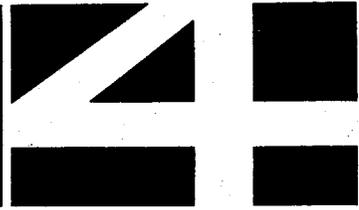


SPARTACIST



NUMBER 40

ENGLISH EDITION

SUMMER 1987

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HONOR BOLSHEVIK LEADERS LENIN, LIEBKNECHT, LUXEMBURG

PAGE 4

For International Class-Struggle Defense!

PAGE 2

The American Question at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International

PAGE 20

Revolution and Counterrevolution in Bolivia Reply to G. Lora, Parrot of Nationalism

PAGE 29

Gore Vidal: Bad Boy of the Bourgeoisie

PAGE 48

For International Class-Struggle Defense!

"The movement for non-partisan, unified working class defense is not only not confined to any one country, but is connected up in a strong ring of solidarity which embraces the entire world. Wherever the class struggle rages, and the capitalist class takes its victims from among the workers and farmers, the movement for labor defense grows up out of the struggle and into an arm for the masses. This movement has already earned its place in the general labor movement, and thruout the world it is joined up into the International Red Aid."

—*Labor Defender*, July 1927

International working-class defense is the cornerstone of the work of the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC), a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal defense organization in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. We take as our heritage the working-class defense policies of the International Labor Defense (ILD) under James P. Cannon, its first secretary from 1925 through 1928.

The ILD was inspired by the International Organization of Relief for Revolutionary Fighters (MOPR) which grew out of a 1922 Soviet appeal for victims of Polish bourgeois terror. Also known as the International Red Aid, MOPR was established by the Comintern to defend and aid revolutionary opponents of capitalism in every land without regard to party or political belief. Discussions in Moscow in 1925 between Cannon and exiled Industrial Workers of the World leader Big Bill Haywood gave birth to the ILD, an independent American defense organization which acted as a section of the International Red Aid. In its early years the ILD supported 106 imprisoned labor organizers, strike leaders and radicals.

The PDC is partisan: we stand unconditionally on the side of working people and their allies in struggle against their exploiters and oppressors. In its partisanship, the PDC is also anti-sectarian. We champion causes and defend cases whose victorious outcome is in the interest of working people, irrespective of particular political views. We place all our faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the "justice" of the courts.

We have called on labor to mobilize to defend their brothers and sisters around the world. The PDC sought to mobilize the powerful International Longshoremen's Association against the execution of African National Congress supporter Benjamin Moloise in 1985 and participated in an emergency demonstration to stop his execution by the racist apartheid butchers. During the PDC-initiated Aid to Striking British Miners' Families, union locals and unionists joined us in raising over \$23,000 for the British coal miners during their bitter 1984-85 strike against Margaret Thatcher's anti-union onslaught. Upon the initiative of PDC supporters, in 1986 three phone union locals sent messages of solidarity to Salvadoran technical workers facing brutal repression after their 51-day strike against Duarte's regime of death squad terror.

Following last fall's French rail strike the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, section of the international Spartacist tendency, was authorized by the strikers to raise funds to assist workers and their families, to which the PDC contributed. For many years, we have fought in defense of the oppressed Sri Lankan Tamils, facing death in Lanka and deportation from refuge in England and Canada. We have also fought to defend Sinhalese workers in Lanka such as women textile workers dismissed from the Magnum plant.

In the U.S. we supported the Hormel, Minnesota meat-packers who faced criminal charges for waging a militant

English Edition

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C. Zimmert

Courageous Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu with friend Judy Zimmert, Israel, January 1986. Vanunu faces death penalty for exposing Israeli nuclear arsenal. Free Mordechai Vanunu!

strike, defying the bosses, the government and the labor cops in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. And we assisted the largely Mexican cannery workers of Watsonville, California who courageously defended their union against Reagan's agribusiness pals.

The PDC seeks to champion causes which can be a beacon for all the oppressed, all decent people internationally. Mordechai Vanunu is such a cause. Vanunu is the courageous Israeli technician who disclosed to the world Israel's arsenal of 100-200 nuclear bombs which are targeted against its Arab neighbors and the Soviet workers state.

The PDC issued a call for an urgent international campaign of protest and publicity for Vanunu, who was kidnapped by Israel's CIA, the Mossad, with the likely complicity of Britain's Margaret Thatcher, and faces the death penalty for treason in Israel. Free Mordechai Vanunu!

In February, the Israeli authorities shut down the Alternative Information Center one week after the AIC organized a demonstration in Jerusalem on behalf of Mordechai Vanunu. Michel Warshawsky, AIC director and member of the United Secretariat-affiliated Revolutionary Communist League, faces charges under the "Prevention of Terrorism Act." Drop the charges against Warshawsky!

As an expression of class solidarity, the PDC has revived the tradition of the early ILD of sending monthly stipends to class-war prisoners. The stipends and letters from outside cement bonds of solidarity with these prisoners of racist capitalist oppression and their return letters are constant reminders to those outside of their duty. Today we continue to send stipends to British miners still in prison for defending their union: Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland.

Also receiving a PDC monthly stipend is Ramona Africa of MOVE, victim of one of the most hideous racist massacres in United States history. Another stipend recipient is former Black Panther leader Geronimo Pratt, America's foremost class-war prisoner. Pratt was framed up after surviving a massive cop/FBI attack on Los Angeles Black Panther Party headquarters, and has spent 17 years in prison for a crime he did not and could not have committed. The PDC was an initiator of a demonstration held in Oakland on February 21 demanding: Freedom Now for Geronimo Pratt! Down with FBI/COINTELPRO Frame-Up! As an example of a genuine labor-centered united front, the demonstration was endorsed by more than 100 individuals and organizations.

The PDC newsletter *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* publishes letters from class-war prisoners and publicizes cases of vital importance to the international workers movement. Monthly PDC columns appearing in *Workers Vanguard* also report on the work of the PDC. We urge *Spartacist* readers to support the work of the PDC. Become a sustaining contributor. Send a donation of \$5 or more and receive a subscription to *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*. For a single copy send \$.75 to: Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. ■

Broué "Replies"

We wish to draw our readers' attention to the following paragraphs which appeared in Cahiers Léon Trotsky No. 28, December 1986 (the translation from the French is by Spartacist). The article which Broué declines to respond to, entitled "Trotskyists in World War Two," appeared in Spartacist No. 38-39 (Summer 1986).

Pierre Broué has asked us to publish these few lines. "Several comrades have asked me why I do not answer in *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* the article by Pierre

Vert in *Spartacist* about my article in No. 23 on 'Trotsky and the Trotskyists During the Second World War.'

"Here is the reason: I can't understand why Vert's critique is directed not against what I wrote but against the intentions that he attributes to me, the direction that he believes that I wish to take, my ulterior motives, etc. Seriously, in writing this article, I had none of the objectives that he ascribes to me and which have nothing to do with this historical work.

"I believe that his idealist and almost religious method of reasoning excludes all possibility of debate, which implies an exchange of ideas, and not an indictment of the *intentions* of his interlocutor."

HONOR

BOLSHEVIK LEADERS



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LENIN, LIEBKNECHT, LUXEMBURG

On January 18, the Spartacist League of the U.S. held a public meeting in the San Francisco Bay Area to pay tribute to the "three L's" of Bolshevism: V.I. Lenin, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Our meeting stood in the early communist tradition of January tributes to these leaders. We print below an edited version of the main presentation, by James Robertson of the SL Central Committee, and of the discussion which followed.

Paintings of the German Spartacus uprising were displayed in the meeting hall as well as historical photographs and enlarged quotations by Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Trotsky and Lenin. There was also a substantial literature display. The meeting began with the reading of greetings from the New York Spartacist League and selected quotations by and about the "three L's." A quotation by Lenin, which appeared on the masthead of the first issue of the *Militant* (15 November 1928), was read right before comrade Robertson's presentation:

"It is necessary that every member of the Party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggles within the Party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot, who can be disposed of with a simple gesture of the hand."

Good afternoon, comrades.

I appreciated the last quote that was read you, from No. 1 of the *Militant*, newspaper of a Trotskyist splinter containing significant cadres and leaders of the American Communist Party. The quotation was so totally appropri-

ate to their attempt to get the attention of the other comrades in the CP that for many, many years I thought Shachtman wrote it himself. Then I was going through Lenin in the course of the trade-union dispute in 1920, and that quote was there. That is an application of what the quotation exhorts you to do.

One more introductory remark. We are not the direct and we are not the indirect continuators of the heroic period of the Third International. Rather we come by way of a generation and a half later, and strongly struggle to function in the spirit, the program and the tradition of the Communist International.

There have been so many murders and so many deaths on this planet—why, 70 years later, would communists, with great legitimacy, seek to remember January 1919 and also January 1924—Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Lenin? Well, there's a certain symbolism: their last names all started with "L" and they all died in a January, and they also are to be taken as representative of all of the communists who have died at their posts. But above and beyond that, as my remarks will mainly center on, these were very important people in a very important context with great masses of working people and others in motion. That's why. But that's very abstract.

I can't resist one more observation. Trotsky says that Lenin was very fond of a quotation by Turgenev to the effect that all reds over 55 ought to be taken out and shot. Now, one hopes he didn't mean that too literally but rather, perhaps, put to pasture. There is a case to be made for that.

I believe that there are two axes which cross. Since the dawn of industrial capitalism there have been three great tightly-condensed-in-time periods of revolutionary distur-

bance. One was associated typically with the year 1848, although there was restlessness from 1847. By 1850 (and only shortly after the largest of the events) comrade Marx gave his analysis of the upheavals through which they had just been—in Engels' case fighting militarily and rather ably—culminating in “the revolution in permanence” [“Address of the Central Authority to the League”]. They pushed it as far as they could and then stepped off into a long, long lull, the Paris Commune aside, ending up in the First World War.

And again, by 1916 a lot of restlessness; 1917, the massive inertia of the tsarist empire was shattered, working people backed by the bulk of the peasantry came to power, and then suddenly you had all the subjective elements come together (this is the Pabloite rendition). The whole thing really did not quite settle down until there was a final revolutionary confrontation in Germany in 1923 which was miscarried, and therefore, in a very orderly and linear way, led to the triumph of Hitler and to the Second World War.

The Second World War by 1943 had led again to a shattering disturbance: upheavals in the Far East with the impending victory of the Chinese Communists and a restlessness in Indochina, upheavals in Italy and Greece, extending up into France, Belgium, attenuated in England to the point that the “triumph of the proletariat” was the election on the Labour Party ticket of the “Little Major” Attlee. In this latter period, there was virtually no existing leadership or would-be leadership with any revolutionary will whatsoever, because through the degeneration that is known as Stalinism, the left wing of the workers parties were quite as reactionary as the social-democratic wings and bent every oar everywhere to quite literally return the masses of guns to the local police stations.

But in the second great revolutionary wave at the end of the First World War there was a different situation obtaining. So one axis is the objective considerations brought on by the economic cycle—economic disasters, militarism, explosion in major wars—mass upheaval, reaction and the striking out by the working people against all that. And

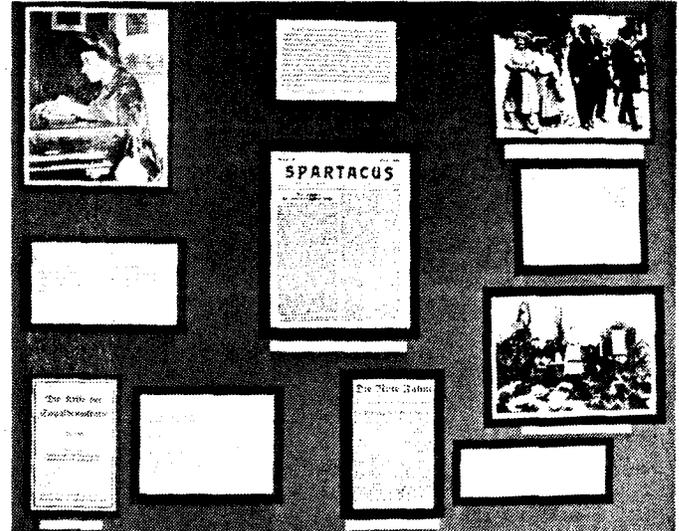
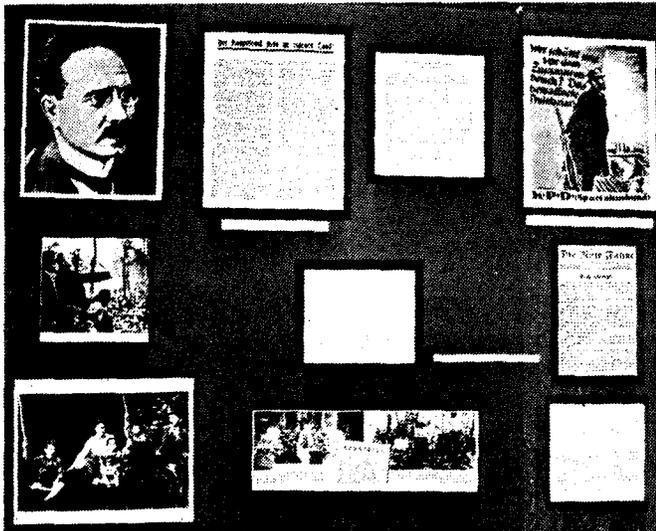
then there's the question of the role of the three L's, symbolically and concretely. If there's any lesson in 150 years of the kind of society that we have now, it is that nothing happens *spontaneously*. There has to be a leadership that has an evolved authority and command among the mass of the working people, not necessarily through victory but through a willingness to struggle and to sacrifice. Georgi Dimitrov was for many years the Labor Secretary of the Bulgarian Narrow Socialist Party which had the overwhelming allegiance of the virtually nonexistent Bulgarian proletariat and great masses of the poor peasants. I believe that he ran 200 strikes and lost 199 of them, or other numbers to that effect. But everyone knew that this little party with a great mass following was fighting for the proletariat and fighting for the landless peasants. (It was also complicated by another factor. All of the ruling classes were pro-Austro-Hungarian and the masses were all pro-Russian, and the Bulgarian party was born in St. Petersburg. That adds a national reinforcing element.)

Revolutionary Leadership

I want to show *in context* some of the power of the individuals—Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht—that we're talking about. You can only speak of a power in context. I hope that those of you who follow left-wing politics closely are aware of a fellow named Mike Banda. He wrote “Twenty Seven Reasons [Why the International Committee Should be Buried Forthwith and the Fourth International Built]” where he presents politics as essentially a conspiracy hung in midair by an assemblage of bad people reacting on worse people, but all named individuals simply floating in the air abstracted from time, place, leadership. Leadership is not a Wohlforthian/Healyite phrase. Leadership is a *testing*, through a complex and time-evolved set of interactions. But for Banda this is the question of a God That Failed—Gerry Healy. I recall a former friend in Germany who Banda lined up to *meet Gerry Healy*. And they were waiting in a car and Mike Banda said: There he is! The Lenin of our time! And my then-friend looked and said: But where, where? I don't see him. Oh, you mean that guy



Workers Vanguard Photos
Spartacist League meeting in Oakland, January 18, paid tribute to three historic leaders of the proletarian fight for socialism.



Workers Vanguard Photos

Displays at Spartacist meeting included photographs and enlarged quotations from each of the "three L's." Karl Liebknecht highlighted (left), Rosa Luxemburg (right).

over there? So, it's one thing when people tell you, but then you have to test it and experience it.

I wanted to give a few quotations, not to show what nice people Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht were but to show some of their strengths and weaknesses. Oddly enough, the selected quotations that I thought showed most power were those of the individual of the "three L's" that I actually know the least about, Karl Liebknecht. I do not believe that there is in English a good biography of him. Some things are known. He's the son of a famous father—which is always difficult—and he made, himself, a very great mark. His father was Wilhelm Liebknecht, one of the co-founders of the German Social Democracy and a great good friend of Karl Marx.

Both Luxemburg and Liebknecht on the day before they were murdered wrote very powerful statements. They are not the same, and they show a continuing weakness on the part of Rosa Luxemburg which, in practice, had been overcome: when she got out of jail just at the very end and became a publicly working leader of the newly founded Communist Party, she made her peace and surrendered many of her criticisms that she expressed in jail toward the Bolshevik Revolution and Lenin.

In fact there was an interesting thing—and this is the sort of material I'd like to impart to you: a man named Ernie Erber who had been a close friend of Shachtman's for a long time resigned from the Workers Party in 1948, and he wrote a 30-page resignation and he quoted a great deal of material by Rosa Luxemburg entirely critical of the Russian Revolution as it then was. It's well worth reading. It is sort of the democratic case (small "d"). Shachtman replied in 119 pages. As a fluent reader of German, he took material from the last couple of months of *Rote Fahne*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Germany, and showed how on all these issues, faced with better information from the Soviet Union and faced with the realities of a developing German revolution, Luxemburg turned right around and saw either the necessities or the justice of the course of the Russian Revolution. And so Shachtman wrapped all these quotations in ten pages each and slammed them back at Ernie Erber. This material is avail-

able for interested comrades [*Bulletin of the Workers Party*, Vol. IV, No. 1, Spring 1949].

Well, here's what Liebknecht said the day before he was murdered, and it's a good title: "Despite Everything!"

"Spartacus is defeated!"

"Yes, indeed, the revolutionary workers of Berlin were beaten. Yes, upwards of a hundred of its best mowed down. Yes, many hundreds of its most loyal thrown in jail....

"Whether or not we are alive when it arrives, our program will live, and it will reign in a world of redeemed humanity. Despite everything!"

Snarl of defiance. And when we pursue some of the other quotes you'll see that there were some differences between Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg—not all one way. Liebknecht was not much of a theoretician but he was very able and very well oriented. He was the founder of the militant, anti-militarist German Social Democratic youth organization. Incidentally, he was very vividly aware of the United States; he was here several times for a number of months working with the left wing of the American Socialist Party.

Here is Karl Liebknecht on the founding of the Communist Party ["Comment on the Resolution"]. This is 30 December 1918, two weeks before they got the chop.

"Comrades, I would like to ask you to approve this resolution, thereby announcing to the world that we are determined to put our lives and bodies on the line to defend the revolution. We will carry through to the end the social revolution, which until now has been betrayed and which has been established by the recent weeks and months as our duty and the historic duty of the German proletariat. Let the world know that class rule, the Eberts and Scheidemanns [those are the Social Democratic leaders], will be defeated; the fainthearted and false friends of the working class, who are retarding the progress of emancipation, will be defeated. The revolution will be made, and it will inspire the world. By the end of this revolutionary period world imperialism, which believes it has been victorious, will be brought down by the united power of the proletariat of the world."

When to Get Out of the Line of Fire

Now, these comrades had targeted what had to be done. Much of the miscarriage, defeat, of that world revolution

“...we can, with full justification, place our work for the Fourth International under the sign of the ‘three L’s,’ that is, under the sign not only of Lenin, but also of Luxemburg and Liebknecht.”

—Leon Trotsky,
“Luxemburg and the
Fourth International,”
24 June 1935

Leon Trotsky in exile in
Prinkipo, Turkey, reading the Militant,
newspaper of the American Trotskyists, 1931.



Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis

lay in their murders. Because if the top leadership is annihilated, the replacements do not measure up, the bonds have been snapped, a fresh team has come in, it's a bit disoriented. I thought it was a little idiosyncratic of Victor Serge in *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*, but he describes a 30-member central committee in Spain of something curiously resembling the POUM, the Party of Marxist Unification. The fascists got some during the uprising, and the Stalinists got the rest. After that another 30 men came in—good cadres, well meaning, provincial, disoriented, lacking audacity, assuredness, capacity to bring out a newspaper, to agitate. And the POUM effectively ceased to be a factor, with its membership and its many connections intact. This is what was done in Germany. And these very sagacious people in Russia that constituted the left wing going into February 1917 banked above all on a German Revolution.

Of course there were mistakes. It would be easy to talk for hours analyzing the defeat of the German Revolution or the missed revolutionary opportunity. That's not really the point. The point is the unusual circumstances of an evolved leadership so that in tsarist Russia a revolution was successful. There have been no lack of revolutionary situations, literally scores of them in the last hundred years. And all the rest have miscarried one way or another, the German simply the most important, the most urgent failure. Bolivia is another case. It's not a very important country, but has a heroic proletariat and the conjunctures were such

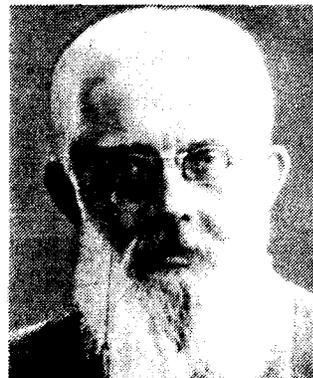
that the working class, however transient its power, could have made a revolution several times, easily.

Here is a typical mistake: Spartacus was *smashed* in Berlin by the Freikorps. With the smell of smoke, blood, gunpowder—Luxemburg and Liebknecht, the leadership, hung around town! It was a major defeat, but only in one central city. The way the German Revolution was defeated was that 15,000 demobilized officers, maniacs from the Baltic and the rest, ran from town to town and smashed the reds—killed them, burned out their offices. It was put down piecemeal. And because they were dealing with a newly fledged communist party with very few members and less experience in this kind of thing, they got away with it. Luxemburg and Liebknecht should have been elsewhere.

A similar sort of thing occurred in July of 1917, when the left wing in the Russian Revolution suffered what turned out to be only a major setback. Lenin, who had the reputation for being the “bearer of German gold,” the “beast,” the “monster” and all the rest, shaved off his beard and hid under a wig in Finland in constant consultation with the Central Committee. Trotsky, who had come over, who visibly “had personally clean hands”—he hadn't expelled everybody several times, and all the rest—stayed in Petrograd and said, “Arrest me if you want to.” But the party remained intact, Lenin was at large, and in the midst of a temporary defeat the government did not dare to arrest Trotsky for several weeks. If Lenin and Trotsky had both been swooped up by the authorities, they would not have

Not only Luxemburg,
Liebknecht but the
entire German
leadership was
destroyed in 1919.
Left: Leo Jogiches—
murdered in March.
Center: Franz Mehring—
died in January.
Right: Eugen Leviné—
executed in June.

Photos: Dietz Verlag Berlin





Dietz Verlag Berlin



Penguin

Lenin went into hiding with false passport (left) after July Days to avoid arrest by Kerensky government. Trotsky continued public activity; seated center with deputies of Petrograd Soviet, 1917 (right).

come out of prison alive. They made a proper division of labor.

Luxemburg and Liebknecht, not having this kind of perspective and not realizing that their enemies' way to consolidate a military defeat of the proletariat is to *kill their leaders*, were easy to pick up. And it didn't stop there in the German Revolution. Jogiches more or less committed suicide by working openly in Berlin; he was arrested and murdered by the police a little later. The old man Mehring died of a broken heart. The leadership, the pre-existing leadership such as it was, of the German proletariat was physically annihilated. The only member of the team that survived was the weakling Paul Levi. So the revolution was beheaded. And after that you have a study in incapacities.

That's just one example, that you have to know when to get out of the line of fire, when to be bold and when to be, in effect, both. And counterrevolutionary defeats are usually consolidated at a time of dispirit and defeat of the mass of the proletariat, when there will be no trouble created by killing the leaders.

When to Split with the Centrists

In order to understand the situation in Germany, you have to start a bit before, in the German Social Democracy. It embraced more or less the whole of the German proletariat, including the landless peasants in the east. By 1917 there had been, of course, a big split in the German Social Democracy. There was the USPD, the Independents. By that time the Spartacus group and a couple of other little groups of the far left who were direct forerunners of the Third International had acquired a separate propagandistic character, publishing little newspapers, but inside the loose framework of the USPD. Now, the top leadership of the USPD were simply the old left wing of the Social Democrats who had gone along with their followers. Two-thirds of the USPD *wanted to be communists*, thought they agreed with what Lenin was doing in Russia, and eventually those two-thirds came over to the Communist Party to make a mass communist party. So it seems more or less impossible, and looks idiotic, for the

German left to walk out on people who say: Why are you walking out? Most of us agree with you! But it was very naive of the left wing not to have split, and by the time they did form the Communist Party it was much too late.

That's the *real* reading of the "sectarian" split in Russia in 1903 between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks, whatever their flaws (and they were numerous), and the Mensheviks, however good they were (and there was much good), made a basic split—at that time only looking like the hards and the softs, which is not a programmatic statement, which is why it was a badly based split. But it evolved, and by the time of the 1905 Revolution, there was a deeply programmatically founded difference. And the would-be revolutionaries, the Bolsheviks, had their own organizational base to work from and, with the lifting of the period of reaction, they had several years in which to build up a large press, a large following in general, and in particular in some of the crucial industrial plants in St. Petersburg and textile around Moscow. I believe, by 1914, when the war came, that of the 14 workers' deputies in the Duma they had six and the Mensheviks had seven. What was important was that a majority of the Menshevik deputies came, for some weird reason, from the Georgian peasantry of the Caucasus. It was hardly the centrality of the proletariat. The only proletariat down there was in Baku, the oil fields, and those were Bolshevik.

A leadership is an evolved, a real relationship, and it *takes a while*. The German revolutionists were killed and it wasn't just the German Revolution that was beheaded. The success of the Bolsheviks in Moscow and Petersburg had not only given the German leadership an example, but also caused them to restudy. So they were on a converging course with the Bolsheviks around the issue of the founding of the Third International, the creation of a new International and the building of a party of a Bolshevik kind, overcoming the old organizational basis for the Menshevik/Bolshevik split. The main debate in 1903 was: what is a party member? Is a party member someone who agrees with the program, who, when possible, materially aids the party and, when practicable, lends one's own body for assistance? No, that's a Menshevik. A Bolshevik is some-

body who is a regular member of a local party organization, who comes regularly to local meetings so that they *may be mobilized if necessary*. That is discipline. That is the only different element; there was very little other formulation of programmatic difference in 1903. But there was a gulf psychologically that crystallized in counterposed programs.

Although I have to tell you that, as far as I know, to this day no professed Menshevik has ever thought of himself or herself as a counterrevolutionist. They think of themselves as sincere socialists. But once they were wiped off their base in Russia they found it necessary to capitulate. They capitulated to Lenin, a few, and went into the Soviet government. They capitulated to the White Guards where the Whites were in power. Later, there was still a trickle that capitulated to the Stalinists. And many of them, if they found themselves abroad, capitulated to particular imperialist bourgeoisies. So capitulation's the mark; but if you ask them privately and personally what they really think—why, they're real hotshot, militant Marxist socialists. It's just that they capitulate.

And that raises another methodological question. What we know today about these old battles is the received wisdom of the communists, and the communists by and large have won or were smashed—one or the other. Where they were smashed they look kind of heroic, and who wants to jump on the communists of Bulgaria? Or where they won you have typically what I call the Komsomol mentality: Oh, those Mensheviks! I can't understand how they could say a single thing that they did! Why, they must have felt so disgusting, they must have felt like lepers who wanted to crawl out of their own skins! But if you go back and read both sides at the time, the Mensheviks made a lot of good sense—and in many respects they were quite superior to the Bolsheviks. But not on the fundamental and decisive things that counted. So we have a lot of ignorant communists because they are operating on received, one-sided and partial wisdom. It does not prepare you for battles and disputes which come *ahead* if you cannot relate what is happening to us to what happened yesterday; it introduces disorientation. And that's very common.

Leadership in Context

I want to read several more quotes to give some flavor of why these people are very important. But not in isolation,



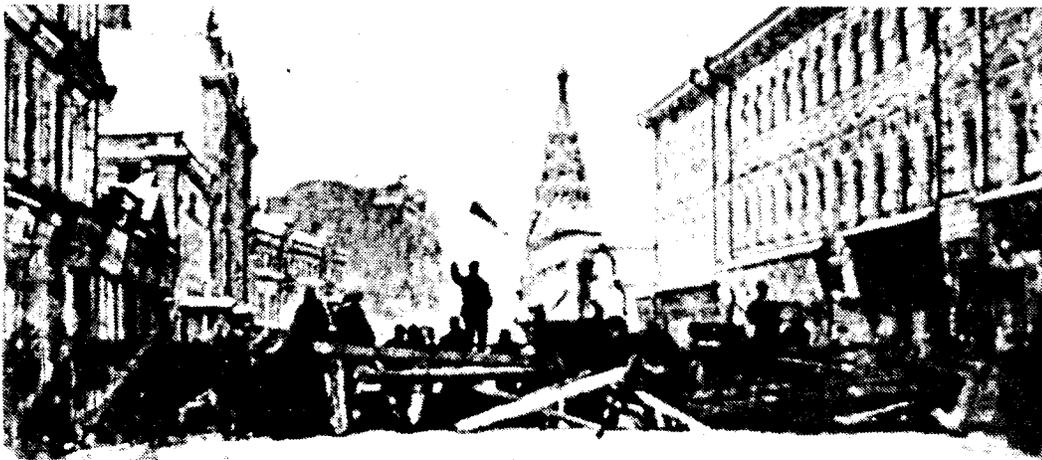
Planeta

Vilna, Poland, 1905. In demonstration of proletarian internationalism, Russian and Polish Social Democrats and Bundists honor victims of October pogrom.

not in the Banda sense of the pantheon of Norse gods who have nothing to do with the earth or its inhabitants, but the sky lights up with lightning bolts and thunder when the gods are having it out. Except Mike Banda says: Furthermore, the gods all steal, they lie, they do everything that you find out gods are up to. They have no relationship to us, they're just these great figures who turn out to be empty.

In a November 1918 article ["The New 'Civil Peace'"], Karl Liebknecht addressed the issue of unity. It had been necessary for the communists to have *split* organizationally long before and to have engaged in unity through united fronts. But now the unity-mongers were saying: the war is over, let's get the Social Democrats and the Independents and you hotheaded extremists all back together in one party and it will be just like before World War I. Liebknecht wrote:

"We strive to combine forces that pull in the same direction. The current apostles of unity, like the unity preachers during the war, strive to unite opposing forces in order



Schocken Books

Moscow, 1905: Barricades on the Arbat during Russian Revolution.



Dietz Verlag Berlin

Liebknecht addressing Berlin workers, 5 January 1919, before he and Luxemburg were murdered at instigation of Social Democrats.

Liebknecht's famous pamphlet directed against capitalist militarism.

Militarismus und Antimilitarismus

unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der internationalen Jugendbewegung

—
Dr. Karl Liebknecht



Leipzig 1907
Leipziger Buchverlag Rößner-Gesellschaft

The toiling masses are the prime movers of social revolution. Clear class consciousness, clear recognition of their historic tasks, a clear will to achieve them, and unerring effectiveness—these are the attributes without which they will not be able to complete their work. Today more than ever the task is to clear away the unity smokescreen, expose half measures and halfheartedness, and unmask all false friends of the working class. Clarity can arise only out of pitiless criticism, unity only out of clarity, and the strength to create the new socialist world only out of unity in spirit, goals, and purpose.

—Karl Liebknecht,
"The New 'Civil Peace',"
19 November 1918

to obstruct and deflect the radical forces of the revolution. Politics is action. Working together in action presupposes unity on means and ends. Whoever agrees with us on means and ends is for us a welcome comrade in battle. Unity in thought and attitude, in aspiration and action, that is the only real unity. Unity in words is an illusion, self-deception, or a fraud. The revolution has hardly begun, and the apostles of unity already want to liquidate it. They want to steer the movement onto 'peaceful paths' to save capitalist society. They want to hypnotize the proletariat with the catchword of unity.... They lash out at us because we frustrate these plans, because we are truly serious about the liberation of the working class and the world socialist revolution....

"Unity with them would mean ruin for the proletariat. It would mean renouncing socialism and the International. They are not fit for a fraternal handshake. They should be met not with unity, but with battle."

Liebknecht is a pretty hard guy; in this not very different from Trotsky. Somewhat different from Luxemburg, although she was being pulled in by the force of events. In

the quotations that the other comrades read, you notice that she sheers off: "I was, I am, I shall be." That's your final statement the day before you're murdered? Very subjective and narrow. Liebknecht was talking about unity and "our program will triumph," and not enough has been said about him.

This is a quote from the 1916 May Day manifesto, for which Liebknecht got thrown in jail and could have been killed:

"Consider well this fact: As long as the German people does not arise and use force directed by its own will, the assassination of the people will continue. Let thousands of voices shout 'Down with the shameless extermination of nations! Down with those responsible for these crimes! Our enemy is not the English, French, nor Russian people but the great German landed proprietors, the German capitalists and their executive committee.'"

He was a very clear-eyed man. This was during the war, in downtown Berlin. He marched out wearing his soldier's

uniform. He didn't just say "Down with the war!" He knew *what* war to demand "Down with."

Here is a call for a new International ["A New Year's Greeting to England"] in December 1914, one or two months after Lenin called for the same thing:

"The world war which has smashed the International must, however, be realized as a powerful sermon making clear the need for a new International, an International of another kind, with a different force from that which the capitalist powers so easily scattered on August 4, 1914."

I'm dwelling on Liebknecht because so little is known about him, because he was not a theoretician, he was a good propagandist and an outstanding activist. These quotes [from *Militarism and Anti-Militarism*] are very early:

"The proletariat knows that the fatherland, for which it must fight, is not its fatherland, that in every country it has only one real foe—the capitalist class which oppresses and exploits it. It knows that all national interests give precedence to the common interests of the international proletariat, and that the international coalition of the exploiters and enslavers must be opposed by the international coalition of the exploited and the enslaved."

This is only 1907, this is what he was telling the kids in Germany:

"Anti-militarist propaganda must be cast over the whole nation like a wide net. The proletarian youth must be systematically imbued with class-consciousness and with hatred of militarism. This kind of agitation would warm the hearts and rouse the youthful enthusiasm of the young proletarians. The proletarian youth belongs to Social Democracy, to Social-Democratic anti-militarism. It must, and will, be won over if everyone does his duty. *He who has the youth has the army.*"

Now, unfortunately, in many countries there were very small Communist youth groups in 1921 who read this and said: That's it—off to the proletarian youth. But these youth were in nations which didn't have four or five million of their class-conscious fathers at least voting for the social-democratic parties; so you get in turn this disjuncture which stays with us to this day in youth organizations when you have a small propagandistic youth. We must understand that comrade Liebknecht was speaking from the basis of a mass social-democratic party. But this is what he said.

And then I have a few quotes from Lenin. This is Lenin's

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Karl Liebknecht in army uniform. He was in army dress when arrested for speaking out against World War I in May 1916.

"Addition to the Letter of 24 December 1922" [*Collected Works*, Vol. 36]. It's identical, insofar as translation from Russian to English can permit identity, with the version that Trotsky had in his papers.

"Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary-General. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance."

That's the core of the Lenin testament.



W.W. Norton



Dietz Verlag Berlin

German Revolution 1918-1919: Workers heroically fought Freikorps troops (left). But revolution was beheaded and defeated. Murdered revolutionaries (above).

Our tactics: no trust in and no support of the new government; Kerensky is especially suspect; arming of the proletariat is the only guarantee; immediate elections to the Petrograd City Council; no rapprochement with other parties. Telegraph this to Petrograd.

Ulyanov

—V.I. Lenin,
"Telegram to the Bolsheviks
Leaving for Russia,"
19 March 1917



P. Volkov

Petrograd, 1917: Lenin defends his April Theses.



Novosti

Red soldiers in 1917 Moscow demonstration. Banner says "Communism."

This has to do with consciousness [from "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," October 1921]:

"... the millions who are thinking about the causes of the recent war and of the approaching future war are more and more clearly realising the grim and inexorable truth that it is impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist peace... which inevitably engenders imperialist war, that it is impossible to escape that inferno, *except by a Bolshevik struggle and a Bolshevik revolution.*"

March 1917: Stalin's Menshevism

"In so far as the Provisional Government fortifies the steps of the revolution, to that extent we must support it; but in so far as it is counter-revolutionary, support to the Provisional Government is not permissible."

—J.V. Stalin,
29 March 1917

And Trotsky would have added, to put point to it: And a Bolshevik leadership.

In March of 1917, after the February Revolution, Lenin wrote a farewell to the Swiss workers. Here is just a paragraph:

"Single-handed, the Russian proletariat cannot bring the socialist revolution to a *victorious conclusion*. But it can give the Russian revolution a mighty sweep that would create the most favourable conditions for a socialist revolution, and would, in a sense, *start* it. It can facilitate the rise of a situation in which its *chief*, its most trustworthy and most reliable collaborator, the *European and American socialist proletariat*, could join the decisive battles."

Here's another bit of clarity from the same letter, as compared to the Junius pamphlet of Luxemburg:

"When, in November 1914, our Party put forward the slogan: 'Turn the imperialist war into a civil war' of the oppressed against the oppressors..."

It's nice to date that. He understood when. And Liebknecht said very close to the same thing: "*Der Hauptfeind steht im eigenen Land!*" The main enemy is at home.

The first thing that I ever read by Luxemburg was a little book of her letters to Sophie Liebknecht. They went something like this: "Dear Sophie—they let me out in the yard of the prison yesterday and I saw a little blue bird against the blue sky and a little cloud came by, and I felt real sensitive, don't you?" And I thought this was not too good. But she wrote some very powerful material. The attack on

Bernstein, *Reform or Revolution*, is a decisive theoretical work. Much of her work on economics is very good. A lot of *Introduction to Economics* was destroyed when her apartment was wrecked after she was murdered, but the first chapter was saved and later published as "What Is Economics?" I just came across a quote in which Luxemburg (probably in another letter because it's not the sort of thing she would otherwise write) said: You know, I sure got tired of writing Karl's wife in prison because the stuff I had to write was so sensitive; it was Sophie's nature; but she did write me, and I was in prison, so I did it. That made me feel a lot better about the woman!

The principal biographer of Rosa Luxemburg was a man named Peter Netti. He wrote a nice big, two-volume biography of Rosa Luxemburg. I read it, and have some quarrels with it here and there but not about its intentions. In 1945 when Peter Netti was stationed in north Germany, he came across a captured German who said to him: Why do you have me in a military prison? I should be on full rations, I should have my freedom. Don't you understand I'm the man who personally organized the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht? You should be so grateful to me. I went to one of their mass meetings, I decided these were dangerous people, their followers had been defeated temporarily in this town; so I went to some officers that I knew and I made all the arrangements and I had them killed. Since Peter Netti was already pretty much of a red, I would like to think that the next year or so of this assassin's life was very unpleasant.

Prerequisites for Revolution

I've explained the necessary intersection of the cross hairs: the vast objective process of these successive revolutionary upheavals, which are made or broken depending on their prehistory—whether a committed, programmatically sound *leadership* of sections of the proletariat in

various countries stands at the head of the masses moving into such a revolutionary period; or whether it doesn't, and instead there is a bunch of social democrats and Stalinists or nationalists of some kind.

For the revolutionary movement, 1919 was the period of the greatest triumph and the greatest desperation. The Russian Revolution had been made, but the country was being pounded: the White Guards were at their maximum power and the area controlled by the Revolution at its minimum. The revolutionary party in Germany, an extremely important country, had just been shattered at the top. Yet the revolutionary party was intact in Russia, the country of victory; Lenin and Trotsky were at their best and were able to lead in the founding of the Third International.

It's very important that the German leadership and others around the world were heading toward a common international team, a revolutionary leadership in the Communist International. But most of them were chopped one way or another. So that one had, through the strength of the Russian Revolution and its material resources, something called the Executive Committee of the Communist International, which Zinoviev liked to call the General Staff of the World Revolution—but it *wasn't*. It was a bunch of Russians and essentially some hangers-on and a few isolated, able individuals, because the other great national section had had its leadership smashed, undercutting the possibility of a genuine international executive committee. It wasn't because Stalin was a mean man or something. It became *objectively* subordinated to the Russian state, and there were no independent forces. I do not claim that if there had been *simply* a German leadership component in the ECCI without a German workers state, that it would have retarded Stalin more than about three months and led to more than an additional 50,000 members of the Opposition. This is not however unimportant. Furthermore, if they had not been beheaded, the outcome in the final stage of the German Revolution in 1923 might

Y. Shteinberg



1919, year of greatest triumph and greatest desperation. Delegates at the founding of the Communist International, March 1919. On wall at left, picture of murdered Liebknecht, draped in black.

have been a different kettle of fish entirely. You wouldn't have had poor Brandler hanging around Moscow asking what to do.

So one ends up with a contradiction. Either you have a sort of anarcho-syndicalist bias that leaderships are all fakes, they're all swindlers, they're all liars, they have no relationship to struggle. Or, alternatively, leadership, disembodied, floating in the sky, having no relationship to masses or struggle, is everything. Both of these are lies.

Therefore, for example, I want to differ with those who say that though millions of communists may die the revolution will go ahead. I've got to ask, which communists? If you knock out all the infrastructure, no way, for a generation. These things *do* regenerate, new layers come up through new battles. But then it has to be done all over again, and the particular revolutionary opportunity is wrecked. I think it was Trotsky who said that in a few days, or at most a few weeks, you have this discharge of lightning of revolution which may well not recur in a given area for a generation. So time is of the essence.

Discussion:

Jonas: On the importance of the defeat of the German Revolution to the degeneration of the Soviet workers state and on the importance of that defeat to the prospect of the world revolution in general, there is some interesting material in a book which the SWP, of all people, has published. It is *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power*.

The book contains a very interesting article by Karl Radek ["Our Isolation Has Ended," 1925] where he talks about what he saw when the Bolsheviks and the Russian workers were under the impression that the German Revolution under the leadership of Luxemburg and Liebknecht was triumphing. He talks about how Sverdlov gave him and Béla Kun the assignment to put out a leaflet at four in

the morning telling about the fall of the monarchy and the empire in Germany, and that there was a demonstration of the Russian workers. What impressed me about it was how deeply the Russian workers were imbued with the understanding of the need of the German Revolution. Radek says:

"From every corner of the city demonstrations were marching toward the Moscow soviet. From the balcony at the soviet we looked onto a sea of heads that came in waves from Strastnaya Square and Mokhovaya Street. Suddenly there was shouting that grew like a hurricane. A car was slowly moving through the crowd. We realized that Ilyich, unable to stay any longer in the Kremlin, had come out for the first time since he had been wounded [by the SR Fanya Kaplan]. Kun and I went running up to him. His face showed excitement and at the same time he seemed profoundly worried."

Parenthetically, he was worried because the Anglo-French and American imperialists were going to be freed up, he was afraid, to crush the Soviet Republic because the German imperialists were out of the war.

"When Ilyich appeared on the balcony tens of thousands of workers burst into cheers.

"I have never seen such a sight. Workers, both men and women, and Red Army soldiers filed past until late evening. The world revolution had arrived. The masses of people were listening to its iron step. Our isolation had ended."

So they hoped and thought. It gives an idea of what the German Revolution *would have* meant.

Another point which, I think, is toward young people who are getting interested in our party. Presumably you've all been through the discussion of: How come you Spartacists argue your positions so hard against all these other groups? I wanted to say something about the death of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. First of all, their murder led, after the defeat of the 1923 Revolution, to Hitler—not inevitably, but directly. I think comrade Robertson pointed that out. And the Freikorps used the swastika as one of their symbols.

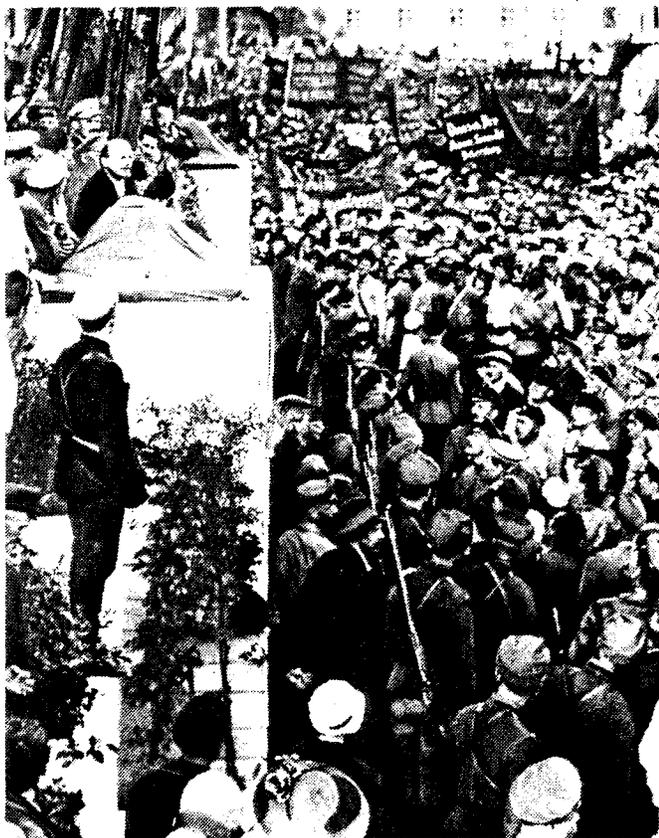
But the main point is that the social democrats that you see on the campus or encrusted in the trade-union bureaucracy or pushing the Contadora so-called "peace" pro-

1918-1919 Berlin

Spartacus 1918-1919
Tempera
Fritz Brosius, 1938



Paintings are displayed in New York
Spartacist local hall.



V.K. Bulla

Lenin lays foundation stone for monument to Liebknecht, Luxemburg and the heroes of the Paris Commune. Petrograd, July 1920.

cess, are the direct linear descendants of the people who murdered our comrades Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. And that, too, the youth has got to never forget—who killed those comrades.

Robertson: If you want to sound like a raving sectarian, you can get into a big argument about the date that the Russian Revolution degenerated. And that sounds on the face of it scholastic. I'd like to explain why it's not.

In January of 1924, there was a party conference. The Trotskyist left wing had been quite strong in the party organizations; they had perhaps 20 to 30 percent of the party. But by then the party administration was in the hands of some other people, a triumvirate. And as a way of this incipient bureaucracy shaking its fist at the party, the triumvirate rigged the elections so that the left wing got only three delegates out of 128. The message was clear: it doesn't matter what you think. And from that date forward, the people who ruled Russia, the way that Russia was ruled, and the purposes that Russia was ruled for, were all different, even though there were all kinds of fossilized remains and fragments of the way it had been.

Now, Deutscher dates the decisive going over from Bolshevik rule to the defeat of the United Opposition in 1927. Left Social Revolutionaries or anarchists would date it earlier. With the introduction of the New Economic Policy, and the end of the civil war in 1920, all of the vital forces that were for the revolution were found in the Communist Party, and this left little living space for the soviets because they were no longer a wide-ranging, big, super united front of all those well-meaning people who were on the side of the revolution. As soon as they found out what the revolution was really about and saw the bloody civil war, they either became Communists, dropped out of politics, or went over to the Whites. That didn't leave in life much room for soviets. So a formal democrat would say, well, when the soviets went, you just had a one-party regime, that's it.

But the real substance, the real change, came in early 1924. In late 1923, *Pravda* was thrown open for the last time. There was a free, open debate. That's when Trotsky wrote *The New Course*, and there was a huge outpouring, a thousand flowers grew. Then the party managers who'd become ossified closed the pages of *Pravda*, acquired a certain kind of consciousness, and by one year later had promulgated the doctrine of "socialism in one country" upon which Russia was run.

So that's why it's important. It's sort of like saying: Why argue about when Hitler took power? I mean, maybe he took power when he got appointed chancellor in 1933, or



maybe when he passed some important laws in 1936. No, it's quite important to know—in this case when to leave!

I can't stress too strongly the question of the missed German Revolution of 1923. This is not a question simply for party strategists in the Kremlin or the Lux Hotel. The whole of the Russian masses knew that they had been through a grinding civil war, that there were enormous shortages, that Germany was a great advanced country. They could all taste the exchange of German manufactured goods for their own wheat and other raw materials. There was vast excitement. There was not enough paper pulp in Russia for many newspapers, so they had wall posters in the factories and elsewhere; people clustered around. The revolution in Germany—it was a *literal, immediate, life-and-death*, felt question. And then the bottom fell out in the summer of 1923. By the beginning of 1924, a consolidation had taken place: Well, comrades, I guess we're *alone*. And immediately that brought other forces and other sides into a crystallization. All of this hangs together.

Foster: Had 1923 turned out successful for the proletariat, I assure you we would probably all speak better German and Russian in this room.

I have two quotes I like of Lenin's from "*Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*." One is:

"Would it not be better if the salutations addressed to the Soviets and the Bolsheviks were *more frequently* accompanied by a *profound analysis* of the reasons *why* the Bolsheviks have been able to build up the discipline needed by the revolutionary proletariat?"

And that's partly what these talks are for. And he went on to note that the Bolsheviks

"... went through fifteen years of... rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement—legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms. In no other country has there been concentrated, in so brief a period, such a wealth of forms, shades, and methods of struggle of *all* classes of modern society, a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the severity of the tsarist yoke, matured with exceptional rapidity, and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the appropriate 'last word' of American and European political experience."



Workers Vanguard

Demonstration in New York City, September 1981. SL upholds tradition of early Polish Communism against counterrevolutionary Solidarność.

The 1905 Revolution, which did not culminate in the proletariat seizing power, nonetheless, because the Bolsheviks were able to come through it intact as a leadership, was a valuable and essential dress rehearsal for 1917. If the split in 1903 was on what a member was, by the end of 1905 it had become very clear; because the Bolsheviks in that period attempted to carry that revolution as far as it could go, culminating in the Moscow insurrection. When 1917 came it was easier.

In 1918-1919, the communists lost Liebknecht and Luxemburg. When 1923 came, they really had a second-rate leadership that could not make the turn and see when to make the move to struggle for workers power. So this small question of when to know when to leave town can have very big historical consequences.

Kelsey: This is really more in the nature of an announcement and an appeal. As most of you know, the Partisan Defense Committee and the Labor Black League for Social Defense are building a demonstration calling for "Freedom Now for Geronimo Pratt! Down with Meese/FBI COINTELPRO Frame-Up!" Despite 17 years in prison, Geronimo Pratt remains unbroken in his commitment to the fight for black liberation. He remains in prison for that reason. Many other former Black Panthers were simply murdered by the FBI in the late '60s and early '70s. Geronimo Pratt remains committed to his principles. He's appealing now in Federal Court for a new trial. So we're appealing for a demonstration February 21 in Oakland City Hall Plaza Park, and we want to urge everyone to get involved in the building for that event.

Robertson: Actually, I have a polemical comment on that. Somebody who is rather politically distant from us told us: You know, I'd like to give you a fair bit of money for the Partisan Defense Committee—there's one thing, though, you're not going to use any of it on the MOVE people. So we thought about it, and I'd like to offer the following proposition for consideration by the PDC: Sometimes we make special and urgent appeals, as during the British miners strike, and we're very careful to segregate that money with special receipts and make sure that every dime goes to the British miners. That's a positive appeal. I don't think the reverse is true. If you donate to the Partisan Defense Committee, I don't think we accept donations earmarked that you can't use them for Negroes or Mexicans or anybody else. I'd like to put in our newsletter that we're not going to practice that kind of discrimination. If the Partisan Defense Committee, in accordance with its understanding of legal defense and Marxism, finds a case falls within its central political component, we're not going to be dependent on people whose program or prejudices are going to control our purses.

Alexander: Since they made Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday, we've been bombarded with a lot of liberal pacifist pabulum with regard to the questions of war and peace, racist terror in this country. One of the things that immediately comes to mind when you think about this communist tradition that we stand in, is that there really is not much new. The program that guided Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg is the same program that guides us, that is, the program of class war of the working people against the bourgeoisie, which is the only way out. And that's the spirit that we struggle in because we have been the

Rosa Luxemburg:

“All Power to the Workers and Soldiers Councils!”

Lenin's *State and Revolution* was decisively tested in the Russian October and again in the German Revolution. Those modern Mensheviks who quote Luxemburg's criticisms of the Bolsheviks for failing to call new elections to the Constituent Assembly (interim criticisms made in her prison writings on the basis of incomplete information and never published in her lifetime) avoid quoting from her writings after she was released from prison in November 1918 in the midst of the German Revolution.

The German workers had thrown out the Hohenzollern monarchy and created their own “Soviets”—Workers and Soldiers Councils—just as the Russian workers had. The German Mensheviks, Social Democratic leaders Scheidemann, Noske, Ebert et al., were attempting to derail the socialist revolution and smash the Councils by championing the bourgeois National Assembly—the equivalent of the Russian Constituent Assembly. Kautsky and Haase, the centrists, oscillated between the Councils and the Assembly.

Here the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat vs. the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie was posed again in the concrete and Luxemburg did not hesitate to fight for all power to the Workers and Soldiers Councils. Of course

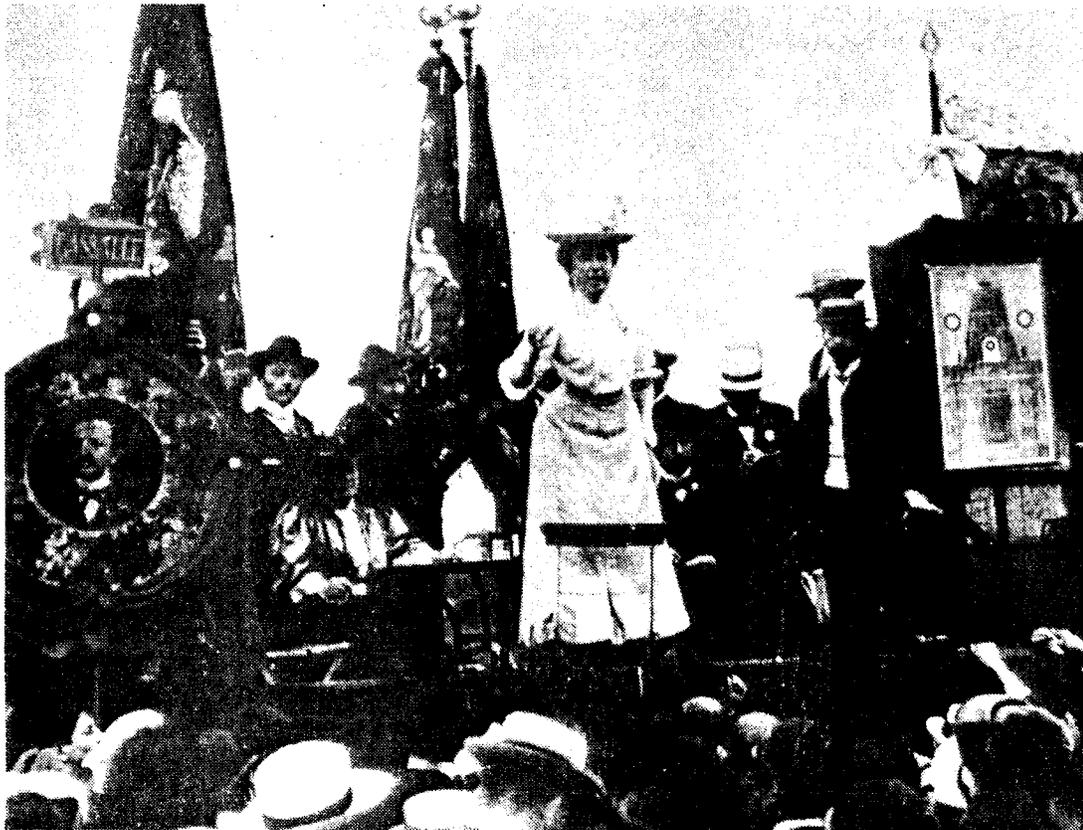
Kautsky, and following him Leonard Schapiro and other able anti-communist propagandists, sought to obscure the central question—“which class will prevail?”—by counterposing a spurious, classless “democracy” to proletarian rule.

We have taken the following quotations from Max Shachtman's “Under the Banner of Marxism,” his reply to Ernest Erber's resignation from the Workers Party (*Bulletin of the Workers Party*, Vol. IV, No. 1, Spring 1949). We have used Shachtman's translation but changed the italicization and paragraphing to correspond to the German version from Luxemburg's *Collected Works*. In one case Shachtman's citation from *Die Rote Fahne* was incorrect and we have changed it to the correct citation according to the *Collected Works*.

Here is what Rosa Luxemburg wrote about Haase and Kautsky, leaders of the Independent Socialist Party:

“Their actual mission as partner in the firm of Scheidemann-Ebert is: to mystify its clear and unambiguous character as defense guard of bourgeois class domination by means of a system of equivocation and cowardliness.

“This role of Haase and colleagues finds its most classical



Dietz Verlag Berlin

Rosa Luxemburg denounces German imperialism at rally in 1907.

№r. 34 — 54. Jahrgang 1918 Donnerstag, 18. Dezember 1918 Preis 10 Tpf.

Die Rote Fahne

Zentralorgan des Spartakusbundes

Schriftleitung: Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg

Verlag Kurt Desch

19. Dezember.

2 gr. öffentl. Frauenversammlungen.
Freitag, den 20. Dezember, abends 8 Uhr.
Charlottenburg, Volkshaus, Hofmeisterstraße 3.
Kordhofen, Brauerei Bölow, Breglauer Allee.

Tagesordnung:
1. Die Frauen und die Revolution.
2. Diskussion.

Ref.: Genosse Haberland, Genossin Regina Huben.
 Genossinnen, erachtet in Massen.

Masthead of Spartakusbund (and later Communist Party) newspaper, Die Rote Fahne (Red Flag).

expression in their attitude toward the most important slogan of the day: toward the *National Assembly*.

“Only two standpoints are possible in this question, as in all others. Either you want the National Assembly as a means of swindling the proletariat out of its power, to paralyze its class energy, to dissolve its socialist goal into thin air. Or else you want to place all the power into the hands of the proletariat, to unfold the revolution that has begun into a tremendous class struggle for the socialist social order, and toward this end, to establish the political rule of the great mass of the toilers, the dictatorship of the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils. For or against socialism, against or for the National Assembly: there is no third way.”

—“Party Conference of the Independent SP,”
Die Rote Fahne, 29 November 1918

Luxemburg clearly characterizes the National Assembly:

“The Revolution has begun....

“From the goal of the revolution follows clearly its path, from its task follows the method. *All power into the hands of the masses, into the hands of the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils, protection of the work of the revolution from its lurking foes:* this is the guiding line for all the measures of the revolutionary government....

“[But] what is the present revolutionary government [i.e., Scheidemann & Co.] doing?

“It calmly continues to leave the state as an administrative organism from top to bottom in the hands of yesterday’s guards of Hohenzollern absolutism and tomorrow’s tools of the counterrevolution.

“It is convoking the Constituent Assembly, and therewith it is creating a bourgeois counterweight against the Workers’ and Peasants’ representation, therewith switching the revolution on to the rails of the bourgeois revolution, conjuring away the socialist goals of the revolution....”

—“The Beginning,” *Die Rote Fahne*, 18 November 1918

“From the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, the *Vossische*, and the *Vorwärts* to the *Freiheit* of the Independents, from Reventlow, Erzberger, Scheidemann to Haase and Kautsky, there sounds the unanimous call for the National Assembly and equally unanimous outcry of fear of the idea: Power into the hands of the working class.

“The ‘people’ as a whole, the ‘nation’ as a whole, should be summoned to decide on the further fate of the revolution by majority decision.

“With the open and concealed agents of the ruling class, this slogan is natural. With keepers of the capitalist class barriers, we discuss neither *in* the National Assembly nor *about* the National Assembly....

“Without the conscious will and the conscious act of the majority of the proletariat—no socialism. To sharpen this consciousness, to steel this will, to organize this act, a class organ is necessary, the national parliament of the proletarians of town and country.

“The convocation of such a workers’ representation in place of the traditional National Assembly of the bourgeois revolutions is already, by itself, an act of the class struggle, a break with the historical past of bourgeois society, a powerful means of arousing the proletarian popular masses, a first open, blunt declaration of war against capitalism.

“No evasions, no ambiguities—the die must be cast. Parliamentary cretinism was yesterday a weakness, is today an equivocation, will tomorrow be a betrayal of socialism.”

—“The National Assembly,” *Die Rote Fahne*,
 20 November 1918 ■

Kautsky: For the German Empire

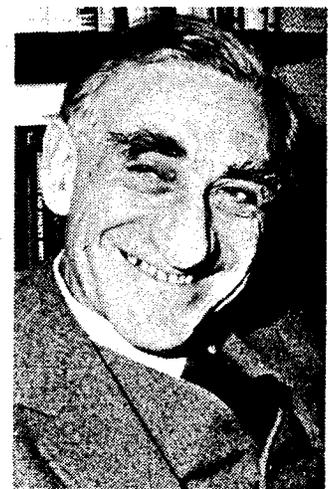
“The one and only institution at the present moment that might to some extent keep the Empire together can come, not through Workmen’s Councils, nor through a dictatorial government, but only through a National Assembly, consisting of representatives from all parts of the Empire.”

—Karl Kautsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 1919

From November 1918 to February 1919, Kautsky chaired the “Commission for Socialization” of the German government which had on its hands the blood of countless German revolutionaries including Luxemburg and Liebknecht.



Verlag Kurt Desch



London School of Economics

Karl Kautsky (above left) and Leonard Schapiro. Both hated communism.

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MARXISM

The American Question at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International

Spartacist is pleased to publish here, for the first time to our knowledge, a short but key document from the early period of the American Communist Party, "The American Question." It was written at the behest of Leon Trotsky during the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (CI) in 1922 and signed by Max Bedacht, Arne Swabeck and James P. Cannon. The English translation is by *Spartacist*.

James Cannon was a central leader of the American Communist Party in the 1920s, when he made at least four trips to Moscow as a delegate to the CI. It was in Moscow at the Sixth CI Congress in 1928 that Cannon became a supporter of Trotsky's struggle against the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution. Expelled from the Communist Party, Cannon and his collaborators Max Shachtman, Martin Abern and Arne Swabeck were able to win almost one hundred other supporters for Trotsky from the CP. Cannon was the principal leader of U.S. Trotskyism until the early 1950s when he retired from day-to-day administration of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party.

In 1954, Cannon began a correspondence with the historian Theodore Draper, then at work on his history of the

early Communist Party. (Draper's books, *The Roots of American Communism* and *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, remain the best histories of the CP of this period.) In a 10 May 1954 letter to Draper which we print below, Cannon describes how "The American Question" was central in winning the CI's support for the "liquidators" faction, which fought for an open, legal communist party against those who wanted to keep the party underground as a principle. Cannon wrote that he "would give a good deal today for the original of that document."

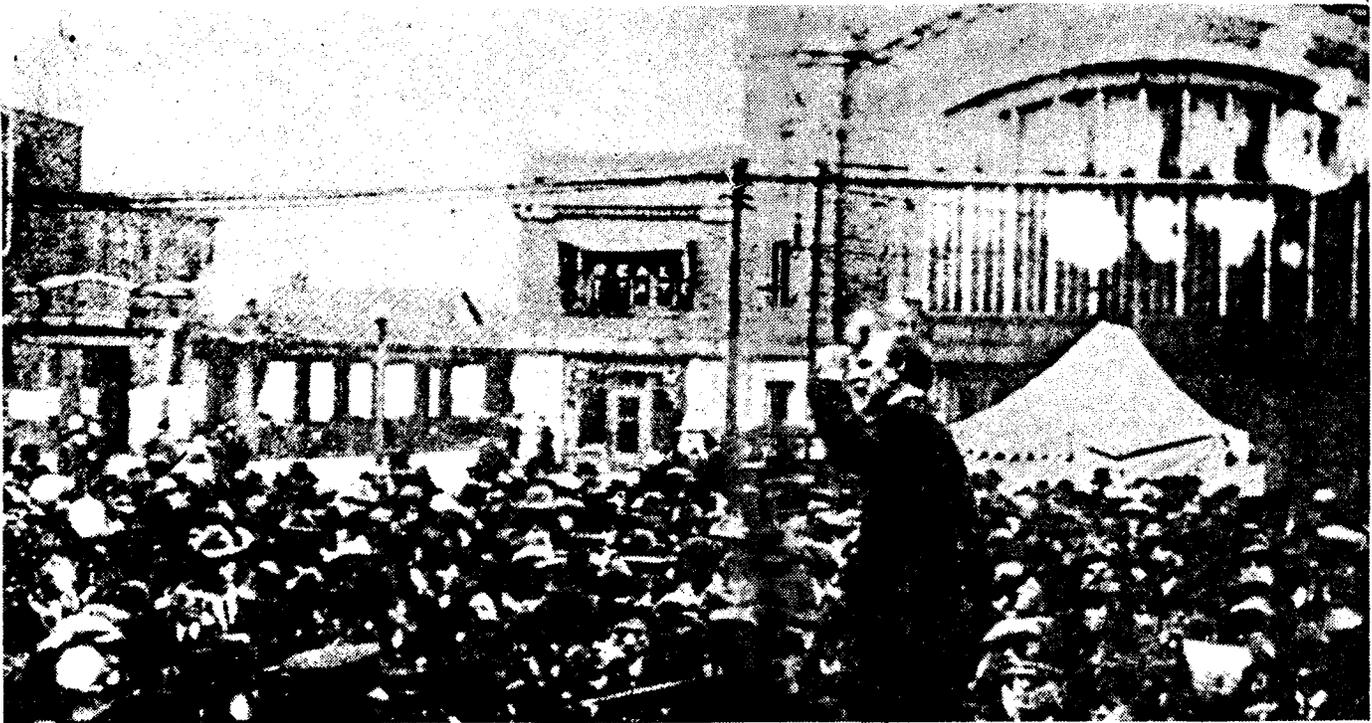
The American communist movement was rent by intense factional struggle from its emergence in 1919 as a premature split/expulsion from the Socialist Party. Divided into two (and then three) competing parties, all of which went "underground" in the face of government repression (the Palmer Raids), the young American movement was plagued by sectarianism and ultraleftism. It was only upon the insistence of the Comintern and under the impact of Lenin's "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, that all factions were united in the Communist Party of America (CPA) in May 1921.

But the CPA remained a clandestine organization, removed from the masses of American workers, its mem-



no credit

Max Eastman, then pro-Communist intellectual (left), with James P. Cannon (center) and William D. Haywood, leader of the Industrial Workers of the World, in Moscow at Fourth Congress, 1922.



Labor Defender

C.E. Ruthenberg speaking out against World War I in Cleveland's Public Square, 1918. Ruthenberg was the only nationally prominent Socialist Party leader to come over with Left Wing to found Communist Party.

bership for the most part foreign-born and non-English-speaking. Of the 21 foreign-language federations affiliated to the CPA, it was the Russian Federation which predominated, its leaders claiming for themselves a unique understanding of Bolshevism. But the Russian Federation "madmen" (as Cannon later called them) had little understanding of communist tactics and even less desire to apply them to the American political terrain. They resisted the decision of the Third CI Congress in 1921 that the American Communists "try by all ways and means to get out of their illegalized condition into the open among the wide masses."

Cannon was part of a group of CPA leaders who fought to turn the party toward the American trade-union movement and for the establishment of a legal party. This group of leaders, which included C.E. Ruthenberg, William Z. Foster and Jay Lovestone, succeeded in getting the CPA in December 1921 to found the Workers Party (referred to in the code of the underground as the "L.P.P." for "legal political party") with Cannon as National Chairman. The Workers Party incorporated both the CPA and the Workers Council Group, a recent, pro-communist split from the Socialist Party. The underground CPA still existed, with nominal decision-making power over the Workers Party. Nevertheless, the diehards of the Russian Federation led a split, forming the United Toilers.

A heated factional struggle then arose in the CPA over the question of dissolving the dual structure in favor of legality. The "liquidators" wanted the Workers Party to assume all the functions and the program of a legal communist party while the "Goose caucus" conceived of the Workers Party as a mere public shadow of the clandestine CPA. The factions were fairly evenly divided in terms of their strength in the American party and the fight raged

furiously until the Comintern took a decisive stand in favor of the "liquidators." Cannon, Swabeck and Bedacht were representatives of the "liquidators" in Moscow at the Fourth CI Congress and signed the document "The American Question" under the pseudonyms Cook, Lansing, and Marshall respectively. We have not been able to determine the identities of the other signers.

The Comintern's intervention into the dispute in the American party at the Fourth Congress was very beneficial, helping a weak and confused section to orient itself "in accord with the national political conditions and necessities of that time," as Cannon said. This material thus has great implications *vis-à-vis* the refusal of the majority of the British Socialist Labour Party (SLP) to participate in the founding of the British section of the Communist International. The SLP was undoubtedly right in many of its criticisms of the centrist elements which fused to form the Communist Party of Great Britain. But the refusal of the majority of the SLP to join the new party for this reason deprived this CI section of key subjectively revolutionary elements and contributed to the stillbirth of British communism. (See "British Communism Aborted," *Spartacist* No. 36-37, Winter 1985-86 and "Founding British Communism—An Exchange," *Spartacist* No. 38-39, Summer 1986.)

We reprint Cannon's 10 May 1954 letter to Theodore Draper from the Winter 1955 issue of *Fourth International*. A selection of Cannon's letters to Draper was published as *The First Ten Years of American Communism*.

We also print here the decision of the Comintern in the Goose-liquidators fight. Written as a letter of the CI Executive Committee to the American Central Executive Committee, it is undated but appeared in *The Communist* (newspaper of the CPA) Vol. 13, No. 1, 1923.

The American Question

In the United States the objective preconditions for revolution are not yet fully developed. In addition, the class consciousness of the American workers is still undeveloped; they have not even risen to the point of undertaking independent political action.

However, there is developing within the trade-union movement a rapidly increasing rebelliousness against the official union bureaucracy and, linked to this, a steadily increasing tendency in favor of a workers party. Our main task at present is to develop these tendencies, to crystallize and organize them; tactics must be oriented toward making us an integral component of the workers party when it is founded.

The illegality of the CPA is a major obstacle to its work. In addition, American workers are still dominated by democratic illusions, so that they grasp neither the aim nor the reasons for conspiratorial, clandestine organizations. We must therefore commence a determined struggle for a legal communist party. A large part of the organized workers movement will support us in such a struggle. If we win, the Party will enjoy the enormous advantages of legal party organization, at least for a time. But if we lose, the fact of our defeat will greatly contribute to destroying the democratic illusions of the masses; at the same time they would come to understand the necessity of illegal organization.

This struggle must be carried out with the legal Party that exists already. Every function which can be carried out openly and legally must be transferred to it; its program must gradually be strengthened and clarified; the duties of members must be increased and their discipline must be tightened; all with a view toward the goal of making it a real, communist party.

We are hindered in carrying out this task by the fact that the great majority of members are comrades born abroad, mainly of Russian origin, who judge things not from the standpoint of the objective conditions prevailing in America, but on the basis of their subjective conceptions

which are based on events in Europe. This is why they oppose every attempt at a realistic application of the Comintern's tactical guidelines to American conditions.

The simultaneous existence of these two irreconcilable elements in the Party is the real cause of the ineffectiveness and sterility of the American movement. The bitter disputes and splits which develop in the American Party over every fleeting question are merely symptoms of the more deep-seated sickness in the Party. The unity imposed by the Comintern has not resolved the problem in America, but only aggravated it.

We ask the Comintern for a clear presentation of its guidelines concerning the questions mentioned above and request that, in the event of a new split arising from the realistic implementation of these guidelines in America, the Comintern does not again insist on a mechanical formula for unity.

Signatures follow:

Marshall, Cook and Lansing
Minority of the delegation to
the Comintern

By signing, the following
comrades declare that they are
in complete agreement with the
above:

Starr and Marlow
Delegates of the Young
Communist League of America
to the Congress of the Youth
International

Godfrey, Brooks and Knowles
Delegates of the Trade Union
Educational League to the
Congress of the Profintern

Harrow
CPA regional organizer

Cannon Letter to Theodore Draper, 10 May 1954

May 10, 1954

Dear Sir:

I arrived in Moscow on June 1, 1922 as the official delegate of the American Communist Party to the Plenum of the ECCI and to the pending Fourth Congress of the Comintern. I remained there until the following January. Besides attending to my duties in the ECCI and in the Congress, I had a good chance to look around and form some impressions of the country in the fifth year of the revolution.

After my return to the U.S., I covered the country on a five-month tour, speaking on "The Fifth Year of the Russian Revolution." This lecture was published in pamphlet form at the time and has since been reprinted by

Pioneer Publishers, together with another lecture, under the title "The Russian Revolution."

I was seated as the American representative on the ECCI and was also made a member of its presidium, the smaller working body, which met frequently and handled all current political work of the Comintern in the same manner as the smaller political bureau of the national committee of a national organization.

This was my first view of the functioning of the Comintern, and my first chance to see the great political leaders at work in discussion and decision on questions of the world movement. I was well satisfied to sit quietly, to listen and try to learn. I really think I learned a lot in this priceless experience.

The problems of the various national parties, one :

another, came up for review in the sessions of the presidium. The big questions of the time, as I recall, were the continuing crisis in the French party and the application of the tactics of the united front generally. All the important parties had permanent delegates in Moscow. They presented periodic reports on new developments in their respective countries and joined in the discussion.

The decisive lead was taken by the Russian delegation assigned to permanent work in the Comintern. These were Zinoviev as chairman, Radek and Bukharin. As a member of the presidium, I saw these leaders at work and heard them speak on an average of about once a week during the entire period of my stay in Moscow. There was no question whatever of the leading role played by the Russian representatives. This was taken as a matter of course and was never questioned. But the reasons for it were entirely just and natural.

They were the veterans who were schooled in the doctrine and knew the world movement, especially the European section of it, from study and first-hand experience in their years of exile. In addition, they had the commanding moral authority which accrues by right to the leaders of a victorious revolution. The delegates of the other parties, like myself, were mainly apprentices of a younger generation. I think all of us, or nearly all, felt that we were privileged to attend an incomparable school, and we tried to profit by the opportunity.

* * *

I also worked in the Executive Body of the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern). There I became well acquainted with the leading figures in the trade-union work of different countries. I particularly remember Losovsky, Nin and Brandler. The Profintern Committee enjoyed a wide autonomy at that time in all the practical affairs of the international trade-union movement. Questions involving political policy, however, were coordinated with the presidium of the Comintern and eventually decided there.

* * *

In pursuit of my special objective—to gain Comintern support for our policy in the U.S.—I talked personally to Zinoviev, Radek, Bukharin and Kuusinen (the secretary of the ECCI). Bittelman came along to Moscow in the summer of 1922 on a special mission—to report on the Jewish movement in the U.S., I think. Bittelman and I worked closely together in Moscow. We cooperated in preparing written reports on the situation in the U.S. and attended the conversations with the various leaders together.

I noted that all the leaders, as though by a prior decision on their part, remained noncommittal in all these discussions of American policy at that time. They were extremely friendly and patient. They gave us freely of their time, which must indeed have been strictly limited, and asked numerous pointed questions which showed an intense interest in the question. None of them, however, expressed any opinion. The net result of the first round of conversations, which extended over a considerable period of time, was an informal decision to wait for the arrival of the delegates from the other faction, who would be coming

Radio Times Hulton



**Gregory
Zinoviev,
head of
Communist
International,
October
1921.**

to the World Congress, and to defer any decision until that time.

Nothing was said directly to indicate a definite position; but I did get the impression at that time that the Russian leaders were inclined to regard me as a "liquidator" of the type they had confronted in the Russian party in the period of reaction following the defeat of the 1905 revolution. These Russian "liquidators" had wanted to abandon the illegal party organization and to adapt Social Democratic activity to Czarist legality. The Bolsheviks had been traditionally opposed to such capitulatory liquidationism; and I felt that the reserved attitude of the Russian leaders in 1922 was at least partly conditioned by the memory of that old battle.

I noticed that one of the technical functionaries in the Comintern apparatus, a woman comrade who spoke English, told me that she had been assigned to help me study the experiences of the old Bolshevik struggle against the liquidators. She took me to a library and translated for me a number of Lenin's polemical articles of that time. I agreed with the articles, but I thought there was a difference between Czarist Russia and Harding's America. I had the uneasy feeling, throughout the summer of 1922, that I wasn't making a bit of headway in my effort to gain support for our policy.

Possibly the reserve of the Russian leaders was due to the fact that previously the ECCI had sent a representative to America—Valetski, a Pole—and that they awaited his report.

* * *

Those were the good days of the Communist International, when its moral authority was the highest and the wisdom of its advice to the young parties from the various countries was recognized and appreciated by all. We knew nothing of any conflict or rivalry among the Russian leaders. We thought of the Russian leadership as a unit, with Lenin and Trotsky standing above and somewhat apart from all the rest.



Wide World

American poet Claude McKay addressing Fourth CI Congress. McKay wrote of Moscow experiences in A Long Way From Home.

Trotsky led the debate on the French question at the June Plenum of the ECCI of that year, and also at the Fourth Congress which followed some months later. Trotsky also appeared a few times at the meetings of the presidium, but only for a special purpose each time. I saw and heard Lenin only once, when he spoke for an hour at the Fourth Congress. We knew, of course, that he was ill; but there was confident optimism on every side that he would recover. As I said, all the daily work of the presidium of the ECCI was led by the special Russian delegation assigned to that function—Zinoviev, Radek and Bukharin. I can't recall that I either saw or heard of Stalin that time.

* * *

Meantime, at home the factional fight between the liquidators and the leftists was raging. Additional delegates to the Fourth Congress began to arrive from America. It was a big delegation, nearly a score all told, and all tendencies were represented. Max Bedacht came for the liquidators; L.E. Katterfeld, Rose Pastor Stokes and others for the undergrounders. There was a youth delegation headed by Martin Abern. A number came as trade-union delegates; I remember Jack Johnstone and others. The youth and trade-union delegates both supported the liquidators. There was also a Negro delegate whose name has escaped me, who seemed to support the leftist faction. Trachtenberg represented the Workers Council group, which had not joined the CP. The seceding group of leftists (United Toilers) had two delegates who had been invited to come and present their appeal.

In addition, a number of individuals had come to Moscow on their own account. Among them were Max Eastman; the Negro poet, Claude McKay; and Albert Rhys Williams. In Claude McKay's autobiographical book, "A Long Way from Home," he devotes a section to his Russian visit and the Congress. Zinoviev and the other Russian leaders made a great fuss over him. They included him in group pictures with them and other Congress leaders for propaganda purposes in the colonial world. In Chapter 16 of his book, beginning page 172, McKay speaks about the Congress and the American Commission, which he

attended. You might find this interesting, as the independent impression of an artist.

After the full delegation had arrived and the Fourth Congress began to drag out its month-long course, the preliminary fight over the American question began in earnest. The first skirmishes took place in the special department of the Comintern for English speaking countries. Rakosi, the recently deposed Stalinist boss of Hungary, was in charge of this department. He spoke English fluently and I got to know him quite well. He was one of the younger members of the Hungarian leadership who had made their way to Moscow after the defeat of the Hungarian revolution.

Rakosi impressed me then as a rather rigid formalist and sectarian and he did not conceal his suspicion of us as "liquidators." We didn't mind that so much because we didn't take him too seriously. But the possibility that he might be reflecting the point of view of the official leaders made us rather uncomfortable. I must say that this was the general impression at that time, and it was reflected in the attitude of other technical functionaries in the Comintern apparatus.

They began to give me a bad time. On the eve of the Congress they shifted me from my privileged room in the Hotel Lux to a roughly improvised dormitory for overflow delegates. I really didn't mind that very much, being an old hobo, but political significance was attached to it, and my friends joked about my banishment from the Lux. This is what I meant when I referred in my "History" to my status during that period as a sort of "pariah." These "apparachniks" were real weather vanes. I never liked this breed, then or ever.

Toward the end of the Congress we finally secured an interview with Trotsky. That changed everything overnight. We don't deserve a bit of credit for this decisive interview because, as far as I can remember, we never even thought of asking for it. The interview was arranged by Max Eastman on his own initiative.

Trotsky, the most businesslike of men, set the interview for a definite time. His fearsome insistence on punctuality, in contrast to the typical Russian nonchalance in matters of

time, was a legend, and nobody dared to keep him waiting. Eastman only had about one hour to arrange it, and came within an inch of failing to round us up. He got hold of us at the last minute, as we were blithely returning from a visit to the Russian steam baths—my first and only experience with this formidable institution—and hustled us to Trotsky's office by auto just in the nick of time to keep the appointment.

Those who attended the interview, as I recall, were Max Bedacht, Max Eastman and myself. If any other American delegates were present, I don't remember them. Trotsky, bristling with businesslike precision, wasted no time on formalities. He asked us right away to state our case, and reminded us that we had only one hour.

I was struck by the difference between his manner and method and Zinoviev's. The latter had impressed me as informal and easy-going, even somewhat lackadaisical. He always seemed to have plenty of time, and could always be counted on to open a meeting two or three hours late. In spite of that he obviously did an enormous amount of work. It was just a difference in his way of working.

The greatness of Lenin and Trotsky was the greatness of genius. Zinoviev receded before them, but on a lesser scale he was a great man too. I had a soft spot for Zinoviev, and my affectionate regard for him never changed. I still hope, someday, to write something in justice to his memory.

The main exposition at the interview with Trotsky was made by me, supplemented by some remarks from Bedacht. My thesis, as I recall, had four points: (1) The lack of class consciousness of the American workers, and as a result, the elementary tasks of propaganda imposed on the Communist Party. (2) The actual political climate in the country which made possible and necessitated a legal party. (3) Our proposal to support the formation of a labor party based on the trade unions. (4) The necessity of Americanizing the party, of breaking the control of the foreign-language federations and assuring an indigenous national leadership.

Trotsky asked only a few questions about the actual political situation in the country, with respect to the laws, etc. He expressed astonishment, and even some amusement, over the theory that underground organization is a question of principle. He said the attempt of the foreign-language groups to "control" the American party was unrealistic and untenable. If they persisted, he said facetiously, the Russian party would invite them to return to Russia.

(It might be remarked, parenthetically, that the return to Russia of Hourwich, Staklitzky, Ashkenudzie and other strong and fanatical leaders of the Russian Federation, did contribute to the eventual solution of the problem of party "control.")

I don't recall what, if anything, Trotsky said about the labor party question.

At the end of the discussion, which probably didn't last more than an hour as he had specified, Trotsky stated unambiguously that he would support us, and that he was sure Lenin and the other Russian leaders would do the same. He said that if Lenin didn't agree, he would try to arrange for us to see him directly. He said he would report the interview to the Russian Central Committee and that the American Commission would soon hear their opinion.

At the end of the discussion he asked us to write our position concisely, on "one sheet of paper—no more," and send it to him for transmission to the Russian leadership.

It struck me at the moment, as a formidable task, after a solid year of unlimited debate, to be asked to say everything we had to say on one sheet of paper. Nevertheless, with the help of Eastman we did it that very day and sent it in. I would give a good deal today for the original of that document "on one sheet of paper."

* * *

That interview with Trotsky was the great turning point in the long struggle for the legalization of the American communist movement, which should never have accepted an illegal status in the first place. Soon afterward, the formal sessions of the American Commission of the Fourth Congress were started. The Russians showed their decided interest in the question by sending a full delegation—Zinoviev, Radek and Bukharin—to the Commission.

Nothing was hurried. There was a full and fair debate, in a calm and friendly atmosphere. Nobody got excited but the Americans. Katterfeld and I were given about an hour each to expound the conflicting positions of the contending factions. Rose Pastor Stokes, Bedacht and others were called upon to supplement the remarks of the main reporters on both sides. A representative of the seceding underground leftist group was also given the floor.

Then the big guns began to boom. First Zinoviev, then Radek and then Bukharin. The noncommittal attitude they had previously shown in our personal conversations with them, which had caused us such apprehension, was cast aside. They showed a familiarity with the question which indicated that they had discussed it thoroughly among themselves. They all spoke emphatically and unconditionally in support of the position of the liquidators.

Their speeches were truly brilliant expositions of the whole question of legal and illegal organization, richly illustrated from the experience of the Russian movement. They especially demonstrated that the central thesis of the underground leftists, namely, that the party had to retain its underground organization as a matter of principle, was false. It was, they explained, purely a practical question of facts and possibilities in a given political atmosphere.

They especially castigated the tendency to transplant mechanically the Russian experiences under the Czar, where all forms of political opposition were legally proscribed, to America which still retained its bourgeois democratic system intact and where the Workers Party was already conducting a satisfactory communist propaganda without legal interference. Illegal underground work, said Zinoviev, is a cruel necessity in certain conditions; but one must not make a fetish of it, and resort to costly and cumbersome underground activities, when legal possibilities are open. He told an amusing story of an old Bolshevik underground worker who insisted on carrying her old false passport even after the Bolsheviks had taken over the state power.

The result of the discussion in the American Commission was the unanimous decision: (1) to legalize the party; (2) to recommend that the party advocate and work for the construction of a labor party based on the trade unions;

and (3) to appeal to the seceding leftists to return to the party, assuring them a welcome and rightful place in its ranks.

* * *

That was one time when a great problem of American communism, which it had not been able to solve by itself, was settled conclusively and definitely by the Comintern for the good of the movement.

All subsequent experience demonstrated the absolute correctness of this decision. It is appalling to think what would have been the fate of the American communist movement without the help of the Comintern in this instance. The two factions were so evenly matched in strength, and the leftists were so fanatically convinced that they were defending a sacred principle, that a definitive victory for the liquidators within a united movement could not be contemplated.

The main energies of the American communists would have been consumed in the internal struggle, at the expense of public propaganda and the recruitment of new forces. The prospect was one of unending factional struggles and disintegrating splits until the movement exhausted itself,

while the great country rolled along and paid no attention to it. The intervention of Trotsky, and then of the Russian party and the Comintern, saved us from that.

This decision showed the Comintern at its best, in its best days, as the wise leader and coordinator of the world movement. Its role in this crucial struggle of the infant movement of American communism was completely realistic, in accord with the national political conditions and necessities of that time. Moreover, the Russian leaders, to whom American communism owed this great debt, showed themselves to be completely objective, fair and friendly to all, but very definite and positive on important political questions.

I always remembered their friendly help in this affair with the deepest gratitude. Perhaps that was one reason why I could never reconcile myself to the campaign against them and their eventual expulsion a few years later. I could never believe that they had become "enemies of the revolution," and I believe it even less today, 32 years afterward.

Yours truly,
James P. Cannon

SPARTACIST

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To the Communist Party of America from the Executive Committee of the Communist International

For two years already, the Executive Committee of the Communist International has been dealing with the situation in the American sister party. On this question we have heard a number of your delegates and complete delegations from your Party. A number of special Commissions appointed by the Executive have dealt exhaustively with this question.

We succeeded in sending a special representative to America who has now submitted his report to us. Finally, at the Fourth Congress a large commission, once again, dealt with the American question. We are of the opinion that the Executive Committee of the Communist International is now in possession of sufficient material to give its definite judgment on the matter.

What we witness in America are the birth-pangs of a Communist Party. This birth is taking place amidst internal struggles and conflicts.

Is a LEGAL Communist Party in America possible now or not? This is the question which has to be decided. The Executive is of the opinion, unless all signs are misleading, that a legal Party in America is now possible. The Communist Party existing in America now was born during the period of the war, the period when in all the belligerent countries martial law prevailed, which in America, assumed the most stringent forms. During this period a legal Communist Party was certainly not possible in America, and under the conditions then prevailing the Party had to work ILLEGALLY. The psychology that prevailed in the Communist Party during the period of martial law can not remain. It is true, that so-called American "democracy" is not a paradise for the working class. And yet even this notorious "democracy" is in a position in which it can and must do what the most reactionary government, that of the imperialist France, for example, is obliged to do.

We have a year's experience of a legal party, the L.P.P. This, if brief experience, indicates that even in present day America, the existence of a legal Party is possible. The periodicals you publish are in the main Communistic. The things published by your illegal press are not much more revolutionary than those published by the LEGAL press, and yet the publications of the legal press circulate freely.

The present legal party is not by far satisfactory to us. The numerical proportion of the membership of the illegal Party to that of the L.P.P. is as one to two. This is not sufficient. We must establish a wider legal movement in which the proportion of the Communists as compared to the rest of the organized workers' masses must be as one to fifty or as one to a hundred. In this connection the idea now prevailing of the establishment of a labor party in America has enormous political importance. *The basis of our activity must be the Left Wing of the Trade Union Movement.* All attention and energy must be devoted to our activity among the masses of the Left Wing in the Trade Union movement. If we succeed in building a large Labor Party—

at first only with a moderate political program—it will be an event of historical importance, not only for the American Labor movement, but for the Labor movement of the whole world. It will be the business of the Communists to get a strong footing in this Labor Party; to build Communist nuclei in all Labor Party organizations, and to influence the Party.

The Fourth Congress and the new Executive of the Communist International are of the opinion that the American communists must commence a new chapter in their work. Illegality for the sake of illegality must cease.



The COMMUNIST

Official Organ of the Communist Party of America
(Section of the Communist International)

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To the Communist Party of America from the Executive Committee of the Communist International

For two years already, the Executive Committee of the Communist International has been dealing with the situation in the American sister party. On this question we have heard a number of your delegates and complete delegations from your Party. A number of special Commissions appointed by the Executive have dealt exhaustively with this question. We succeeded in sending a special representative to America who has now submitted his report to us. Finally, at the Fourth Congress a large commission, once again, dealt with the American question. We are of the opinion that the Executive Committee of the Communist International is now in possession of sufficient material to give its definite judgment on the matter. What we witness in America are the birth-pangs of a Communist Party. This birth is taking place amidst internal struggles and conflicts. Is a LEGAL Communist Party in America possible now or not? This is the question which has to be decided. The Executive is of the opinion, unless all signs are misleading, that a legal Party in America is now possible. The Communist Party existing in America now was born during the period of the war, the period when in all the belligerent countries martial law prevailed, which in America, assumed the most stringent forms. During this period a legal Communist Party was certainly not possible in America, and under the conditions then prevailing the Party had to work ILLEGALLY. The psychology that prevailed in the Communist Party during the period of martial law can not remain. It is true, that so-called American "democracy" is not a paradise for the working class. And yet even this notorious "democracy" is in a position in which it can and must do what the most reactionary government, that of the imperialist France, for example, is obliged to do.

The decision of the ECCI on the American question was published in The Communist, newspaper of the still-underground CPA.

The main efforts must be devoted to work on the legal field. This is what the Communist International now categorically demands.

The relations between an illegal Party and a legal Party in America can not be the same as those existing in Russia, for instance, after the first revolution, or now in Finland or Poland. The Communist Parties in those countries have existed for many years. The leaders of those parties have led the working class to revolution. The masses of the workers have seen these parties and their leaders on the battlefield, and have learnt to regard them as reliable leaders. When these parties were forced into a state of illegality, they can claim that the legal movement, as a whole, subordinates itself to them and that they are its leaders.

The situation in America is altogether different. The Communist Party there is still young and has not yet had the opportunity of leading the masses of the workers into decisive battles. Its leaders, hitherto, have not been able to come before the working classes, and win the confidence of the masses. When, under such conditions, the small illegal party claims that all other forms of the movement must subordinate itself to it, and must be led by the illegal organization, it can only lead to great difficulties and through tactlessness may hinder the development of a

broad legal labor movement. That being the case, the illegal Party must set itself more modest tasks. It must regard itself as an *auxiliary organization* to the broad legal mass movement.

We do not believe that at this moment the illegal Communist Party must be demobilized. In view of our experience of the period of the "democratic" martial law, we must by all means have in reserve an illegal apparatus, but the relations between the illegal Party and the legal mass movement must be established on the basis outlined above. Perhaps it will be possible within a year almost totally to abolish the apparatus of the illegal party, but to do this now would be premature.

The Executive does not propose that you immediately carry out such a complete reorganization. We think rather that we can for the time being, be satisfied if *the illegal Central Committee and the Central Committee of the legal Party unite*, and that this enlarged Executive Committee take over the leadership of the movement. The rest will follow.

The immigrants, including Communists, who have migrated to America from Europe, play an important part in the American Labor movement. But it must not be for the moment forgotten that the most important task is to arouse the *American born* workers out of their lethargy. The Party must systematically and willingly assist American born workers, whenever the opportunity offers, to play a leading part in the movement. The Communist immigrants have brought many virtues with them to America, self-sacrifice, revolutionary courage, etc. At the same time, however, their greatest weakness lies in the fact that they desire to apply the experience they have acquired in the various countries of Europe, mechanically to American conditions.

In summarising our position, we say:

1. The main efforts must be devoted to work on legal field.

2. All energy must be directed toward building up a Labor Party.

3. The greatest attention must be paid to the Left Wing in the Labor movement.

4. The illegal Party shall continue to exist only as an auxiliary organization.

5. The merging of the Central Committees of the illegal and the legal parties must be brought about as soon as possible.

These are the instructions given you by the Executive. All this, however, can be carried out only on the condition that the factional struggle, the struggle between the various groups, be brought to an end. We have now to carry out a most important political measure. The party will be able to carry out this task only when it is properly disciplined, and when it marches along the path indicated, like one man. The tasks that now confront the American Party are so important that we frankly declare: He, who refuses to adopt these tactics, let him leave the Party!

The Communist International demands discipline. On the basis of its experience the Communist International assures the American comrades that, if they raise no difficulty with regard to the policy indicated above, the Communist Party of America, with the help of the Communist International, will in a short time achieve great success. The situation is so serious and the injury caused by factional struggle so great that the Executive Committee has resolved to take the most energetic measures against all those who will hamper the carrying out of the above decisions. Unity and discipline, on the basis of the decisions of the Communist International, arrived at after mature thought—this is what the Executive Committee demands from all American comrades without exception.

With Communist Greetings,
Executive Committee of the
Communist International

SPARTACIST

An Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

Spartacist is the theoretical and documentary repository of the international Spartacist tendency. Published under the direction of the International Executive Committee in English, French, German and Spanish, *Spartacist* embodies the ISt's commitment to Leninist internationalism.



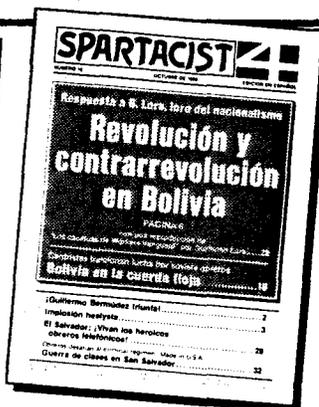
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Revolution and Counterrevolution in Bolivia

Latin America has produced three old-time ostensible artifacts of Trotskyism—Guillermo Lora of Bolivia, Nahuel Moreno of Argentina and (in a paler version) Luis Vitale of Chile. These men, desperately in the grip of local, petty-bourgeois nationalist pressures, have only occasionally appeared to the world at large as centrist (revolutionary in words, opportunist in deeds), and each has been quite idiosyncratic on his own national terrain.

In the course of his career, the pseudo-Trotskyist Guillermo Lora has several times been in a position to bring his particular opportunism to bear on promising prerevolutionary situations, with disastrous results. Bolivia in March 1985 was rent by massive class struggle. The popular-front regime of Siles Zuazo was bankrupt; bourgeois reaction was in chaos and the officer corps had no confidence in the reliability of the troops. Militant miners, at the head of the proletariat, occupied La Paz. The question of power was the order of the day. For a victory of the proletariat, a Bolshevik-Leninist revolutionary vanguard—a Trotskyist party—was needed to lead the oppressed masses in the fight for soviets of workers and peas-

ants. In its absence, the general strike was betrayed by its bureaucratic leadership, including the Stalinists, and with the criminal complicity of the centrist POR (Partido Obrero Revolucionario, Revolutionary Workers Party) of Guillermo Lora.

On 20 September 1985, we published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 387 our analysis of the March defeat under the headline "Bolivia on the Brink," exposing the POR's treacherous opposition to a fight for power by the working class. The failure of this class battle led ultimately to a government order to fire 20,000 miners, the virtual dissolution of this most combative sector of the Latin American proletariat. On 1 November 1985, following the POR's disastrous electoral campaign and facing widespread discontent in his membership, Lora published a polemic against our analysis under the headline "The Cockatoos of Workers Vanguard." A translation of the original *Workers Vanguard* article and the entirety of Lora's polemic against us were published in *Spartacist* (Spanish edition) No. 18, October 1986 along with our reply. We reprint below a translation of our reply to Lora's polemic.

Reply to G. Lora, Parrot of Nationalism

Guillermo Lora is in deep political trouble. *After* the defeat of the near-insurrectionary general strike of March 1985, the leader of the Bolivian Revolutionary Workers Party (POR) triumphantly proclaimed that "the revolutionary situation is deepening," and "this is our hour." Six months later, Lora was "holed up in a cave." Following the July 1985 elections, the State Department's hand-picked president, Victor Paz Estenssoro, decreed a murderous austerity program and broke the desperate resistance of the masses by means of a state of siege. Now, faced with turmoil inside the POR in the wake of its tailism in March (when it didn't call for workers soviets) and its July electoralism (running full lists of candidates in every province of the country), Lora lashes out in a lengthy defensive polemic against the international Spartacist tendency (iSt), these "professionals of internationalism" who call the policies of the POR by their right name: nationalist and popular-frontist betrayals of the Trotskyist program and the Bolivian revolution.

Why did Lora hole himself up in a cave? It turns out that the intrepid POR leader was hiding from his creditors because of his electoral campaign. When they did not

obtain the minimum of 50,000 votes (they received 13,712 in the entire country), the state fined them the equivalent of some US\$7,000. (In other countries like England, this would mean to "lose your deposit," but the Bolivian state charges *a posteriori*.) We emphatically denounce this anti-democratic measure, aimed in the first place at blocking the participation of leftist groups in electoral "contests." But the election campaign of the Loraist POR was an exercise of the purest electoral cretinism. Not only did he put forth the hardly class-struggle slogan, "receive with the right hand the bribe of the bourgeoisie and vote with the left," but, posing as the mass party that it is far from being, the POR ran a slate of 158 candidates in a situation where the workers movement was in retreat, and thereby endangered its own members. And now Lora mounts an international campaign to pay the bill accrued by his own opportunism! But this is only another example from a long list of G. Lora's political swindles.

For the past 40 years, the history of Bolivia has been a cycle of military coups and "popular fronts," tying the workers and peasants to a phantom "national" bourgeoisie. By dissipating the prerevolutionary crisis in March



no credit

La Paz, August 1971: Armed miners rally to resist Banzer's military coup. According to Lora: "At this time it was generally agreed—including among us Marxists—that the arms would be turned over by the governing military team...." Politically and militarily disarmed, the miners suffered a bloody defeat.

1985, which brought the popular-front UDP government of Hernán Siles to its knees, the way was opened for the victory of the Yankee imperialists' program of "democratic counterrevolution." Today, as the masses groan under IMF starvation policies that have broken the inflationary spiral by freezing wages and decimating the Bolivian proletariat, it's high time to pin the blame for the continual "Bolivian crisis." It is not only the reformists and union misleaders who have shackled the class-conscious Bolivian proletariat, capitulating before every "democratic" regime (and not a few military ones). From the time of the 1952 Revolution which first brought Paz Estenssoro to power, self-proclaimed Trotskyist Lora has tailed after bourgeois nationalists and labor reformists, refusing at the crucial moments to fight for workers power.

Stung by our exposure of his centrist policies (see "Bolivia on the Brink," *Workers Vanguard* No. 387, 20 September 1985), Lora denounces the Spartacists as... "the professionals of internationalism." To any authentic Trotskyist, educated in the fight against the Stalinists' nationalist program of "socialism in one country," this is quite a compliment. We can think of no better profession than that of internationalism. The fact that Lora considers this an insult only underlines what we have always said, that he has made *nationalism* his profession. We have quoted his oft-repeated proclamation that "the reconstruction of the Fourth International will occur starting from the Bolivian experience," but that the Bolivian situation "does not permit the POR to dedicate much attention to the international problem." For Lora "the outside world" and the struggle for a world party of socialist revolution are but a small "international problem" for which "the Bolivian revolutionaries" have no time.

Lora's diatribe against "The Cockatoos of Workers Vanguard," in his publication *La Colmena* (The Beehive), 1 November 1985, has done us and the Bolivian workers a real service. Accusing us as "Yankees" and blaming the Bolivian miners for the POR's refusal to fight for soviets,

Lora has posed the choice clearly. Lora stands for nationalism, class collaboration and a thoroughly Menshevik conception of the proletarian party. The international Spartacist tendency stands for internationalism, the program of permanent revolution, and the struggle to build a Leninist vanguard party on a world scale. Today, with the spectacular implosion of Healyism, and the widespread discrediting of the Mandelites, Morenoites and Lamber-tistes—whose anti-Soviet popular-frontist politics stand directly counterposed to Trotskyism—Lora has posed the iSt as *the* alternative for those who are seeking the road to Bolshevism in the light of the Bolivian experience.

Guillermo Lora: Nationalist Menshevik

Lora has never made a secret of the fact that, for him, Bolivia is the center of the universe. He boasts that "Bolivia is the richest experience of world Trotskyism." We beg to differ. *Russia* was the crucible in which the Leninist/Trotskyist party and program were forged. It was the experience of the Bolsheviks in preparing the October 1917 Revolution, the first (and so far only) victorious *proletarian* revolution in history, which is the source of the most basic lessons of communism. And Lora's position is the exact opposite of that of Lenin and Trotsky, whose fight for internationalism made the October Revolution possible. Laying the basis for the Communist International and preparing the Russian Revolution were two aspects of the same struggle. As Leon Trotsky noted in fighting the bureaucratic degeneration of the Bolshevik Party under Stalin:

"The break with the internationalist position always and invariably leads to national *messianism*, that is, to attributing special superiorities and qualities to one's own country, which allegedly permit it to play a role to which other countries cannot attain."

—*The Permanent Revolution* (1929)

Bolivia is indeed the country of Latin America where Trotskyism has wide renown, where Indian miners look to

Telegram

18 September 1986

Victor Paz Estenssoro
President of the Republic
Government Palace, Plaza Murillo
La Paz, Bolivia

Bolivia's anti-democratic electoral laws aim at blocking the participation of left-wing and workers candidates. Spartacist League/U.S., Partisan Defense Committee demand measures against Guillermo Lora and POR-Masas be dropped.

self-proclaimed Trotskyists to lead their struggle against Stalinist sellouts, where even dyed-in-the-wool reformists and nationalists occasionally borrow from the "Trotskyist" vocabulary to keep in check one of the most combative proletariats of the continent. But Lora's POR, built in national isolation, *has never been Trotskyist*. Since its foundation, the POR has not been a functioning part of a democratic-centralist revolutionary international, its actions subject to criticism and correction by comrades abroad. Lora's active rejection of Trotskyist internationalism is the other side of his capitulation to his "own" bourgeoisie. Borrowing a leaf from Trotsky, who denounced the Stalinists in Germany for "national-communism," we might call Lora a "national-Trotskyist," a contradiction in terms.

Lora's "international relations" have always had a purely decorative character, and are evidently measured by the quantity of his voluminous material his confederates will publish. The POR had no direct link with the Fourth International in Trotsky's lifetime. After World War II, relations were established with the International Secretariat of the FI under Michel Pablo. But Pablo was content to brag about great successes in far-off Bolivia and let Lora & Co. pursue their course of collaboration with bourgeois nationalists. In 1953 the Fourth International was organizationally destroyed in the struggle between the Pabloites and the forces led by James P. Cannon and the American SWP (allied to the British section, under Gerry Healy) who belatedly joined with the French (under Pierre Lambert) in defense of the Trotskyist program against Pablo's liquidationism. Lora's response was to condemn both sides as "sects" and to glory in his national isolation, writing in 1960 that "the most positive act of the POR was to free itself from this unbearable tutelage" of the Fourth International (José Aguirre Gainsborg, *Fundador del POR*).

Lora did not reestablish international ties until 1969-70, when the POR successively took part in a series of nationally federated blocs, beginning with the International Committee of Healy/Lambert. Upon the latter's rupture, during which Healy used against Lambert the POR's betrayal during 1971 in Bolivia, Lora took part in the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI) together with Lambert, and

Guillermo Lora,
Nationalist
Menshevik.



Enfoques de Este Tiempo

finally in the Tendencia Cuartinternacionalista (TCI—Fourth Internationalist Tendency), the split-off of the OCRFI's Latin American caucus, led by Lora and Jorge Altamira (of the Argentine Política Obrera group). The TCI corresponded more closely to Lora's conception of a purely Latin American "Trotskyist" movement centered on his POR. But it too blew apart after a couple years over the conflicting national appetites of the bloc partners. Trotsky's comments on an earlier generation of national opportunists apply equally to Lora:

"Their 'internationalism' represents, as everybody knows, an arithmetical sum of national opportunist policies. With this we have nothing in common. Our international orientation and our national policy are indissolubly bound together.

"... only an international organization can be the bearer of an international ideology."

—"An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund," 6 February 1930

In contrast to Trotsky, for Lora the rule is: get the authority conferred by "international relations," but let nobody meddle in my affairs. And by and large the POR doesn't "meddle in the affairs" of the "outside world" either. Reading Lora's paper, *Masas*, you would never guess that U.S. imperialism is mounting a global war drive against the Soviet degenerated workers state. *Masas'* attention is so centered on "the little country of the Altiplano" that there is hardly any mention of such "international problems" as the black revolt in South Africa, raging civil war in El Salvador, CIA-backed contra terror against Sandinista Nicaragua, and the 1984-85 British miners strike. What Lora does focus on are the disputes of Bolivia's bourgeois rulers with their neighbors, as when he accused dictator Banzer of selling out the fatherland to Chile and Peru, and of betraying the "great national task" of regaining access to the sea. So much for his pretensions to be a *Latin American* nationalist. As for "foreigners" who dare to criticize "the Bolivian revolutionaries," it is Lora's habit to "answer" them with the most offensive national chauvinism. His ingrained national parochialism is so extreme that at times he sounds like a caricature of himself. At one point in his "polemic" against the iSt he rails against the "petty-bourgeois Yankee petty bourgeois." This crude Yankee-baiting and Third World

posturing mirror Lora's systematic capitulation not only to the politics of his "own" bourgeoisie, but to its social values as well. In "Bolivian Labor Shakes Popular Front" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 330, 20 May 1983), we wrote:

"For the imitative macho pigs of the petty-bourgeois nationalist 'left,' what goes for a programmatic split is to say, 'Cabrón, I screw your wife. And you steal party funds.' And of course they blame everything on *yanqui* CIA agents, to amnesty their own rulers."

Months later, at a public event at the university in La Paz, when Spartacist militants tried to sell the Spanish translation of this article to Guillermo Lora, his response was to call them—you guessed it—"CIA agents"! The purpose of this slander was to try to seal off young *poristas* from the Spartacists' exposure of the POR's Menshevism. Yet here he is devoting an entire issue of his personal journal to a political polemic against "CIA agents." Lora's cynicism only succeeds in making him look ridiculous.

Lora Blames the American Workers

One of the dubious virtues of Lora's polemic is that he baldly states a position held by nationalists and Stalinists throughout Latin America, but which they seldom put down on paper. He writes off the North American proletariat as hopelessly corrupted by imperialism and incapable of being won to a revolutionary party:

"It would be completely absurd to expect there to be, in the metropolis which plunders a large part of the world, a powerful revolutionary party...."

"The North American proletariat, following its rapacious

bourgeoisie, becomes a *barrier* preventing a major development of the so-called Trotskyist groups...." [our emphasis]

In other words, he maintains there can be no revolutionary party in the United States because it is a powerful imperialist country. This is not Marxism but the most vulgar Third World nationalism.

While Lora lambastes "petty-bourgeois Yankee" radicals, he has *the same line* as the worst petty-bourgeois American New Leftists of the '60s, who argued that imperialism had bought off the entire North American proletariat, and that the struggle to build a party to lead a proletarian revolution in the U.S. was therefore "completely absurd." It was in sharp political struggle during the late 1960s against these anti-working-class Maoists and Guevarists—who talked about the Third World "encircling the metropolis"—that we built the Spartacist League/U.S. Their view is a "radical" version of the liberal lie that imperialist capitalism has abolished the class struggle and satisfied the needs of the American working class.

The reality is far different. It's not just a matter of paying homage to the Haymarket martyrs of Chicago, whose struggle for the eight-hour day a century ago gave birth to May Day, and the women garment workers of New York who started International Women's Day. *Today* the same National Guard that is sent to Honduras to aid the contras against Sandinista Nicaragua is called out against the Hormel meatpackers strike and the Arizona copper miners. Today cannery workers in Watsonville, California are in their twelfth month of a bitter strike, facing mass arrests and brutal cop violence. From Baltimore on the East Coast to the San Francisco Bay Area, the deliberate murder of strikers has become a frequent occurrence in Reagan's America, as the capitalists attempt to smash unions and slash wages. This war on American workers is part of the domestic reflection of U.S. imperialism's anti-Soviet war drive.

So, too, is the war on black people in the United States, who are being *lynched* and even *bombed*, as happened to the black MOVE commune in Philadelphia last year. For Lora, the black workers—the Achilles' heel of U.S. imperialism and the key to the American revolution—apparently do not exist. Does he believe that they, too, are a "barrier" to building a revolutionary party? Does he think that racist imperialist capitalism has liberated black people? More likely this narrow nationalist Menshevik simply does not care about the explosive revolutionary potential of the struggle for black liberation through socialist revolution, considering it yet another distant "international problem."

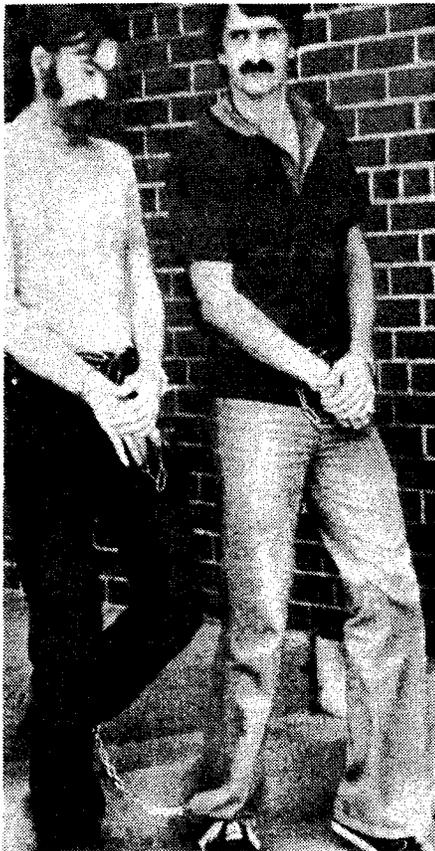
Yet the fate of the toiling masses of Latin America is inseparably tied to the future of class struggle "in the belly of the beast." This is something every conscious Cuban or Nicaraguan worker is well aware of, as they face the forces of U.S. imperialism on their doorstep. A 1921 appeal by the Communist International to the workers of the Americas proclaimed:

"The revolution in our country, combined with proletarian revolution in the United States, that is the slogan of the revolutionary proletariat and the poor peasantry of South America."

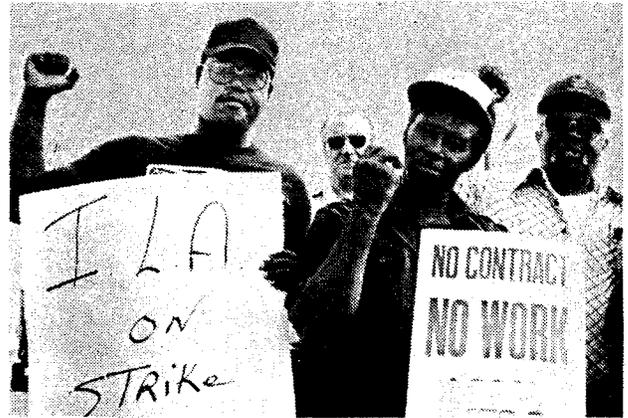
—translated from Michael Löwy, ed., *El marxismo en América Latina* (1982)

International Spartacist Tendency Directory

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Spartacist League of Australia/New Zealand	Spartacist League GPO Box 3473 Sydney, NSW, 2001 Australia



U.S. workers in struggle: to Lora they are nothing but a barrier to the development of Trotskyism. Left: Shackled air controllers in 1981 strike. Right: Longshore strikers, 1986. Striking copper miners in Arizona, 1984 (bottom right).



Workers Vanguard



Workers Vanguard

Any program for revolution in Latin America that *doesn't* fight for revolution in North America is reactionary and utopian. And today the Latin American "debt bomb" threatens the financial stability of Wall Street while millions of Hispanic proletarians in the U.S. are a human bridge for revolutionary struggle across the Rio Grande. There is a very real basis to fulfill Trotsky's prediction that "Americanized Bolshevism will crush and conquer imperialist Americanism."

The *objective* conditions are overripe for an explosion of class struggle in the citadel of world imperialism. It is the *leadership* that is lacking: the imperialist-bribed labor lieutenants of capital, faithful servants of the Democratic Party, maintain their stranglehold on the labor movement. The fake-lefts do their best to maintain this stranglehold, which perpetuates the unquestionable political backwardness of the American proletariat.

Having denounced Bolshevik internationalism in favor of Menshevik nationalism, Lora castigates Trotsky for his "grave error" in placing "so many hopes" in the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party of James Cannon. He pontificates that "North American Marxism, North American Trotskyism, has yet to be established." There is a precedent for this attack, one well known to Lora. In his bizarre diatribe *León Trotsky y Wall Street* (1959), the Argentine ex-Trotskyist Liborio Justo ("Quebracho") denounced Cannon and Trotsky for capitulating to American imperialism in and over World War II. Yet the American Trotskyist leaders were *jailed* for their internationalist opposition to the imperialist war! For Justo as for Lora, the purpose was the same: to justify his own capitulation to *nationalism*.

Lora presents the American Fourth Internationalists in Trotsky's day as little more than a literary sect. On the contrary, the Cannon group came out of the American Communist Party as hard and experienced cadres with real roots in the working class. In 1934, one year before the POR was founded, they were leading the Minneapolis general strike—a key struggle that helped pave the way for the mass organizing drives and sit-down strikes that built the powerful CIO. Even more importantly, James P. Cannon was Trotsky's most important political collaborator in the period of the foundation of the Fourth International. Trotsky worked out the Transitional Program with the SWP leadership, and together with Cannon he fought the last political battle of his life—the fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition which had abandoned the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union. This fight was decisive in arming the entire Fourth International for the coming war.

Today the iSt fights for the rebirth of the Fourth International, to build a world party of socialist revolution that Trotsky would have recognized. Lora paints the Spartacists as an "American" tendency. (Evidently that makes our comrades in France, Britain, Sri Lanka and elsewhere all "Americans.") But we are an "American" tendency only insofar as we are a *Russian* tendency. As we noted in *Spartacist* (English edition) No. 36-37, Winter 1985-86:

"...it was the American SWP's unbroken continuity with Lenin's and Trotsky's Communist International through the SWP's founding cadre which permits us to be different from so many European New Leftists who thought they were Trotskyists, having learned 'Trotskyism' from books after Stalinism, fascism and war had physically wiped out the cadres...."

"The internal bulletins and the volumes of the Cannon writings are available to us all. There's nothing specially American about that—we're just lucky to come from a protected enclave, unlike the Bulgarians or the Chinese or Vietnamese, the Russian Left Opposition or the fragile European Trotskyist nuclei whose slender threads of human continuity with the Fourth International were simply physically wiped out by fascism and the war."

The POR and the 1952 Bolivian Revolution

These observations also shed some light on the history of the Bolivian Partido Obrero Revolucionario. Bolivia never had a section of Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International. When the POR was formed in 1935, it was on a nationally limited, reformist program which made no mention of the state, anything outside of Bolivia, or Trotsky's movement for the Fourth International, with which it had no organizational connection. Soon the POR liquidated into the nationalist student group, Beta Gama, which included many of the future founders of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR). Highly unstable in its early years, the POR leadership was taken over in 1946 by a young university student, Guillermo Lora.

As in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the mass of the Bolivian proletariat acquired class consciousness *after* the Stalinized Comintern had turned to the popular front with the "democratic" bourgeoisie. Thus, as in the case of the then-centrist Ceylonese LSSP (Lanka Samasamaja Party), the way was clear for radical intellectuals who were repelled by Stalinism and had read some books by Trotsky to acquire a certain mass influence. By the late '40s, the Bolivian Stalinists had ministers in a government of the *Rosca*, the traditional oligarchy of tin barons and latifundistas, and were responsible for notorious massacres of tin miners. Under Lora, the POR moved to fill a political vacuum. Unfortunately, without guidance from the Fourth International and locked into the limits of this terribly backward country, these would-be revolutionaries were unable to find their way to authentic Trotskyism.

Instead, the POR established a long-term bloc with the labor wing of the *bourgeois* MNR, in the person of miners union leader Juan Lechín. In this alliance, to paraphrase Bismarck, the POR was the horse and Lechín was the rider. In his polemic in *La Colmena* Lora fumes that "This business about how 'Lora started his "Trotskyist" career as an adviser to MNR bureaucrat Lechín' is simply a stupidity said in bad faith." Yet in the very next breath, he says:

"We sought, as was our elementary duty, to convert him [Lechín] into a revolutionary, to educate him in Marxism; it's another matter that this did not succeed. Nevertheless Lechín acted as a channel to carry some POR ideas into the masses."

Lora's great triumph in sneaking in "some POR ideas" was the famous "Pulacayo Theses," the POR-written program adopted by the miners federation in 1946. But while reflecting the militancy of the Bolivian miners and popularizing various slogans of Trotsky's Transitional Program, Lora's theses leave out any mention of *the revolutionary party*, the conscious leadership which is key to proletarian revolution. The Pulacayo Theses are a *syndicalist* document, which served to bolster the revolutionary credentials of the *nationalist* labor faker Lechín.

It was in the 1952 Bolivian "National Revolution" that

the POR took its Menshevik line to the logical conclusion of class betrayal. In April 1952, a conspiracy between the MNR and the head of the *carabineros* (paramilitary police) for a coup d'état touched off a popular insurrection in which armed workers smashed the bourgeois army. As workers' militias patrolled the streets, the unions established a powerful labor federation, the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), which became the primary authority not only for organized labor but for much of the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie as well. The POR was influential in the COB executive committee, but despite the ringing pledge of the Pulacayo Theses that miners' leaders would never enter a bourgeois government, Lechín became a "workers minister" in Victor Paz Estenssoro's MNR cabinet.

As miners demanded workers control of the newly nationalized tin mines and peasants anticipated the promised land reform by seizing some large estates, the "workers ministers" were the bourgeoisie's instrument to subordinate the aroused masses to the capitalist regime. Later, Lora would criticize this "co-government," but at the time,



MNR

Bolivian miners, 1952. The revolution was derailed by popular front which Lora supported.

rather than condemning Lechín's participation in the bourgeois government, he portrayed it as *a victory of the workers over the MNR right wing*. In an interview published in the American SWP's *Militant* (12 and 19 May 1952), Lora stated that the POR "supports the left wing faction of the new cabinet." The following year the POR's Tenth Congress adopted a resolution stating:

"Far from putting forward the slogan of overthrowing the Paz Estenssoro regime, we support it so that it can resist the offensive of the *Rosca*, and we call on the international proletariat to defend unconditionally the Bolivian revolution and its transitional government."

—translated from G. Lora, *Bolivie: de la naissance du P.O.R. à l'Assemblée Populaire* (1972)

The POR concretized its demand for "complete control of the State by the left wing of the MNR" (*Lucha Obrera*, 5 July 1953), calling on Paz to "realize the hopes of the workers by organizing a cabinet composed exclusively of men of the left of his party" (*Lucha Obrera*, 23 August 1953).

The revolutionary Marxist position toward such a regime was laid out by Lenin in his famous March 1917 telegram to the Bolshevik Central Committee protesting Sta-

lin's and Kamenev's line of support to Kerensky's Provisional Government "insofar as it struggles against reaction and counterrevolution." In opposition to this Lenin demanded: "No trust in and no support of the new government; Kerensky is especially suspect; arming of the proletariat is the only guarantee; ...no rapprochement with other parties." The October Revolution was made possible by Lenin's intransigent struggle against the class collaboration of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who joined the bourgeois government as "workers ministers." The line of Lora's POR was the line Lenin denounced in his March telegram and "April Theses."

Having lent its "Trotskyist" authority to Lechín's class collaboration, the POR shares responsibility for the tragic outcome of the 1952 Revolution. The MNR, on the basis of a decree cosigned by Lechín, rebuilt the bourgeois army with U.S. dollars and advisers. This army became notorious for its bloody massacres of the combative miners. The MNR invited the U.S. to take over the Bolivian economy under the 1957 "Triangular Plan" of austerity and union-busting, and firmly secured the chains binding impoverished, semi-colonial Bolivia to Yankee imperialism.

Lora's "Anti-Imperialist Front"— Treason to the Working Class

Having learned nothing from the "democratic" counter-revolution carried out by the MNR with its complicity, the POR repeated its betrayal the next time around, in 1970-71, once again placing confidence in a bourgeois nationalist—this time one in uniform. This betrayal was prepared by Lora's role in producing the political theses of the COB adopted in May 1970 in a process of programmatic horsetrading between the POR and the Stalinist Bolivian Communist Party (PCB). The document refers to an "anti-imperialist people's front," "the need to unite all revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces" and declarations such as: "The expulsion of imperialism and the realization of national and democratic tasks still pending will render possible the socialist revolution." As we pointed out at the time:

"What this paragraph sets forward is the Menshevik theory of stages, pure and simple—first national liberation, then socialist revolution. It is the classic reformist

rationale for class collaboration, which has led to the most bitter and bloody defeats for the working class."

—"Centrist Debacle in Bolivia,"

Workers Vanguard No. 3, December 1971

The POR soon got the opportunity to put in practice the Stalinoid line of the COB theses. In the face of a split in the officer corps and an attempted ultrarightist coup, in October 1970 a general strike ushered in the "left" military regime of populist General Juan José Torres. (Torres' army chief of staff was General Reque Terán, one of the commanders of the operation that tracked down and assassinated Che Guevara.) A few months later, the Political Command of the COB (including Lechín, the POR and the PCB, among others) called a "People's Assembly." Lora hailed the Assembly as "the first soviet of the Americas," but instead it was turned, with the help of the POR, into an echo chamber of support for Torres. In his book on the events of 1970-71, Lora wrote: "At a certain point, the nationalists in epaulets become allies of the working class and not its sworn enemies" (*Bolivia: de la Asamblea Popular al golpe fascista* [1972]).

In his polemic against our article "Bolivia on the Brink," Lora protests: "It is false that the POR entertained hopes about the possibility of Torres handing over arms." Not only does he contradict himself in the very next sentence ("He could have handed them over..."), but in an article written shortly after the 1971 debacle he declared:

"At this time it was generally agreed—including among us Marxists—that the arms would be turned over by the governing military team, which would consider that only through resting on the masses and giving them adequate firepower could they at least neutralize the gorilla right. This position turned out to be completely wrong...."

—*Bolivia: de la Asamblea Popular al golpe fascista*

While Lora shared the reformists' suicidal illusions that the "nationalists in epaulets" would arm the masses, Torres was more afraid of the working class than of rightist officers. When the time was ripe the bourgeois officer corps, protected by Torres, struck to smash the unarmed masses. The bloody coup of General Hugo Banzer set a pattern for the coups carried out shortly afterward by Pinochet in Chile and Videla in Argentina.

But the fact that Torres and his left camp followers had paved the way for the Banzer coup did not lead the POR to



Punto Final



UPI

1971: General Torres (center on balcony) and union misleader Lechín (right on balcony) politically disarm tin miners (right, brandishing dynamite) on eve of Banzer's coup.

break with them. On the contrary, Lora then formed his own popular front, the Frente Revolucionario Antiimperialista (FRA), together with Torres, nationalist officers, Lechín, the PCB, etc. The founding manifesto of the FRA called the ousted Torres regime “democratic and anti-fascist,” lauded “the progressive sectors of the Armed Forces” and called for a “popular and national government” (*Masas*, November 1971). To this day Lora upholds the FRA as his strategic model. In his polemic against the iSt he states: “In Bolivia the protagonist of the proletarian revolution is the oppressed nation (various social classes) and not only the proletariat, although the latter must impose itself as the national leader.” This ritual reference to the “hegemony of the proletariat” has the same function here as when recited by Stalin and Mao in defense of the “bloc of four classes” in China, or by Salvador Allende in defense of the Chilean Unidad Popular. Lora asks, “Why do North Americans and Europeans identify the tactic of the anti-imperialist front with the popular front?” His “answer” is to point to the distinction between oppressor nations and oppressed nations. So class collaboration is wrong in France or the U.S. but just fine in Bolivia? This directly negates the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. Trotsky exposed this line of argument when the Stalinists used it to justify their line of “anti-imperialist unity” with the premier “nationalist in epaulets,” Chiang Kai-shek:

“The old Menshevik tactic...is now transferred to China.... The struggle against foreign imperialism is as much a class struggle as the struggle against the autocracy. That it cannot be exorcised by the idea of the national united front is far too eloquently proved by the bloody April events [Chiang Kai-shek's Shanghai coup], a direct consequence of the policy of the bloc of four classes.”

—“The Chinese Revolution and the Theses of Comrade Stalin,” 7 May 1927

And for Lora, to whom only the Bolivian experience means anything, we add: it is also proven by the experience of the 1952 “National Revolution” and the Banzer coup of 1971.

March 1985: Lora Blames the Bolivian Workers

The POR's refusal to call for organs of proletarian power—soviets—during the March 1985 strike was the logical continuation of decades of ingrained Menshevism and tailing Lechín. In his present polemic, Lora ties himself in knots trying to justify this position. He writes: “The virtual occupation of the seat of government (La Paz) by a multitude of striking mine workers posed from the beginning, and punctuated with dynamite blasts, the question of workers power....” He then turns around and claims that the Spartacists call for “the creation of soviets, it mattering little at what moment, where and under what conditions.” What a blatant falsification! We called for soviets in the conditions which *Lora himself* characterized as posing “the question of workers power.” To argue that it was premature to fight for soviets in La Paz in March 1985 is to argue that conditions will *never* be ripe for revolution.

Lora also tries some sleight of hand, trying to confuse our call for soviets with the call by the followers of Argentine adventurer Nahuel Moreno for “all power to the COB”—i.e., for a government of Lechín & Co.! Lora does not even pretend that the POR raised the demand for soviets and found no response from the masses. On the contrary, he excuses his tailist policy with the crudest kind of



International Viewpoint

4 March 1985: 60,000 irate workers march on La Paz during near-insurrectionary general strike.

objectivism and economism. Since soviets did not arise spontaneously, Lora repeats his standard argument, namely, the masses were not “ready”:

“It was the masses themselves who, at the critical point of the class struggle, drew from their heads their preconceived ideas, their prejudices, as a wall opposing their own action. As can be seen, these admirably politicized masses still required a greater development of their consciousness.”

To cover his opportunism, Lora contends that the demand for a “living minimum wage with a sliding scale” in and of itself shows the masses the road to power. Lenin had a word to describe this kind of politics: economism. As we stated in our article on the March events, it's not that the demand is wrong *per se*, but rather: “With Bolivia in a state of ruin, *no* economic demand made sense outside of a struggle for power. And this is precisely what Lora *did not* raise.” Instead of soviets the POR called for and joined a “left front,” making a political bloc with the COB bureaucracy, Lechín's bourgeois-nationalist party, and most of the rest of the fake-left—giving a “Trotskyist” cover to Lechín's sellout of the strike from within.

And then, to cover his treachery, Lora claims the March strike was *not defeated*. If that is so, how does he explain the fact that the left got less than 10 percent of the vote in the July elections, in the face of threats by Banzer (who called for “surgery without anesthesia” to break union power) and Paz, who openly declared he would implement the IMF policies to starve the working people? The September strike did not “go even further” than March, as Lora claims—it was a desperate rearguard action. Serious



Gadmer/Circ

Combative Bolivian women take the streets against the popular front of hunger and lies, March 1985.

militants who seek to draw the lessons of the March strike, as well as of the earlier failed revolutionary opportunities of 1952 and 1971, must reject the opportunist demagoguery which calls a defeat a victory. In the words of the Transitional Program, "to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be" is not "defeatism" but one of "the rules of [Trotsky's] Fourth International."

Lora vs. the Leninist Party

From the U.S. to Bolivia, Lora blames the *class*, never the *leadership*. In the '30s, in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, apologists for the centrist POUM, [the party] led by Andrés Nin, blamed the defeat of the revolution on the "immaturity of the proletariat." Leon Trotsky answered this "classical trick of all traitors, deserters, and their attorneys" in an essay on "The Class, the Party, and the Leadership," found among his papers after he was murdered by a Stalinist agent in August 1940. The problem, wrote Trotsky, was that "the masses who sought at all times to blast their way to the correct road found it beyond their strength to produce in the very fire of battle a new leadership corresponding to the demands of the revolution." The POUM "undoubtedly embraced revolutionary proletarian elements," he wrote. But while criticizing the old parties, and even talking of permanent revolution, on all decisive questions the POUM subordinated itself to them:

"The real misfortune was that Nin, covering himself with the authority of Lenin and the October Revolution, could not make up his mind to break with the Popular Front."

So too with Lora.

In keeping with his contempt for the need for conscious revolutionary leadership, Lora comes out against the Leninist conception of a party of professional revolutionaries. This is the meaning of his boast that the POR "has no paid functionaries." (What's his alternative, for the *lider máximo* to be supported by sales of his voluminous writings...?) Lora is here taking the side of the *Mensheviks* against Lenin's *Bolsheviks* in the 1903 split of the Russian socialists. He is denying the lessons of the struggle by the early Comintern to break West European Communists from social-democratic conceptions of party organization, where party leaders often pursued successful careers in the bourgeois world. Trotsky, for example, wrote in a letter

from the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the nascent French Communist Party (June 1921):

"Roughly speaking, not less than one-third of the members of the Central Committee should be professional party workers, kept on the party payroll and completely at the party's disposal."

Lora "explains" that the party is a *reflection* of the class. How, then, would his theory explain the development of scientific socialism in the 1840s by two young German intellectuals, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, at a time when an industrial proletariat hardly existed in Germany? And what of the rise of Bolshevism in the Russia of 1903 where the working class, overwhelmingly the sons and daughters of peasants, still looked to the priests and the tsar to protect them against the capitalists. The nationalist Lora denies that the Marxist program is based on the historical experience and historic interests of the *international* proletariat.

This workerist version of classical Menshevism leads straight to rejection of the Leninist vanguard party. The latter-day Menshevik Tony Cliff, in his 1960 essay "Trotsky on Substitutionism," rails against "the 'substitutionism' of the revolutionary party for the class," the supposed "great danger of an autonomous development of the party and its machine till it becomes, instead of the servant of the class, its master" (reprinted in the International Socialists pamphlet, *Party and Class*). In other words, according to this paragon of the "third camp" who refuses to defend the Soviet Union and the remaining gains of the October Revolution against imperialism, the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution was due not to Stalinism but to Leninism!

POR militants would do well to look at Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism* and Cannon's *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, documenting that fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition in the SWP over the Soviet invasion of Poland and Finland, for they will find that these writings could have been written against Lora's own anti-Soviet positions on Afghanistan and Poland. Where Shachtman and Burnham tailed after the imperialist



Workers Vanguard

Central America is the front line of the bipartisan, anti-Soviet Cold War drive. Spartacist sign says: Defense of Cuba and the USSR Begins in El Salvador!



AP Pathfinder Press
Leon Trotsky (left) and James P. Cannon (right) collaborated closely in fighting the petty-bourgeois opposition which abandoned the defense of the USSR, 1940.

liberals who hailed "poor little Finland," led by butcher Field Marshal Baron Mannerheim, today the POR hails the "resistance" of the "guerrillas" defending the "national sovereignty" of the "heroic Afghan people" against Soviet "expansionism" (*Boletín Informativo* of the "Central POR Cell in Europe," February 1982). The POR *Boletín* fails to

mention that these "heroic guerrillas" are Islamic reactionaries who oppose land reform and murder schoolteachers for teaching girls to read.

Lora, as always, places the *national* question above the *class* question. As for Poland, Bolivian workers fighting the starvation policies of the IMF will have little love lost for the Polish "union" that called for subjecting the planned economy to control by the imperialist bankers' cartel. Yet the same *Boletín* calls for support to Solidarność even while recognizing the U.S. "efforts to use 'Solidarity'!" And Lora fails to see any threat to the Soviet Union here, just as Shachtman/Burnham denied that defense of the USSR was posed on the eve of World War II.

The history of "Bolivian Trotskyism" is rich in *negative* lessons for would-be revolutionaries. The POR's betrayals vividly illustrate what should *not* be done. An intransigent Marxist struggle is necessary against these centrists who cover their popular-frontism and nationalism with a "Trotskyist" sauce spiced up with references to "proletarian revolution and dictatorship." As thousands of tin miners left the capital at the end of March, they vowed, "we will return." For the Bolivian workers to return to kick out the bourgeois politicians and rule the land urgently demands the forging of an authentic Trotskyist party, built through an intransigent fight against the nationalist Menshevism of Lora, as part of the struggle to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International. ■

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Gore Vidal...

(continued from page 48)

That Dare Not Speak Its Name" (*Commentary*, November 1986), Podhoretz whined for pages that almost no one believed his charge that Vidal's essay was "the most blatantly anti-Semitic outburst to have appeared in a respectable American periodical since World War II." It takes an insanely anti-Communist egotist like Podhoretz to thus characterize a few harsh words directed at himself, dismissing, for example, the deep anti-Semitism of the McCarthy witchhunt which culminated in the frame-up and murder of the Rosenbergs. Perhaps many found it hard to swallow Podhoretz' accusation so soon after his buddy, Reagan, had saluted the SS graves at Bitburg.

It's the simple truth that Podhoretz is an agent of the Israeli government—he couldn't do his job better if he were paid. As Vidal said, "Although there is nothing wrong with being a lobbyist for a foreign power, one is supposed to register with the Justice Department" (*Nation*, 22 March 1986). We might add that Podhoretz is welcome to apply for naturalization papers any time.

The Civil War: The Second American Revolution

To illustrate his point that the Podhoretzes are "Israeli fifth columnists...[not] much interested in what the *goyim* were up to before Ellis Island," Vidal told a story: in reaction to a play Vidal had written about the Civil War, Podhoretz commented, "Well, to me... the Civil War is as remote and as irrelevant as the War of the Roses.' I realized then that he was not planning to become an 'assimilated American,' to use the old-fashioned terminology; but, rather, his first loyalty would always be to Israel" (*Nation*, 22 March 1986).

Vidal's detractors have painted the incident as if his



Victor/Time



Jerry Bauer

Another big-time literary feud. Mary McCarthy (right) had a point when she said of Lillian Hellman (left): "Every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'."

objective were to bait the Podhoretzes as "Jew *parvenus*" (*Village Voice*, 1 April 1986) and, as usual, they have deliberately twisted the point. It's not a question of having ancestors that came over on the *Mayflower* nor does it matter if you just crossed the Rio Grande and are still dripping. If you want to be part of a country, you have got at least to have the *appetite* to understand what makes it tick. But Podhoretz wants to come off as "my fellow American" and not give two cents for American realities. Podhoretz has thereby spit on the generations of American Jews who have struggled fiercely to play a full social and political role in their country.

It's a pretty good definition of the term "foreigner": a man who willfully and deliberately turns his back on the



Library of Congress

General William Tecumseh Sherman's Union soldiers devastated the economic foundation of slavery on their march through Georgia to the sea.



Verlag Kurt Desch

Colonel Joseph Weydemeyer, Red '48er and friend of Karl Marx, was one of many German-born officers in the Union Army.

single most formative political and historical event in this country, a social revolution that freed the slaves and opened the road to the development of the United States as a modern industrial power. In 1869 the historian George Ticknor wrote that the Civil War had left "a great gulf between what happened before it in our century and what has happened since, or what is likely to happen hereafter. It does not seem to me as if I were living in the country in which I was born" (quoted in McPherson).

The most destructive war in the Western world between 1815 and 1914, the Civil War was the last war fought on American soil, except, significantly, for the genocide against the Indians in the West. Six hundred twenty thousand American soldiers died, nearly equal to the number of American deaths in all the rest of the nation's wars combined. In *Letter to American Workers*, V.I. Lenin describes the American revolutionary heritage:

"The American people have a revolutionary tradition which has been adopted by the best representatives of the American proletariat, who have repeatedly expressed their

complete solidarity with us Bolsheviks. That tradition is the war of liberation against the British in the eighteenth century and the Civil War in the nineteenth century. In some respects, if we only take into consideration the 'destruction' of some branches of industry and of the national economy, America in 1870 was *behind* 1860. But what a pedant, what an idiot would anyone be to deny on *these* grounds the immense, world-historic, progressive and revolutionary significance of the American Civil War of 1863-65!"

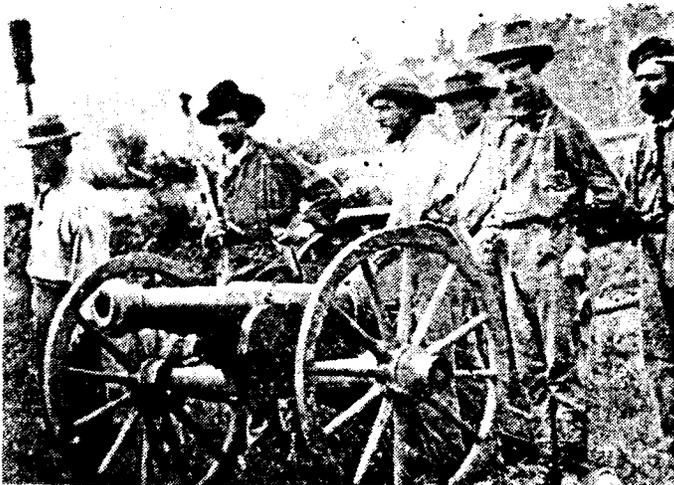
It couldn't have been more to the point if Lenin had had Podhoretz in mind.

Vidal "explained... that my mother's family had fought for the Confederacy and my father's for the Union, and that the Civil War was—and is—to the United States what the Trojan War was to the Greeks, the great single tragic event that continues to give resonance to our Republic" (*Nation*, 22 March 1986). But Podhoretz, who established his reputation as a notorious racist back in the '60s with his essay "My Negro Problem—And Ours," is not interested in the war that freed blacks from chattel slavery and raised the hopes of a future of black equality in the U.S.

In the same way, anyone seeking to understand England (or read Shakespeare) had better know something about the Wars of the Roses, a bloody civil war which raged from 1455 to 1485 and curtailed the power of the feudal lords, leading to the founding of the strong, centralized monarchy of the Tudor dynasty, facilitating the union with Scotland.

Jews and the Civil War

The Civil War drew into its battles people of many origins and many tongues. The war to defeat the slaveholders inspired all who believed in the principles of human equality and brotherhood first established by the Great French Revolution. Nine generals in the Union Army were native-born Germans, many of them refugees from reaction following the defeat of the revolutions of 1848. The defense of Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg was led by divisions under the Germans Steinwehr and Schurz. Germans, who at that time made up fully one-half of the population of St. Louis, saved Missouri as a free state through pitched battles against the secessionists in the streets of the city.



Kansas State Historical Society



Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly

Free-soilers (left) fought pro-slavery "border ruffians" in the struggle for Bleeding Kansas, 1854-1856. John Brown (right) carried the fight to Harpers Ferry, Virginia, trying to lead a slave insurrection, 1859. For his heroic actions, Brown was executed, his last words predicting the bloody war soon to tear the country apart.



NY Public Library

Ulysses S. Grant, 1876.

Although the Jewish population of the U.S. at that time was quite small, many Jews fought in the war—the vast majority for the Union, since 90 percent of American Jews lived in the North. Anti-Semitism in the South was virulent under the Confederacy, and many Jews left after the war. A notorious exception (among others), Simon Baruch, grandfather of Bernard Baruch, made his fortune as quartermaster of the Confederate Army and was later a member of the KKK. However, it is no accident that the regime which held the black man in barbarous chains would seek the destruction of the Jew.

This point was well understood by militants like August Bondi, who was one of three German-speaking Jewish companions of John Brown when he fought the slaveholders and their thugs in Bleeding Kansas. Bondi, a participant in the revolution of 1848 in Vienna at the age of 15, came to the U.S. with his parents and settled in St. Louis. In 1855 he went to Kansas to fight for freedom and met John Brown. He was part of Brown's band at Pottawatomie where anti-slavery fighters battled the pro-South border ruffians. Largely because of Brown and other free-soilers, Kansas entered the Union as a free state.

In his attack on Vidal in the 19 May 1986 *New York Times*, "Vidal, Waldheim, Grant," William Safire mentions a famous incident of the Civil War in which General Grant expelled all Jews from the state of Tennessee. Certainly it is true that anti-Semitism was a large factor in this shameful incident, but there is more to the story. The order originated because there was widespread smuggling of gold and silver across army lines to the Confederacy, and some Jews, in their occupation as "money men," were involved in this. Real atrocities did occur against innocent people, and Lincoln rescinded the order.

Safire does not mention the sequel: after the war, when Grant was running for president as a Republican, this incident was widely debated among Jews. Josiah Cohen, the first Jewish member of the Pittsburgh bar, argued:

"I have always held political opinions consonant with the Republican platform.... No amount of sophistry can

induce me to change my opinions or sacrifice my principles by reason of that unfortunate order of General Grant's in reference to the Jews. That the order was unjust I cannot deny, but it sinks into atomic insignificance when compared with the life of this Government... I shall, therefore, vote the Republican ticket."

—quoted in Bertram Wallace Korn,
American Jewry and the Civil War

Men like Josiah Cohen understood that the struggle for Reconstruction waged by the federal government in the South pre-empted the debate over the infamous order. After the war freedom for blacks in the South was enforced at bayonet point by the Union Army, black and white. It was as clear then as it is today that the struggle against anti-Semitism is a struggle against racism of all kinds. When Reconstruction was betrayed and the hopes of black equality died, anti-Semitism too was reconfirmed in this deeply chauvinist and racist society. It's no accident that the Ku Klux Klan was reborn in 1915 in Georgia with the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish businessman framed up for the murder of a white girl.

Norman Podhoretz Is Not Ashamed of America

Vidal, as a disaffected scion of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ruling elite, knows what country he's in: Amerikkka. Vidal thinks it is bad that nations should steal other people's land and kill, bomb and mutilate those people into extinction, as the Israelis are trying to do to the Palestinians and as the Americans did to the Indians and tried to do to the Vietnamese. As he says in "The Empire Lovers Strike Back," "We stole other people's land. We murdered many of the inhabitants. We imposed our religion—and rule—on the survivors. General Grant was ashamed of what we did to Mexico, and so am I. Mark Twain was ashamed of what we did in the Philippines, and so am I.

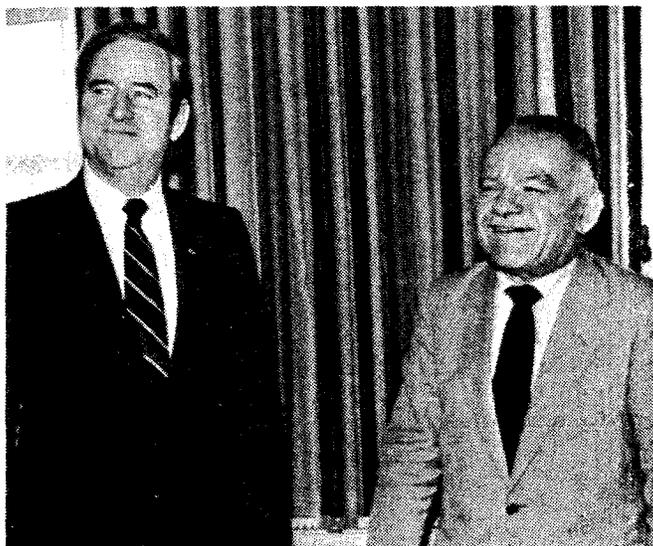
Thomas E. Crowell Publ.



General Edward Salomon (right), a German-born Jew, was a hero in the defense of Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg (above).



American Jewish Archives



UPI



Gotfryd/Newsweek

Norman Podhoretz' unholy anti-Soviet alliance. Left: Podhoretz; above left: Jerry Falwell of the viciously anti-Semitic, pro-Israel Moral Majority; above right: Zionist terrorist Yitzhak Shamir.

Midge is not because in the Middle East another predatory people is busy stealing other people's land in the name of an alien theocracy. She is a propagandist for these predators (paid for?), and that is what all this nonsense is about."

Norman Podhoretz is a political spokesman and propagandist for every kind of bigotry, hatred and oppression. A close personal and ideological associate of Jeane Kirkpatrick and Irving Kristol in the pages of *Commentary*, Podhoretz is a founding member of The Committee on the Present Danger. These ultrahawks have been advocating a nuclear first strike against Russia for decades; they spring out of the same circles of the New York intelligentsia who leaped into the McCarthy witchhunt.

The "neo-conservative" circle thinks that their ostentatious anti-communism and anti-black racism will save them, as the European Zionists thought in Hitler's day, from the nativist race-hate of their not-so-"neo" reactionary allies. But as we pointed out in "Pat Robertson: Sinister Bigot" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 414, 24 October 1986): "Zionist nationalists who want to be theocratic politicians would be smarter going to Israel, where they have the back-

ing of a state power and the social weight of the dominant chauvinism." When "born again" presidential contender Pat Robertson rants that Christians (i.e., WASPs) feel more strongly about "patriotism" and "love of country" than other Americans (*New York Times*, 19 September 1986), he's making it clear that in his America there will be no place even for reactionary, anti-communist, Zionist Jews. Pat Robertson also baited Norman Lear, president of the liberal People for the American Way, for being Jewish and lacking Robertson's "heritage"; he actually said what the Zionists have accused Gore Vidal of saying. In the United States—a white, Christian, English-speaking country—bigotry triumphant will be deeply anti-black, anti-Asian, anti-Hispanic, anti-Catholic, anti-gay and anti-Jewish.

Vidal is appalled that a section of Jewish public opinion in the U.S. has turned against the left, politically and socially, and is making common cause with people who long for the "Final Solution." To the bigoted nouveau elite Podhoretz clique, he warns: "Joyously they revel in the politics of hate, with plangent attacks on blacks and/or fags and/or liberals, trying, always, to outdo those moral majoritarians who will, as Armageddon draws near, either convert all the Jews, just as the Good Book says, or kill them" (*Nation*, 22 March 1986).

Past clashes between Vidal and Podhoretz/Decter have centered on a point which Vidal understands very well: that the struggle for democratic rights and human decency is indivisible. Vidal challenged the *Commentary* crowd: "Since these neo-Naumannites are going to be in the same gas chambers as the blacks and the faggots, I would suggest a cease-fire and a common front against the common enemy, whose kindly voice is that of Ronald Reagan and whose less than kindly mind is elsewhere in the board rooms of the Republic" ("Pink Triangle and Yellow Star," *The Second American Revolution*. Naumann was a German Jew who embraced Nazism). But Podhoretz wears his bigotry proudly, and whines that the AIDS epidemic has confirmed his vile view that "there is a suicidal impulse at work in homosexual promiscuity" (*Commentary*, November 1986). And Decter is infamous for her snide dismissal of all women's liberationists as a bunch of spoiled brats throwing a tantrum.

We Marxists understand that a common front of all the oppressed must be forged behind the social weight of the integrated labor movement, under the leadership of a revolutionary party which acts as tribune of the people. When the Nazis targeted Chicago's gay community in 1982, the Spartacist League initiated a successful united-front mobilization centered on the trade unions and drawing in gays and women, blacks and Holocaust survivors from Skokie. The same year, an SL-initiated demonstration against a planned Klan march in Washington, D.C. mobilized over 5,000 predominantly black workers and youth and prevented the racist thugs from showing their faces in that majority black, Southern city. Race-terror received a big setback. It's in that spirit that we raise the banner "Finish the Civil War! For a Third, Socialist American Revolution!"

Podhoretz, Pollard and "Dual Loyalty"

From before the Civil War to the post-World War II influx of Holocaust survivors, the vast masses of Jewish

Blacks, Gays, Jews, Minorities – Nazis Want to Destroy Us & Ours! STOP THEM! 7 Committee Against the Nazis

Spartacist-initiated united front stopped Nazi provocation against Gay Pride Day, Chicago, 1982. For labor/black action to smash fascist terror!



Workers Vanguard

(and other) immigrants to this country strove to integrate themselves, or at least prepare their children for integration, into American society. They took pride in educating themselves in the English language and American history and culture. It was not a question of wrapping themselves in the "Stars and Stripes," as Vidal aptly says of the Podhoretzes, "like a designer kaftan." Many immigrants became trade-union militants and left-wing activists. Indeed, one of the formative struggles of the early American Communist movement was against those elements of the foreign-language federations who thought they could implant a Bolshevik party in this country without any contact with American culture, without even speaking English.

Podhoretz well knows that in raising the question of "dual loyalty" Vidal is not talking about people like Woody Allen or Admiral Hyman Rickover, founder of the American nuclear submarine fleet. But the case of Jonathan Pollard, self-confessed spy for Israel, is another matter,

sharply posing the "loyalty" question. The life sentence handed down by the U.S. courts certainly shows what the American ruling class really believes about Zionist "dual loyalty"—Pollard was treated as if his controllers were in the Kremlin (but we don't hear Podhoretz screaming "anti-Semite" at the truly anti-Semitic gang in the White House).

Loyalty to a state power is a quite different matter from cultural tradition and religious sentiment. Yet the Zionists, quite dangerously, want to equate them. Today, the theocratic state of Israel demands supranational loyalty from Jews throughout the world, just as the Nazi Reich demanded the allegiance of all ethnic Germans. Israel is the only country in which (Jewish) Americans can automatically exercise dual citizenship. Podhoretz considers this just fine, but as liberal American rabbi Balfour Brickner put it, "I'm not some crypto-Israeli living with an exile mentality here in America, waiting for some opportune moment to pack my bags and run off" (*New York Times*, 16 April).

Black History and the Class Struggle

A Spartacist Pamphlet 25c

Black History and the Class Struggle

A Spartacist Pamphlet 75c

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Israeli liberal Shlomo Avineri taunted American Jews troubled by the Pollard affair and its anti-Semitic backlash, "You too have to be emancipated" (*New York Times*, 11 March). In the Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* (12 December 1985) a writer commented after Pollard's capture:

"The 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' are of course a fabrication and a slander from the aspect of external facts, and for sure from the point of view of the aim of 'Jewish rule over the world.' But is it really so impossible, and furthermore: is it so undesirable, that, indeed, every Jew in the world should act in solidarity with the Jews in times of emergency, and give superior loyalty to his duty to the Jewish nation above any other loyalty?"

Most American Jews, for all the prevailing pro-Zionist sentiment, would rather not be "emancipated" into theocratic Israel. As one said in response to Avineri's challenge, "There is something about the stream of Israelis coming to New York and not New Yorkers moving to Israel that gets them upset" (*New York Times*, 16 April). Nor do we notice Podhoretz and Decter hopping aboard El Al on a one way trip to Tel Aviv. As Vidal commented, "Jewish joke, circa 1900: A Zionist is someone who wants to ship other people off to Palestine" (*Nation*, 22 March 1986).

Podhoretz has been able to maintain his loyalty to both states because of a fanatical anti-communism as holy to him as Islam to the Ayatollah. But the imperialists' strategic anti-Soviet consensus does not, much to Reagan's chagrin, liquidate differences in national interest. Despite Israel's complete reliance on American support, the Pollard affair yet again demonstrates that Israel is not simply a puppet of the U.S. The Zionist rulers know that their "goyishe" senior partner in Washington and the rest of the world are anti-Semites who couldn't give a rat's ass for a "Jewish homeland." Has Podhoretz forgotten that the viciously anti-Semitic Nixon didn't trust Henry Kissinger,



Sabra/Shatila 1982: Zionist genocidal massacre. Israel's blitzkrieg into Lebanon exposed Zionists' Nazi-like aims.

whom he called "Jew-boy," to deal with Near East affairs for years?

Israel: Deathtrap for Jews

From its inception Israel has been a garrison state armed to the teeth, founded on the "racial imperative" that 100 million indigenous Arabs would have to accept its "manifest destiny" to rule from the Euphrates to the Nile. The Zionist state has necessarily depended on the sponsorship of one or another imperialist power, but it has not always been the U.S. Until de Gaulle shifted French policy decisively in favor of the Arab regimes at the time of the Six Day War in 1967, France had been the main Israeli quartermaster. Israel never forgot (or forgave) the French "betrayal," and continued to pursue the development of its own nuclear arsenal. Mordechai Vanunu faces the death penalty in Israel for his sensational and courageous exposure of the existence of their stash of some 100 to 200 nuclear warheads. The Israeli madmen, in pursuit of their Hitlerite ambitions, are obviously prepared to incinerate their Arab neighbors, but a nuclear storehouse of this size, which makes them the world's sixth largest nuclear power, means they have a much bigger target in mind: *Russia*.

Podhoretz says it's anti-Semitic to compare Israel's actions in Lebanon in September of 1982 with Nazi Germany. But there is no better comparison: it's *genocide*. The massacre of thousands of Palestinian refugees at the Sabra and Shatila camps was planned and executed by the Zionist madmen and their Lebanese henchmen. Begin's disgusting response to this truth was to charge the rest of the world with anti-Semitism: "Goyim kill goyim, and they immediately come to hang the Jews" (*New York Times*, 22 September 1982). But the Sabra/Shatila massacre sickened hundreds of thousands of Israelis. By now, many Jews have learned that the line "Israel right or wrong" is dangerous to



Library of Congress

Garment workers rally for eight-hour day. Jewish workers played key role in U.S. radical and trade-union movement, but to Podhoretz Jewish leftists are "self-haters."

themselves. They don't want to have to take responsibility for every Israeli atrocity. Israel's vast imperial appetites are limited by its narrow social resources: three million Jews cannot conquer 100 million Arabs, and every square foot of new Arab land Israel seeks to absorb heightens lethal contradictions for the "Jewish state." Zionist Israel is a death-trap for the Jewish people.

The American commitment to Israel is hardly irreversible. The severity of spy Pollard's sentence reflects the deep division within American ruling circles over Israel. And it's among Podhoretz' pro-Israeli pals on the far right where you find deep-seated anti-Semitism. Of course, part of the outrage over Pollard is simply diversion from Reagagate and expresses the boundless hypocrisy of the American bourgeoisie, which spies on everybody, Israel included (witness the "revelations" of pro-Zionist Senator Durenberger). But the Pollard affair is grist to the mill of sinister forces who would tar all Jews with the brush of "traitor," a fact which even the Zionist superhawks (their belligerency a reflection of their insecurity) recognize.

The bloodthirsty Israeli attack on a virtually unarmed spy ship, the USS *Liberty*, killing 34 American sailors during the 1967 Near East war, created massive disaffection in the American military establishment partly because of the conspiracy cover-up by both the American Zionists and the Pentagon. (What other government could carry out premeditated murder of 34 Americans in cold blood without even getting a slap on the wrist!) The nativist, reactionary America First committee has run ads in the *New York Times* "in memory of the USS *Liberty*," using the atrocity to further its own anti-Semitic interests. Naturally, the Zionist cover-up feeds the America Firsters' image of them as disloyal.

Israel's aim in hitting the *Liberty* was clear—the ship was to sink and there were to be no survivors. One account provides convincing evidence that the Israelis believed the ship had picked up information about their planned attack on Syria. After Israeli jets swooped in, took out the communication system and rained down napalm, patrol boats made three torpedo hits and machine-gunned the fire hoses and rubber life rafts in which the men were trying desper-



Der Höhepunkt der Komödie
Die jüdischen Flüchtlinge und Juden, die sich während der Überfahrt (Kontakts) ihrer bewohnten Kabinen, merkten bei der Landung in England die „ausgezeichneten Opfer der barbarischen Nazis“.

Stein and Day

"Democratic" imperialist countries refused entry to Jewish refugees who left Germany on St. Louis, 1939. Nazis gloated: "The High Point of the Comedy" (above). The journey across the Atlantic and back ended in despair; most died in the Holocaust.

ately to escape. A wing of the U.S. ruling class is still seething about the whole thing.

Zionists Seek to Re-Ghettoize Jews

Zionism has always been the handmaiden of anti-Semitism, accepting and promoting it in order to justify conquest of the "Promised Land." The Zionists have collaborated with the most notorious anti-Semites, from mass murderers like tsarist minister von Plehve, Ukrainian pogromist Petliura and the Nazis, to outright bigots like Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, on the basis not only of the most cynical *Realpolitik* but of common aims—Jews don't belong in anyone "else's" country. And who are Podhoretz' collaborators today? There's Podhoretz' pal from The Committee on the Present Danger, James Buckley. His Radio Free Europe (which is now establishing a transmitter in Israel) shrilly demands "free Soviet Jewry" while justifying pogroms that slaughtered 100,000 Jews during Petliura's White terror in the Ukraine in 1919-20. Edwin Meese's Justice Department scoured the world for a piece of real estate where convicted Nazi war criminal Karl Linnas would be safe from Soviet justice, before Meese finally gave up and let him be deported to Estonia. Former Reagan aide Pat Buchanan defends "Ivan the Terrible" Demjanjuk in the pages of the *New York Times* (31 March), scarcely deigning to conceal his view that Demjanjuk's accusers—survivors of the extermination camps—are a bunch of unreliable Commie-symp.

It was the transnational character of the Jewish "people-class" that the Nazis, as rabid nationalists, hated—just as they hated communism because it is internationalist and Catholicism because it is anti-national. It is precisely this quality, which made many Jews key in modern history, that the Zionists too hate about the Jews; their "solution" is to re-ghettoize the Jews into their "own" state, in effect running the film of history backward.



Bitburg, 1985: Reagan obscenely salutes Nazi SS graves.



NY Public Library

Under the terror of the Spanish Inquisition many Jews converted to Christianity and were then persecuted as "New Christians."

It is no accident that of the four most influential thinkers of the past 200 years—Darwin, Marx, Freud and Einstein—three were Jewish. (The Nazis hated Darwin too.) Speaking of Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky and Freud, Isaac Deutscher—himself a good example of the phenomenon—wrote in "The Non-Jewish Jew":

"They were *a priori* exceptional in that as Jews they dwelt on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures. They were born and brought up on the borderlines of various epochs. Their mind matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilized each other. They lived on the margins or in the nooks and crannies of their respective nations. Each of them was in society and yet not in it, of it and yet not of it. It was this that enabled them to rise in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations, and to strike out mentally into wide new horizons and far into the future.
 "All of them had this in common, that the very conditions in which they lived and worked did not allow them to reconcile themselves to ideas which were nationally or relig-

iously limited and induced them to strive for a universal *Weltanschauung*."

In contrast, there's Podhoretz' poisonous opinion of the cosmopolitan, historically socialist Jewish working class and intelligentsia. He says: "From Karl Marx to Noam Chomsky... anti-Semitic and self-hating Jews have been a familiar presence in left-wing circles" (*New York Post*, 6 May 1986). Podhoretz will never forgive the Enlightenment for casting doubt on the absolute authority of religious fundamentalism (which the Ayatollahs in Israel and Iran are now trying to restore).

A Radical Egalitarian in the Age of Imperialism

Readers of our press will know that Gore Vidal has long been sort of a favorite of ours (see "Goring Oxes," *Workers Vanguard* No. 359, 20 July 1984). We've enjoyed his caustic and perceptive criticism of the American scene, both contemporary and historical. As a descendant of an old upper-class political family, Vidal knows the American bourgeoisie from the inside and delights in exposing some of its more holy myths. In a recent interview (*Vanity Fair*, June 1987) he said:

"If you're the editor of the *New York Times* or the president of Chase Manhattan, there is no central command giving you your orders. But these people got the job because they think alike. They are brought up the same way, taught the same things; they go to the same schools. Later you find them on the same board of directors. There is indeed a ruling class, but it's the best-kept secret in the United States."

We can't wait to read Vidal's new novel *Empire*, which deals scathingly with Teddy Roosevelt and his big stick. Vidal's novel *Burr* celebrated Aaron Burr, the archvillain of school history texts, and debunked Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. In *Julian*, he exposed the dirty feet of the revered icon, Christianity. *Creation* attacked the European-centered concept of world history by describing the highly developed civilizations of Persia, India and China which co-existed with the wretched little slave-based Athenian "democracy."

Gore Vidal is a man who forthrightly attempts to confront the problems of race and sexuality in this deeply bigoted country. These are truths the American establish-

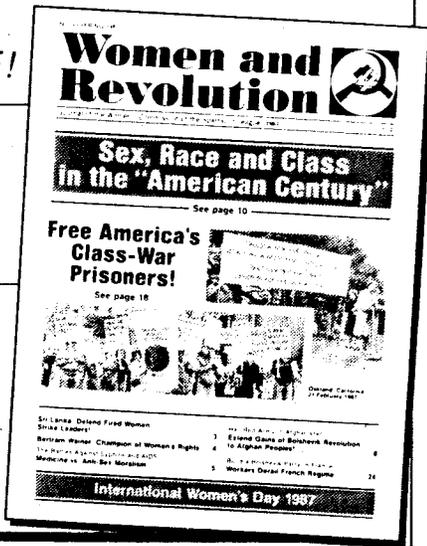
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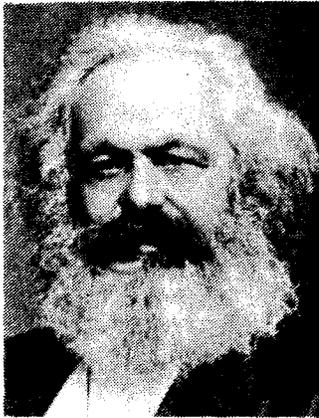
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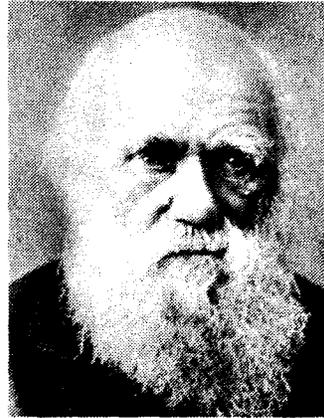
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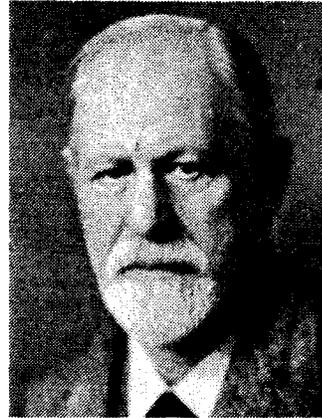




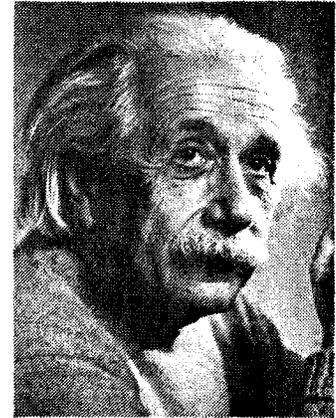
Wide World
Karl Marx



Elliott and Fry
Charles Darwin



Farrar, Straus & Giroux
Sigmund Freud



Karsh, Ottawa
Albert Einstein

ment intellectuals would prefer to keep under the rug. So, frequently not only conservatives but also liberals denounce those who address these questions as "racists" or "sexists." And Vidal's enemies have deliberately twisted the irony of his fine essays "Requiem for the American Empire" and "The Empire Lovers Strike Back." Vidal has sadly left himself open to being baited as anti-Asian because irony in American political life, especially on the race question, often doesn't work. Thus when Vidal refers to "one billion grimly efficient Asiatics," he means to mock the racist worldview of the American imperialists. His detractors, however, pluck the words out of their context and brand Vidal a racist. Vidal concludes his piece with a review of the current state of the U.S. economy: now a debtor nation for the first time since World War I, the U.S. has lost its economic hegemony to Japan. Mocking the American imperialists, Vidal comments, "Now the long-feared Asiatic colossus takes its turn as world leader, and we—the white race—have become the yellow man's burden. Let us hope that he will treat us more kindly than we treated him" (*Nation*, 11 January 1986). This is emphatically not the language of a racist.

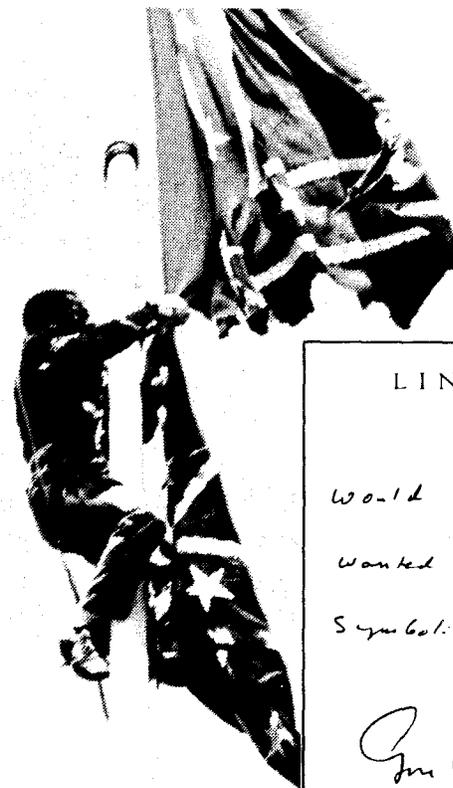
Yet there is a problem here. With increasing anti-Japanese protectionist poison a daily subject of debate, the word "Asiatic" is loaded. (We might add that "faggot," which Vidal likes to use to mock anti-gay bigots, is also objectionable.) Vidal risks being seriously misunderstood. But the witchhunters' lack of understanding of Vidal's irony is deliberate and malicious. His enemies are trading on racist hysteria and liberal guilt to twist his very denunciation of racism into support.

However, Vidal's radical egalitarianism doesn't provide him with many answers to the dilemmas he so scathingly describes. So, mocking the American imperialists who are losing out to the Japanese economic powerhouse, he has suggested a united front between the U.S. and the USSR against Japan. Of course the likelihood of this occurring is about as great as that of Podhoretz joining a gay rights rally, but Vidal plainly enjoys the shrieks of horror from the *Commentary* Cold Warriors.

Vidal is no Marxist, but he certainly has an unerring nose for sniffing out oppression, bigotry and pretension. The bad boy of the bourgeoisie has told the simple truth: those who sneer at the Civil War are willful foreigners in the United States. And the studied ignorance of American social reality evinced by Podhoretz, Decker et al. is clearly in

the service of the racist, genocidal theocracy in Israel. It doesn't really take a Marxist to see through Podhoretz' attempt to frame up Vidal as an anti-Semite.

But it will take communist revolution internationally to preserve the gains of the bourgeois revolution and the Enlightenment. The choice really is socialism or barbarism. And we assure Vidal, whose historical novels are a big hit in the USSR, that, unlike the prudish and socially oppressive bureaucrats who have usurped political power in the Soviet Union, genuine communists will also publish *Myra Breckinridge*. ■



Workers Vanguard

LINCOLN
 would also have
 wanted the flag's
 symbolic removal
Jim Vidal

After Spartacist supporter Richard Bradley tore down Confederate flag flying in San Francisco Civic Center, April 1984, Vidal autographed for us the title page of his novel *Lincoln*: Lincoln "would also have wanted the flag's symbolic removal."

Gore Vidal: Bad Boy of the Bourgeoisie

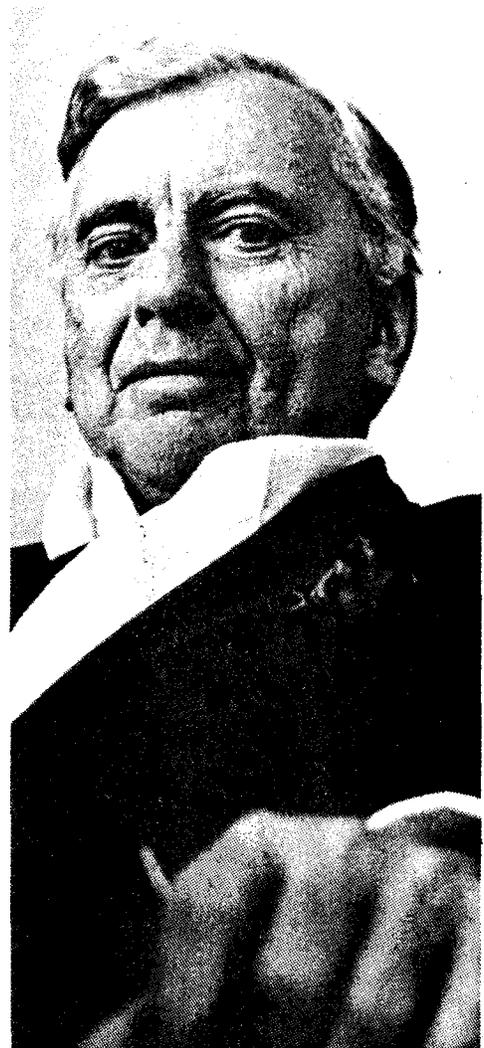
Zionist bigots are trying to brand novelist and essayist Gore Vidal as a racist and an anti-Semite. The Reaganite *New Republic* (29 April 1986) claimed his "brazen racist hate" has made him fit only for the "funny farm." Former Nixon adviser William Safire tarred him with the brush of Nazi Waldheim. And the liberal *Village Voice* (1 April 1986) denounced his "anti-Semitic screed." The dispute even made the big league of literary/political feuds, the op-ed page of the *Washington Post*. The same quotes cropped up in journal after journal: Vidal calling the Israelis "a predatory people... busy stealing other people's land in the name of an alien theocracy." And another favorite was Vidal tagging Norman Podhoretz, editor of the "neo-conservative" Zionist magazine *Commentary*, one of "our Israeli fifth columnists... not planning to become... an 'assimilated American'."

Is Vidal baiting American Jews as foreigners, the old "rootless cosmopolitan" charge? No, Vidal simply made the correct point that Podhoretz renounced his American birthright when he sneered at the Civil War, "the central event in the American historical consciousness," in the words of historian James M. McPherson (*Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*). As columnist Edwin M. Yoder Jr. commented (*Washington Post*, 23 May 1986):

"The truth is that Norman Podhoretz asked for it... by professing an ostentatious indifference to early American history.

"... if relevance is the test, the Civil War has plenty, even for those whose ancestors arrived after it. A mutual friend of ours once had occasion to remind Podhoretz that U.S. labor and immigration policies might have been quite different if the South had prevailed. The industrialization drive might not have made the United State a free-labor haven for the dispossessed in the later 19th century. There might have been no Ellis Island."

In classic frame-up style, Vidal's detractors have rarely addressed themselves to the substance of this dispute. Podhoretz and his wife, Midge Decter, kicked it off when they went after Vidal for his scathing denunciation of the dirty history of American imperialism, "Requiem for the American Empire." First given as a fund-raising lecture for



**Gore Vidal
towers over
Zionist
smear
campaign.**

Helmut Newton

the writers association American PEN in the fall of 1985, the essay was published by the *Nation* (11 January 1986). In the pages of Murdoch's *New York Post* (3 December 1985) and the February 1986 *Contentions* (newsletter of that hawks' nest, Committee for the Free World) Podhoretz and Decter rather pathetically attempted to debunk Vidal's on-target historical polemic. Vidal defended himself in an aptly named piece, "The Empire Lovers Strike Back" (*Nation*, 22 March 1986), in which he made the biting characterization of the *Commentary* crowd as "Israeli fifth columnists."

Vidal dared to speak the truth about the *Commentary* crowd which is part of the Zionist lobby devoted to pressuring Congress for bigger bucks for Israel. Because of this, Vidal is the victim of a frame-up in the service of the anti-Soviet war drive—a character assassination orchestrated by the Zionist right. They were after him because of his pristine *bourgeois* opposition to imperialism. So these Cold War yahoos posturing as "intelligentsia" tried to give him the Joseph McCarthy (aka Joseph Goebbels) treatment. But lately, as genuine anti-Semites make hay over the controversy about confessed and convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Jay Pollard, it's been coming back to haunt them.

The Zionist smear campaign didn't really catch on. In an article with the melodramatic and lying title of "The Hate

continued on page 39