clinton have been silent around the murder of David Gunn. Now the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) are pushing a "freedom of choice" bill in the Democratic Congress and enthusing over Clinton's female attorney general. They are asking former Florida prosecutor Janet Reno to "crack down" on anti-abortion

Heroic abortion provider Dr. David Gunn, murdered March 10 by "right to life" bigot.



mobs and to come up with a federal law against blocking access to clinics. Such bans could well be used in the future to legitimize the suppression of militant actions by labor, blacks and leftists. Judges and D.A.s could point to such a law when they go after workers picketing a corporate headquarters, angry blacks surrounding a courthouse to protest a racist frame-up, or antiwar activists blockading a military induction center.

While Clinton's campaign promise to respect "choice" for women helped him win the election, formal legality of abortion won't help poor, minority and working-class women get abortions if there are no doctors around to perform them, no clinics left to perform them in, and they don't have the money to afford them. That is why the Spartacist League fights for free abortion on demand, and calls on labor and all supporters of abortion rights to defend the clinics.

Social Reaction and Gay Rights

Along with the "promise" to end the military ban (see "Clinton Bows to Anti-Gay Hysteria," page 44), Clinton "promised" gay activist groups that he would sponsor federal legislation guaranteeing gay rights. While such token legislation is supportable, it will no more end discrimination against gays than Clinton's pen saved the life of Dr. Gunn. And can Clinton get it through Congress? Under pressure from Congress he has quickly dropped another of his "promises": to rescind Bush's policy of banning those infected with HIV from entering the country. Meanwhile, over 200 desperate Haitian refugees quarantined at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo, Cuba, have been on a hunger strike, demanding to leave the camp where many have been imprisoned for almost a year and a half. Drop the ban—let them in!

While nationally the ultraright religious bigotry of the Republican platform lost them votes, on a local level the religious right was able to mobilize for a string of victories or alarming near-misses, including a series of vicious measures against homosexuals. A gay rights bill was defeated in Tampa, Florida. In Oregon, 44 percent of the electorate voted for a measure which would have required the state to declare that homosexuality is "abnormal and perverse."

In Colorado, voters approved an amendment to the state constitution that repealed existing gay rights laws in three cities, and barred other municipalities from enacting

such laws. Right-wing demagogues tapped into ethnic, racial and religious divisions by portraying gays as "perverts" enjoying "special rights." And not only the anxieties of white suburbanites: "Colorado for Family Values" deliberately sought to appeal to blacks and Hispanics, arguing that laws prohibiting anti-gay discrimination could be used to dilute affirmative action programs. Now, right-wing forces are organizing to put anti-gay referenda on the ballot in 12 other states.

Gay activist groups have responded to the anti-gay referenda by calling for a boycott of Colorado. Commanding much media attention and support, they succeeded in getting the U.S. Mayors Conference to relocate its convention to New York. But while ever mindful of the voting clout of the organized gay movement in cities like San Francisco and New York, this body is no friend to gay rights. The U.S. Mayors Conference is an assemblage of political stooges whose job is to impose racist budget cuts, bust city workers unions and unleash cop terror on blacks and immigrants. Their policies necessarily aggravate the social tensions fueling anti-gay scapegoating, wherever their gabfests are held.

And New York? Last winter an ugly backlash against the multicultural "Rainbow Curriculum," which sought to teach schoolchildren tolerance for homosexuality, cost schools chancellor Joseph Fernandez his job. On St. Patrick's Day, gays and lesbians protesting their exclusion from the city's parade were denied a permit to march. As John Cardinal O'Connor (a "celestial ward boss," as *Newsday* called him) hailed the Apostles' Creed, 228 demonstrators were rounded up by city cops with the approval of gay rights "friend" Democratic mayor David Dinkins, who deemed the arrests "necessary" to "law and order."

Capitalist System Breeds Anti-Woman, Anti-Gay Bigotry

Clinton has backed off from the extreme anti-woman, anti-gay flights of religious, moralistic "family values" bigotry which dominated the White House under Reagan and Bush. The face of bourgeois rule shown by Clinton is updated and refurbished, a rational (by American ruling-class standards) strategy for oppression and exploitation. But Clinton has already repeatedly capitulated to the extreme right wing because their interests are the same: to shore up the institution of the family and the authority of religious ideology in a population viewed as insufficiently acquiescent to the aims of U.S. imperialism. Bigotry against women and homosexuals in particular flows from entrenched sexual stereotyping decreed by the sexual division of labor in the family, the root of the oppression of women in bourgeois society, and enforced by religious moral codes against "sin." It will take a socialist revolution to lay the material groundwork of a collectivized economy before the family can be replaced through socialized childcare and housework.

Anti-sex crusades have proved a useful tool to drum up reaction in this deeply puritanical country. The question of abortion rights has been central here, with wide swings of political mood in the ruling class on this question for the last 25 years—a clear example of the transitory nature of reforms under capitalism. The 1973 legalization of abortion with *Roe v. Wade* was part of a brief period when the bourgeoisie opted to make certain token changes



Theresa Havens

Workers, mainly women, at Delta Pride fish plant launched largest strike by black labor in Mississippi history in 1990, fighting for better wages and working conditions.

and reforms in reaction to the explosive social struggles of the 1960s. The "American Century" died in the rice paddies of Vietnam, as the U.S. went down to defeat and domestic protest against the war destroyed the 1950s mass base for anti-Communism. The civil rights movement inspired millions—white as well as black—to march for equality.

With a semi-mutinuous army and an entire generation of students largely alienated from society, the bourgeoisie made two moves in 1973: it abolished the draft and legalized abortion, seeking to win back the loyalties of at least the children of the white middle class, future managers and technical experts necessary to run an advanced industrial economy. (Even Ronald Reagan was "pro-choice" in those days: he signed a liberal abortion bill into California law.) Internationally, the American bourgeoisie under Cold Warrior Richard Nixon pulled out of Vietnam and pursued a policy of détente with the deformed and degenerated workers states, in order to buy time to rearm in its drive to roll back Communism.

This phenomenon was doomed to a short life, particularly with the escalation of U.S. economic decline, signaled by the 1971 devaluation of the dollar. The ruling class moved to restore "morals" and "family" to America as part of the campaign to overcome the disaffection of the population under the "Vietnam syndrome." This campaign was an ideological cover for the "democratic" police state—a call to action for the cops, preachers and puritanical busybodies to poke and pry into what they see as an unruly and sullen population whose degenerate practices are presumably sapping the will of America. It was part of a wholesale legal counterrevolution abrogating democratic rights, the domestic corollary of a new offensive against Communism, and it was the Democratic Party that launched it 15 years ago with Jimmy Carter's Cold War II, an ideological campaign against the USSR under the rubric of "human rights." At home, it meant a general

reactionary social climate engendered by a bourgeoisie triumphant in its "rollback" against the union movement and assaults on the working people and minorities. Busing for school desegregation—a minimal gain of the civil rights movement—went down to defeat in a maelstrom of racist fury as white mobs mobilized in the streets.

In 1976 the Supreme Court restored the racist death penalty, unleashing a legal bloodbath upon hundreds of men and women. In 1977 Anita Bryant kicked off the "Save Our Children" witchhunt of gays after the Equal Rights Amendment stalled. In the same year, fresh from a series of reactionary decisions attacking busing, housing desegregation, unemployment benefits for striking workers and abortions for the poor, the Supreme Court declared open season on gay teachers when it sanctioned the firing of teachers James Gaylord and John Gish for one reason alone: homosexuality. The Democrat-controlled Congress passed the Hyde Amendment, striking down federal funding for Medicaid abortions for poor women. It's then that anti-abortion terror bombings began to escalate.

The politically bellicose religious movement emerged with Carter, the born-again Democrat from Georgia. By 1980 the stage was set for "creationism" and school prayer, AIDS as "nature's awful retribution" for gays, witchhunts of "pornography" and erotic art, while Reagan decreed a renewed assault on the labor movement when he fired the PATCO air traffic controllers. And the imperialists saw their first big opportunity to actually roll back Communism at this time with the CIA- and Wall Street-sponsored rise of Polish Solidarność.

But the internal ideological crusade proved only partially successful, given the vast disparity between what people do and what are roundly embraced as "morals" by the far right. A few years back, bourgeois politicians began to realize that the superstition that "abortion is murder" is not going over in this country, and that they could win elections by coming out as "pro-choice." They began to figure out that they risked alienating an entire layer of professional women—from conservative, white Middle America—who had no quarrel with the mainstream racist status quo other than its threat to deny them legal abortions.

With a Democrat in the White House, bourgeois feminist organizations like NOW and NARAL figure they have won the battle. Feminism is the political movement of petty-bourgeois and ruling-class women to end such discrimination which hampers their own success within this capitalist society. Feminism can in no way challenge the deep-seated oppression of women because its goals are entirely compatible with the goals of imperialism. It is a truism to point out that women as an oppressed group encompass a majority of the population, and therefore reflect wide race and class poles. Marxists would add that a classless "women's movement" does not exist: women side above all with the social class of which they are members; historically bourgeois feminists have often been bitter and conscious enemies of the workers movement. In the United States, the feminist movement has played a despicable and dirty role, albeit a minor one. Its founding act was to oppose the 15th Amendment to the U.S. constitution, which gave the vote to black men, on the grounds that white women should have it first. While NOW and NARAL do not spout such overtly racist trash, their usefulness to the capitalist order today is in diverting the deep-seated fury felt by the masses of wom-

en over the assault on abortion rights into votes for "pro-choice" Democrats and Republicans—like, for example, New York's John Ravitz, who ran for office on a "law and order," pro-death penalty platform.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

While Hillary Rodham Clinton, Janet Reno and newly elected senators like Dianne Feinstein bask in their newfound positions of power at the top levels of government, life for the masses of American women remains as dreary and oppressive as ever. Women on average make 60 cents to a man's dollar; they perform endless hours of domestic galley labor caring for house and children in a society with massive unemployment and disappearing education and health care. And for black women, the nasty, brutish existence of life in capitalist America is turned into sheer hell by systematic, institutionalized racial oppression.

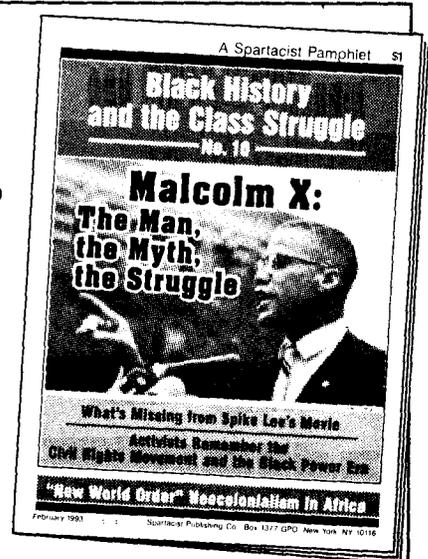
No matter which one of the bosses' parties is running this capitalist state, its job is to serve ruling-class interests, maintaining the profit system through exploitation and oppression of the vast bulk of the population. To fight the social reaction engendered by this system in crisis requires a hard break with both the ruling political parties. It requires the building of a multiracial workers party which will fight on the basis of a class-struggle, anti-racist program addressing the needs of all the oppressed and exploited, for example, for free, quality health care for all! As an SL spokesman said at a City College of New York speakout against the murder of Dr. Gunn:

"Bill Clinton is not going to defend the clinics. Bill Clinton stands for the racist death penalty, he stands for 'workfare,' to force poor mothers on welfare to leave their children alone or starve.... The FBI is not going to defend abortion clinics! And we can't look to the bosses' parties to defend our rights. The Spartacist League stands for mobilizing the unions and all the intended victims to use their social power to defeat the bigots in the streets. Only working-class rule will ensure women's equality." ■

JUST OUT!

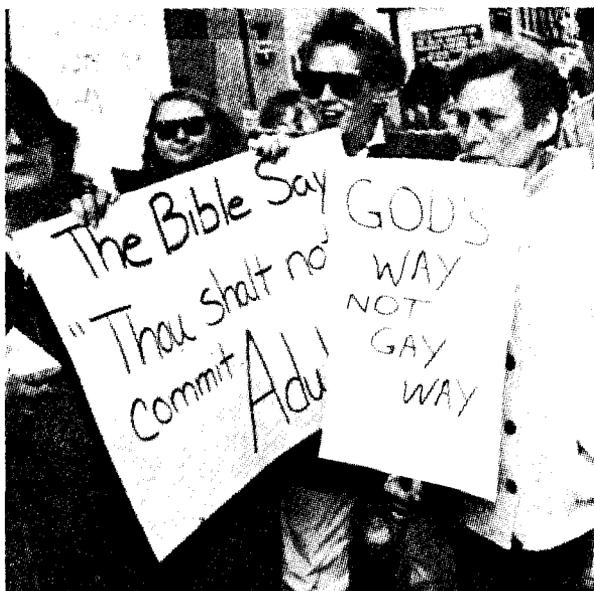
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Bible-thumping bigots demonstrate against gay rights in New York, October 1992 (left). Protesters demand end to ban on gays in armed forces (right).

Clinton Bows to Anti-Gay Hysteria

The furor over Clinton's campaign promise to drop the U.S. military's ban on homosexuals reflects this society's vicious anti-gay

social climate, fostered for over a decade by White House-sanctioned religious fundamentalists. Of course, gays and lesbians have always been in the military, just as they exist—mainly “closeted”—in all areas of society. Despite media claims that gays are now “entering the mainstream,” open homosexuals remain prey to ignorant prejudice, savage beatings and even murder.

Navy Seaman Allen Schindler, serving on the USS *Belleau Wood*, was brutally beaten to death by shipmates in October 1992, shortly after he “came out.” Schindler had complained of harassment previously, having been subjected to deadly taunts like, “There’s a faggot on this ship and he should die.” And as Clinton fumbled over ending the anti-gay ban, three Marines from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina dragged a man out of a local gay bar and beat him while shouting, “Clinton must pay!”

Clinton's hesitant, on-again, off-again line on ending the anti-gay ban invited the right-wing backlash. Head of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell, Republican Congressional leaders and the rabidly militarist wing of the Democratic Party around Georgia Senator Sam Nunn provided moral support for the gay-bashers in khaki and navy blue. Clinton quickly backed off and agreed to a six-

Gays in the Military

month moratorium on ending the ban to allow Congress to “study” the question.

Fearing an upset of its compromise with the right wing, the Clinton administration instructed the Justice Department to oppose a court decision which reinstated Keith Meinhold, a sailor discharged from the navy last year after declaring his homosexuality on national television. Far from following Clinton's directive to prepare an executive order lifting the ban, military brass are circulating a commander's “sworn statement” that Meinhold's presence “disrupts” the base. Then, at a March 24 press conference—apparently, according to administration officials, after seeing the triple-decker berths on board a submarine—Clinton “clarified” his stand: to “end” the ban he'd consider the sexual segregation of gays in the armed forces!

This right-wing anti-gay backlash is the latest battle in a festering war of bigotry against gays and lesbians that has escalated over the last 15 years. The rise of “gay-bashing” and vicious discrimination against homosexuals flows not only from the rise of AIDS hysteria, but from the general reactionary climate engendered by a bourgeoisie triumphant in its “rollback” of trade-union gains and its assaults on the working people and minorities. Clinton's campaign promise to end the ban on gays in the military was part of a strategy to garner votes by



Workers Vanguard

Chicago, 27 June 1982: 3,000 at Spartacist-initiated mobilization to stop Nazi provocation against Gay Pride Day. While local gay press opposed effort to enlist broad support against Nazi threat, united front brought out unionists, Jews, blacks alongside gay activists in self-defense against fascism.

appealing to the bourgeois feminist milieu and “respectable” gays who have no quarrel with the aims of U.S. imperialism at home or abroad. Such rad-lib types as *Village Voice* columnist Donna Minkowitz dusted off her tux to celebrate Clinton’s inauguration: “At the Triangle Ball, kicked-out marine Joe Steffan sang the national anthem while an honor guard of homosexuals purged from the military carried in the flag. I had to keep reminding myself that the military was at that moment bombing hotels in Iraq” (2 February).

The history of America’s wars (with the exception of the Civil War, in which the capitalist North defeated the Southern slavocracy and ended black chattel slavery) is a history of racist injustice, from this nation’s origins in the mass murder of the native Indian population, to colonial massacres in the Philippines, to the imperialist slaughter of World Wars I and II, to Vietnam. As socialists, we carry on the tradition of militant Marxist opposition to imperialist war, as expressed in the slogan “Not one man, not one penny!” for the imperialist army. At the same time, the military is a microcosm of society as a whole, and just as we fight against racist violence and discrimination in “civilian” society, so we oppose it in the armed forces.

Open gays and lesbians have just as much right as anyone else to participate in the armed forces. The “Dreyfus Affair” of the 1890s in France became a key test for socialists then on the question of democratic rights. Captain Alfred Dreyfus was a Jewish career army officer who was framed up on espionage charges and sent to Devil’s Island in a frenzy of vindictive anti-Semitism. The Dreyfus affair brought France to the brink of civil war between the bourgeois right—the officer caste and Catholic hierarchy—and the socialist-led workers movement.

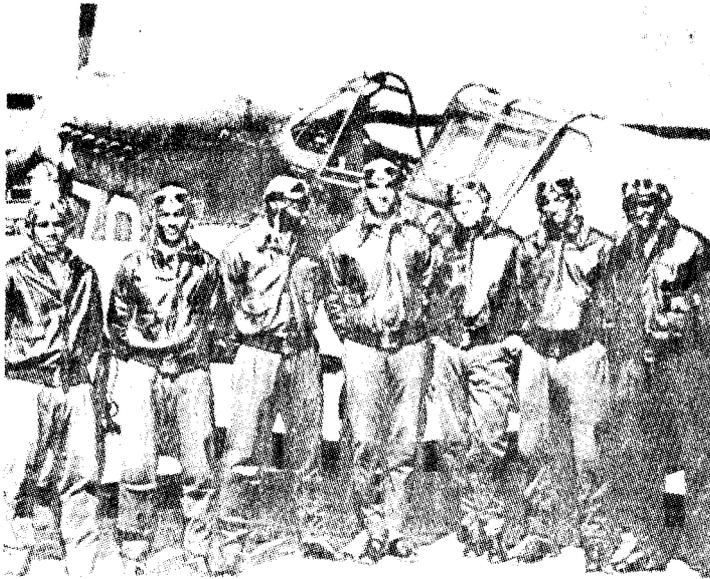
Since practically everyone admits that gays have always served in the military, the screeching opposition now coming from the military brass reeks of hypocrisy. While

anti-homosexual exclusion in the military goes back decades, an executive order banning gays outright came with a 1982 Reagan directive stating, “Homosexuality is incompatible with military service.” In the 1980s, anti-gay purges surpassed even the World War II period or the 1950s, when Cold War witchhunts against both suspected Communists and homosexuals reached a crescendo. Yet such stalwart anti-Commie witchhunters of the period as Roy Cohn and J. Edgar Hoover participated in gay parties at NYC’s Plaza Hotel, where Hoover reportedly sported high heels, wig, black chiffon, and “Under his dress he was wearing a little, short garter belt” (*New York Post*, 5 February). Gives new meaning to the phrase “G-man.”

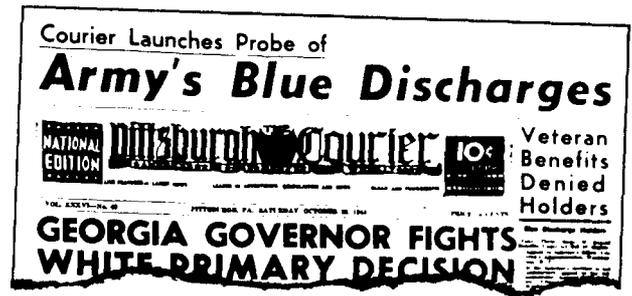
Everyone knows that sexual orientation has nothing to do with fighting capacity. Every cadet in every military academy in the world studies the battles of Alexander the Great of Macedonia and Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia. All students of military history know that these two commanders were openly homosexual. And Alexander could have taken apart the entire U.S. Joint Chiefs in single combat, for in those days commanders led their men into battle.

Gays and Blacks in World War II

When the U.S. entered WW II, the massive need for manpower temporarily overwhelmed more “normal” prejudices. Toward the end of the war, some blacks began to be integrated into white fighting units, and both blacks and women joined the armed forces and became industrialized in unprecedented numbers. Many enlisted gays and lesbians found themselves for the first time thrust into a broader social milieu and discovered many others across the nation like themselves, as Allan Berube noted in his history of gays in the World War II military, *Coming Out Under Fire* (1990). However, black soldiers continued to be victimized by white racist officers. Almost four times as many black GIs as whites were executed in Europe



Washington Post



Black flying aces in World War II. Popular black newspaper *Pittsburgh Courier* denounced "blue" (dishonorable) discharges for tens of thousands of black and homosexual veterans.

by military courts, even though they made up only 10 percent of the troops.

Toward the end of the war, tens of thousands of veterans—disproportionately gay and/or black—were drummed out of the service with "blue" (undesirable) discharges, which not only stigmatized them in efforts to get civilian jobs, but cut them off from GI benefits. Military apologists for the gay ban deny any connection between gay rights and the struggle leading to the 1948 racial desegregation order. But in addition to fighting Jim Crow in the military, black civil rights activists also championed the cause of the discharged homosexual soldiers. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, then the most widely read black newspaper in the U.S., campaigned "in behalf of veterans who are holders of blue discharges," specifically including homosexuals, asserting it was "fighting for the rights of the 37,000 white veterans involved as well as for those of the 10,000 Negroes involved."

The U.S. ruling class has always been deeply ambivalent about arming blacks. While the "volunteer" American army overwhelmingly relies on black and Hispanic as well as white working-class soldiers to carry out its racist wars of conquest overseas, at the same time the integration of blacks into the armed forces is a potentially powerful base for struggles for black emancipation.

Allowing gays into the military with full rights is a simple democratic demand. However, if the formal ban is dropped, gays will still face harassment and violence at the hands of bigoted officers and fellow soldiers in this bigoted society. Career military types bluster that allowing gays in will undermine the "morality" of the military—that piggish, male-chauvinist "morality" exemplified by the Navy Tailhook affair, where drunken officers mauled any woman in the vicinity.

Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals!

The leaders of the April 25 gay and lesbian march on Washington demand, "Our Time Has Come—Federal Civil Rights Now!" and seek to organize gays into endless lobbying of Congress and state legislatures. Pseudo-leftists like the lifestyle Revolutionary Workers League tail this

"strategy" of pressuring Democrats to achieve gay liberation, and can "counterpose" only a rehashed New Left "personal is political" message that "liberated" lifestyles are the road to social emancipation. In contrast, the Spartacist League fights to mobilize the social power of the working class to defend gay rights and to strike down the bourgeoisie's stultifying "moral" laws, based on the institution of the family, the source of the oppression of women and gays in bourgeois society.

Revolutionary Marxists approach the question of homosexual oppression as the only consistent defenders of democratic rights for all the exploited and oppressed. These rights are indivisible and can be secured only with the proletariat in power. A militant class struggle for jobs, education and housing for all could unite the working people in overcoming the ruling-class strategy of pitting one section of the oppressed against another. However, this would mean a fight *against* the Democratic Party and its pliant servants in the unions, posing the necessity of organizing the working class politically in its own party. The Spartacist League fights for the construction of a revolutionary workers party which will act, in the words of the Russian revolutionary Lenin, as "a *tribune of the people*, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what class or stratum of the people it affects."

In sweeping away capitalism and tsarist autocracy, the Russian Revolution also eliminated all laws against homosexuality. We would note that it was the Soviet Red Army which in practice solved the apparently thorny problem U.S. military types can't seem to figure out: Can women really fight? The "Night Witches" women's units in the Soviet Union's World War II air force struck terror into the Nazis' air aces. These female bombers and fighters were defending not just their homeland, but a workers state, albeit degenerated, against imperialist attack. When we have our own American workers state to defend, our army will be in the forefront of eliminating discrimination and oppression.

—adapted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 569,
12 February 1993

In an outrageous witchhunting attack, WNBC-TV Channel 4 in New York City has targeted members of a gay group, setting them up for vicious harassment at their jobs and in their neighborhoods.

On March 2, 3 and 5, the nighttime edition of Channel 4 News ran a series of "reports" which purported to disclose the results of an "investigation" into the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), which advocates the repeal of reactionary "age of consent" laws.

The station used a format similar to "consumer protection" spots popular with local TV news programs, but the broadcasts were hatchet jobs that smeared NAMBLA as a secretive, criminal conspiracy and were explicitly aimed at getting its targets *fired from their jobs*. "Undercover cops" are quoted as saying that the group advocates child molestation. One segment was introduced by news anchor Sue Simmons, who stated that the group "advocates the sexual molestation of young boys"—a bald-faced lie.

It's not the first time that NAMBLA has had to defend itself against attempts to criminalize it with false charges. The NBC witchhunt mirrors a similar media blast last year in San Francisco by KRON-TV, in which the SFPD's lying accusations of "child molestation" were retailed. Fascist skinheads were mobilized to bust up a NAMBLA press conference held to refute the vicious KRON provocation (see "Hysterical Liberals Join S.F. Anti-Gay Witchhunt—Defend NAMBLA!" *Workers Vanguard* No. 544, 7 February 1992).

In the second installment of the WNBC series, several NAMBLA members were individually ambushed on the streets near their homes and workplaces. They were set upon by a WNBC camera crew, as "investigative reporter" John Miller thrust a microphone in their faces and peppered them with questions like, "Do you think that your role in NAMBLA would be upsetting to the people you work with?" The men shown in the broadcasts, including a schoolteacher and a school librarian, were named, as were their places of employment. Schoolchildren, parents and administrators were interviewed and given the names of school employees identified by Channel 4 as NAMBLA members and were urged by the WNBC reporter to take action against the individuals.

A NAMBLA press release protesting the series noted that "Ordinary activities such as going to the post office or meeting in a restaurant are presented as threatening and ominous." Yet as the press release pointed out: "NAMBLA, which is 15 years old, operates openly. Our publication, the NAMBLA Bulletin, is available in bookstores around the country, and it is in the collection of the New York Public Library." Clearly, WNBC is stoking anti-gay hysteria in the Big Apple, where NYC schools chancellor Joseph Fernandez was ousted

WNBC's Anti-Gay Witchhunt

Defend NAMBLA!

amid a backlash over the liberal "Rainbow Curriculum." The bigots are up in arms over the distribution of condoms in the schools and, led by Cardinal O'Connor, they are excluding

gays from the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Playing for ratings in "Sweeps Week," NBC has been on a sensationalist yellow-journalist kick heavy on sex and sin. *New York* magazine (15 February) reported that WNBC's newsroom revolted over what was dubbed the "Fag Alert" series, including a planned segment titled "Warning Signs: How to Tell If Your Child Is Gay." Anchorwoman Carol Jenkins reportedly refused to work on the piece. "Are we going to report that if your kid can't throw a ball straight, you better watch out?" asked one WNBC staffer.

Instead, WNBC opted for a cruel attack against a vulnerable group, one which is ostracized even by most self-proclaimed radical homosexual activists. Channel 4 is NBC's flagship station and they should be a bit embarrassed these days, particularly after the network was caught out (and its "news" division chief resigned under fire) for staging a phony truck crash and burn for a special on unsafe GM trucks. And don't forget the smelly fish story: in one eco-piece, NBC purported to show "dead" fish which turned out to have only been stunned by scientists for test purposes.

WNBC's concern for children is entirely hypocritical. "Age of consent" laws are not aimed at protecting children but at imposing abstinence and guilt on youth who wish to have sex. Such laws differ from state to state, but adjudge anyone below a certain age—in New York the age is 17—incapable of consenting to have sex with anyone older. Such a sweeping and arbitrary presumption is patently unjustified and oppressive. Attempts to portray sex between older and younger people as equivalent to child molestation are aimed at enforcing social conformity and reactionary sexual mores, and are in no way related to protecting the interests of youth.

NAMBLA is an easy target for WNBC's retailing of crude slanders and self-serving statements from police agents involved in failed police sting operations. The repressive climate produced by such media witchhunting actually fosters teen suicide, as young people discovering their homosexuality are oppressed by officially promoted guilt. As we wrote in response to the KRON/SFPD witchhunt in San Francisco: "The guiding principle for sexual relations should be that of effective consent, nothing more than mutual agreement and understanding as opposed to coercion—the state has no business interfering." Stop the witchhunt against NAMBLA!

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 571,
12 March 1993

Pro-Death Penalty Clinton: No Friend of Working Women

Outrage over Murder of Heroic Abortion Doctor

Many "pro-choice" supporters and gay rights activists looked to the election of Democrat Bill Clinton as the key to defeating the anti-abortion and anti-gay bigots. On the other side, Randall Terry said, "Our worst political nightmare has come upon us. A pro-baby-killing, pro-Sodomite, pass-out-the-condoms-in-school, back-slidden President is headed for the White House." In fact, Clinton's presidency has brought the country a virulent anti-gay backlash over ending the ban against gays in the military. And the violence against abortion clinics has escalated, as the clinic blockaders, after a decade-plus of support from the White House, feel abandoned at the top and have increased their nightriding terror. A hero in the fight for women's right to abortion has been assassinated: on March 10 in Pensacola, Florida, David Gunn, a dedicated doctor who traveled long, lonely hours providing abortion services for women in the Deep South, was murdered by Michael Griffin, a "right to life" bigot and a member of "Rescue America."

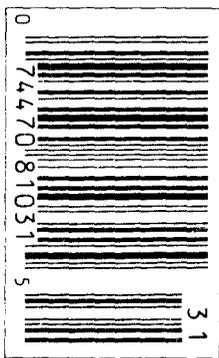
Just what *is* the difference between Bill Clinton and George Bush? It's certainly not over the fundamental imperialist aims of the U.S. bourgeoisie: they both hail the capitalist counterrevolution in the ex-Soviet Union, seek to bolster the autocratic Yeltsin as the champion of "democracy," and rail against their imperialist rivals, Germany and Japan. And president-elect Clinton cheered lame duck Bush's order to renew the hellish U.S. bombing raids over Iraq last January. In fact, because of its populist appeal, the Democratic Party historically is the party of imperialist war in this country—it was in power at the start of every major war from World War I to Vietnam.



Young Spartacus
New York City: Spartacus Youth Club speakout on March 18 at CCNY to defend abortion rights against right-wing terrorist attacks.

Nor do Bush and Clinton disagree over the cruel and racist death penalty, which almost every other advanced industrial country on earth has abolished—nor over the question of rights for black people. When L.A. exploded in the wake of the acquittal of the racist cops in the Rodney King beating trial, both candidates went on record to support squarely the vicious police occupation of that city. To assert his credentials as a "responsible" CEO of American capitalism, Clinton—like his predecessor—vows to end "welfare as we know it" and even to slash Social Security. Clinton's entire election campaign was geared to distancing himself from the traditional identification of Democrats with a "welfare state," itself a racist code word for anything perceived as beneficial to blacks.

While Clinton did benefit from the deep disgust of the
continued on page 41



Gays in the Military
**Clinton Bows to
Anti-Gay Hysteria**

SEE PAGE 44

**Mexico: Murderous
Bigotry Against Gays
—Stop the Killings!**

SEE PAGE 6

Defend NAMBLA!

SEE PAGE 47