

1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives — these are the rules of the Fourth International."

JOURNAL OF THE BOLSHEVIK TENDENCY

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Glasnost and "Market Socialism"

Whither Gorbachev's USSR?

Fifty years after Stalin decreed the advent of "complete socialism" in the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev proposes to open the economy to the world market and replace centralized planning with market competition. In his speech to the plenum of the Central Committee last June, Gorbachev announced that prices for some 200,000 commodities currently set by the state planning bureau are to be determined at the local and factory levels. Wages and investment funds are to be derived from the revenues generated by each in-

dividual enterprise. Those that do not show a net profit are subject to closure. Subsidies are to be cut dramatically and plant managers now have the right to lay off redundant workers.

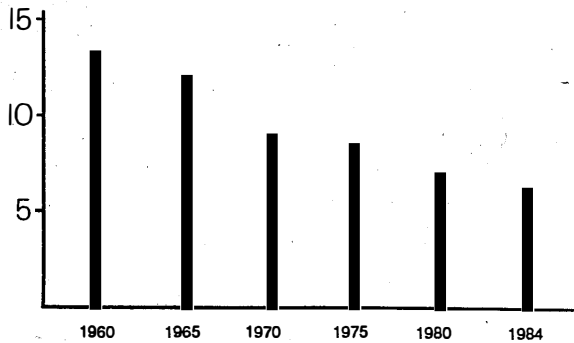
The Western media have enjoyed the spectacle of the leader of "actually existing socialism" trying to prop up an

Workers States and Markets

pg.15

Gorbachev's dilemma

Growth Rates of Fixed Capital (in %)



Source: G. Sorokin, *Voprosy ekonomiki* (1986)

economy predicated on the superiority of the planning principle with the operation of the laws of supply and demand. But the failures of the Soviet economy are not the result of collectivized property. They originate in the monopoly of political decision-making jealously guarded by the Soviet bureaucracy. The prerogatives of Gorbachev and his caste are antithetical to the imperatives of working-class democracy—the indispensable requirement for the proper operation of a system based on collectivized property.

At bottom the Gorbachev “reforms” are an attempt to reverse the deceleration of the Soviet economy and the dangers of losing ground to the West. While still comparing favorably with the overall average of the imperialist economies, growth rates in the Soviet Union have slowed dramatically in the last two decades. In a recent article which was translated in *The Soviet Review* (Summer 1987), G. Sorokin, of the USSR Academy of Sciences, noted that:

“higher economic growth rates are needed to counteract adverse trends in the dynamics of the national economy and to compensate losses associated therewith. They are also needed to maintain the required balance of power between the two opposing socioeconomic systems and to speed the full victory of socialism in its economic competition with capitalism.”

Sorokin also noted that, “In a certain sense, the rates are set by this competition, i.e., they must outstrip the economic growth rates of the principal capitalist countries” for the purpose of “maintaining approximate military parity between the USSR and the United States.” Standing still could be fatal.

For decades the advantages of centralized planning, even profoundly distorted by the parasitic bureaucracy which administered it, allowed the USSR to narrow the gap significantly between itself and the advanced capitalist economies. Trotsky compared the growth of the Soviet economy under Stalinist dictatorship with the development of capitalism under feudal absolutism:

“We have more than once spoken of the fact that ‘enlightened absolutism’ has played a progressive role in the development of the bourgeoisie only afterward to become a brake upon this development; the conflict resolved itself,

as is known, in revolution. In laying the groundwork for socialist economy, we wrote, ‘enlightened absolutism’ can play a progressive role only during an incomparably shorter period. This prognosis is clearly confirmed before our very eyes.”

—“Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?,” 1937

As the Soviet economy grows more sophisticated, the traditional methods of the Soviet bureaucracy become progressively less effective. Mature industrial economies require inputs of a different character than do less developed ones. The old quantitative methods of measuring production no longer suffice.

Poor quality steel can still be used for railroad tracks; the tracks just wear out faster. But only the highest quality metal alloy can be used to make modern machine tools. Technologically advanced societies require a more cultured, more skilled work force. Stalin may have used work-camp labor to build T-34 tanks; his successors can’t rely on it to manufacture sophisticated electronic components for modern missiles. The bureaucratic monopoly on information and decision-making creates more problems than it solves.

Gorbachev admits that the system of top-down commandism which he inherited has become a fetter on the further development of the collectivized economy. His proposed market “reform” package should be seen as an implicit admission by Stalin’s heirs of the *impossibility* of establishing “Socialism in One Country,” and of the fundamental ir-

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1917

Editor: T. Riley

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Leninism and the Third Period

Not Twins, But Antipodes

In our previous issue we published a critical assessment of the contradictory leftward movement of the formerly Maoist Marxist-Leninist Party ("MLP's Stalinist Pyrite: The Myth of the Third Period," 1917 No. 3). The MLP responded in the 20 May *Workers' Advocate Supplement* (WAS) with a blustering ten-page article entitled "On 'Bolshevik Tendency's' Polemic Against Our Party: Trotskyism Trails in the Wake of Reformism." This tract (which we will be happy to send to anyone who requests it) blithely ignores the substantive political points raised in the original polemic.

In their 20 June issue the WAS editors congratulate themselves that their reply "has been met with enthusiasm." They apparently consider it very clever to have ducked all the difficult questions. But, to quote a Scottish proverb of which Lenin was particularly fond, "facts are stubborn children that will not move." As we pointed out in our last article, the class-collaborationist policies that led to Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War were not initiated in 1935, but in 1926-27 with the betrayal of the British General Strike and the Chinese Revolution. For those who refuse to probe beneath the official Stalinist falsifications of Soviet history during the 1920's, the Comintern's subsequent betrayals must forever remain an insoluble riddle.

Instead of investigating the historical roots of the Popular Front, the MLP sets itself the sterile task of poring over official transcripts of speeches from the Seventh Congress to discover in this or that formulation of Dimitrov the origins of "revisionism" in the international communist movement. This is like trying to understand contemporary South Korean politics from the resolutions of Chun Doo-hwan's handpicked National Assembly. The Comintern in Lenin's time held yearly congresses in which genuine debates took place and real decisions were made. The Comintern of 1935 had not met for seven years and functioned as a rubber stamp for decisions already arrived at in Moscow. Like the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU), it had been strangled by a conservative bureaucracy, headed by Joseph Stalin. This bureaucratic caste had consolidated its power in the Soviet workers state a decade earlier under the banner of "Socialism in One Country."

"Socialism in One Country"

Until 1924 it had been an article of faith among Bolsheviks (including Stalin) that socialism could never be built in a single country, let alone in backward Russia. All currents in the party agreed that the final fate of the Russian Revolution was inextricably linked with the progress of revolution worldwide. "Socialism in One Country" expressed the outlook of newly-arisen privileged layers within the Soviet party and state apparatus. For these "red parvenus," the international revolution, with its attendant sacrifices and risks, was seen as a threat to the status and material comforts they had only recently acquired. This



KPD election poster, 1930

new cautious and inward-looking mood among Soviet officialdom, moreover, found resonance among broad sections of the Russian masses, exhausted by seven years of revolution and civil war. Stalin's rise to power represented the triumph of nationalist bureaucratic conservatism over the profoundly internationalist traditions of the October Revolution.

In the field of foreign policy, "Socialism in One Country" meant conciliating imperialism. By Stalin's logic the imperialist powers would never leave the Soviet Union in peace to construct a nationally self-contained socialism unless convinced that the Comintern no longer posed a threat to the international status quo. The doctrine of peaceful coexistence was enunciated by Stalin in 1927:

"[We must] take into account the contradictions in the imperialist camp, postpone war, buying off the capitalists and take all measures to preserve peaceful relations....

"The basis of our relations with the capitalist countries is the acceptance of the co-existence of two fundamentally

different systems..."

—quoted in *Soviet Foreign Policy 1928-1934*, X.J. Eudin, R.M. Slusser (editors)

Stalin could only prove his peaceful intentions to the international bourgeoisie by converting the Comintern into the handmaiden of Soviet diplomacy. All leaders who still regarded it as a revolutionary instrument or insisted on the least degree of independence from the Kremlin had therefore to be purged. This sanitizing of the Comintern, along with the liquidation of the Bolshevik old guard within the USSR, was already an accomplished fact by 1935. The delegates assembled at the Seventh Congress were, in the main, a collection of the most servile and mediocre elements of the national communist party leaderships, distinguished only by their capacity for unquestioning obedience to the Kremlin's orders.

The Popular Front, far from a mistaken tactic, was integral to the larger Kremlin strategy of seeking an alliance for "collective security" with British and French imperialism against a German war machine with appetites in the East. The Popular Front was initiated not at the Seventh Congress, but with the Stalin-Laval pact (a mutual security agreement between France and the USSR) signed in May 1935. In the years immediately following, Stalin sacrificed the heroic and combative proletariat of Spain on the altar of "collective security." By artificially confining the Spanish Civil War within bourgeois-democratic limits, and using the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), along with Soviet aid, to suppress all attempts by workers to struggle for their own class interests, the Kremlin hoped to recommend itself to the capitalist democracies as a worthy anti-German ally.

MLP On Spain: Reinventing the Wheel

From reading "The Collapse of the Spanish Republic" (the final installment of the series on the Spanish Civil War in *WAS*), one could get the impression that the MLP was the first to discover the treachery of the PCE. One would hardly suspect that the betrayals *WAS* refers to had been documented fifty years earlier in the heat of battle. Felix Morrow's *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* (1938), Franz Borkenau's *The Spanish Cockpit* (1937), and George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938)—all tell the same sordid story of liquidation of workers' organizations in the name of "anti-fascist unity." Finally, Trotsky's Spanish writings counterpose to Stalinist class collaboration a clear program of revolutionary class struggle. All these works were widely available in English nearly forty years before the publication of the dispatches of Palmiro Togliatti, on which *WAS* bases its account. Togliatti is, at best, an interesting footnote to the main historical text. To rely exclusively on Stalinist sources for historical information, as the MLP insists on doing, is like accepting only the checks of a convicted forger.

The "anti-fascist unity" line that delivered Spain to Franco also dictated Soviet foreign policy (and hence the politics of CPs throughout the world) for the better part of World War II. In the hope that comrades of the MLP will not spend another forty years unearthing the crimes committed in the name of this policy, we bring to their attention the following facts: 1) the Stalinists in World War II

disparaged and frequently collaborated in the suppression of anti-colonial struggles from Ireland to India, from Algeria to Indochina, from Latin America to the Philippines; 2) the Stalinists in the U.S. acted as the most zealous enforcers of Roosevelt's wartime wage freeze and no-strike pledge (placing themselves to the right of John L. Lewis), enthusiastically supported the incarceration of Japanese-Americans (even to the point of expelling their own members of Japanese origin), and resisted attempts by blacks to protest Jim Crow segregation in the U.S. Army (placing themselves to the right of A. Philip Randolph and the NAACP); and 3) Stalin, in an ultimate gesture of "anti-fascist unity," disbanded the Comintern altogether in 1943.

The MLP acts like a latter-day seaman who attempts to sail around the world without the benefit of the discoveries of Columbus or Magellan. It insists on viewing the Popular Front and the Spanish events in isolation from their causes and consequences, not out of stupidity, but from willful political blindness. Trotsky's Spanish writings and the works of his co-thinkers remain to this day on Stalinism's forbidden index. This is because the main premise of these works is that the Popular Front was not an incidental error, but part of a consistent pattern of class treason which dated back to the 1920's.

Once this is understood, it becomes necessary to ask whose interests, if not those of the working class, were served by Stalin's maneuvers. For Marxists, politics are not ultimately an exercise in free will, but a reflection of the strivings of various social classes and strata. Soviet foreign policy only becomes intelligible when viewed as an expression of the interests of the bureaucratic caste that politically expropriated the Russian proletariat in the 1920's. But a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. If the MLP wishes to remain Stalinist, it would do better to shut the lid forever on the Pandora's box of Comintern history.

Roughly twenty years ago the Progressive Labor Party (PL), an American Maoist/Stalinist formation, also began, from a slightly different angle, but with more or less the same intent as the MLP, to question its Stalinist legacy. PL was soon confronted with a choice: either undertake a serious study of Trotsky's writings or abandon its critical enterprise. It chose the latter course, concluding that all knowledge and learning serves the ruling class. The MLP must either come to grips with the revolutionary program of Trotskyism or wander down PL's road to political oblivion.

The Origins of the "Third Period"

The one point in our polemic the MLP makes some pretense of responding to is the record of the German Communist Party (KPD) during Hitler's rise to power. This is a chapter of Comintern history in which the MLP should take considerable interest, since the KPD was both the foremost practitioner and chief victim of the Comintern's "Third Period" line which is held in deep sentimental regard by all left Stalinists. At first glance the maximalist slogans and policies of those years—with all the triumphal phrases about capitalism's "ultimate crisis," the proletariat's "final offensive," and the attempts to organize "red trade unions"—appear more attractive than the groveling class-collaborationism which preceded and then ultimately replaced them. But it is necessary to understand



KPD members and other leftists paid with their lives for the sectarian idiocy of the Third Period

the integral connection between reformism and ultra-leftism.

In the mid-1920's the Stalin faction in the CPSU was not nearly as powerful as it was later to become, and possessed no coherent program of its own. Stalin's sole objective was to preserve and extend his power base in the party. To defeat the Left Opposition, headed by Trotsky, Stalin allied himself with the CPSU's right wing, whose chief spokesman was Nikolai Bukharin. The policies pursued under this "center-right bloc," which lasted from 1926 to 1928, led to a series of disasters on both foreign and domestic fronts, all of which had been foreseen and warned against by the Left Opposition (the defeat of the British General Strike of 1926 and of the Chinese Revolution of 1927, and the grain procurement crisis in the USSR in 1928). As a result, Stalin turned upon Bukharin and denounced the rightist policies that he had championed only months before.

To arm itself against Bukharin and guard its left flank against the vindicated criticisms of the Left Opposition, the Stalin faction took the opportunity of the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928 to proclaim the onset of the "Third Period" of imminent revolution in every country around the world. This abrupt lurch to the left was dictated by the factional necessity to cover past failures, and bore no relation to the objective balance of class forces. By far the heaviest price paid for this ultra-leftist posturing was the defeat of the world's most powerful working class by the Nazis in 1933.

Defending the Indefensible

The Left Opposition insisted that the most urgent task confronting the German proletariat in the early 1930's was

not the immediate seizure of power, but crushing the burgeoning fascist movement. To this end Trotsky advocated that the KPD, without for a moment abandoning its criticisms of social-democratic reformism, approach the SPD with a proposal for joint action against the fascists. If the SPD leadership failed to respond positively to such a united-front proposal, it would stand exposed in the eyes of millions of social-democratic workers—many of whom could then be won to the banner of the KPD. The MLP attacks the Left Opposition's proposal by setting up a straw man: it claims that the united front was somehow predicated upon the SPD leadership's willingness to fight the Nazis. It proceeds to knock down this straw man by reeling off a list of social-democratic leaders who did not resist the Nazi onslaught.

This is a willful distortion of the Trotskyist position. The Left Opposition never argued that the SPD leadership could be counted on to fight the fascists. It simply pointed out that the SPD, despite its reformist leadership, was a multi-millioned workers organization that the Nazis were sworn to destroy. This objective contradiction between social democracy and national socialism meant that social-democratic workers had a common interest with the KPD in defending themselves against Hitler's storm troopers. How else can the MLP explain the February 1934 armed rising of the Austrian social-democratic workers against fascist terror and the rightist Dollfuss government?

In the event, the KPD responded to the Nazi menace with a series of orthodox-sounding excuses for inaction. In December of 1931, as the Nazi juggernaut gathered speed, KPD leader Ernst Thaelmann was filling the pages of *Die Internationale*, with denunciations of, "liberal tendencies to counterpose fascism to bourgeois democracy, Hitler's party

to the social fascists" (quoted in "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat," Georg Jungclas). By dubbing the SPD the "left wing of fascism," the KPD in effect demanded that the social-democratic ranks break with their leadership as a precondition for collaboration.

As Trotsky never tired of pointing out, a revolutionary party which demands that the masses accept its entire program in advance, effectively forgoes any possibility of winning them in the course of living struggle. Ultra-leftism often provides an ideological cover for political abstentionism, no less harmful than reformist cowardice. The sectarian bombast of the KPD helped pave the way to the Nazi slaughterhouse.

Trotsky's proposal for stopping Hitler was drawn directly and explicitly from the Bolsheviks' successful struggle against the attempted reactionary coup by General Kornilov in late August 1917. Members of the MLP who can think, and who know anything about the history of the Russian Revolution, should consider Lenin's tactical military alliance (i.e., united front) with Kerensky and the Mensheviks against Kornilov. Was Kerensky less cowardly or treacherous than the SPD leaders? Does the MLP think that Lenin abandoned "the actual class struggle in favor of liberal dreams about the reformists...taking up struggle on behalf of the working class" by forming this bloc? If not, then what possible objection could there be to applying the same tactic in Germany with the SPD?

There is a chain of causation—errors compounded by errors—which connects the class collaborationism preceding the Third Period to the class collaborationism which followed in its train. The capitulation to Chiang Kai-shek and the defeat of the Chinese Revolution in 1927 led to the "left" turn of the late 1920's which ended in the victory of Hitler. This in turn precipitated the popular-front strategy of kowtowing to the "progressive wing" of the bourgeoisie. It is no accident that the MLP must draw the line at 1935 and insist that everything that went before is unexceptionable. Stalinism thrives on historical ignorance.

MLP vs. Lenin on Regroupment

Most of the WAS reply consisted of a barrage of charges about the BT's current work in the Bay Area. Some of these allegations are so malicious and disingenuous that they do not merit a serious response (e.g., the assertion that, "The BT apparently believes that dedication, courage and self-sacrifice are not needed for the revolution"). But the bulk of the MLP's criticisms are more politically substantive.

The MLP rejects our conception of revolutionary regroupment—that many of the cadres of a future mass revolutionary party will be recruited from left splits in reformist and centrist organizations. The MLP imagines that always and everywhere revolutionary organizations must be built by a process of simple linear recruitment of raw individuals to small pre-existing propaganda groups. It bristles at our assertion that a central task of genuine Marxists in Nicaragua today is to struggle for the creation of a network of workers councils (or soviets) embracing *all* the trade unions and workers organizations. Such a formation could provide both an arena for the political recomposition of the Nicaraguan workers movement and an organizational framework for working-class rule. But for the MLP, the

central task is to recruit individuals one by one to its sister organization (the PMLN).

Our conception of how the crisis of proletarian leadership can be successfully resolved is hardly original. The cadres of the Bolshevik Party were assembled largely through the long factional struggle within the Russian social-democratic movement. Lenin's party did not triumph in October 1917 by recruiting ones and twos in isolated "work with the individual activists under the influence of the reformists" as the MLP advocates. Only through open political struggle with the Mensheviks and other "moderate" socialists *in the soviets*—the arena where the shop-floor representatives of the whole class met to consider what direction to take—did the Bolsheviks win over the majority of the proletariat.

Similarly, the Communist International was created by *splitting* the parties of the Second International and regrouping the subjectively revolutionary elements behind a new banner. To the Leninist strategy of international regroupment, the MLP can only counterpose "having faith in the strength of independent revolutionary organization [and] the 'gradualism' of building its ties among the masses and of carrying out actions."

United Fronts in the Unions

The *Workers' Advocate Supplement* attacks our record in the 11-day boycott of South African cargo aboard the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* in 1984, initiated and, in part, led by our supporters. They chastise us for participating in a bloc with union supporters of the Communist Party to lead the action. We are also criticized for reporting that several black Democratic congressmen endorsed the action. Presumably the MLP thinks that the correct tactic would have been to refuse to cooperate with either the CP or the black politicians. This is completely congruent with the tactics of the Third Period—and completely wrong.

We knowingly entered a bloc with CP supporters and others in the union because we wanted to see the action take place, and we did not have the forces to pull it off by ourselves. We did not reject the endorsement of the boycott by the black Democratic congressmen—the publicity they generated objectively aided the struggle. That's their contradiction, not ours.

We conceded nothing to either the Democrats or the CP politically and openly criticized both throughout the struggle. When it came to the crunch, and the union was slapped with a federal court injunction, the Democrats were long gone and the CP capitulated. So we had to contend with them as well as the cops. But we would never refuse to work with people who are prepared to go even part of the way to carry out an action so clearly in the interests of the black South African masses. As Lenin remarked in *What Is To Be Done?*: "Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people."

According to WAS, our desire to win official union approval for the action is proof that, "BT's strategy is that, as the masses rise, the labor bureaucrats will play an important role on the side of the workers." The MLP seems to have no sense of the contradiction which the boycott posed for the bureaucrats of this largely black local. They could

(continued on page 18)

The Road out of Jimstown

New York BT Launched

The establishment of a Bolshevik Tendency (BT) nucleus in New York City, traditionally the political center of the American left, marks another small but important step forward in our attempt to consolidate a viable Trotskyist organization in North America.

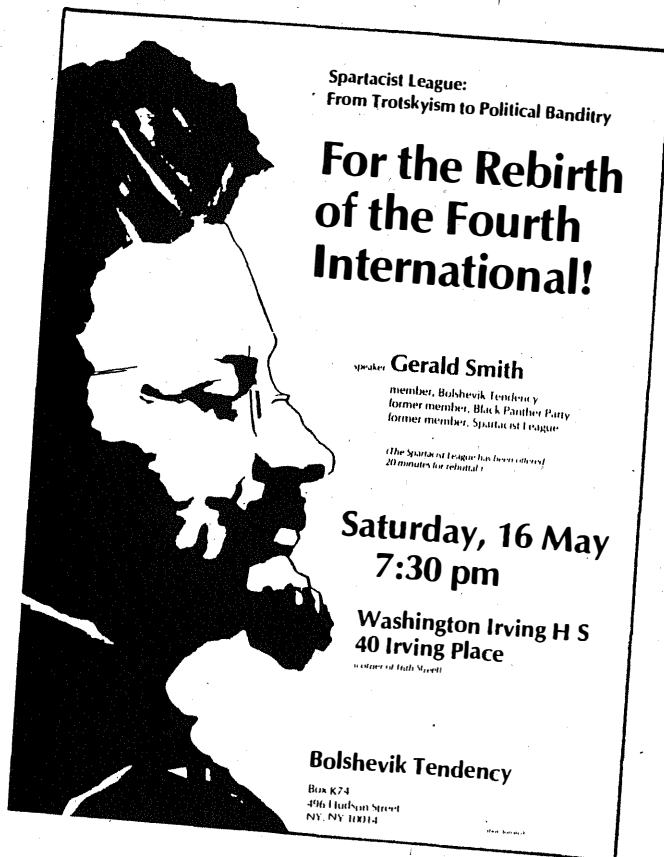
The events which led to the launching of the New York BT began unfolding in the spring of 1986 when two cadres in the SL's New York local had the temerity to question an erroneous theoretical pronouncement on the part of Ed K., who was being promoted as a local leader and black spokesperson by James Robertson, SL National Chairman and Perfect Master. Comrade Ed claimed, contrary to the most fundamental Trotskyist teaching on the Russian question, that surplus value exists as a significant component of the Soviet economy. The newly-appointed "party leader" did not, as far as we can tell, consciously intend to revise Trotsky on this score. Marxist economics was simply not his strong suit. But these days in the SL, leaders are not to be contradicted, no matter what they say.

The two SL cadres involved (Jim C. and Dave E.) had between them a total of 28 years in the Trotskyist movement. While they refused to abandon their positions they were prepared to pursue the matter in informal discussion or even to let it drop. Ed K. was not. He sensed an opportunity to bolster his authority and purge the ranks of two members who insisted on the right to think for themselves. First in an internal education class and then at a subsequent local meeting, he continued to exacerbate the dispute, proposing to rectify his critics' "mistakes" through further education, the contents of which would be dictated by himself. When the two now-exasperated members—one at the explicit urging of the local—wrote documents expressing their displeasure at being attacked for upholding basic Marxist positions, the scene was set for a typical purge, Spartacist-style.

Purge In New York SL

No sooner had the documents appeared than the leadership started putting out the word that their "uncomradely tone" could not possibly be explained by the purely theoretical issues involved, and must therefore be the result of other, more sinister motives on the part of the authors. The membership—with the help of a couple of deliberately vague and insinuating documents from Ed K.—was thus given the signal to trot out the familiar litany of accusations against those slated for an SL heretic-burning: intellectual elitism, Menshevism, anti-Sovietism and, since these individuals had the misfortune of crossing polemical swords with a black comrade, perhaps something even worse.

At a meeting called in September to "resolve" this dispute, SL members, duly primed for the occasion, rose one after another in a hysterical competition to heap opprobrium upon the two miscreants. But not to be outdone,



Spartacist League:
From Trotskyism to Political Banditry

For the Rebirth of the Fourth International!

Speaker: **Gerald Smith**
member, Bolshevik Tendency
former member, Black Panther Party
former member, Spartacist League

(The Spartacist League has been offering
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it was *el supremo* Robertson (who admitted offhandedly that he had not even bothered to read the pertinent documents) who rose to deliver the *coup-de-grace*. Robertson said that, although he couldn't prove it, he suspected racism on the part of the two dissenters. They just couldn't admit to themselves, he went on, that a black man could be so much better than they are. The meeting concluded with the passage of the obligatory motions accusing the apostate pair of harboring deviations on the black, party and Russian questions. Both these members handed in angry resignations the following week. A third SL cadre—a fifteen year member who is a recognized expert on American and black history—resigned a few weeks later in sympathy. Jim C.'s resignation read, in part:

"The official reason given for my resignation will no doubt be that I left the party out of white, intellectual elitist antipathy towards the current perspective of black recruitment. This is a lie—only the most infamous of a torrent of lies unleashed at the local meeting of 16 September in order to cover up one simple fact: the present party regime will not tolerate significant opposition to any of its major pronouncements or decisions. Therefore, when a member opposes a particular decision or questions the conduct of a particular individual in the leadership, he is accused of opposing the entire party program. In the case of Dave E. and

myself, the singularly ugly charge of racism was thrown in for good measure by the political chairman. This is tantamount to (and perhaps even worse than) the formula, opposition = disloyalty, used to expel the Revolutionary Tendency [progenitor of the SL] from the Socialist Workers Party twenty-three years ago, and makes a mockery of the party history being so proudly recounted in recent issues of *Spartacist*."

This whole episode shows what happens to SL members who attempt to defend their views, orally or in writing, against Robertson's favorites. In the Spartacist school, whoever disagrees with Robertson's flunkys attacks Robertson, and whoever attacks Robertson, attacks the Trotskyist program, of which he is the sole legitimate interpreter. The political substance of the disagreement is immaterial.

BT Launched in New York

In the months that followed their break from the SL, the comrades involved in the blow up, together with several other former SL members, began to reflect on and generalize from their experiences. After studying the BT's published materials, they engaged in a series of discussions with comrades from the BT and arrived at a firm political agreement on all outstanding questions.

The New York BT held its first public meeting on 16 May. The event drew forty people, many of whom were former members or supporters of the SL. Entitled "For the Rebirth of the Fourth International," the forum was given by comrade Gerald Smith. Smith described the degeneration of the Spartacist League from a revolutionary propaganda group with a tenuous but real connection to the American working class into the cultist political bandit outfit it is today. His remarks were followed by a lively round of discussion.

We offered the SL leadership a twenty-minute rebuttal but they declined. All we got was five largish *Workers Vanguard* salesmen, several wearing steel-toed boots, who stood in front of the meeting and unsuccessfully attempted to persuade people not to attend. We were not surprised by the SL's refusal to take up our offer. For years the Spartacist League has flatly refused to meet us in an open, public debate, while their press continues to churn out a series of "polemics" reminiscent of the anti-Trotskyist tracts produced by the CPUSA in the 1930's.

The 15 May issue of *Workers Vanguard* devoted one and a half pages to an item entitled "Garbage Doesn't Walk By Itself—What Makes BT Run?" The article, occasioned by our New York forum, was evidently intended

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SL 'Financial Crisis'

The following is excerpted from the SL's 1987 *Tasks and Perspectives* document:

"The party is currently in a financial crisis....

"The key problem" is that our bottom line monthly operating costs significantly outstrip our basic income, even counting on modest windfalls. Over the past year we carefully preserved our modest reserves through assorted investments, so that they would not be spent piecemeal.

"The measures being taken to address our financial problems include the SP [sustaining pledge] increase of 5 to 6 percent implemented effective 1 May 1987 and some carefully considered 'givebacks' cuts and speedup on the payroll which, once fully implemented, will result in a 10 percent savings there....

"...in the past couple of years, the financial squeeze has been doing damage to our work....

"As against this gloomy operational financial picture, it should be remembered that beginning with the acquisition of our New York headquarters we now stand on a more secure material footing. This situation however presents its own liabilities, including substantial regular expenses for upkeep and safety."

Having "preserved [their] modest resources through assorted investments" (i.e., Robertson's new house), the SL leadership now invites the ranks to retroactively approve the tax hike imposed to cover the "substantial regular expenses" for upkeep and improvements. Who knows what the next "assorted investment" will be?

to seal off what remains of the SL's periphery in that city with a line of cop-baiting filth and slander. This technique, perfected by Joseph Stalin in his struggle against Trotskyism, has long been recognized as the last refuge of every scoundrel in the workers movement.

In Defense of Polemics

The WV article argues that the BT (and its predecessor, the External Tendency of the iSt—ET) is so fixated on politically attacking the SL that it cannot be defined in rational political terms:

"When people quit an organization, they generally don't want to have anything more to do with it; they have other fish to fry. But the ET/BT has always pursued an unnatural obsession with the SL... The BT has spent five years bewailing our 'degeneration.' Are we that important? Not according to the BT: in the pages of its bulletins and its *1917* magazine, the SL is 'over the brink,' on a 'plunge toward political irrelevance,' 'can no longer be considered, in any sense, a revolutionary organization'."

What then, asks WV, could possibly account for the BT's continuing attention to the SL? After serving up a rehash of its standard litany of smears, half-truths and out-

right lies, *WV* finally comes to the point:

"The whole tone of the BT recalls nothing so much as the insinuating style associated with the FBI's infamous COINTELPRO...The BT is manifestly an assemblage of garbage...But to take that refuse heap and make it move like a loathsome living thing requires something more, an animating principle like the electric charge Dr. Frankenstein used to imbue his monster with life."

The SL's "evidence" for this despicable cop-baiting smear is that we refuse to let the SL alone. This is a strange accusation coming from an organization itself frequently cop-baited precisely for this stance. If a polemical attitude toward one's opponents suggests COINTELPRO provocation, what of the SL's decades-long fight—waged with frequent press articles, leaflets, interventions and even demonstrations—against its rivals in the Socialist Workers Party and the Healyite Workers League and its British mentors? In devoting two recent issues of its theoretical journal, *Spartacist*, to these two organizations, is the SL pursuing an "unnatural obsession?"

A minor irony in all this is that having effectively

withdrawn from the unions and any prospect of serious influence in the working class or the left, the Robertsonites actually occupy less and less of our time and activity. But because the SL rarely appears at political events which it does not control, it has little sense of this.

WV's latest smear job speaks volumes about the SL's contempt for its own history. When it was a revolutionary organization the Spartacist League engaged in political battle with Barnes, Moreno, Healy and assorted other "Trotskyists" because these political charlatans, by pretending to the Trotskyist banner, misled and confused those subjectively revolutionary youth who took their claims at face value.

The Spartacist League even now does not openly recruit people on the basis of their desire to enhance the power, prestige and material comfort of its infallible founder-leader. If it did, we would cease to bother with it. It is only because the SL disguises its cultish reality with the trappings of its revolutionary past, in order to recruit healthy young militants searching for a revolutionary organization, that telling the sordid truth about life in "Jimstown" remains an elementary duty for Trotskyists. ●

In Robertson They Trust... All Others Pay Cash Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous

Over the last several years Spartacist League *lider maximo* James Robertson has acquired a substantial material stake in his control of the finances of his group. At about the same time as the recent witchhunt in the New York local (see accompanying article), the SL undertook an internal fund-raising drive. Members were asked to make a special one-time contribution (over and above the extortionate sustaining pledge) to replenish organizational funds expended to buy Robertson a well-appointed house on a marina in the Bay Area, where he has lately taken to spending his summers. Although the house is technically the property of the organization, it is clearly intended for the personal use of Robertson, his family and an entourage which, in addition to the female sex groupies normally in attendance, has recently expanded to include an iSt member (female) whose chief assignment is to act, as a full-time nursemaid for the guru's infant son. The purchase price of the house is reported to run into six figures and there are plans to invest almost as much again on improvements to the property.

This is, to our knowledge, the SL's most lavish expenditure on the whims of its founder-leader—but it is not the first. Adjoining his private office in the group's New York headquarters is a plush-carpeted playroom specifically designed for the nocturnal escapades that occupy an ever-increasing share of the National Chairman's attention. Robertson has also had a hot tub installed in his extensive, two-storied Manhattan apartment. All of these items were paid for with organizational funds and built by organizational labor. No one in the SL, moreover, dares to question these emoluments. Those with any misgivings are well aware from the examples set by periodic purges that to do



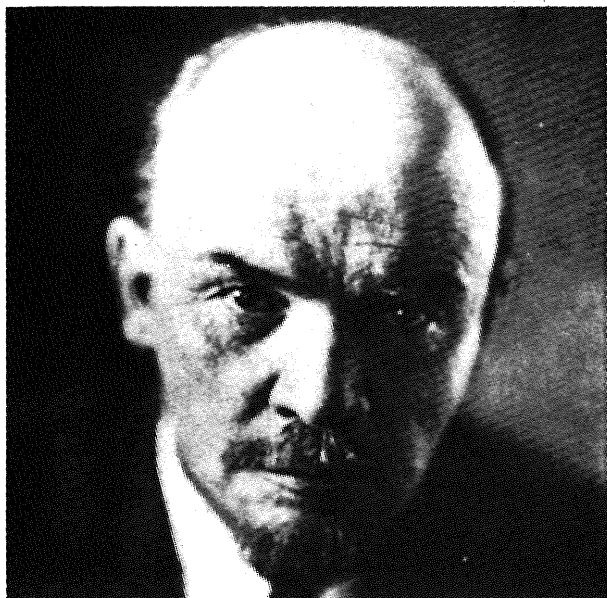
James Robertson, SL Perfect Master

1917

so would invite similar treatment for themselves. Robertson's tolerance for advocates of "petty-bourgeois egalitarianism" in his supposedly revolutionary organization is roughly the same as Stalin's in Soviet Russia in the 1930's.

Lenin vs. Robertson

Bolsheviks have never been puritans or primitive egalitarians. We recognize the need for a full-time staff of



“It was well known that the peasants provided ‘their Ilyich’ with gifts of white flour, bacon, eggs, fruit, etc.; but it was also well known that nothing remained in Lenin’s household. Everything found its way to the hospitals and children’s homes; Lenin’s family held strictly to the principle of not living better than the others, that is, than the working masses...”

—Klara Zetkin, quoted in *Not by Politics Alone*

professional revolutionaries who have time for important political work, free from the daily struggle for survival. In a revolutionary organization such individuals should be paid a living wage—approximately that of an average worker—and on that money be expected to support themselves and assume the normal financial responsibilities of every other member of the movement. The perks which Robertson has awarded himself, however, can by no stretch of the imagination be considered operational necessities for a revolutionary organization. They belong in the realm of luxury consumption, bought with the money and labor of a rank-and-file often too heavily taxed to take a vacation or even buy a book, and frequently too overworked to read any books they might manage to buy. One only has to think of Lenin at the helm of the Soviet state, profusely apologizing for borrowing a volume from the library after closing time, waiting his turn in line to be seated at the opera or feeling guilty about receiving a bouquet of flowers at the hospital, to appreciate the flagrant and cynical disregard for proletarian morality on the part of a leader whose contributions have been, to say the least, of a somewhat lower order.

The degeneration of the Spartacist League was not caused by the material privileges of its leaders. Fifteen years ago Robertson lived very modestly and had only contempt for those ostensibly revolutionary leaders who traded on their prestige to enjoy the good life (see box on Huey P. Newton). The attempt to substitute his own authority for the collective political life of the SL (while maintaining the formal framework of internal democracy) was originally

conceived of as a means of short-circuiting the development of revisionism—and specifically of avoiding the kind of damaging split suffered by the American Trotskyist movement in 1939-40. Yet history cannot be cheated, and Robertson’s technique of launching “pre-emptive strikes” against potential oppositionists before they even raised any differences, ultimately led to the destruction of the SL as a revolutionary organization.

The present grotesque corruption and cynicism of the Robertson regime is the logical outcome of the erosion of any real democracy within the SL. A leader who comes to view himself as the sole repository of the revolutionary program leaves no room for the political peers whose critical evaluations and frank judgments provide the only mirror in which he can take an objective look at himself. Absent also are the politically clarifying contrasts of opposing views and tendencies. In the party of Lenin, the lowest-ranking member felt free to address his leader as an equal. In “Jimstown” the leader’s most highly placed subalterns must think twice about offending him before they speak. Surrounded by yea-sayers and sycophants, the leader’s correct political judgments gradually become indistinguishable from his errors, and political questions as a whole begin to merge with subjective whims and appetites. Of he who must answer only to himself, all is permitted. Down this road lie the fancy summer retreats, plush-carpeted orgy rooms, hot tubs and—to protect these privileges—the organizational methods of a political bandit. ●

If the Shoe Fits...

The January 1972 issue of Workers Vanguard made the following apt comment on corruption in the Black Panther Party:

“Hero worship is one of the ways bourgeois ideology enters the revolutionary movement and destroys it. Its corrupting nature is evident in Huey Newton’s \$650 a month penthouse, paid for out of Party funds raised in defense campaigns, while rank-and-file Panthers hide from the police in rat-infested hovels. The Panther paper justifies Newton by noting that he had ‘stood up and faced the pigs (from which he was wounded and spent two years in prison)’ and that he had ‘put his life on the line in the fight to end this racist, exploitative system.’ The paper went on to state: ‘Huey and his generals of staff should have the best as they plan their party’s strategy.’ (*The Black Panther*, 27 February 1971) The belief that the past sufferings of militants entitle them to the good life at rank-and-file expense is an important subjective justification for bureaucracy in the labor and radical movement. Moreover, left-wing leaders can continue to enjoy the good life only with ruling-class cooperation, obtainable by holding back the organizations they are supposed to lead against it. Many present leading AFL-CIO bureaucrats were beaten, shot at and jailed in their youth. Newton’s penthouse and the Party’s defense of it indicate a deeply anti-socialist attitude.”

Letter

The Morenoite Method: Any Way the Wind Blows



Juan Peron



Fidel Castro



Gamma/Liaison Jesse Jackson

Andy Lewis/ Black Star

25 May 1987
San Francisco

To the editor:

I enjoyed the excellent analysis of the impasse of the Nicaraguan revolution and the role of the organizations to the left of the Sandinistas (1917 No. 3). The article discussed the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores [PRT—affiliated with the International Workers League], but did not mention the IWL's (sometime) advocacy of the Cuban road for Nicaragua.

The Morenoites [followers of Nahuel Moreno, the recently deceased founder-leader of the IWL] have a deservedly bad reputation throughout the Latin American left for capricious line changes and generally unprincipled behavior. Their attitude toward the character of the Cuban Revolution, which has been a key question for the international Trotskyist movement for decades, is a case in point. Here are a selection of IWL zigzags on Cuba which have appeared in *Working Class Opposition* [WCO—the IWL's American press] over the past couple of years:

"Socialism is the revolutionary solution to the crisis, it is not the terrorism and pro-NATO stands of Mitterrand, or the Mitterrandized Euro-Communists. It is not the police states of Gorbachev, Castro, Jaruzelski, or Deng Xiaopeng."

—"Rambo, the Rainbow and Revolution," WCO, October 1985

"There is also the need for a political organization that recaptures the experiences of the struggle for the independence of the entire continent, not just Chile. A party is needed that will explain that what needs to be done is what happened in Cuba, where the workers and the people

destroyed the bourgeois army and state, kicked the capitalists out of Castro's government, expropriated the lands and factories of the bourgeoisie, and created a workers' state."

—"The Chilean Revolution—Part II" *International Marxist Courier*, (monthly magazine of the IWL), printed in WCO, October 1986

"The *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* (Revolutionary Workers Party—PRT), the official section of the International Workers League in Nicaragua...proposed a series of measures....

"These proposals would guarantee the best defense of Nicaragua, while, at the same time, would open the door to transforming Nicaragua into a new Cuba, that is to say, into the second free territory of America."

—"Resolution of the International Secretariat of the IWL(FI)," printed in WCO, October 1986

"Historically, they are counterrevolutionary leaderships [in Nicaragua, Libya and Angola], even if they go as far as expropriating the bourgeoisie, as Castro did in Cuba. Castro stopped all extension of the revolution at the international level and he maintained a totalitarian domination within Cuba. In doing this, Castro acts like a bureaucrat who defends the privileges that he obtains from the Cuban national state."

—"Nicaragua, Libya, Angola: Are They Allies of the Revolutionary Working Class?" by Nahuel Moreno, printed in WCO, December 1986

To sum up then: the IWL views Cuba as (a) a Stalinist "police state" which is nonetheless (b) a model worker state to which Chilean and Nicaraguan proletarians should aspire although (c) it is in the grip of a counterrevolution-

ary bureaucrat (Castro) who maintains a "totalitarian domination." Clear as mud.

Comradely,
Fred Riker

We thank comrade Riker for his letter. The "dual nature" of the Morenoites' schizoid position on Cuban Stalinism is given an added twist by their insistence on the characterization of Stalinism as simply "counterrevolutionary through and through." This is one of the "Ten Points" put forward as criteria for attendance at the projected 1988 "International Conference," at which the IWL hopes to swallow what's left of the British Workers Revolutionary Party. It is typical of these political chameleons that they denounce Stalinism as simply counterrevolutionary always and everywhere, while simultaneously holding up the Cuban Stalinist regime as a model for the workers of Nicaragua and Chile. And, of course, in Argentina the Morenoites are in bed with the Stalinist Communist Party in an ongoing reformist electoral bloc appropriately known as the "People's Front."

The sole "principle" of Morenoism is a constant willingness to redefine political positions in accordance with what they perceive to be in their immediate organizational interests. In the 1950's in Argentina, when they were adapting to the bourgeois populist General Juan Peron, the masthead of *Palabra Obrera* (Moreno's press) proclaimed that it was an "Organ of Revolutionary Workers Peronism—Under the Discipline of Gen. Peron and the Peronist High Council."

The July issue of *Working Class Opposition* contained an American example of the Morenoite proclivity for unprincipled maneuvers—an appeal to Rev. Jesse Jackson, the two-bit black hustler who is once again running for the Democratic Party presidential nomination. *WCO* proposes that the "Rainbow Coalition" (Jackson's vehicle within the Democratic Party) should:

"...Break the loyalty pledge to the Democratic Party machine, and do it now. Instead of being a symbol of hope with no chances of fulfillment, the Rainbow should break from the Democratic Party and run Jackson as an independent. Moreover, the Rainbow should adopt a program that truly meets the needs of the Black community, the millions of immigrant workers, trade union members and all those who today are oppressed by the capitalist system with its dual racist parties. There is only one name for that program and Jackson and everyone else in the Rainbow know what it is—socialism....Who knows what would happen in a three-way Presidential race in 1988? Who would have a better chance in a contest between George Bush, Michael Dukakis and Jesse Jackson? At the very least, Jackson's chances of making it to the White House would be better than they are today in his effort to make it there via the nomination of the racist Democratic Party!"

Instead of telling the truth about this cynical demagogue, *WCO's* tactful advice can only reinforce the illusion that Jackson and his "Rainbow" are in fact a "symbol of hope" for the oppressed. Always on the lookout for a "short-cut" to the big time, the Morenoites have apparently decided that the quick and easy way to build a big socialist movement in America is by winning over capitalist politicians! Who's next—Teddy Kennedy? ●

Gorbachev...

(continued from page 2)

rationality of rule by the bureaucratic caste which justified its existence with this reactionary dogma.

The inherent limits of development of the Soviet economy under the oligarchic Stalinist dictatorship were brilliantly sketched by Leon Trotsky, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, a book published in 1936 and still banned in the USSR:

"...bureaucratism destroys the creative initiative and the feeling of responsibility without which there is not, and cannot be, qualitative progress..."

"The progressive role of the Soviet bureaucracy coincides with the period devoted to introducing into the Soviet Union the most important elements of capitalist technique...It is possible to build gigantic factories according to a ready-made Western pattern by bureaucratic command—although, to be sure, at triple the normal cost. But the farther you go, the more the economy runs into the problem of quality, which slips out of the hands of a bureaucracy like a shadow. The Soviet products are as though branded with the gray label of indifference. Under a nationalized economy, *quality* demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative..."

Unconsciously confirming Trotsky's prognosis, Gorbachev in his February 1986 report to the Twenty Seventh Congress of the CPSU stated that: "The substance of the changes [in structural and investment policy] lies in shifting the centre of attention from quantitative indices to quality and efficiency." Gorbachev also recognized that, "The prime condition for accelerating the country's socio-economic development is to turn society towards new tasks and draw upon the creative potential of the people..." But here there is a problem. It seems, "A person's attitude towards property is shaped, first and foremost, by the actual conditions in which he has been put, by his possibilities of influencing the organisation of production, and the distribution and use of the results of work."

Sixty years of Stalinist repression have taught the Soviet workers that they can not expect to exert any "influence the organization of production." The result is a severe problem of morale and labor discipline. Alcoholism is widespread; workplace absenteeism, poor quality control and a general lack of concern for production are all deeply-rooted problems which inevitably result in huge losses during the production process.

Now the parasitic social caste which Gorbachev heads laments the indifference and cynicism which its rule has bred and looks for ways to motivate the workers. There are only two possibilities. There is the discipline of the marketplace which impartially rewards those whose commodities sell, and punishes those whose products sit on the shelf. That is what Gorbachev is opting for. The other way the Soviet proletariat could be motivated is politically—through taking control of the organization of production into its own hands and restoring the genuine workers democracy of the early years of the Soviet state. But this can only be achieved by smashing the rule of the bureaucracy, for as Trotsky noted, "No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off his own claws."

The standard charge of every anti-communist ideologue is that Stalinism is the logical and inevitable consequence

of Leninism. This is fundamentally false. Stalinism, a nationalist and profoundly anti-revolutionary ideology, is the antithesis of Bolshevism. The Bolsheviks never expected that backward and isolated Russia would be able to make a successful transition to socialism on its own.

"In the eyes of its originators the October Revolution had neither meaning nor future independent of its international function as a catalyst and detonator: it was to be the first spark that would lead to the establishment of socialist regimes in countries which, unlike Russia, possessed an adequate economic infrastructure and cultural basis."

—Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*

Neither Lenin nor any of his co-thinkers in 1917 considered the Russian Revolution an event primarily of significance for Russia. They saw it as a lever for the international working class struggle for world revolution. The current problems of the Soviet economy can all be traced, in the last analysis, to its isolation from the other industrially advanced economies of the globe. They can only be finally overcome by reintegration into the world division of labor. Thus the preservation of the gains of October is indissolubly linked with the extension of the world revolution. The reactionary and autarkic fantasy of "Socialism in One Country" was the program of the political counterrevolution within the workers state.

It is no accident that Gorbachev's market-orientation domestically is complemented by an overtly anti-revolutionary policy internationally. A Reuter article in the 11 July issue of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* was headlined: "World revolution idea outdated, Soviet says." It quotes Yevgeny Primakov ("an official linked to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev") as saying in *Pravda*, "The exclusion of the export of revolution is an imperative of the nuclear century." The corollary of this is the bureaucrats' dangerous illusion that if the Soviets just give up enough in disarmament negotiations, they can secure permanent peaceful coexistence with imperialism. The attempt to mollify Reagan, Thatcher et al is rooted in the same reformist impulse that facilitated Hitler's 1941 blitzkrieg. In the real world, lions don't lie down with lambs. Every bourgeois "statesman" understands that any peace treaty is a temporary arrangement to be honored only as long as it seems advantageous; after that it is simply a scrap of paper. Far from diminishing the risk of attack, the pacifist bleating from the Kremlin only emboldens the capitalist war-

mongers who have not, and will not, abandon their dream of reversing the social overturn of 1917.

From Khrushchev to Gorbachev

While the fundamental features of Soviet political life are the same today as they were a half-century ago, the manner in which the bureaucratic monopoly of power is exercised has undergone considerable evolution since the Stalin era. Nikita Khrushchev's famed "Secret Speech," given to the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, represented, among other things, the rebellion of the party apparatus against the traditional Stalinist method of "resolving" intra-bureaucratic disputes through blood purges. The ruling stratum stabilized and solidified under Khrushchev when the bureaucrats decided to stop shooting each other.

Yet Khrushchev's capacity for flamboyant and erratic lurches in both domestic and foreign policy created serious discontent within the bureaucracy and ultimately led to his replacement by Leonid Brezhnev. Popular wisdom in the USSR has it that Stalin shot incompetent managers, Khrushchev demoted them, but Brezhnev merely transferred them. Cronyism, cliquism, extravagant corruption and mutual back-scratching characterized the Brezhnev years. The bureaucracy ossified and economic growth slowed dramatically. When Brezhnev finally died there was an attempt to find a replacement who would be capable of getting the economy back on track. This is Gorbachev's assignment.

The Irrationality of Bureaucratic Planning

The limousines, special currency shops, dachas and other privileges the Soviet administrative elite has awarded itself are well known. Yet the luxury consumption of the *nomenklatura* is only the tip of the iceberg of bureaucratic mismanagement. Far more consequential are the overheads incurred because economic decisions are made in accordance with the necessity of maintaining bureaucratic privilege. An old Brezhnevite may only have embezzled 10,000 rubles a year, but the decisions made to safeguard the privileged position that made the theft possible could cost the economy millions.

Distortion and falsification of information are necessary and inevitable aspects of economic "planning" under bureaucratic control. Production capacity, stocks of raw materials, and outputs of finished goods are all hidden

The anti-revolutionary corollary of Gorbachev 'reforms'

World revolution idea outdated, Soviet says

Reuter
MOSCOW

An official linked to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev said yesterday that the export of world revolution has become outdated as a foreign-policy concept.

Yevgeny Primakov, writing in the Communist Party newspaper *Pravda*, said the demands of current Soviet policy dictate an end to excessive military spending if the country is to bridge the wide economic gap with the West.

through the East bloc's new military doctrine of "defensive sufficiency," in which East and West would seek parity at lower levels. He said increased trust in the Soviet Union could make this policy a reality.

"The exclusion of the export of revolution is an imperative of the nuclear century," Mr. Primakov, director of the Institute of World Economics and International Relations, said in an article entitled "Foreign Policy and the Future of the Soviet Union."

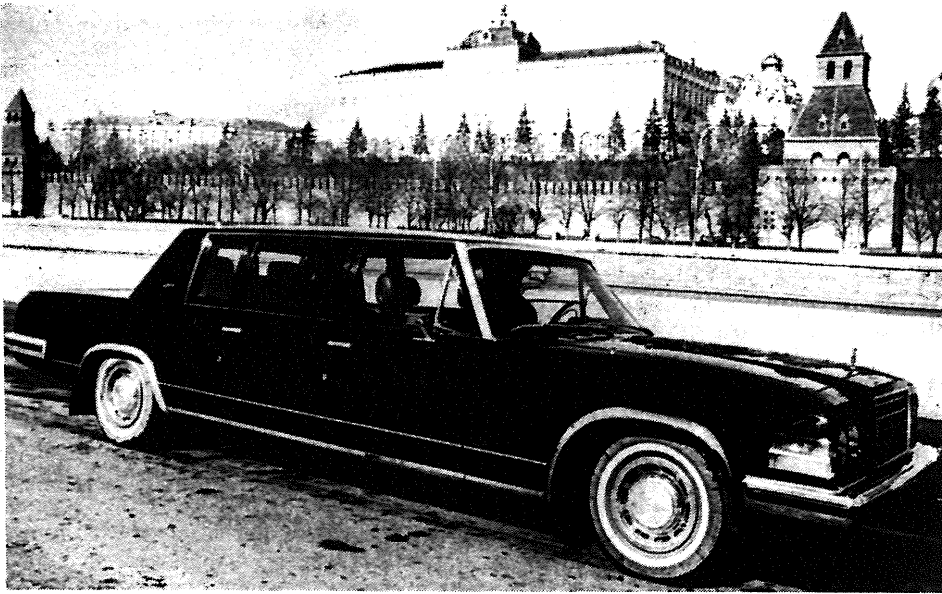
ous foreign policy — that any aggression against it would lead to war — was correct because of the need to build up offensive capacity, but that the situation has changed and the Soviet Union now seeks to ensure its security by political means.

More than ever, he said, Soviet economic problems require that an balance be struck on spending on military and civilian production. "Previously," he said, "we agreed in a number of cases with the so-called 'rules of the game' which consisted of matching American steps in the arms race."

Although the United States is seeking to exhaust the Soviet economy through the arms race, Mr. Primakov said, it should be aware that the security of one side cannot be obtained at the expense of the other.

To end what he called "the balance of terror," Mr. Primakov advocated a system under which each side would reduce its arms, particularly nuclear weapons, to a level that would ensure mutual security.

—Reuters, 11 July



Moscow bureaucrat's limousine

from the central planning bureaus. The career of each individual bureaucrat is determined not by how well he performs the tasks assigned but by how well he appears to perform them. Fulfilling the quota, not producing use values, is the objective of each individual link in the chain of bureaucratic command. What is "rational" from the perspective of an individual manager may be completely irrational from the standpoint of the requirements of the economy as a whole. Alec Nove gives an example of this from *Pravda*:

"when a plant making pipe produced cheaper, better-quality pipe weighing 25 per cent less, the statistical 'effect' was a reduction in both the 'volume' of output and in labour productivity. This explains the reluctance of management to adopt more economical variants but also shows the imperfections of measurement."

—*Socialism, Economics and Development*

Factory managers routinely conceal output figures from the State Planning Authorities in order to divert production to favored associates at other plants. Industrial output is deliberately underestimated in order to fulfill the quotas specified in the plan more easily. Nove reports:

"A Hungarian economist once remarked that, in even the most apparently centralized command system, 'most commands are written by their recipients'. It is one of the main contradictions of the Soviet economic system that, while on the one hand the task of subordinates is to obey plan instructions which supposedly embody the needs of society and the best means of providing for them, everyone in fact knows that much depends on the initiative, proposals and information (or the withholding of it) by or from management. Quality, punctual deliveries, technical progress, the details of the product mix (and the satisfaction of user needs) depend in practice on management."

The problem of bureaucratism cannot be solved by a few demotions, jailings or shootings. The only historically progressive answer to the crisis of the Soviet economy is for the producers to participate directly in elaborating the plan and then in checking and controlling its implementation. As Trotsky noted in *The Revolution Betrayed*: "Soviet

democracy is not the demand of an abstract policy, still less an abstract moral. It has become a life-and-death need of the country." But soviet democracy means an overthrow of the political power of the bureaucracy by the working class—that is, a political revolution.

The Soviet masses made enormous sacrifices during World War II when the USSR was invaded by the Nazis. There is no issue in the Soviet Union today capable of producing the same spirit of sacrifice. Gorbachev and the bureaucratic caste he heads can take credit for creating a "socialist paradise" where the workers are so indifferent that productivity can only be raised by resorting to the mechanisms of the market.

The Soviet workers are not responsive to appeals for more work from the discredited oligarchs. Imagine a Leningrad factory conference where a Gorbachevite bureaucrat arrives to promote self-sacrifice and delivers a speech on the need for improved work discipline. He breakfasted on Crimean orange juice, Danish ham, and white bread; the workers had black bread and yogurt. He travelled in a chauffeured car from his dacha outside the city; the workers awoke in tiny apartments and rode a crowded subway to the factory. He has Party connections to support himself; the workers have children to support.

The Dangers of Capitalist Restoration

The danger posed by the Gorbachev "reforms" is that they will inevitably tend to strengthen the forces of capitalist restoration in Soviet society. Workers who derive their income directly from the profits of their "own" enterprise will tend to see their interests as bound up with their company and not the economy as a whole. Those employed by enterprises that do well will come into conflict with those sectors of the class that work in under-capitalized, or poorly managed factories which cannot compete. The growth of small farmers producing for the market will provide another point of social support for those who wish to see an unrestricted return to the "freedom" of the marketplace. Even more dangerous is the proposal to breach the state monopoly of foreign trade and allow enterprises to establish their own links to foreign corporations. The millions of threads connecting Soviet businessmen to their international counterparts and binding individual enterprises to the fluctuations of the capitalist world economy could only add impetus to the forces of counterrevolution.

Trotsky projected the likely course of capitalist restoration in a planned economy as follows:

"The chief task of the new power would be to restore private property in the means of production. First of all, it would be necessary to create conditions for the develop-

(continued on page 17)

Workers States and Markets

In the 1920's Evgeny Preobrazhensky, the Left Opposition's leading economist, engaged in a polemic with Nikolai Bukharin, over the course of Soviet economic development. Bukharin proposed to proceed toward socialism, if only at a "snail's pace," by reliance on the workings of the market. He argued that the savings of rich peasants would eventually fund the industrialization of the USSR, and is remembered for his exhortation to the small capitalist farmers (kulaks) to "enrich" themselves.

The Left Opposition rejected Bukharin's strategy, and fought for a program of industrialization financed by a net transfer of resources from agriculture to industry through a system of price differentials favoring the latter. But the Left Opposition never denied that the mechanism of the market could perform some useful functions in a post-capitalist economy. Preobrazhensky discussed the operation of the market and market mechanisms within a planned economy in his major work, *The New Economics*.

There are two markets that socialist planners must consider. The first is the external world market dominated by the capitalist powers. The second is the internal market of the workers state itself. This is an important distinction: a worker state can make use of the market mechanism internally to allocate consumer goods rationally while simultaneously resisting the influence of the external capitalist market on central planning mechanisms.

The Soviet Union has not entirely removed itself from the influence of the world market—nor can it. Yet a planned economy *can* limit the influence of the world market. As Preobrazhensky wrote, "the world market makes itself felt on the whole organism of our state economy as on a unified organization." One of the dangers posed by Gorbachev's economic proposals is that they will tend to fragment this "unified organization" and leave each sector to deal with the capitalist world on its own.

Preobrazhensky noted that, "there operate at one and the same time *two laws* with diametrically opposite tendencies" during the transitional period between capitalism and socialism. The first he described as the "law of socialist accumulation" while the second was the law of value. As planned socialist accumulation proceeds, more and more of the necessities of life will be guaranteed to every member of society. Consequently, the influence of the law of value, i.e., the law of spontaneous equilibrium of the market, will shrink.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky discussed the contradiction in the bureaucratized USSR of the 1930's:

"Two opposite tendencies are growing up out of the depth of the Soviet regime. To the extent that, in contrast to a decaying capitalism, it develops the productive forces, it is preparing the economic basis of socialism. To the extent that, for the benefit of an upper stratum, it carries to more and more extreme expression bourgeois norms of distribution, it is preparing a capitalist restoration. This contrast between forms of property and norms of distribution cannot grow indefinitely. Either the bourgeois norm must in one form or another spread to the means of production, or the norms of distribution must be brought into correspondence



Evgeny Preobrazhensky

with the socialist property system.

"The bureaucracy dreads the exposure of this alternative."

Gorbachev's "reforms" represent a major step in the direction of spreading the bourgeois norms (i.e., the unrestricted operation of the law of value) to the relations of production.

Market Mechanisms and the Yugoslav Debacle

Gorbachev is not the first Stalinist bureaucrat to talk of "reliance on market mechanisms" within the post-capitalist economies. Poland and Yugoslavia have both (in their own ways) conducted similar experiments, with unfortunate results. When the Titoist party in Yugoslavia chose to drop the state monopoly on foreign trade, Yugoslav firms and combines were given great latitude to sell their production on the world market and make individual financial arrangements with western banks, free from the "interference" of the state planning institutions.

The initial result was a period of rapid expansion for the Yugoslav economy. This should hardly be astounding—any working-class family can temporarily boost its standard of living if it succeeds in obtaining a mortgage on its house. But eventually the bank insists that the mortgage be paid back—with interest. This is what is currently happening to Yugoslavia, where the International Monetary Fund is demanding further "belt-tightening" from a working class which has already seen its real wages cut by over a third this decade.

In principle it is perfectly permissible, if necessary, for enterprises in a workers state to be funded by foreign bank loans—although it is a sign of weakness rather than strength. Preobrazhensky argued that the determinate factor should be “what is economically expedient for the entire state economy.” This concept of economic totality marks the scientific socialist thinker. Marxists reject the utopian-autarkic vision of Maoists who urge the development of tiny, “self-sufficient” backyard steel mills and moralistically shun the influx of Western capital regardless of circumstances.

A planned economy, needing steel, might fund several mills through loans. But the mills and loans would be part of an integrated financial plan. The entire weight of the national economy would stand behind the loan and resist any special pressure by the lending bank. The wages and pricing policies of the mills would be determined by the state planning bureaus. The interest on each loan would be raised on a national basis and would not be permitted to interfere with the operation of the particular enterprises.

This has often not been the case in Yugoslavia. Instead, the search for profitability by each individual enterprise has come to determine the pattern of investment. Foreign banks were given tremendous leverage over the activities of the factories they funded. The result has been a profound disruption of the national economy characterized by a severe disequilibrium as different sectors grow at disproportionate rates.

Socialism in One Federated “Socialist” Republic?

It is natural to construct profit-making factories as close as possible to centers of population and the finished subgoods needed in the manufacturing process. In a “market-socialist” economy it is equally natural that such a factory’s profits are reinvested in the same areas. The less industrialized areas of the economy, which were once supported via centralized planning, are left to stagnate. One can ignore the disequilibrium to a certain extent when it occurs within a single national unit. But Yugoslavia, like the Soviet Union, is composed of many nations.

Regional dislocations in investment policy have helped undermine the national character of the Yugoslav economy. The northern area of the country is far more highly industrialized and the population enjoys a correspondingly higher standard of living than in the agricultural south. Undue reliance on the law of value spontaneously tends to produce such patterns which, in turn, promote national antagonisms and parochialist hostility to socialist planning. An article in the 13 July *New York Times* quotes Viktor Zakej, “principal economic adviser to the collective presidency of Slovenia” (the wealthiest and northernmost Yugoslav republic), as saying that: “We in Slovenia see a solution for emerging from the crisis [of the Yugoslav economy] in a more open market and economy...In Kosovo [a predominantly Albanian region in the south], because of their much lower level, they find it easier to be content with distribution more programmed by the state.”

“Market socialism” in the USSR will tend to operate in the same fashion—strengthening industry in Great Russia at the expense of similar, but less technologically advanced, industry in Georgia, Azerbaidzhan and other regions. Under Stalin, the central planning bureaus at least



Lech Walesa: kulak's hero

attempted to produce well-rounded development throughout the USSR, especially where the non-Russian population was concerned. Gorbachev appears to be prepared to abandon even the “one country” aspect of Stalinist policy for another set of directives that will have the effect of strengthening economic growth for a few privileged nationalities within the USSR.

Polish Stalinism: Enriching the Kulaks

Pre-Jaruzelski regimes in Poland managed to combine some of Yugoslavia’s errors with their own irrational attempts to ignore the law of value in the consumer goods sector. The failure of the Gomulka regime to collectivize agriculture in the 1950’s led to the development of an independent agriculturally-based smallholders class in Poland. This class, along with the Catholic Church, formed the base for the most reactionary pro-capitalist currents which came to the surface in Poland during the Solidarnosc upsurge in 1980-81.

In an attempt to ingratiate themselves with the Polish kulaks, the Stalinist regime heavily subsidized food purchased from them. Yet to placate the combative Polish proletariat, an additional subsidy was provided when the food was sold to the workers. The result was that the smallholders received *more* than market value while the workers paid *less*. This led to severe misallocation of foodstuffs, as well as a squandering of scarce resources.

Pro-socialist Poles resident in the U.S. have told us of chronic egg shortages at a time when government statistics indicated that egg production was at unprecedented levels. The explanation of this apparent paradox is simple: the farmers received more for the eggs than the workers paid for them in the stores. So instead of going to the trouble of increasing production, the kulaks simply bought up the eggs in the retail market and resold them to the state!

The Stalinist bureaucrats funneled the available social surplus, which should have been reinvested in expanding production, into the pockets of a few million rural petty capitalists. This criminal stupidity was compounded by reckless borrowing from the imperialist banks. The regime soon found itself squeezed between the Western banks and the smallholders. The result was an economic and social crisis of enormous dimensions which ultimately posed a threat to the very existence of collectivized property in Poland.●

Gorbachev...

(continued from page 14)

ment of strong farmers from the weak collective farms, and for converting the strong collectives into producers' cooperatives of the bourgeois type—into agricultural stock companies. In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual 'corporations'—potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the emigre former proprietors and foreign capitalists. Notwithstanding that the Soviet bureaucracy has gone far toward preparing a bourgeois restoration, the new regime would have to introduce in the matter of forms of property and methods of industry not a reform, but a social revolution."

—*The Revolution Betrayed*

The extreme reliance on market mechanisms which Gorbachev proposes and a qualitative reduction in the role of the state planning authorities is not capitalist restoration per se. But the "reforms" threaten to undermine the remaining strength of an economy already severely weakened by decades of bureaucratic misrule. As such they move Soviet society closer to the danger of a convulsive social counter-revolution performed, perhaps not by Gorbachev's supporters, but by elements in an even more Bukharinist post-Gorbachev regime intent on more sweeping "reforms."

Sophisticated left-apologists for Gorbachev have tried to give his policies a Leninist imprimatur by comparing them to the "New Economic Policy" of 1921. This is illegitimate. The NEP was an extreme tactical concession necessitated by the decimation of the economy as a result of seven years of war, widespread famine, an increasingly restive peasantry and the virtual collapse of industry. Gorbachev's "reforms" are not proposed as short-term expedients, but represent the bureaucracy's "solution" to sixty-odd years of "Socialism in One Country."

Gorbachev's "Democratization"

Gorbachev's talk about democratizing Soviet society and the Communist Party has received at least as much attention as his economic proposals. Speaking before a plenary meeting of the Central Committee on January 27, Gorbachev stated that, "one conclusion begs of itself: the time has come for change, for democratizing the process of management selection at enterprises on the basis of the all-round application of the electivity principle."

Thus far the "electivity principle" has not been proposed much beyond the enterprise level. In June's elections for some two million local government posts, only five percent featured two candidates, both of whom were pre-approved by the party. "Democracy" can provide a handy tactical ploy to permit a Gorbachev candidate to run, with Moscow's assistance, against the candidate of an entrenched Brezhnevite regional apparatus. Any "democratization" proposed by the CPSU bureaucracy must necessarily be qualitatively insignificant—because a real democratization of Soviet society would sweep the bureaucrats aside.

At the same time, Trotskyists in the Soviet Union should be attentive to any cracks in the bureaucratic



Leningrad metalworker

monolith and quick to take advantage of openings, however small, which might present themselves as a consequence of Gorbachev's "democratization." We recall Trotsky's observation in *The Revolution Betrayed* that: "it has happened more than once that a bureaucratic dictatorship, seeking salvation in 'liberal' reforms, has only weakened itself...The rivalry of bureaucratic cliques at the elections may become the beginning of a broader political struggle."

Those sections of the bureaucracy that fear that their power and prestige will be undercut by the realization of Gorbachev's program are already making their opposition known. For all his talk of "democratization" Gorbachev's reforms ultimately depend on his control of the bureaucratic apparatus inherited from Stalin. An op-ed writer in the *New York Times* (26 June) recalled a comment by John Stuart Mill in 1859 on the attempts of an earlier Russian autocrat to institute reforms:

"The Czar himself is powerless against the bureaucratic body: He can send any one of them to Siberia, but he cannot govern without them or against their will. On every decree of his they have a tacit veto, by merely refraining from carrying it into effect."

Thus far the Soviet workers, reflecting a historically well-grounded cynicism about their "leaders," do not seem to have responded in any significant way to Gorbachev's

proposals for democratization. They doubtless figure that, "when elephants fight it's the grass that gets trampled." They remember that every post-Stalin leader (and even Stalin himself) periodically gave speeches against bureaucracy and in favor of increased workers democracy.

The Contradictions of "Glasnost"

Gorbachev's course is fraught with contradictions. The Soviet working class has seen substantial improvements in its standard of living since the Stalin years. This has not been granted out of the beneficence of the rulers, but rather in the attempt to guarantee the quiescence of the proletariat. The proposals to rationalize the economy by eliminating subsidies on food, subway travel, health care, housing, etc., are an attempt to accumulate an additional surplus directly from the living standards of the working class. Gorbachev is being rather circumspect about the prospect of unemployment, but that is what a labor market requires to function properly. Attempts to curtail consumption, reintroduce unemployment and other anti-working class features of the market, could touch off significant resistance from the gigantic Soviet proletariat.

Literate and sophisticated members of the technical and intellectual elite do not leave their critical faculties in the lab or editorial office when they go home. What's more, their access to photocopiers and microcomputers will tend to undercut the bureaucrats' monopoly on information and communication. The totalitarian methods of Stalin's police state have, to a large extent, become irrational even from the point of view of the party hierarchy. Yet it is on the power of the political police that the bureaucracy's authority ultimately rests. While the *perestroika* (restructuring) is a step down the road to capitalist restoration and bloody counterrevolution, the *glasnost* which must necessarily accompany it, opens the possibility for the generation and growth of leftist oppositional currents within the USSR.

In this regard it is significant that Trotsky has undergone a minor "rehabilitation." He is now portrayed as an ultraleftist instead of a British/Hitlerite/Mikado-ite agent. Those in the USSR who look into the roots of the current economic crisis will find in the suppressed history of the Left Opposition the Leninist tradition of struggle against both the imperialists and the Stalinist usurpers within the workers state.

The relationship between the political superstructure and the economic base in a planned economy is much more direct than in a market economy. The solution to the economic problems of the USSR is inextricably linked to reversing the political counterrevolution represented by the victory of the Stalin faction in the 1920's. Only a reborn Bolshevik Party, rooted in the Soviet working class, and forged on an internationalist program of irreconcilable struggle against the bureaucratic betrayers can defend and extend the gains of the October Revolution:

"The defense of the USSR coincides in principle with the preparation of the world proletarian revolution. We flatly reject the theory of socialism in one country, that brain child of ignorant and reactionary Stalinism. Only the world revolution can save the USSR for socialism. But the world revolution carries with it the inescapable blotting out of the Kremlin oligarchy."

—"Manifesto of the Fourth International," 1940

MLP...

(continued from page 6)

not come out against it, yet they did not want to be associated with it. The question for revolutionists was how to exploit this contradiction to maximize the possibilities of success for this action, the first political strike in West Coast maritime since World War II.

Had it been possible to mobilize enough sentiment in the base to force the union leadership to sanction the action officially, militants in the local could have demanded that the full resources of the ILWU be used to bring out the rest of the labor movement, as well as the black community, in active support. There is a lot of anti-apartheid sentiment in the Bay Area and, had it been properly tapped, the employers' injunction could have been defeated. Conversely, if the local union leaders had defied the wishes of the rank-and-file, and refused to come out in open support, or were seen to be dragging their feet, it would have provided an opportunity for class-struggle militants to expose them. Thus the fight to put the union officially on record in support of the boycott was integral to both winning this struggle and exposing the pro-capitalist policies of the bureaucrats to the workers. Whether it be learned negatively in Germany on a large scale, or from the positive example of the Bay Area boycott on a much smaller scale, the lesson is the same: it is in action, and not with high-sounding phrases that the reformist misleaders must be exposed before the working class.

The CIO: "Labor's Giant Step"

The MLP asserts that we are "absolutely wrong" to argue that the split John L. Lewis initiated in the AFL in the 1930's, which gave birth to the CIO, "gave enormous impetus to industrial unionism on this continent." For these born-again Third Period loyalists, the American trade-union brass was, and is, one monolithic reactionary mass. The MLP is unable to comprehend the deeply *contradictory* nature of the formation of the CIO, seeing it only as a means by which the labor revolt "was channelled into tame, pro-capitalist unions." But the creation of industrial unions in the mass-production industries, regardless of Lewis' intent, sparked the most important step forward for American labor in its history. The CIO was forged in mass class battles which brought hundreds of thousands of working-class militants into political life for the first time.

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The Communist Party, the largest radical group in the country at the time, was unfortunately the main beneficiary of this tremendous opening for revolutionary politics. Following Moscow's instructions, it supported Roosevelt and his "New Deal" Democratic Party and then shoved the "no-strike pledge" down the throats of American workers during World War II. But the CP's treachery doesn't change the fact that the battle for industrial unionism was a major step forward for the American working class. The Trotskyists of the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party threw themselves into this struggle wherever they got a chance, and we proudly stand in that tradition.

The wisdom of the Third Period boils down to the proposition that every united front not dominated by the revolutionary party is counterrevolutionary. Consequently, it is necessary to wait until the revolutionary vanguard has the majority in any particular section of the class before attempting to initiate mass actions. Since it is impossible to gain a majority through one by one recruitment, the revolutionary party will never have a majority, and therefore never be able to take the lead in mass actions. In theory this should pose an insoluble dilemma for a very small group of Third Period devotees. The MLP gets around the problem through the simple expedient of discarding its troublesome theory whenever it sniffs a practical "party-building" opportunity.

Opportunism and Sectarianism: "Not Antipodes, but Twins"

The MLP lightly dismisses the creation of the CIO, a milestone in the struggle for the emancipation of labor in this country. But it measures the contemporary campus-based anti-apartheid movements by a different yardstick. Here we see the opportunist side of the sectarian coin. Gone is the "leftist" tactical rigidity and the Third Period formulas. Instead of wholesale denunciation, the MLP tags right along behind the students—thereby implicitly endorsing the liberal, utopian demand that the capitalist corporations and university trustees pursue a more "progressive" investment policy.

In theory the MLP shares our position that the student movement must forge links with the proletariat, through the medium of a Leninist party. But in the anti-apartheid movement on campus, the MLP soft-pedalled any criticisms it had of the divestment strategy so as not to alienate the students. We told the students the truth: that the law of value, not abstract morality, dictates capitalist investment policy, and that to be effective, the struggle against the apartheid regime had to be brought into the organized working class. On this basis we were able to establish a principled working relationship with the main campus anti-apartheid group at Berkeley. In March 1986 we carried out a joint action based on this perspective on the docks in San Francisco (see 1917 No. 2).

While individual MLPers have on occasion characterized the divestment strategy as a "sham," the WAS polemic attacks us for "denounc[ing] the divestment demand in itself as automatically liberal and reformist." To this we plead guilty. Calling on American capitalists to juggle their stock portfolios and cleanse themselves of association with their South African ally and junior partner is an exercise in utopian moralism. The MLP theoreticians seem



BT combatted illusions in divestment

1917

stung by our criticism of their opportunist willingness to go along with the divestment sham. To get off the hook they try to obscure the vital distinction between labor solidarity actions and student campaigns aimed at pressuring millionaire business tycoons and university trustees to "divest." In a particularly crude and stupid bit of confusionism, WAS argues that labor boycotts of South African cargo aim:

"to force the shipping companies and dock authorities to refuse South African cargo. Are such big capitalists any more moral than the others? If BT wants to say something nice about a struggle, it calls it an 'effective solidarity action'. But if BT dislikes it, it is an attempt to make the imperialists act morally."

We can't believe the MLP is really unable to tell the difference between student appeals to the capitalists to act "morally," and direct working-class action by longshoremen who get fired for refusing to handle apartheid cargo.

For communists, theory and practice are inseparable. "Theories" such as the MLP's fairy tale about the glories of the Stalinist Comintern in the Third Period, which can only be defended by glossing over major historical events which do not fit, are not worth much. Likewise, a theory of how to intervene in the mass movement which must be routinely discarded in practice, should cause its adherents to start asking some questions.

Bad politics are not cost-free. The MLP can no more escape the contradictions of Third Period politics than the Communist International could. The first step for those in the MLP who are serious about understanding the political collapse of the Third International must be to study the political debates in the 1920's which split Lenin's Political Bureau. Two fundamental tendencies emerged from that struggle—the Left Opposition headed by Trotsky and the conservative bloc of Stalin/Bukharin. While the Left Opposition fought for international proletarian revolution, Stalin/Bukharin banked on building "Socialism in One Country" at a snail's pace. Those same two tendencies represent the alternatives for the subjective communists in the MLP today—Leninism or Stalinism. ●



The Crisis of Leadership in B.C., 1983

Anatomy of a Sellout

Review of Bryan D. Palmer's *Solidarity: The Rise & Fall Of An Opposition In British Columbia*

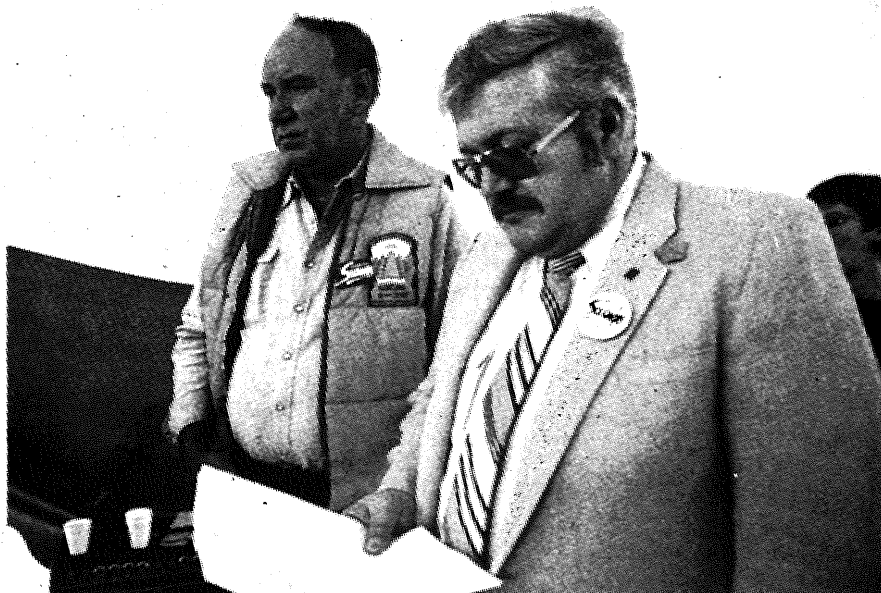
by Chris Knox

In class-divided society history based on allegedly "non-class" objectivity obscures rather than clarifies reality. Marxist social science—which seeks to change the world, not just study it—finds the truth by placing itself squarely on the side of the working class in the struggle for socialism. It is rare to find good studies of contemporary history which are really based on this Marxist understanding. For this reason, socialists, labor militants, and all those seeking Marxist clarity, should welcome Bryan Palmer's first-hand study of the class upsurge in British Columbia in the summer and fall of 1983, known as the Solidarity movement.

Influenced by right-wing ideologues and a notorious local "think tank" for social retrenchment, the ruling Social Credit party under William Bennett in that year launched a vicious, across-the-board attack on social services, education, minority rights and the trade unions. Under the quaint rubric of "downsizing" government, Bennett's July budget and package of 26 bills eliminated whole categories of social services, abolished the Human Rights Commission and rent controls, drastically increased class sizes in public schools, and virtually ended all the rights and functions of public-sector trade unions, among other things. The government wanted 1600 public service layoffs and the right to fire public workers without cause. As Palmer puts it, "In one devastating blow Bennett and the Socreds sought to liberate capital from the fetters of the post-war settlement," in which containment of the class struggle was achieved in exchange for legalized collective bargaining, unemploy-

ment insurance and other social services.

The response to this fusillade of "takeaways" proved once again that the British Columbia working class is the most militant in English-speaking North America. As hundreds of public workers were fired before the ink was dry, many more walked off their jobs to attend mass rallies demanding withdrawal of the entire legislative package. In Kamloops workers occupied a hospital for the mentally handicapped in order to keep Bennett from closing it and turning the patients out into the streets. Leftists of all stripes and rank-and-file unionists formed coalitions, such as the Lower Mainland Budget Coalition, to fight the government's attack and to pressure the B.C. Federation of Labour (the "Fed") into action.



Jack Munro and Art Kube

Paul Little

The mass mobilization was marked from the beginning by a strong sense of unity between organized workers and the other sectors—drawn overwhelmingly from the ranks of the oppressed—affected by the attacks: the elderly, women, students, the handicapped and the sick. BC's Chinese and Indian-derived minorities were also very much involved, as the Socred measures threatened to unleash barely-restrained racist forces in a province with a long history of racist attacks. That this movement had revolutionary potential was evidenced by one speaker at a Solidarity mass meeting, who said that the government was "calling it revolution." While the situation was not yet pre-revolutionary, the mass mobilization could have, and should have, smashed the Socred offensive with a province-wide general strike by organized labor.

The assumption that there would be a general strike was everywhere, from calls by numerous union bodies, to placards seen frequently at demonstrations and rallies, etc. Yet the timid, legalist Fed leadership of Art Kube & Co. sought from the beginning to channel the movement in a "safe" direction. When the Fed brass presided over a rally of 50,000 in Vancouver (many of whom were striking illegally), many leftists and militants were duped by the bureaucrats' apparent commitment to the struggle. Drawing on numerous interviews conducted with principal figures after the main events, however, Palmer shows that this "commitment" was a fraud from the beginning. In one instance, George Hewison, a well-known supporter of the Communist Party, who was a prominent organizer of the early rallies, told Palmer that Kube "virtually ordered me to call it [one of the rallies] off."

Art Kube's real problem with Solidarity—which eventually led him to break down and cry on national television—was how to balance the bureaucracy's commitment to capitalist legality and parliamentarism, with its need to be in control of the mass movement in order to contain it. When the Fed did reluctantly "hop on the bandwagon," it formed two organizations—Operation Solidarity for the unions, and the Solidarity Coalition for non-unionists—both tightly controlled through their purse strings and hand-picked leaders.

Throughout the 100-day struggle, Fed leaders constantly coordinated their actions with the leaders of the New Democratic Party (NDP), Canada's parliamentary-cretinist labor party, despite the social democrats' inability to resist Bennett and their arrogant condescension toward the mass movement. Illegal walkouts and rallies were curtailed, and replaced with petitions and "education." Kube next announced his intention to *abandon* all issues except immediate union demands! In the end, the Fed leadership called off an escalating series of public employees' strikes in return for a vague verbal deal with Bennett which was never even announced publicly, let alone ratified by Solidarity or any union organization! Naturally, Bennett began renegeing on his "handshake" almost immediately. The sellout came only hours before ferry, bus and other municipal workers were set to bring Vancouver, B.C.'s only big city, to a virtual standstill. The pickets were called off, and by the morning of 14 November, as Palmer puts it, Solidarity "was a dirty word."

The deal allowed public-sector unions to negotiate exemptions from a provision of Bill 3 allowing indiscriminate firings. This followed the precedent set by the striking Government Employees Union (BCGEU), which "won" such an exemption for itself. But the BCGEU's "no-concessions" contract did not restore any of the 1600 jobs the government wanted to be rid of! And the other unions facing contract deadlines were left to fend for themselves, as the BCGEU returned to work. The other sections of the population were left to swing in the breeze with a promise of "advisory bodies" to hear submissions on some provisions of the bills!

While some militant actions—including an occupation of Bennett's office, and a mass "visit" to a minister's home (dubbed "Luncheon with Gracie")—took place outside of the Fed's control, in the end, the reformist leadership's grip was lock-tight. The Fed bureaucrats' divide-and-conquer, two-organization policy worked, as the tops of both Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition separately bought the deal. While there was plenty of recrimination



"There are no two different class struggles of the working class, an economic and a political one, but only one class struggle, which aims at one and the same time at the limitation of capitalist exploitation within bourgeois society, and at the abolition of exploitation together with bourgeois society itself."

—Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike*

after the sellout, throughout the struggle there was no organized opposition warning of the impending betrayal, or advocating a course toward victory through class-struggle action and a general strike to reverse all the Sacred legislation. Such an opposition would have had to have been rooted within the unions and other mass organizations, but *independent* of the bureaucratic structure. Palmer's account spells out how this could have come about through democratically-elected strike committees in every work place, "which could have then co-ordinated activity with non-union participants in the Coalition and formed labour-centred municipal, regional and province-wide strike committees." At that point it would have been possible to take "direction of the strike and Solidarity as a whole out of the closed hands of the labour bureaucrats."

Only the Communist Party has the organizational strength to have implemented such a policy on a large scale; but the Stalinists' subservient marriage of convenience to the Fed bureaucracy was more important. CP militants took the initiative to prod the Fed into motion, but the party's position from the beginning was that unity must prevail within the labor movement *regardless of the cost*. CPers played good-soldier roles throughout the upsurge while the CP paper, the *Pacific Tribune*, covered up for the bureaucratic sellout, calling it a "limited victory" and burying any criticisms (16 November 1983).

The CP thought Palmer's book sufficiently important to

warrant a lengthy attack in the 4 March *Pacific Tribune*. The "review," by Fred Wilson, is really a diatribe complete with personal denigration and absurd charges that the book is an attack on trade unions and working people, etc. Wilson denies the "limited victory" line--though the 1983 statement appeared under his byline!--as well as the comments of George Hewison to Palmer in an interview. (Hewison might well wish to erase comments such as, "You don't worry about the price" that the movement will pay for uncritical loyalty to the bureaucracy but the editors of his paper—perhaps in the spirit of *glasnost!*—printed a reply from Palmer on 22 April which pointed out that the interview was taped with Hewison's permission and is still in the author's possession!) Wilson really outdoes himself when, after his page-long discussion of Palmer's book, he concludes that, "This is not a book to be purchased, read or debated by the left"! What cynical arrogance! The militant workers of B.C. will not be taken in by such a crass, self-serving attempt to squash a devastating critique of Stalinist betrayal at work.

Unlike social science from a bourgeois or New Left perspective, in which assumptions are made up as you go along to "explain" a present in its own terms, Palmer's short but succinct work grounds its analysis in the historic lessons of the class struggle internationally, as expressed in the writings of leaders such as Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky. In Trotsky's comments on general-strike action in France in the 1930's, or in Luxemburg's *The Mass Strike*, the problems faced by the B.C. workers in Solidarity are illuminated for all to see: the trade-union officials, conservatized by their role and seeking only to contain and defuse the mass struggle; and the social democrats, who are so fixated on the next election that they turn their backs on the struggle in the streets. That is why the NDP charlatans, trade-union sellouts, and their hangers-on in the CP don't want workers to read books like this.

Palmer's conclusion, that the defeat of movements like Solidarity at the hands of their own leaderships can only serve to undermine future struggles, is being confirmed in B.C. today as a new Fed leadership, after calling a *one-day* general strike to blow off steam, prepares to capitulate before the latest Sacred anti-labor attack. All the more important, then, is Palmer's additional conclusion, that the need for revolutionary leadership of the working class must be addressed in the manner indicated by Lenin and Trotsky. The book's only real weakness (aside from its being too short) is that, while it discusses retrospectively a program for a Solidarity victory, it fails to discuss in a sufficiently *concrete* fashion the need to rebuild working-class leadership in the form of a Leninist vanguard party.

Perhaps the most important part of the book is the afterword, which is in part an auto-critique (written in 1986). Palmer points out that he, along with many other militants who were suspicious of the reformist trade-union leadership, was nevertheless "guilty of slighting the critical importance of leadership and program, trusting implicitly if uneasily in the momentum of the movement to carry the struggle forward." In drawing the lessons of B.C. Solidarity, Palmer aptly quotes Trotsky's observation that, "All now depends on the proletariat, i.e. *chiefly* on its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of humanity is *reduced* to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." ●



U.S. Union Militant Tours Britain For International Labor Solidarity

During the week of July 4-12, Bolshevik Tendency (BT) supporter Howard Keylor was sponsored by the Cambridge Area Trades Union Council to tour Britain and speak about his experiences in the 1984 San Francisco longshore boycott of South African cargo. The interest in Keylor's visit was sparked by the growing disenchantment of British trade-union militants with the strategy of "disinvestment" and their increasing interest in the possibility of direct industrial action ("workers sanctions") against the vicious apartheid regime.

Keylor addressed trade-union groups in Cardiff and Cambridge, and spoke at public meetings of trade unionists, anti-apartheid activists and leftists in Derby, Newcastle, Cambridge and London. He described the events and drew the political lessons of the San Francisco boycott—the only sustained political strike by American workers against apartheid to date. He pointed out that the 11-day boycott of South African cargo by members of Local 10 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) was the culmination of years of propaganda and education on international working-class solidarity. He explained that the basis for the 1984 action had been laid by two much smaller cargo boycotts in 1974 and 1978; the former in defense of the Chilean working class and the latter against the oppression of the black masses in South Africa.

Keylor emphasized that a sectarian approach to workers sanctions is doomed to failure and that the implementation of the San Francisco boycott was due in part to the careful building of a united front comprised of union members who supported different left and trade-union currents. Unfortunately, it appears that in Britain some groups which, in theory, favor workers sanctions are subordinating the fight to implement them to considerations of petty-sectarian maneuvering.

In Derby, Keylor shared the podium with Frank Murphy, Educational Director of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the second largest union in COSATU. Brother Murphy told the audience that during the 1984 San Francisco cargo boycott a FOSATU (a forerunner to COSATU) representative appeared on television in New York and praised the longshoremen's action and called for similar direct industrial actions by other U.S. workers.

Murphy also described how the highly publicized disinvestment by U.S. and British companies doing business in South Africa frequently concealed a continuing economic connection and continued profiteering from the apartheid system. He said that in many cases it left unionized black workers without even the meager pension, wage and trade-union protection won over the past decade of militant struggles. Murphy said the metalworkers union wanted to build

direct ties with British (and American) trade unions working for the same multinational corporations, or in similar industries and trades, in order to facilitate direct action by British workers in support of South African trade-union and anti-apartheid struggles.

In public discussions at the meetings, and in informal exchanges afterward, the British trade unionists were concerned about the legal restrictions and penalties used against the U.S. trade-union movement, especially those aimed at striking unions and international solidarity actions. Many trade unionists in the audience asked detailed questions as to how the U.S. trade unions function within these legal restrictions, and were particularly interested in those cases where workers were successful in defying court injunctions and anti-labor laws. Keylor drew parallels between the situation in the U.S. and Thatcher's program of anti-union legislation and massive police attacks on striking workers, and warned that only a trade-union leadership committed to mobilizing the working class against capitalist government repression could defend even the limited gains of the workers movement.

The London meeting at Camden town hall was or-

ganized and chaired by a leader of a rank-and-file militant trade-union group that had led a combative strike of London construction workers. In attendance were members of a number of ostensibly Trotskyist organizations, including the British affiliates of David North's American Workers League, who attacked Keylor for advocating and participating in a united-front action with workers who support the Communist Party. The Northites ludicrously characterized the San Francisco action bloc as a "popular front." Most of the other groups present accused each other of "sectarianism" while failing to clearly commit themselves to principled united-front tactics aimed at building international solidarity actions within the trade-union movement. In Keylor's brief tour he was able to carry the lessons of his exemplary trade-union work into a small section of the British left and workers movement. The intense interest of trade unionists, anti-apartheid activists and ostensible revolutionary political groups in our supporters' struggles on the docks in San Francisco demonstrates the powerful international impact which even a small revolutionary propaganda group with some influence in the unions can have, if it is able to apply its program intelligently. ●

Free Moses Mayekiso



Over 40 protesters rallied at Union Square, San Francisco, on 24 August demanding: "Free Moses Mayekiso" and "Free All Anti-Apartheid Prisoners in South Africa." The demonstration marked the opening day of the trial of Mayekiso, the General Secretary of the 130,000 member National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, and four other black trade-union leaders, who face the death penalty on charges of "high treason" against the brutal apartheid regime.

The protest was called by the united front "Committee to Free Moses Mayekiso," initiated by the Bolshevik Ten-

dency. Representatives of the BT, the Revolutionary Workers League, the Workers Socialist League and the *Labor Militant* group spoke at the rally. Unfortunately the other left-wing organizations contacted about the demonstration chose to boycott it.

The following is an excerpt from the call for the demonstration by the Committee to Free Moses Mayekiso:

"Moses Mayekiso is not only the leader of South Africa's second biggest non-racial trade union, he was also elected as chairman of the Alexandra Action Committee where he worked to link the power of the unions with the organizations of the townships. In February 1986 when the South African security forces attacked a funeral in Alexandra they were met with fierce resistance. The South African government then went after the Alexandra Action Committee. Moses was detained and suffered five days of beating. Brother Mayekiso has been central to building COSATU and served on the committees that drew up its constitution and planned its inaugural congress. If the Botha regime succeeds in killing this outstanding militant it will be a major defeat for the non-racial trade union movement and the entire international working class.

"The situation of Brother Mayekiso is doubly dangerous because so far no major organizations of the anti-apartheid movement or the left in the U.S. have made an effort to mount a protest around this vital case. It is the duty of all socialists and anti-apartheid militants and organizations to demand and work for the release of Moses Mayekiso and all victims of apartheid terror."

Waterfront...

(continued from page 32)

dispatch office. It means no stable, registered or even recognized status. I was lucky enough to know a couple of older activists in the union—one of whom belonged to the CP, another was an old Wobbler—who were friends of mine and used a bit of influence and got me on a casual list. It wasn't until 1959 that I got recognized status in the ILWU.

1917: But you were a member of other unions before?

Keylor: Yes, as a matter of fact in 1953 I had been fired from the job I worked for two years in a paper mill. I belonged to the papermakers' local union. I was active in that union in a limited way.

1917: You were a supporter of the Stalinist Communist Party for over 25 years. How were you won to Trotskyism?

Keylor: I had always been something of a secret dissident, I guess you could have called me a left-Stalinist. I was quite unhappy most of the time during the McCarthy period with the Communist Party trying to hide what seemed its own limited, but at least formally revolutionary ideology. I was never too happy with the policy of primari-

ly trying to form alliances with bourgeois or petty-bourgeois formations. I guess I was an unreconstructed Third Period Stalinist.

I had my own somewhat secret, actually very secret, theory about the Soviet Union as a workers state in which the bureaucracy had seized power from the working class and suppressed working class dissidents. I knew that was the case, but I'd never been able to generalize my political differences.

1917: So how did you come to Trotskyism? Did you read a book by Trotsky or did you meet people that called themselves Trotskyists?

Keylor: I never read anything by Trotsky or any of the main writings about Trotskyism or met a Trotskyist until the 1971-72 longshore strike when I came in contact with Asher Harer, a member of the union who was a well-known supporter of the Socialist Workers Party and is today with Socialist Action. I collaborated with him in writing a leaflet during the 143-day strike in 1971-72 and I wasn't too happy with the collaboration because, while some of what we were asking for programmatically seemed to make sense, he was very adamant on not criticizing the

Militant Longshoreman Program

1. DEFEND OUR JOBS AND LIVELIHOOD—Six hour shift, no extensions, at eight hours pay. Manning scales on all ship operations, one man—one job. Weekly PGP. Full no-cap C.O.L.A. on wages. Joint maritime union action against non-union barge, shipping and longshore operations. No ghost riders or witnesses. No long-term contracts.

2. DEFEND THE HIRING HALL—Use regular gangs on container ships; no dispatch of "unit gangs." Call all 9,43 men back to the hall. Stop-work action to defend the hiring hall and older and disabled men.

3. DEFEND UNION CONDITIONS AND SAFETY THROUGH JOB ACTION—Stop PMA chiseling on the contract. Eliminate "work as directed," "no illegal work stoppage," and arbitration sections from the contract. Mobilize to smash anti-labor injunctions. No employer drug or alcohol screening.

4. DEFEND OUR UNION—No Class B or C longshoremen. Register directly to Class A. Keep racist, anti-labor government and courts out of the union and BALMA. Support unions' resistance against court suits and government "investigations." Union action to break down racial and sexual discrimination and employer favoritism on the waterfront. Organize for a coastwide strike to get what we need—no concessions—no give-backs.

5. BUILD LABOR SOLIDARITY—against government/employer strikebreaking. No more defeated

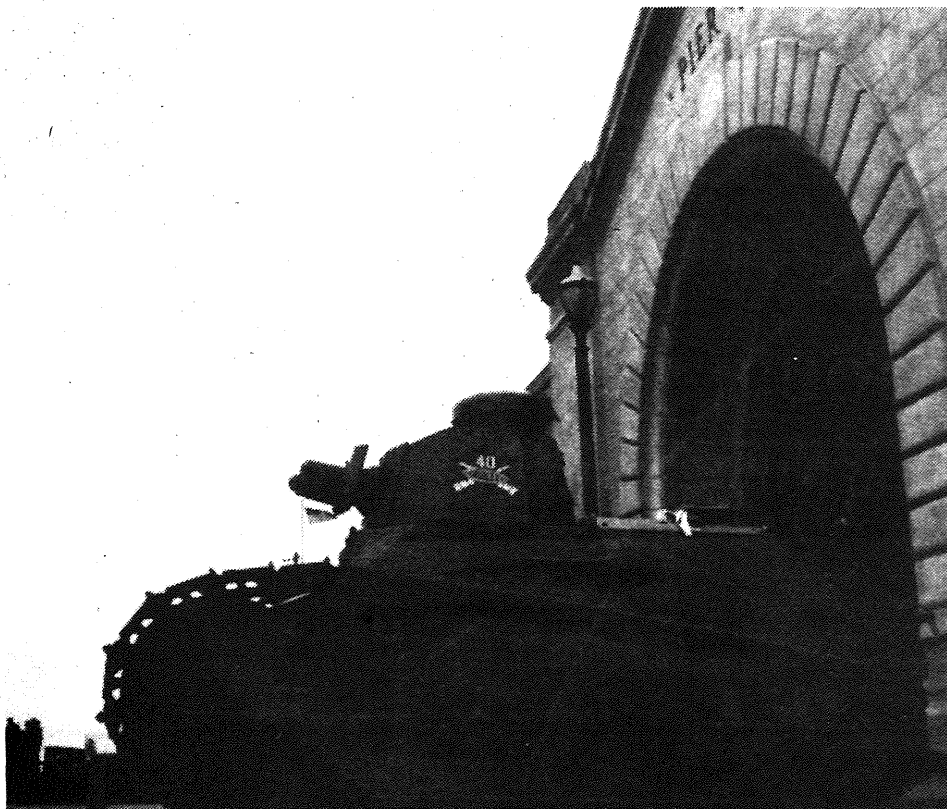
PATCO or HORMEL strikes. Honor all class-struggle picket lines—remove phony, racist, anti-working class picket lines. Don't handle struck or diverted cargo. No raiding of other unions. Organize the disorganized, and the unemployed. Defend IBU-ILWU (INLAND BOATMEN) against Crowley union busting.

6. STOP NAZI/KLAN TERROR through union-organized labor/black/latino defense actions. No dependence on capitalist police or courts to smash fascists.

7. WORKING CLASS ACTION TO STOP REAGAN'S WAR-DRIVE—Labor strikes to oppose U.S. military actions against Cuba, Nicaragua or Salvadoran leftist insurgents. Boycott military cargo to Central America. Build labor action to smash the apartheid injunction.

8. INTERNATIONAL LABOR SOLIDARITY—oppose protectionist trade restrictions—for a massive trade-union program of aid to help non-U.S. workers build unions and fight super-exploitation by the multinational corporations—Defend undocumented workers with union strike action.

9. BREAK WITH THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN PARTIES—Start now to build a workers party based on the unions to fight for a workers government which will seize all major industry without payment to the capitalists and establish a planned economy to end exploitation, racism, poverty and war.



National Guard occupies S.F. waterfront during 1934 general strike

John Gutmann

international union bureaucracy and their conduct in the strike. He was the only ostensible Trotskyist I had ever had any contact with.

It wasn't until about August 1974 that I ran into an old tattered copy of Deutscher's *The Prophet Armed* [the first volume of a three-part political biography of Trotsky]. I took it home; stayed up all night reading it and then went to a library the next day and got the rest of the trilogy, read it and walked around in a daze for a couple of weeks. It wasn't until I came in contact with the Spartacist League in the fall of 1974 that I began doing some consistent reading on Trotskyism and was won over painfully.

1917: You eventually became a supporter of the Spartacist League?

Keylor: Yes, I became a supporter of the Spartacist League, which as you know, at that time had a serious orientation to trade-union work—something which is no longer the case. Actually, initially I became a member of the SL-supported Longshore/Warehouse Militant Caucus, and in April of 1975 became an organized supporter of the Spartacist League.

1917: This is the thirteenth consecutive year you have been elected to the Executive Board of ILWU Local 10 on an openly socialist program. How have you managed to win a base for your politics in the union?

Keylor: There are really two separate questions. Getting elected to the Executive Board was initially rather difficult. There was a lot of competition for Executive Board posts in the earlier period. Having transferred from the small up-river port of Stockton to San Francisco in 1970, I was a

relatively “new boy” on the block. Also, I was white and the San Francisco longshoremen were, and are still, about 70 percent black. Initially it was not easy to get elected and running on an explicitly socialist, transitional program made it even more difficult.

By December 1974, when I first ran on this program as a member of the Militant Caucus, socialists had mostly been identified with the Communist Party in Local 10. The Communist Party had to a large extent been discredited because of their support to the international union's bureaucratic sellout of the workers interests. In the first period some of our support came from militants who thought we were uniquely honest in saying what we stood for, and because we were projecting a positive program and were not afraid to criticize all levels of the bureaucracy. That was rather unusual because almost all other figures, even minor ones in the Local at that time, were identified with either one of two main bureaucratic factions—the [ILWU

President Harry] Bridges faction or the large, amorphous anti-Bridges faction.

We stood outside these formations and acted as a very small, hard left political pole, and nothing like that had been done for a long, long time. I particularly suffered some difficulty, because in moving toward an explicitly socialist program based on the Transitional Program, I had to break with the whole anti-Bridges bloc that I had worked with for almost four years—some of whom were my close friends.

1917: So in the union you ran on the Transitional Program. One of the criticisms which we often hear of this approach by groups like Workers Power in Britain is that raising a full socialist program amounts to “ultimatism.” Their idea is that demands like the call for workers defense guards or for a workers government are too advanced for the present consciousness of the class. How would you respond?

Keylor: I would respond that the failure to raise the whole Transitional Program as applied to the particular trade-union milieu or trade-union situation amounts to misleading the workers, because all points or aspects of that program sometime or other, sooner or later, relate to immediate questions facing the union. It is impossible to build a class-struggle opposition that can lead workers, even to defend themselves, without educating at least a section of the activist workers—the most advanced ones—about the social and political reality in which they are operating.

For example, in the mid to late fifties, the union started to get very deeply involved in Democratic Party politics in San Francisco. Actually earlier in Hawaii, the bulk of the union became intertwined with the Democratic Party to

such an extent that the interests of the various coalitions they were backing ran directly counter to the interests of the workers. To oppose support to the Democrats you have to explain the class nature of the capitalist state, and that automatically raises the question of the workers government—just like any serious picket line situation poses in embryo the necessity for some kind of workers defense guards.

The bottom line is that you can't build a pro-socialist wing in the unions by hiding your politics—that's always a sign of adaptation to the present backwardness of the class. You've got to be upfront about what you stand for and try to apply your program in a creative way to address the concrete questions which arise. To pick out a few of the demands of the Transitional Program that might be more popular at a given moment, and just run on them, in effect destroys the whole purpose of the program—which is to connect the immediate, felt needs of the workers to the necessity of a political struggle for power.

1917: From time to time there have been oppositional formations in the ILWU that ran on a program of "more militancy" and "more democracy," similar to Ed Sadlowski in steel or Arnold Miller in the coal miners union, or the Teamsters for a Democratic Union [TDU]. Many leftists see these campaigns as a step forward because they oppose the incumbent bureaucrats. How do you look at such a lesser-evil approach to union work?

Keylor: It's not very practical. Even when they succeed in throwing out the existing bureaucrats the results are usually disastrous. Even assuming you've got honest, well-meaning elements leading these oppositional groups—and not just another gang of would-be bureaucrats—when they get into power, they find themselves up against the same opposition from the government, the same legalistic restrictions and the same nasty, brutal repression from the employers. And lacking an understanding—a political class understanding—of how to break out of those restrictions, those leaders will end up acting like Miller, Nixon's candidate in the mineworkers. They will become brutal bureaucrats themselves and suppress the rank-and-file.

In longshore there was a big, broad oppositional grouping to the Bridges leadership in the late sixties, based in part on new people who had come into the union. When Bridges finally retired, various elements of this opposition came into power, especially in the major longshore locals. They didn't do any better in defending the interests of the workers than the Bridges machine. The only real alternative is to pose class-struggle oppositional formations, which stand as a political alternative to all varieties of business unionism.

1917: What would distinguish such caucuses from formations like the TDU?

Keylor: They are distinguished primarily by their program. When they get elected in a given section of a union they are predictable in terms of what they will do. When oppositional groupings that are not programmatically based win leadership in a union, they usually don't remain intact. The only glue that holds them together is the fight for power. Once they get in, they quite frequently split or dissolve into their components, fighting over crumbs; or they become cynically co-opted into the bureaucratic system. The very

Trotsky on the Unions

"...it seems, at first sight, easy to draw the conclusion that the trade unions cease to be trade unions in the imperialist epoch. They leave almost no room at all for workers' democracy which, in the good old days when free trade ruled on the economic arena, constituted the content of the inner life of labor organization. In the absence of workers' democracy there cannot be any free struggle for influence over the trade union membership. And because of this, the chief arena of work for revolutionists within the trade unions disappears. Such a position, however, would be false to the core. We cannot select the arena and conditions for our activity to suit our own likes and dislikes.... We cannot, in precisely the same way, renounce the struggle within the compulsory labor organizations created by fascism. All the less so can we renounce internal systematic work in trade unions of totalitarian and semitotalitarian type merely because they depend directly or indirectly on the workers' state or because the bureaucracy deprives the revolutionists of the possibility of working freely within these trade unions.... It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilize the masses, not only against the bourgeoisie, but also against the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: *complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state.* This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy."

—Leon Trotsky, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay," 1940

best of such formations will simply degenerate into nickel-and-dime economism or social-democratic maneuverism. An opposition based on a coherent program of class struggle can win workers to a political understanding and the necessity to fight for it. In learning to apply that program to all aspects of the union's life, as well as in the whole of society, they become committed to that program.

Individuals can betray or fall away but the betrayal will be quite conspicuous. One of the virtues of running on a clear class-struggle program is that the workers know where you stand on all major issues or can figure out which side you are going to come down on regarding the issues facing the union.

1917: When is it correct for Trotskyists in the unions to support other groups or individuals for union office? What should be the conditions of that support?

Keylor: Given the extremely degenerate condition of the American trade-union leadership, one has to be extremely careful about offering even critical support to individuals or



December, 1984: pickets defying injunction, block Pier 80 on last day of longshore boycott

1917

groupings running for office. Even the smallest committee in the union will be dealing with questions that have to do with the power of the employers over the workers or questions of class-collaboration. So the criteria that one has to apply must be based on program.

While it will vary from time to time in practice, there are certain minimum positions we would generally want to see publicly taken by individuals running for office before we would think of voting for them. There are three interconnected questions that I can think of. One is no support for the top trade-union bureaucracy. There isn't a single major union in this country in which all the components at the top have not been at least complicit in major betrayals of the workers interests. Only people that are prepared to openly break with all sections of the trade-union bureaucracy, and criticize it, can have sufficient independence to merit support.

Another absolutely minimal programmatic aspect is the defense of the independence of the workers movement, especially the unions, from the capitalist state. This usually comes up over the question of lawsuits against the unions or government intervention into the internal affairs of the unions.

1917: Or defying injunctions?

Keylor: Yes, that is another aspect of the same thing. Anyone who runs for office in a union and will not take a position on the necessity to defy injunctions or court orders emanating from the capitalist state, is simply not able to defend workers interests.

And then there is the question of a break with the Democratic and Republican parties, the twin bourgeois parties. While we always call for a break with the Democrats

and Republicans and for a workers government that will expropriate industry without compensation, in some cases we have given critical support to candidates for office who simply called for breaking with the Democrats and Republicans and forming a workers party.

In general though, "critical support" in union elections is an application of the united front. Lenin compared it to that which a rope gives a hanged man. What he meant was that an important aspect of critical support is exposure, in practice, of the inadequacies and contradictions of a reformist program. You cannot expose a reformist unless he or she runs on a platform that in some fashion represents a real break from class collaborationism. Every out-bureaucrat will promise "more militancy" and "more democracy"—it's cheap. If you vote for somebody on that basis you are really just voting for one reformist because he's more popular than the other.

It's always a concrete question, but if a reformist oppositionist is running at the head of a real rank-and-file movement, and is seriously committed in the eyes of his base to fight for some programmatic plank which is really opposed to pro-capitalist business unionism, then class-struggle elements could consider offering him critical support, despite the reformist limitations of the rest of his platform. At the same time, it is necessary to warn those who follow such a candidate that his platform as a whole contradicts this particular demand. That way, if and when he betrays this demand, those who supported him because of it will begin to understand that only the consistent class-struggle elements in the union are capable of really fighting for their interests.

1917: In 1984 you initiated a united front for the political strike which boycotted the South African cargo on the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* in San Francisco. A lot of the workers involved in that action had very different politics than yours, right?

Keylor: That is correct. The initiating committee and the committee that implemented the boycott after it was approved, was composed of individuals who had not only widely different political views, but who had often been in very sharp, antagonistic disputes in the union and even outside the union.

1917: On the eleventh day of the cargo boycott, when a federal court injunction came down, the bloc split. What happened?

Keylor: When the federal injunction came down the local union leadership, which had been giving passive support, and in some cases rather active support to the boycott,

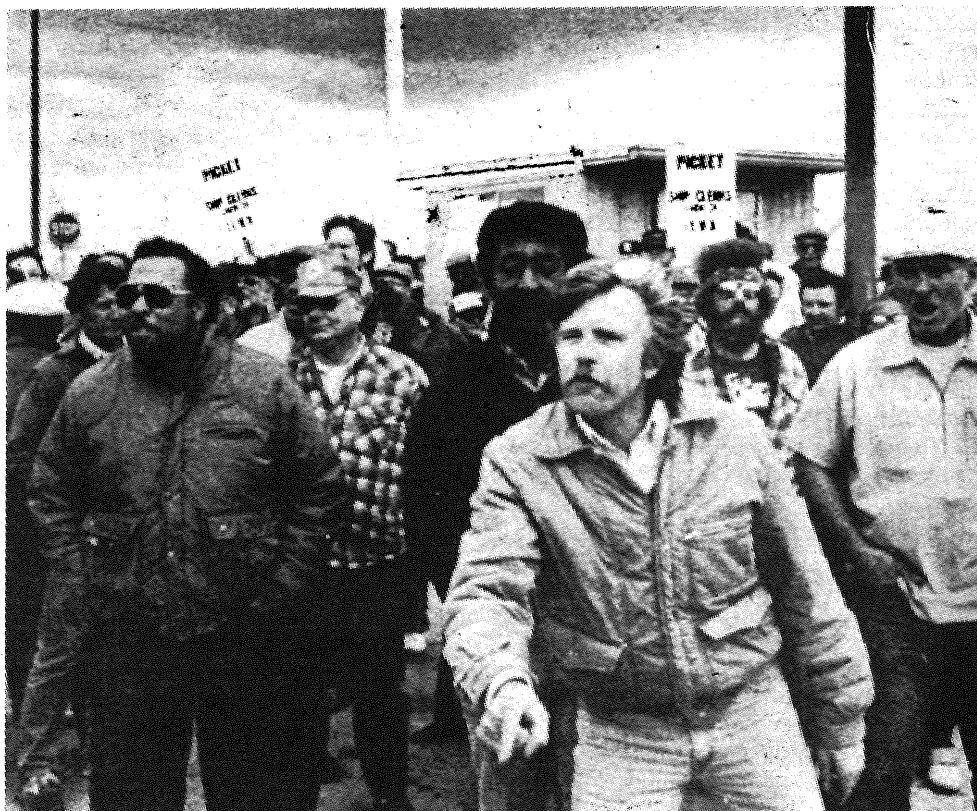
called a special meeting of the local executive board. After extensive debate the board voted eleven to five to comply with the injunction. In the course of that debate the bloc split with most of the members, who were either one-time adherents or supporters of the Communist Party, various Maoist groupings or who could be characterized as something like black nationalists, went along with the union bureaucracy in advocating an end to the boycott and complying with the injunction.

The local executive board voted to end the boycott and voted down my proposal to call a mass, stop-work membership meeting at the pier to make the decision. I called for this because a meeting of a couple of thousand longshoremen at the pier would have amounted to a mass picket line and could well have led to successfully defying the injunction. At any rate, my proposal was voted down. So then, I, along with a number of other militants in the union and supporters from outside the union, attempted to put up a picket line and continue the boycott and defy the injunction. Initially we closed down the pier and stopped the trucks for an hour and the longshoremen did not work. But eventually the Stalinists, the adherents of the Communist Party, helped the cops to break the action by escorting the trucks through the picket line and creating fear among those participants who were not part of the union that they would go to jail for long periods of time for defying the injunction.

1917: Recently there has been an important strike on the waterfront by the Inland Boatman's Union [IBU], an affiliate of the ILWU. I understand you have been active in promoting cooperation between the IBU and the longshore division to stop scabbing. Was there any defiance of injunctions in this strike?

Keylor: Not defiance of an injunction specifically, but there was an invasion of "private property" when the employers took three barges that had been stopped through joint IBU/ILWU action in Oakland to Redwood City and began unloading them with non-longshoremen. This was seen as a direct incursion of longshore jurisdiction, as well as an attempt to weaken and break the IBU strike. All the longshoremen, clerks and walking bosses in the Bay Area then left their jobs and traveled to the pier to protest the scabbing. This was an "illegal" action because, according to federal law, we were violating our contract. In fact, members of the longshore division and the striking boatmen went onto the pier and "illegally" chased off the scabs.

There have been many injunctions in the IBU strike



IBU/ILWU pickets run scabs off at Redwood City, California; March 1987

which have largely strangled it, because they have been adhered to by the leadership of the IBU and the ILWU. The lesson that class-conscious militants in the unions have to constantly hammer home to the membership is that even a minimal defense of the union requires actions that are illegal under some section or sections of federal law. Whether defiance of an injunction, or even the most minimal stop-work action, the Taft-Hartley law makes it all illegal.

1917: Gompers-style "business unionists" argue that unions should concern themselves simply with the wages and working conditions of their members. In the long run the interests of the longshoremen are tied pretty closely to the interests of the class as a whole, including the unemployed. How can this connection be made?

Keylor: One of the problems we ran into in longshore is the parochialism, growing out of the fact that longshoremen, by the nature of their work, even though they are small in numbers, have an unusual economic power. Ports and port facilities can't be moved easily. But the union could not have been formed in the first place or defended against employer attacks, especially in the early decades, without the support of other workers and especially other maritime workers. There is an unusually rich history of this in longshore which has almost been lost, but which the class-struggle militants went back to and used as illustrations.

For example, it is not well known, but in 1934 when scabs were loading ships in San Francisco harbor and some other west coast ports, the longshoremen in Chile, even though they were under a quite repressive government,

refused to handle scab cargo. Longshoremen in Australia and some other countries did the same. That kind of international support was one of the factors that helped win the strike. Of course it was the massive San Francisco general strike and the threat of extending it to the rest of the west coast that finally won the establishment of the longshoremen's union in 1934. Today we call for using the union's full power to organize the unemployed in waterfront areas. That should make a lot of sense to any trade-unionist—it's elementary self-defense.

As for the unemployed, rather than accept a shrinking workforce in longshore, for example, we call for a shorter work shift with no loss in pay to the point where not only all present workers are kept working, but additional workers can be added. This is how the Transitional Program proposes to solve unemployment—by dividing the available work among the available workforce, at no loss in pay.

It is also important to start organizing the unemployed directly by the unions, similar to what was done in the 1930's especially in the mass organizing of auto workers. That's part of the lost history of the labor movement. It would have been a lot harder to organize those auto plants if they hadn't been organizing the unemployed along with them. A lot of the pickets that surrounded and sealed off the auto plants were composed of unemployed auto workers organized in unemployed leagues close to the union.

1917: Historically, the most important single obstacle to class consciousness among white workers in America has been the deeply embedded racism in this country. How can socialists in the unions take up this problem?

Keylor: Socialists first of all have to confront the problem where it exists. Even in the longshore union division racism existed in the form of restrictions against blacks coming into the union in a number of locals. The issue has to be confronted directly in terms of hiring, especially in hiring of blacks, Asians and other minority workers. In the longshore division that battle has been largely won for now. But the overall threat to the union by divisions among workers growing out of racism is a very real one.

Several years ago when a black longshoreman in my local moved into an area of the suburbs that was largely white, he was subject to direct threats and even attacks on his house by the Ku Klux Klan. At that time we Trotskyists fought for a defense guard composed largely of longshoremen to defend that worker's home in conjunction with black community groups. We fought this issue out in the union. We lost the fight but in the process we made some gains in terms of educating workers in the necessity of not depending on the bourgeois state for defense against racist, fascist groups like the Klan.

1917: As I understand it, the union bureaucracy decided to hire private security guards instead.

Keylor: That is correct. The interesting thing is that we won the fight in the sense that the union bureaucrats had to concede that it was not realistic to simply rely on the police to defend this threatened worker. But their solution was to hire private security guards around the clock to protect his home.

1917: Finally, how do you see the possibilities for the creation of a class-struggle current in the unions in the coming period?

Keylor: The potential is great but the difficulty is that in the short run there are not sizeable political groupings in place that can initiate and give rise to indigenous class-struggle formations which can pose a quantitatively significant alternative on a national level. It is not going to happen spontaneously. It didn't happen that way in the high points in North American trade-union history in the past. The obstacles to an alternative class-struggle leadership being built are in some ways even greater today, so that the necessity to bring forward the hard-won lessons of working-class struggle in initiating and building such formations is even more critical.

Part of the reluctance of workers to struggle and to go on the offensive is a lack of confidence in their present leadership. In fact, I wouldn't say part of the reason, I'd say the overwhelming obstacle to a working-class offensive against Reagan is that the union ranks don't trust their leadership to lead them in struggle.

There is among American workers a very profoundly felt hunger and need for labor unity in struggle. This was clearly expressed around the PATCO strike. Many workers have told me, even the most conservative workers, that the only thing that could have saved that strike, and stopped Reagan's union-busting was a nation-wide general strike, or at least regional general strikes where the airports were. That was a very deep-felt need of workers at that time. Unfortunately there were not the political groupings in place within the unions with the will and the authority to have raised those demands in such a way as to force some action. So we saw a defeat.

The key is to build a revolutionary organization with a real, organic connection to the working class. That is why I am a supporter of the Bolshevik Tendency. Because I think the Bolshevik Tendency has learned these lessons best and can show the way to build such formations in the working class. At this point, the question is one of the struggle for political clarity in the construction of the nuclei of the future leadership of the class.

There is today a growing awareness on the part of the more advanced workers that their problems can't be solved on a national basis. I have been surprised at how aware workers are that capitalist interests can move their money around pretty freely from country to country. They recognize that it isn't possible even to wrest lasting gains in this country because the capitalists can always move their money to where the rate of exploitation is higher than it is here.

There is a really deep felt need for international solidarity among workers. We found this was true in longshore when we raised demands for the defense of workers in other countries: South Africa, Chile and others. And when there was a possibility of acting, even in a small and symbolic fashion, to build solidarity with workers internationally, I have found through my own experience on the waterfront that the workers are quite open. And that's why you can remain optimistic about the future. In the last analysis though, it all comes back to the question of available alternatives—the question of the crisis of working-class leadership. ●

Labor Must Clean Its Own House Hands Off The Teamsters!

On 10 June the U.S. Justice Department announced that it is preparing a lawsuit against the 1.7 million member International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) under the infamous Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). The suit is aimed at taking over the union and, if successful, will cost IBT president Jackie Presser his job. This is somewhat ironic, as Presser was head of one of very few unions which openly supported Ronald Reagan's election to the White House. (Another was PATCO—smashed by Reagan in 1981.) In Presser's case, the irony is compounded by last year's revelation that he had been on the government payroll for years as an FBI informant.

The suit is the latest move in an ongoing campaign by the U.S. government to establish tame, housebroken unions that police the workers in the interests of the ruling class. Beginning with the Wagner Act in 1935, continuing with the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 and the Landrum-Griffin Act in 1959, and backed by an endless number of court injunctions and criminal prosecutions, the U.S. government has continually sought to extend the control of the capitalist state over the organized workers movement.

Last March, in what was clearly a dress rehearsal for the RICO attack, the government got a court-ordered takeover of Teamster Local 560 in Union City, New Jersey and appointed Joel Jacobson, a Democratic Party politician and former union bureaucrat, as virtual dictator. The local's leaders, like Anthony (Tony Pro) Provenzano, were widely known to have mob connections. Tony Pro's daughter Josephine "earned" \$71,000 a year as the local's nominal Secretary-Treasurer. This kind of thing made it easy for the Reagan administration's top cop, Ed Meese, and his underlings in the Justice Department, to masquerade as reformers and "friends" of the Teamster rank-and-file, who only wish to "clean up" the union.

For years the reformist left has advocated the tactic of "using" the bosses' government to battle corrupt union bureaucrats. A classic case, widely debated in the left press at the time, was when court-ordered elections supervised by Richard Nixon's Labor Department put Arnold Miller into the presidency of the United Mine Workers in 1972. Virtually every centrist and reformist outfit in the U.S. left lined up to "critically support" Miller in his campaign to replace the corrupt and murderous regime of Tony Boyle. Miller was eventually driven from office in 1977, but not before he demonstrated the logic of his Labor Department candidacy by negotiating two sell-out contracts, and siding continually with the courts and the coal bosses against wildcat strikes by rank-and-file miners.

A witless article in the 22 June *San Francisco Examiner* by Ken Paff, National Organizer of the social-democratic Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), shows that the reformists learned nothing from the UMW experience. Paff cites Miller's election as a positive example and says:



Jackie Presser

"If the Justice Department is going to sue the top IBT officials, using the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, let it be to give the members a chance. The Press has reported a court-ordered trusteeship in which the 18 members of the union's general executive board will be removed and replaced....But it's difficult to see how a trusteeship over the...IBT could be workable....What would inspire Teamsters members is providing them with the right to elect their top officers, a right Teamsters do not now have...."

The first principle of socialist trade unionism is unconditional opposition to *all* government intervention in the workers movement. The government is no neutral mediator standing above the class struggle, it is the instrument of the bosses—their "executive committee." Each time a union leadership knuckles under to a court injunction, each time a government agency runs a union election, the labor movement gives up a bit more of its independence from the capitalists—and therefore its ability to act in the interests of the working class.

Hands off the Teamsters!

Labor must clean its own house!

Down with the Presser Bureaucracy!

For a class-struggle leadership in the IBT!

Communist Tactics in the Trade Unions

Class Struggle On the Waterfront



Keylor (foreground) with students resisting attempt to open Pier 80 for apartheid cargo, March 1986

1917

On July 19 we interviewed Howard Keylor, a longtime trade-union militant on the waterfront in San Francisco. Brother Keylor is on the Executive Board of International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Local 10 (longshore division) and is the editor of *Militant Longshoreman*. Keylor's record of over three decades in the ILWU and his break from Stalinism to Trotskyism give him a unique perspective on the fight for a class-struggle leadership in the American labor movement.

In the 1970's, as a supporter of the then-revolutionary Spartacist League, Keylor played an important role in organizing several small but successful actions on the waterfront in defense of the victims of South African apartheid and the Chilean junta. In the last several years, in addition to playing a leading role in several waterfront strikes,

Keylor initiated two larger and more important actions in solidarity with heroic black workers battling the racist Botha regime. These actions provided a concrete alternative to the liberal moralism prevalent in the campus-based anti-apartheid movement and provide a model of how a communist opposition in the unions should act as the tribune of the oppressed.

1917: Let's start with your history in the ILWU. How did you come into the union?

Keylor: The hard way. I started in 1953 as a casual. That means just picking up extra work by standing around in the

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