



## The Russian Revolution and the Collapse of Stalinism

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# The Stalinist Thermidor, the Left Opposition and the Red Army

## A Correction to an Earlier Article

Recently, a comrade in Italy raised the question of whether Leon Trotsky, in fighting against the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union, should not have used his influence as founder and leader of the Red Army to militarily oust Stalin and his cohorts before they had consolidated their grip on the Communist Party (CPSU) and state apparatus. A response by comrade Marlow of the Spartacist League/U.S. to this question, explaining why the International Communist League upholds Trotsky's rejection of such a course of action, is printed below in edited form.

This exchange of views sparked a reappraisal of a statement in an earlier article in *Spartacist*, a review by Daniel Dauget of Pierre Broué's French-language biography of Trotsky. That review included the following paragraph:

"But in 1923, when Lenin finally decided that Trotsky was better than Stalin and made a bloc with him, Trotsky flinched and made a compromise with Kamenev that he wouldn't fight Stalin. We could argue that Trotsky's friend, the commander of the Moscow military garrison [Muralov], should have come with his soldiers and assisted the delegates at the Congress in arriving at the correct decision advocated by Lenin—for instance to send Stalin to Outer Mongolia, to a menial job. Trotsky himself had occasion to point out the real dangers inherent in such a situation. But in discussing his refusal to bring his extensive support in the Red Army to bear in the internal party struggle ("How Did Stalin Defeat the Opposition?", November 1935), Trotsky, while insisting that it could have been done without a single drop of blood being shed, did not take on the compelling argument in favor: it would have bought time. In the Soviet Union buying time would have permitted the implementation of a policy of rebuilding the confidence and strength of the proletariat; Germany in 1923 was in the throes of revolution and the Chinese Revolution was to

come to a head only two years later. Five years might have brought revolution in several major imperialist centers. The revolutionary proletariat will never be able to win definitively until it dominates a rationally planned world market, and that means world revolution."

—Daniel Dauget, "Pierre Broué's *Trotsky*—Tailored for Perestroika," *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 45-46 (Winter 1990-91)

Couched coyly in the conditional tense, the paragraph does not actually advocate a military coup d'état against Stalin at the time of the 12th Congress, but in positing that the presence of Red Army soldiers might have "assisted the delegates...in arriving at the correct decision" and alluding to Trotsky's "insisting that it could have been done without a single drop of blood being shed," it clearly raises this possibility. While this proposal appears in a signed article not necessarily reflective of the views of the *Spartacist* editorial board, the theoretical and programmatic implications are far enough removed from the views of the International Communist League that we feel compelled to issue a correction. As one comrade put it in our recent internal discussion, the paragraph "is *at best* fatuous, and at worst it smacks of the kind of looking for shortcuts that leads to revisionism."

In fact, the flawed paragraph effectively contradicts the rest of the article, which, while explaining the objective conditions that favored Stalin as the exponent of an increasingly self-conscious bureaucratic caste within the Soviet party and state, explicitly *condemns Trotsky's failure to take up the battle to oust Stalin at the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923. It was only such a political fight within the party that could have bought time for the world revolution.* The key question was *party* leadership. And Trotsky *lacked the resolve and political understanding* at that time to launch a clear fight for leadership in the party.

Even within the framework of a workers state undergoing bureaucratic degeneration, the *consciousness of the vanguard of the proletariat* is primary. As was noted in a different article in the same issue of *Spartacist*:

"[Trotsky] writes, 'Progress towards socialism is inseparable from that state power which is desirous of socialism or which is constrained to desire it.' Thus, he concluded, without the intervention of a conscious proletarian vanguard, the collapse of the Stalinist political regime would lead inevitably to the liquidation of the planned economy and to restoration of private property."

—Albert St. John, "For Marxist Clarity and a Forward Perspective," *Spartacist* No. 45-46 (Winter 1990-91)

St. John was citing Trotsky's article, "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism" (*Writings 1934-35*). By 1935, when Trotsky wrote this article, the CPSU was no longer a Marxist workers party but the political organization of the bureaucratic caste which had seized political power from the working class in 1924. What was required was the forging of a new revolutionary workers party in the Soviet Union and a proletarian political revolution to return to the road of Leninist internationalism.

In the spring of 1923, what was necessary was an *internal factional struggle* to influence the consciousness of the

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L. Y. Leonidov

**Lenin and Trotsky (standing, center) with delegates to Tenth CP Congress, held March 1921, who mobilized to suppress anti-Communist Kronstadt mutiny.**

leadership layer in the CPSU and in the *Communist International*, as well as the consciousness of other layers of Soviet party members in the proletariat, and in the army. It was this consciousness which was intimately bound up with the prospects for revolution internationally, not least in Germany which was in 1923 in the midst of revolutionary turmoil. To pose this task solely in military terms is not only wrong given the still overwhelmingly peasant base of the Red Army, but it strongly implies a negation of the paramount importance of the vanguard party itself.

The first sentence of the flawed paragraph in our Broué review wrongly poses Lenin's 1923 bloc with Trotsky as if it were a subjective personal choice: "But in 1923, when Lenin finally decided that Trotsky was *better than Stalin* and made a bloc with him..." (emphasis added). While in his "Testament," written in December 1922 and January 1923, Lenin had criticized Trotsky for a "preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work," his growing criticisms of Stalin were of an entirely different character, underlined by the fact that the Testament called for Stalin's removal from the powerful position of General Secretary. Lenin's attempted bloc with Trotsky was based on decisive programmatic issues: defense of the state monopoly of foreign trade against the efforts of Stalin to dismantle it; the defense of the non-Russian nationalities, particularly the Georgian Communists, against Stalin & Co.'s heavy-handed administrative centralism, which smacked of Great Russian chauvinism; the need to establish an authoritative Rabkrin (Workers and Peasants Inspection) removed from Stalin's control to check and reverse growing bureaucratism in the party apparatus. Lenin had come to believe that the fate of the revolution depended on Stalin being fought and decisively defeated—that is why he planned to drop a "bombshell" on Stalin at the 12th Congress. However, he was struck by another stroke shortly before the Congress opened.

Lenin had a far better sense of the danger that Stalin represented than Trotsky, who made the fatal mistake of temporizing throughout the early period of the revolution's

degeneration. The bureaucratization of the Russian party was already in full swing by the spring of 1923; the bulk of the delegates to the 12th Congress were effectively *appointed* by regional secretaries, rather than elected by the party ranks. Most of the secretaries had, in turn, been appointed by the party Secretariat, at whose head stood Stalin, who had been appointed General Secretary the year before (see "Trotsky's Fight Against Stalinist Betrayal of Bolshevik Revolution," *Spartacist* No. 53, Summer 1997). Nonetheless, Stalin was fearful enough that Lenin's sharp attack on him would be revealed that he actively sought to come to agreement with Trotsky. Lenin had warned Trotsky to accept no compromises. But lacking Lenin's authority and experience in factional struggle and fearful that a fight would be seen as a personal power struggle, Trotsky accepted the tacit deal offered by Kamenev, with whom Stalin was then allied in a "troika" which also included Zinoviev. Stalin maintained his post as General Secretary while agreeing to Trotsky's resolutions on the national question and the Soviet economy.

The Bolsheviks, along with the Russian working class, looked urgently toward socialist revolution in the West to ease the economic conditions leading to bureaucratism in the Soviet state and party. All eyes were turned to Germany. But the prospects for proletarian insurrection in Germany in 1923 were aborted by the vacillations of the German party leadership, for which the Comintern leadership under Zinoviev bore heavy responsibility. Zinoviev had accepted the KPD's opportunist practice of lending parliamentary support to Social Democratic-led provincial governments in Germany, and with the theses on the "workers government" slogan at the Comintern's Fourth Congress he sought to codify the conditions under which the KPD could even enter such a *bourgeois* government. This helped to confirm the rightist Brandler leadership in its course of suicidal conciliation of the counterrevolutionary SPD. The German debacle shattered the immediate hopes for ending Soviet Russia's isolation.

At the same time strikes against deteriorating economic conditions swept the major Russian cities. In a series

of letters to the Russian Central Committee, Trotsky finally raised the call for an anti-bureaucratic struggle within the party: "Secretarial bureaucratism must be brought to an end. Party democracy must enjoy its rightful place—at least enough of it to prevent the party from the threat of ossification and degeneration" (Letter to the Central Committee, 8 October 1923, in *Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1923-25*). The troika saw to it that Trotsky was vilified and isolated at a subsequent plenum of the Central Committee, and a campaign against him opened within the party cells. But at the same time *Pravda* was opened to internal party debate, revealing a depth of opposition to the party regime which shocked the troika. Trotsky took the opportunity of publicly raising the need for an anti-bureaucratic campaign within the party in his series of letters to *Pravda* on the "New Course." Subsequently, however, he acquiesced to the Political Bureau's meaningless acceptance of his "New Course" resolution. Meanwhile, *Pravda* was closed to debate and the subsequent elections to the January 1924 13th Party Conference (at the time party conferences were generally held a few months before congresses) were rigged by the apparatus so that Trotsky's Left Opposition received only three delegates. *Stalin's victory at this conference marked the decisive degeneration of the revolution.*

The CPSU had launched a propaganda campaign in August 1923 to prepare the Soviet proletariat for the expected proletarian revolution in Germany; the German party's incapacity caused a wave of demoralization to sweep the Russian proletariat. The troika was able to ride this wave to their victory in January 1924; Lenin's death that same month dashed hopes that his authority might be brought to bear in future inner-party struggle. Subsequently the troika proclaimed the "Lenin levy," opening the floodgates of the CPSU to thousands of aspiring bureaucrats and diluting the historically forged proletarian vanguard.

Trotsky opened up a public campaign against the troika with the publication of *Lessons of October* in the fall of 1924. Stalin's promulgation of the dogma of "socialism in one country" around the same time provided a programmatic focus for opposition, but Trotsky still lacked a well-developed political sense of what Stalin represented. When Stalin turned on his erstwhile allies and made conciliatory gestures to Trotsky while destroying Zinoviev's power base in the Leningrad party and Kamenev's in Moscow in December 1925, Trotsky sat on his hands. When Trotsky finally consummated a bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev in the United Opposition of 1926-27, he compromised on the crucial question of the class character of the unfolding revolution in China, accepting Zinoviev's insistence on the formula "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," which had been proved outlived in the Russian Revolution. Only after the defeat of the second Chinese Revolution in 1927, which caused Trotsky to generalize his theory of permanent revolution to the rest of the semi-dependent and colonial capitalist countries, did the Left Opposition's battle take on a programmatic and theoretical consistency.

We have often noted that a key element in stiffening Trotsky's resolve was played by a letter written by Adolf Joffe, one of Trotsky's closest and most able comrades in the Left Opposition, shortly before he committed suicide in 1927: "You have often *abandoned your rightness* for the sake of an overvalued agreement, or compromise. This is a mistake.... You are right, but the guarantee of the victory of your rightness lies in nothing but the extreme unwillingness

to yield, the strictest straightforwardness, the absolute rejection of all compromise; in this very thing lay the secret of Lenin's victories." Taking this injunction to heart, it is clear Trotsky underwent a rather qualitative personal transformation. In the arduous struggles of the ensuing years, Trotsky pursued the granite hardness and political intransigence which had enabled Lenin to build the Bolshevik Party.

As the letter reprinted below points out, the Red Army of 1923 was not and could not be isolated from Soviet society. Trotsky himself was explicit in explaining why he rejected military action:

"There is no doubt that it would have been possible to carry out a military coup d'état against the faction of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, etc., without any difficulty and without even the shedding of any blood; but the result of such a coup d'état would have been to accelerate the rhythm of this very bureaucratization and Bonapartism against which the Left Opposition had engaged in struggle.

"The task of the Bolshevik-Leninists was by its very essence not to rely on the military bureaucracy against that of the party but to rely on the proletarian vanguard and through it on the popular masses, and to master the bureaucracy in its entirety, to purge it of its alien elements, to ensure the vigilant control of the workers over it, and to set its policy back on the rails of revolutionary internationalism."

—Leon Trotsky, "How Did Stalin Defeat the Opposition?", 12 November 1935 (*Writings 1935-36*)

In the elections for delegates to the 13th Party Conference in the fall of 1923, Trotsky's Left Opposition won *one-third* of the party cells in the Red Army, but as Marlow's letter notes, these were party members—the most conscious, proletarian elements. The army as a whole was still overwhelmingly peasant, as was the Soviet population as a whole. Given the economic devastation of the country, the proletariat itself was only a shell. Small-scale industry had begun to revive under the "New Economic Policy," a series of concessions allowing limited capitalist markets in agriculture and light industry; the "NEP men," small capitalist entrepreneurs, were coming to dominate local commerce. A layer of better-off peasants—the "kulaks"—was growing in the countryside. A coup by the peasant army, even if led in the initial period by party cadre, would inevitably have been a magnet for the kulaks and NEP men, i.e., for the forces of capitalist restoration, as Trotsky argued.

There is no shortcut to the only viable long-term basis for a revolutionary workers state: a class-conscious proletariat fighting in its historic interest, and that means the leadership of a revolutionary internationalist Bolshevik Party.

\* \* \*

11 July 1999

Dear Comrade Carlo,

I received your letter of 9 July concerning our supporter's question about whether or not Trotsky should have used the Red Army against Stalin. Since you seem to want a reply sooner rather than later, I have only been able to do rather cursory research. But the question is an interesting one and it should open a salutary discussion with our supporter.

There would certainly be no question of using the army at the 10th Congress—that was in 1921 and Lenin was still alive and well. This was where the ban on factions was voted as a *temporary, emergency* measure. Also, at the 10th Congress Lenin opposed Stalin's appointment as General Secretary; he only relented at the 11th Congress. By the end of 1922, Stalin had come out for the relaxation of the monopoly of foreign trade—a proposal which Lenin

vigorously opposed. In December 1922, Lenin wrote his "Testament" wherein he called for Stalin's removal as General Secretary. He fully intended to deliver this "bombshell" at the 12th Congress, scheduled for April, but was incapacitated by his second stroke in March. Prior to that Lenin had urged Trotsky to take up the fight against Stalin over the national question at the 12th Congress. As we know, Trotsky failed to carry out Lenin's instructions.

So I assume our supporter refers to the subsequent period, i.e., the summer of 1923 onward. Now to the specific question of using the Red Army; one cannot approach it as if Trotsky could simply have flipped a switch, as one does to light a room!

First, there is the political question: would it have been appropriate for Trotsky to go *outside* the party and use military force to accomplish what he couldn't do politically *within* the party? The latter was largely closed off by the bureaucratic strangulation of the party itself. But then you have to delve into the reasons for the bureaucratic degeneration, not simply in Stalin's drive for power. The fundamental thrust of Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution (see *The Revolution Betrayed*) was the economic backwardness of the Soviet Union and the failure of the revolution to spread internationally, especially the failed German Revolution in 1923. Thus the rise of the bureaucracy had deep socio-economic roots, combined with the virtual destruction of the Soviet proletariat during the Civil War, the corollary loss of Bolshevik cadre and the demoralization of the population as a whole.

Deutscher, in the second volume of his biography of Trotsky, *The Prophet Unarmed—Trotsky: 1921-1929*, lays out Trotsky's thinking concerning use of the army (see pp. 161-162 of the Oxford edition, in the chapter "The Anathema"). Unfortunately Deutscher does not give the source for some of his interpolations, but nothing I have found in Trotsky's *My Life* or the speech at the 13th Congress (in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1923-1925*) contradicts Deutscher's assertions. In case this is not readily accessible, I will quote the section in full, beginning with the infamous 13th Party Conference (not Congress):

"Trotsky was not accused of making any single move designed to use his position as Commissar of War to his political advantage. He acknowledged as a matter of course, the Politbureau's jurisdiction over the army. Consequently, he accepted, though not without protest, the dismissal and demotion of his followers from the most influential posts in his Commissariat and the appointment to them of his adversaries.

"It would be futile to speculate whether Trotsky would have succeeded if he had attempted a military *coup*. Early in the conflict, before the General Secretariat had begun to shift and shuffle the party personnel in the army, his chances of success might have been high; they dwindled later. He never tried to test the chances. He was convinced that a military *pronunciamiento* would be an irreparable setback for the revolution, even if he were to be associated with it. He had declared at the thirteenth congress that he saw in the party 'the only historic instrument which the working class possessed for the solution of its fundamental tasks'; and he could not try and smash that instrument with the army's hands. In any conflict with the party, he held, the army would have to rely on the support of counterrevolutionary forces and this would have condemned it to play a reactionary part. True, he saw 'degeneration' in the party. But this consisted in the breach between the leaders and the rank and file and in the party's loss of its democratic base. The task, as he saw it, was to reconstitute that base and to reconcile the leaders and the rank and file. Ultimately the revolution's salvation lay in a political revival 'down below,' in

the depth of society. Military action 'from above' could only usher in a régime even further removed from a workers' democracy than was the present government."

I think that the last sentence is really key: an army also reflects the contradictions of the society from which it is drawn. And if the Kronstadt revolt of 1921 was an indicator, the army by 1923 was hardly the politically motivated force that fought and won the Civil War which ended several years earlier. In effect, even if Trotsky was able to "use" the army, he would have been using forces politically even more backward than the Stalinist bureaucracy itself. The likely result would not have been a resurgence of proletarian power, but a short-lived bonapartist regime based on the armed peasantry. This in turn would have quickly led to outright capitalist counterrevolution since the peasantry, as an intermediate class, could not consolidate its own state power. The experience of France after 1848 is here quite instructive.

The second question is whether Trotsky could have pulled off such a coup, even if it was within his political calculations. I think that the answer is again no. By late 1923/early 1924 many of Trotsky's most able subordinates—all with exemplary records of service during the Civil War—had been replaced by officers and functionaries loyal to the Stalin faction. That's not to say that the influence of the Opposition was lacking—even prior to the 13th Party Conference in January 1924, Antonov-Ovseenko won about a third of the party cells in the military. But note that these were *party cells*—i.e., the most advanced elements one could hope to find within the military. While that one-third represented a force, I seriously doubt how much of it would have responded to a call for a military insurrection against the Soviet government. In fact, I suspect that most would have responded by denouncing such a call, and any comrades connected with it, as acting as agents for counterrevolution.

Our young supporter is reflecting quite healthy revolutionary sentiments, but there are no shortcuts to the revolutionary mobilization of the workers consciously in their own class interests.

As an aside, there is a nice section in Trotsky's *My Life*, which deals with a conversation Trotsky had with his old deputy in the military, Sklyansky. In it Trotsky presents a short analysis of the reasons for the rise of such a mediocrity as Stalin, and it seems that this stimulated Trotsky to undertake a more thorough study of the Soviet Thermidor.

"Tell me," Sklyansky asked, 'what is Stalin?'

"Sklyansky knew Stalin well enough himself. He wanted my definition of Stalin and my explanation of his success. I thought for a minute.

"Stalin," I said, 'is the outstanding mediocrity in the party.'

"This definition then shaped itself for me for the first time in its full import, psychological as well as social. By the expression on Sklyansky's face, I saw at once that I had helped my questioner to touch on something significant.

"You know," he said, 'it is amazing how, during this last period, the mean, the self-satisfied mediocrity is pushing itself into every sphere. And all of it finds in Stalin its leader. Where does it all come from?'

"This is the reaction after the great social and psychological strain of the first years of revolution. A victorious counter-revolution may develop its great men. But its first stage, the Thermidor, demands mediocrities who can't see farther than their noses. Their strength lies in their political blindness, like the mill-horse that thinks that he is moving up when really he is only pushing down the belt-wheel. A horse that sees is incapable of doing the work'."

Comradely greetings,  
Marlow

## The Russian Revolution and the Collapse of Stalinism

# The Bankruptcy of "New Class" Theories

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 was a shaping event of the 20th century. The end of the First World War saw a wave of proletarian revolutionary struggle across the globe, swelled by widespread revulsion at the historically unprecedented butchery of the interimperialist slaughter. Revolutionary working-class upsurges struck Russia, Finland, Italy, Hungary, Germany; elsewhere armies mutinied and massive, militant strikes disrupted industry on a scale never before seen. Yet the old tsarist empire was the only domain in which the working class seized and successfully maintained state power, going on to expropriate the capitalist class and begin the construction of a collectivized, planned economy. The leadership of Lenin's Bolshevik Party proved the decisive element in that victory. The vanguard layer organized by the Bolsheviks had achieved a thoroughgoing political split between themselves and the varieties of liquidationism, social-chauvinism, revisionism and reformism current in the workers movement of the tsarist empire. This enabled Lenin's revolutionary Marxist workers party, when the opportunity presented itself, to clear away the obstacles and lead the working class in smashing the bourgeois state and creating a state based on workers councils, or soviets.

When the Second International disintegrated as the war began, with most of its individual parties supporting their own imperialist governments and helping to lead the proletariat into the slaughterhouse, Lenin recognized that it was dead as a revolutionary force. The Bolsheviks attempted to regroup the revolutionary internationalists in the struggle for a Third International, a Communist International, which was finally founded in Moscow in 1919. But in Germany and Italy the vanguard of the class broke too late with the reformists and social-pacifists; in Hungary and Finland the aspiring Communists were united with the Social Democrats as the proletarian uprisings unfolded. Promising revolutionary situations foundered due to the immaturity of the revolutionary leadership. The Social Democrats, meanwhile, proved themselves an indispensable aid to the imperialists in shackling the working class to the capitalist order, providing the "democratic"

façade under which outright counterrevolutionary nationalist terror mobilized and did its bloody dirty work.

Writing after history's first great revolutionary wave in 1848, Karl Marx insisted that a revolution in any state in Europe could not last long without engulfing England:

"Any upheaval in economic relations in any country of the European continent, in the whole European continent without England, is a storm in a teacup. Industrial and commercial relations within each nation are governed by its intercourse with other nations, and depend on its relations with the world market. But the world market is dominated by England and England is dominated by the bourgeoisie."

— "The Revolutionary Movement," *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 1 January 1849, reprinted in *The Revolution of 1848-49* (1972)

### Tony Cliff and Max Shachtman: Pro-Imperialist Accomplices of Counterrevolution



Socialist Challenge



Donald Press

The "state capitalism" of Tony Cliff (left), as well as the "bureaucratic collectivism" of Max Shachtman, were "theoretical" justifications for their pro-imperialist program: support for "democratic" capitalism against the Soviet Union.

Without being able to build upon the world division of labor created by capitalism it would be impossible to create the material abundance necessary for the construction of a socialist society. "Want," as Marx had earlier put it, would "merely be made general, and destitution, the struggle for necessities, and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced" (*The German Ideology* [written 1845-46]). Moreover, as long as economically powerful capitalist nations continued to exist, reaction would hold a bastion from which to mobilize for a counterattack. Writ-

ten almost 80 years before Stalin promulgated the dogma of "building socialism in one country," Marx's words are a savage indictment of this absurdity.

The vicissitudes of the Russian Revolution after the Bolsheviks came to power reveal in abundant, sadistic detail the variety of weapons which world imperialism can bring to bear on an isolated revolutionary workers state. From the invasion by troops of 14 different capitalist nations, to an embargo on travel, trade and investment, to the arming of the indigenous forces of counterrevolution, the imperialist powers did their utmost to strangle isolated and economically devastated Soviet Russia. The world bourgeoisies refused to coexist with a state that had ripped a huge area of investment and exploitation out of the world market. That the workers state held out as a bastion of world revolution for five years in isolation was a major historical accomplishment; that in



**Soviet Left Oppositionists in Siberian exile, 1928, demonstrate on anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution. Center banner proclaims, "Long Live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."**

degenerated form the state issuing from October was maintained for almost 70 years is testimony to the incredible economic power of a planned and collectivized economy, despite the mismanagement of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste which seized power from the working class in early 1924. The continued historical reverberation of the Bolshevik Revolution was illustrated by the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of deformed workers states in the Stalinist image in East Europe, China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba.

A decisive factor in the degeneration of the Russian Revolution was the outcome of the revolutionary economic and political crisis which rocked Germany, WWI's defeated power, in 1923 when French troops invaded the Ruhr industrial region seeking payment of war reparations. At the end of 1918 in the midst of an unfolding revolution, the nucleus of the German Communist Party (KPD)—the Spartacist group led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht—had split from Karl Kautsky's centrist USPD. Kautsky's party used pseudo-Marxist rhetoric to mask its social-pacifism and opportunist practice, providing an essential cover for the outright reformist Social Democrats (SPD). The revolution of 1918-1919 was shipwrecked by the KPD's failure to separate itself from Kautsky earlier, but subsequent events were to prove that even afterward the party's programmatic and ideological break with Kautsky's centrism was far from complete. The problem was only exacerbated by the murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht in early 1919. It was not the leaders of the fledgling German Communist Party who answered Kautsky's savage attacks against the Russian Revolution, but Lenin in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918) and Trotsky in *Between Red and White* (1922). These works were written while their authors ran the Soviet state, fought the Civil War against the Whites, and inspired and led the Third International. The failure of the German party to even attempt a proletarian insurrection in the revolutionary year 1923 spread demoralization in the Soviet working class and prepared the way for Stalin's victory early the next year. As Trotsky so powerfully explicated in his *Lessons of October* (1924), the incapacity of the KPD in 1923 proved in the negative that the problem of revolutionary leadership is the decisive question of the imperialist epoch.

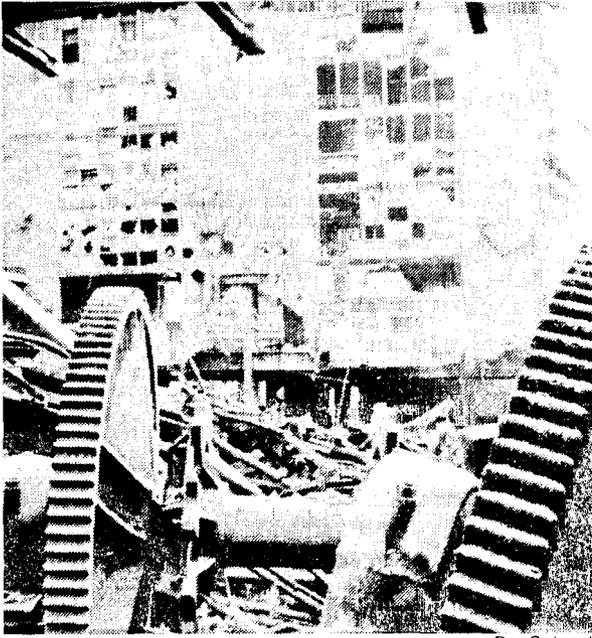
In its compulsion to destroy the world's first workers state, world imperialism enjoyed the assistance of its social-democratic lackeys and of many others to their left. From Karl Kautsky, to anarchists hostile to the dictatorship of the

proletariat, to Max Shachtman, who split from the American Trotskyist movement in 1939-40, to the now-defunct Maoist movement, all kinds of forces have put forward all kinds of explanations over the years purporting to show that the USSR was some kind of "capitalist" or "new class" society. The rise of the brutal, conservative Stalinist bureaucracy, sowing revulsion and confusion in the ranks of class-conscious workers everywhere, was a great gift to anti-socialist ideologues and their "left" tails who sought justification for making common cause with capitalist imperialism in the name of "democracy."

Today the best-known variant of such currents is the international tendency headed by Tony Cliff and the British Socialist Workers Party, whose affiliates include the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the U.S. The Cliffites (and their numerous offshoots, such as Workers Power) stand in the direct tradition of Max Shachtman's fundamental break from Trotskyism over the program of unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state against external imperialist attack or internal attempts at capitalist restoration. This illustrates unambiguously that state capitalist "theory" is a bridge to reconcile supposed "socialists" with their own ruling class.

The "new class" theories of these renegades from Trotskyism like Shachtman and Cliff were an attempt to justify their betrayal of the class interests of the proletariat and their own reconciliation with capitalism by denying the working-class nature of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the post-WWII East European deformed workers states. In reality these "theories" were nothing but attempts—dressed up in pseudo-Marxist terminology—to conceal their real program of capitulation to anti-communist bourgeois public opinion and the renunciation of a proletarian revolutionary perspective.

Thus, Shachtman's abandonment of unconditional defense of the USSR was precipitated by his capitulation to popular-frontist petty-bourgeois public opinion following the Soviet-German pact in 1939. In 1950, Tony Cliff broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International on the same question of defensism, this time precipitated by the anti-communist Cold War hysteria that accompanied the outbreak of the Korean War. Cliff reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defense of the Chinese and North Korean deformed workers states against imperialist attack, which took the form of a multi-nation "police action" under the auspices of the



Der Spiegel



Reiser/Bilderberg

**Capitalist restoration in the former deformed and degenerated workers states has brought unemployment and poverty to millions: dismantling of East German industry (left), elderly women selling their possessions at Moscow street market.**

United Nations. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and its social-democratic lackeys: it was a Labour government that dispatched British troops to Korea.

While Cliff's "theory" of state capitalism differs internally from the "bureaucratic collectivist" theory of Max Shachtman and originated a decade later, what they have in common is their service as vehicles for dumping the Trotskyist program of unconditional defense of the degenerated or deformed workers states from imperialist attack. Each took place on different national political terrains. Shachtman, operating in the U.S. during Roosevelt's "New Deal" on the eve of World War II, reflected the Orwellian view of the "horrors of totalitarianism" represented by Hitler and Stalin, which gripped the petty-bourgeois milieu to which he was responsive; Cliff was accommodating to the rotten British Labour Party—which Lenin described as a "bourgeois workers party"—at the outbreak of the Korean War. Thus each in its own time represented an accommodation to its own bourgeoisie's anti-Sovietism.

Little has been heard from supporters of the "theory" of "bureaucratic collectivism" since the Shachtmanites themselves became Cold Warriors in the extreme right wing of American social democracy. But a new book published in Britain by Sean Matgamna is attempting to revive "bureaucratic collectivism," publishing texts of Shachtman and the Shachtmanites in a collection entitled *The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism Volume I* (1999). Even as selected by a newfound admirer of Shachtman with the advantage of hindsight, Matgamna's volume contains ample material demonstrating the profound emptiness of his mentor's anti-Marxist analysis of the Stalinized USSR, as we shall see.

### "Socialism in One Country"

Though the Bolsheviks repulsed the imperialist invasions and won the Civil War, the young Soviet Republic was shackled with a technically and socially backward agricultural base and it lacked the resources necessary to quickly rebuild the infrastructure and industries devastated by the imperialist and Civil wars. The proletariat had almost ceased to exist, its most conscious elements killed in the Civil War or co-

opted into the state and party apparatus. Under these conditions the world's first workers state underwent a political counterrevolution with the virtual exclusion of the Left Opposition at the 13th Party Conference in January 1924. In the degenerated workers state that emerged, the bureaucratic apparatus headed by Stalin did not destroy the socialized property relations but usurped political power from the proletariat. In his retrospective analysis of the bureaucracy, Trotsky used an analogy with the ouster of the radical Jacobins on the 9th of Thermidor during the French Revolution:

"Socially the proletariat is more homogeneous than the bourgeoisie, but it contains within itself an entire series of strata that become manifest with exceptional clarity following the conquest of power, during the period when the bureaucracy and a workers' aristocracy connected with it begin to take form. The smashing of the Left Opposition implied in the most direct and immediate sense the transfer of power from the hands of the revolutionary vanguard into the hands of the more conservative elements among the bureaucracy and the upper crust of the working class. The year 1924—that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor."

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

After Lenin's death, also in January 1924, the Stalin faction flooded the Bolshevik Party with nascent bureaucratic elements in the "Lenin levy" and in December 1924 put forward the false dogma of "socialism in one country." "Socialism in one country" initially represented a dead-end road of impossible economic autarky and isolationism. Over the course of the next period, the Communist International's policies zigzagged from a bureaucratic centrism which dictated the suicidal subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to the "national bourgeoisie" during the second Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, to the "Third Period" sectarianism which allowed Hitler to come to power in Germany in 1933 without a fight, to the overt reformist class collaborationism of the People's Front, which strangled the 1936-37 Spanish Revolution. The Stalin faction first eliminated its rivals within the party, then the Stalin clique purged those capable of challenging it within the faction. As the bureaucratic caste represented by the Stalin clique attained a measure of historical consciousness, "socialism in one country" became the ideological justification for transforming the foreign Communist parties into

bargaining chips in an illusory search for “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism.

Stalin rigged the elections to the 13th Party Conference and, in subsequent years, unleashed wave upon wave of repression and purges (see “The Stalinist Thermidor, the Left Opposition and the Red Army,” page 2). The ferocity of Stalin’s repression against the Left Opposition, against former factional allies like Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, against the kulaks, artists and intellectuals stemmed from Stalin’s recognition that his regime was constantly in peril. To continue to claim the heritage of the Bolsheviks while politically expropriating the proletariat and overturning the Bolsheviks’ internationalist proletarian program, Stalin required the “Big Lie” backed up by police-state terror.

The capitalist system in its imperialist decay continued to present new revolutionary opportunities. The cyclical economic crises inherent in capitalism, notably the Great Depression of the 1930s which impelled radicalization among the proletariat, the bourgeoisies’ contradictions leading to fascist regimes in the poorer states and a new interimperialist war of mass destruction to redivide the world—these should have been again the mothers of revolution.

The West European Stalinists emerged from World War II at the head of the mass organizations of militant workers of Italy, France and elsewhere. But thanks especially to the Stalinists’ class collaboration, the American imperialists were able to restabilize capitalism in West Europe and Japan. A quarter-century later, the military defeat of the American imperialists at the hands of the Vietnamese Stalinists, which led to the establishment of a unified Vietnamese deformed workers state, severely weakened the imperialists. The late 1960s-early 1970s saw a series of prerevolutionary and revolutionary situations in Europe—France 1968, Italy 1969, Portugal 1975. These represented the best opportunities for proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries since the immediate post-WWII period. It was the pro-Moscow Communist parties which again managed to preserve the shaken bourgeois order in this region. Here the counterrevolutionary role of the Western Stalinist parties contributed immeasurably to the subsequent destruction of the Soviet Union.

The final undoing of the gains of October by capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92 was the ultimate confirmation of the impossibility of “socialism in one country.” This catastrophe for the world proletariat has profoundly reshaped the world we live in. Mass impoverishment and ethnic strife have devastated the people of the former Soviet Union and East Europe. The nominally independent nations of the “Third World” can no longer maneuver between the “two superpowers” as they face the unrestrained economic exactions and brute military force of the imperialists. With interimperialist rivalries no longer restrained by the bourgeois rulers’ shared commitment to anti-Sovietism, the workers in the advanced capitalist countries face intensified attacks aimed at achieving greater competitiveness by increasing the rate of exploitation of labor. Proletarian consciousness has been thrown back; workers’ identification of their class interests with the ideals of socialism is at a nadir, as the bourgeoisie points to the collapse of Stalinism as “proof” that “communism is dead.”

**Capitalist Counterrevolution:  
A “Step Sideways”?**

Today Cliff’s U.S. followers unabashedly declare: “The revolutions in Eastern Europe were a step sideways—from one form of capitalism to another” (*Spartacist Worker*, 23 April 1999). Don’t try this line on any Russian worker today. The unprecedented economic and social implosion now occurring in the territory of the ex-USSR is the real measure of just how historically *progressive* the planned, collectivized economy really was. In the chaotic conditions of post-Soviet Russia, the laws of capitalism have resulted in total economic collapse: production has fallen at least 50 percent since 1991, capital investment by 90 percent. Today a third of the urban labor force in Russia is effectively unemployed; 75 percent of the population lives below or barely above subsistence level and 15 million are actually starving. Life expectancy has fallen dramatically and now stands at a mere 57 years for men, below what it was a century ago, while the overall population actually declined by three and a half million from 1992 to 1997.

Statistics alone cannot convey the scale and intensity of immiseration. The infrastructures of production, technology,

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**How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled**

For Socialist Revolution to  
Sweep Away Yeltsin Counterrevolution!

August 1990 Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

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**Spartakists initiated mass rally to protest desecration of war memorial to Soviet soldiers at Treptow Park in East Berlin, 3 January 1990. Banner reads: "Down With NATO! Defend the Soviet Union!"**

science, transportation, heating and sewage have disintegrated. Malnutrition has become the norm among school-children. Some two million children have been abandoned by families who can no longer support them. The delivery of basic services like electricity and water has become sporadic in wide areas of the country. With the disintegration of the former state-run system of universal health care, diseases like tuberculosis are rampant. As Trotsky predicted, capitalist restoration has reduced the USSR to a pauperized wasteland prey to all the ravages of imperialist depredation.

While clinging to their threadbare theories, the Cliffites and their ilk are oddly modest about their real contribution. The restoration of capitalism in the USSR and East Europe was the implementation of their program. Like Shachtman, who supported Washington's Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, Cliff & Co. did their utmost to seek to bring victory to U.S. imperialism in the Cold War, lusting for the bloodying of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, championing the "trade union" credentials of Solidarność—instrument of the Vatican, Wall Street and Western social democracy for capitalist counter-revolution in Poland—and vicariously dancing with the black marketeers, monarchists and yuppies on Yeltsin's barricades in 1991. *Socialist Worker* (31 August 1991) trumpeted Yeltsin's victory: "Communism has collapsed.... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing." Well, now the Cliffites have what they wanted.

The absurdity of "state capitalist" and "bureaucratic collectivist" theories is manifest in light of the simple surrender of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the East European deformed workers states by the disintegrating Stalinist bureaucracy. No propertied ruling class in history has ever voluntarily given up its power. Nonetheless Cliff, whose reworking of Kautsky's "state capitalism" is his main claim to fame as a "Marxist," is now claiming that the counterrevolution in the ex-USSR confirmed his analysis. In an article, "The Test of Time," in *Socialist Review* (July-August 1998), Cliff claims in passing that the "state capitalist" nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy was shown by the emergence today of some of the former bureaucrats as capitalists. In fact,

Trotsky pointed out in his seminal works, such as the 1936 study *The Revolution Betrayed*, that the ruling caste had every bourgeois appetite and aspiration, but was constrained from implementing them by the socialized property forms of the degenerated workers state.

Cliff further asserts that "If Russia was a socialist country or the Stalinist regime was a workers' state, even though a degenerated or deformed one, the collapse of Stalinism would have meant that a counterrevolution had taken place. In such circumstances, workers would have defended a workers' state in the same way that workers always defend their unions, however right wing and bureaucratic they may be, against those who are trying to eliminate the union altogether." The ICL has extensively analyzed the collapse of Stalinist bonapartism in Russia in our 1993 pamphlet *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*, as well as in the documents by Joseph Seymour and Albert St. John published in *Spartacist* No. 45-46 (Winter 1990-91). In a capitalist state changes of political regime have little effect on the anarchistic bourgeois economy, which tends to function automatically. In contrast the proletarian revolution transfers the productive forces directly to the state it has created. A planned socialist economy is built *consciously* and its continued existence is inseparable from the political character of the state power that defends it. The fact that the Soviet proletariat did not fight the counterrevolution is testimony to the systematic destruction of proletarian consciousness by the bureaucracy. And as Trotsky noted in *The Third International After Lenin* (1928): "If an army capitulates to the enemy in a critical situation without a battle, then this capitulation completely takes the place of a 'decisive battle,' in politics as in war."

The Cliffites, little different from the Shachtmanites, ultimately view disembodied "power," rather than economics, as decisive. For them, the strength and presumed permanence of Stalinist rule flowed from the undeniable ruthlessness of its repression. Motivated by a profound pessimism regarding the revolutionary capacity of the working class, these renegades from Trotskyism mouth the same propaganda as the

open bourgeois apologists for capitalism, who claimed that Stalin's "totalitarianism" guaranteed the Russian workers would never again wage any struggle for their own interests, unlike the workers in the "democratic" West.

To elevate "democracy" to the ultimate progressive-historical goal irrespective of its class content is the oldest trick in the book for defenders of the bourgeois order. In *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Lenin heaped scorn on the Kautskyite centrists—who were to return to the Social Democratic party of Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann in 1922—for "cringing before the bourgeoisie, adapting themselves to the bourgeois parliamentary system, keeping silent about the *bourgeois* character of modern democracy." For a Marxist, Lenin noted, "the form of democracy, is one thing, and the class content of the given institution is another."

### The Class Nature of the Soviet State

Trotsky's understanding of the bureaucracy as a corrosive ruling *caste*, not a possessing class but an excrescence upon the state and institutions issuing from October, defined the manifest *contradictions* which ultimately doomed Stalinism. As a kind of global middleman balancing between a state based on collectivized property forms and the world imperialist order, its rule was brittle and fundamentally *unstable*. In "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" (1933), Trotsky asserted:

"The class has an exceptionally important and, moreover, a scientifically restricted meaning to a Marxist. A class is defined not by its participation in the distribution of the national income alone, but by its independent role in the general structure of the economy and by its independent roots in the economic foundation of society. Each class (the feudal nobility, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the capitalist bourgeoisie and the proletariat) works out its own special forms of property. The bureaucracy lacks all these social traits. It has no independent position in the process of production and distribution. It has no independent property roots. Its functions relate basically to the political *technique* of class rule....

"Nevertheless, the privileges of the bureaucracy by themselves do not change the bases of the Soviet society, because the bureaucracy derives its privileges not from any special property relations peculiar to it as a 'class,' but from those property relations that have been created by the October Revolution and that are fundamentally adequate for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"To put it plainly, insofar as the bureaucracy robs the people (and this is done in various ways by every bureaucracy), we have to deal not with *class exploitation*, in the scientific sense of the word, but with *social parasitism*, although on a very large scale."

As against Trotsky's Marxist view, all manner of anti-revolutionary forces imbued the Stalinist ruling elite with some substantial solidity. Notable among these were, of course, the Stalinist ideologues themselves, who claimed to be securely "building socialism" within their own borders (until they finally discovered the alleged inevitability, indeed the superiority of capitalism). *If the final undoing of the October Revolution confirms Trotsky's analysis and program only in the negative, it at least exposes as threadbare all notions of Stalinism as a stable system.*

Shachtman ridiculed Trotsky's warnings that in the absence of proletarian political revolution the Stalinists were entirely capable of liquidating the workers state:

"Trotsky assigned to Stalinism, to the Stalinist bureaucracy, the rôle of undermining the economic foundations of the workers' state. By gradually de-nationalizing the means of production and exchange, loosening the monopoly of foreign

trade, Stalinism would pave the way for the restoration of private property and capitalism.... Nothing of the sort occurred."

— Max Shachtman, "The Counter-revolutionary Revolution," *New International*, July 1943, reprinted in Matgama, ed., *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*

*But that is exactly what did occur* in the USSR and East Europe—a historic defeat which the authentic Trotskyists fought to prevent.

### The "Russian Question" and the Trotskyist Program

Trotsky fought to unconditionally defend the workers state issuing from the October Revolution *against* and *despite* the Stalinist caste which usurped political power from the Soviet working class in 1923-24. The bureaucracy retained power only through a combination of terror and lies, atomizing and demoralizing the Soviet proletariat, subverting the planned and collectivized economy, blocking in the name of "socialism in one country" the possibilities for extending the gains of October through proletarian revolutions internationally. As Trotsky explained:

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

— *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

Trotsky understood the situation very clearly: either a political revolution by the Soviet proletariat would overthrow the bureaucratic caste that had usurped political power or the bureaucracy would eventually prepare the way for capitalist restoration as it sought to guarantee its privileges by converting itself into a new possessing class. But meanwhile it was the urgent task of every class-conscious worker in the world to unconditionally defend the workers state and the Soviet workers from the external military attacks of imperialism or internal attempts at capitalist restoration. But there were those who capitulated to the pressures of bourgeois anti-Sovietism and abandoned their revolutionary duty to unconditionally defend the first workers state, in spite of its bureaucratic degeneration, claiming that to do so would be an endorsement of Stalinism, falsely equating the parasitic bureaucracy with the Soviet workers state. In 1934, Trotsky insisted:

"We have been informed by various sources that there is a tendency among our friends in Paris to deny the proletarian nature of the USSR, to demand that there be complete democracy in the USSR, including the legalization of the Mensheviks, etc....

"The Mensheviks are the representatives of bourgeois restoration and we are for the defense of the workers' state by every means possible. Anyone who had proposed that we not support the British miners' strike of 1926 or the recent large-scale strikes in the United States with all available means on the ground that the leaders of the strikes were for the most part scoundrels, would have been a traitor to the British and American workers. Exactly the same thing applies to the USSR!"

— Trotsky, "No Compromise on the Russian Question," 11 November 1934

And Trotsky warned: "Every political tendency that waves its hand hopelessly at the Soviet Union, under the pretext of

its 'nonproletarian' character, runs the risk of becoming the passive instrument of imperialism" ("The Class Nature of the Soviet State," October 1933). Ostensible "socialists" of the Shachtman/Cliff/Matgama stripe go far beyond being mere passive instruments.

In sharp distinction to the gibberish of Shachtman/Cliff, Trotsky advanced a precise Marxist analysis of the USSR under the rule of Stalin. He attacked the notion that "from the present Soviet regime *only* a transition to socialism is possible. In reality a backslide to capitalism is wholly possible." He noted:

"The Soviet Union is a contradictory society halfway between capitalism and socialism, in which: (a) the productive forces are still far from adequate to give the state property a socialist character; (b) the tendency toward primitive accumulation created by want breaks out through innumerable pores of the planned economy; (c) norms of distribution preserving a bourgeois character lie at the basis of a new differentiation of society; (d) the economic growth, while slowly bettering the situation of the toilers, promotes a swift formation of privileged strata; (e) exploiting the social antagonisms, a bureaucracy has converted itself into an uncontrolled caste alien to socialism; (f) the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses; (g) a further development of the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism; (h) on the road to capitalism the counterrevolution would have to break the resistance of the workers; (i) on the road to socialism the workers would have to overthrow the bureaucracy. In the last analysis, the question will be decided by a struggle of living social forces, both on the national and the world arena."

— *The Revolution Betrayed*

The Stalinist bureaucracy was an unstable caste resting parasitically on the socialized foundations of the workers state, which it was at times compelled to defend. This contradictory character was evident even in the last years of the Brezhnev regime, with the Soviet military intervention into Afghanistan against a CIA-backed insurgency by woman-hating Islamic reactionaries. It was reflected as well over the question of Soviet support to the 1984-85 British miners strike, which was backed by old-time Stalinists like foreign minister Andrei Gromyko and opposed by younger elements around Gorbachev, at the time the number-two figure in the

Kremlin regime. Conversely, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, appeasing imperialism at the very borders of the USSR, was a tip-off that the Stalinists would soon renounce any intention of defending the Soviet Union itself against imperialism.

Irrespective of any subjective ideological commitment to socialized property on the part of the bureaucracy, the laws of economic motion in a degenerated or a deformed workers state differ from those operating under capitalism. An industrial manager in the USSR obeyed fundamentally different economic imperatives than a Russian capitalist today, even if they happen to be the same individual. The goal of a capitalist is to maximize profits, i.e., the difference between costs of production and market price. The main goal of a Soviet factory director, on which his future career depended, was maximizing the planned output of goods, although often to the detriment of quality and variety. The system thus generated full employment. In fact, Soviet enterprises were typically overmanned. And despite bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption, the planned, collectivized economy provided for universal medical care, housing, education, childcare and vacations, which were possible *only* because capitalism had been expropriated.

It is indicative that, unlike a ruling class, the Stalinist bureaucracy could not elaborate a new ideology justifying its privileges. Even at the grotesque and murderous heights of the "cult of personality," Stalin, having murdered all of Lenin's comrades, could never cease to claim to be Lenin's successor. In contrast, the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union was accompanied by an open embrace of capitalist ideology: communism was an experiment that failed, the magic of the market means prosperity, Stalin was worse than Hitler, etc.

Noting that the world's most advanced capitalist economies remained more productive than the Soviet economy, Trotsky observed that the power of cheap commodities would ultimately prove more dangerous to the USSR than open military hostilities. While strikingly prophetic, this observation was merely based on the basic Marxist understanding that socialism must be built as a world system.

As long as Wall Street financiers, German industrialists and Japanese *zaibatsu* own most of the productive wealth on this planet, the communist vision of a classless and stateless society cannot be realized anywhere. The question, for Trotsky, was: will the workers overthrow the bureaucracy, or will the bureaucracy devour the workers state? There was nothing abstract about this question; Trotsky devoted his life, until his murder by Stalin, to seeking to rally the proletariat in the USSR and internationally to the defense of the gains of October, not least through the fight for new October Revolutions.

### The Genesis and Evolution of Shachtman's "Bureaucratic Collectivism"

The genesis of Shachtman's "new class" theory of the USSR was in the abandonment by part of the American Trotskyist party of the unconditional

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**A Program Of Victory For The Soviet Union**

**THE MILITANT**

Formerly the SOCIALIST APPEAL

of the Socialist Workers Party

Number 101 - N° 23

15 OCTOBRE 1941

**LA VÉRITÉ**

Organ Central des Comités Français pour la IV<sup>e</sup> Internationale

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*tout le pouvoir aux*

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Depuis bientôt quatre mois, le prolétariat inter-

To defend the USSR as the main fortress of the world proletariat, against all assaults of world imperialism and of internal counter-revolution, is the most important duty of every class-conscious worker.

— LEON TROTSKY



**Leon Trotsky Defender of The USSR**

TROTSKY'S WORKS LIVE ON IN HEROIC RED ARMY



International Trotskyist movement fought for unconditional military defense of USSR during World War II. 1941 headline from French Trotskyist press (center) reads: "To Save the USSR, All Power to Workers and Peasants Committees!" American SWP's *Militant* on 19 July 1941 (top left) featured Soviet defensist slogan above the masthead; 13 August 1942 front-page article (at right) recalled Trotsky's role as founder of Red Army.

military defense of the Soviet Union when it counted. The precipitant was the 1939 Stalin-Hitler pact, which had a dramatic effect on the milieu of petty-bourgeois "progressives," who in the previous period of the popular front honeymoon with Roosevelt's "New Deal" had seen themselves as in some sense "friends" of the Soviet Union, while in reality still maintaining their fundamental loyalty to American "democracy." Max Shachtman, James Burnham and Martin Abern, all members of the leading committee of the American Trotskyist party, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), came together in 1939-40 to challenge the longstanding Trotskyist program of Soviet defensism. Because of the conditions created by the war in Europe, the struggle in the American section became a surrogate for a fight in the Fourth International as a whole.

Leon Trotsky, in the last major factional battle of his life, led the counterattack against the Shachtmanites. In a series of devastating polemics, subsequently published by the SWP as *In Defense of Marxism* (1942), Trotsky insisted that Stalin's diplomatic and military alliance with Hitler changed nothing of the class character of the Soviet degenerated workers state which he had analyzed in *The Revolution Betrayed*. Trotsky exposed how the U.S. minority in the SWP had, in abandoning Soviet defensism, abandoned the theoretical underpinnings of revolutionary Marxism itself. He ridiculed the American minority's argument that to *militarily* defend the USSR in Finland and Poland constituted *political* support to the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Soviet defensism had been a continual source of dispute within the Trotskyist movement. In the 1939-40 fight, Trotsky restated arguments he had made in 1929 against those Left Oppositionists who refused to defend the USSR against China in the dispute over the Chinese Eastern Railroad; against Hugo Urbahns, who generalized from this position to declare the Soviet Union "state capitalist"; against Yvan Craipeau in France, who insisted in 1937 that the Soviet bureaucracy was a new ruling class; against James Burnham and Joe Carter, who started out on their revisionist path in 1937 by arguing that the USSR could no longer be considered a workers state, though (until the Stalin-Hitler pact) they claimed to be defensist of the collectivized property and planned economy.

It was the Shachtmanites' bowing to the pressure of bourgeois public opinion which was the real basis for their flight from the Fourth International's program. James P. Cannon,

the founder of American Trotskyism, in his 1939-40 writings, later published in the book *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, the companion volume to Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism*, exposed the link between the Shachtmanites' politics and their base among vacillating petty-bourgeois layers of the party who had not broken from their historic milieu. In fact, the anti-Cannon bloc of 1939-40 had no coherent analysis of the nature of the Soviet state. James Burnham had come to view the Soviet Union as a new form of class society; already openly sneering at dialectical materialism, he was within months to abandon his erstwhile factional allies and the Marxist movement altogether. Abern and his clique claimed to view the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state, but they had a long history of always putting petty organizational grievances against the Cannon "regime" above revolutionary program or principle. Shachtman claimed not to have a position on the Soviet state, arguing that in any case this was immaterial to the "concrete" question at hand. In one of his last documents as an SWP member, he claimed that if the USSR was ever *really* threatened with imperialist invasion, he would defend the Soviet Union.

The opposition bloc fell apart less than a month after Shachtman et al. exited the SWP, to found the Workers Party (WP). Burnham denounced Marxism and decamped to his bourgeois academic haunts, going on to write *The Managerial Revolution* (1941), which identified Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia as the harbingers of a new, bureaucratic class society. Shachtman and his followers (with Abern continuing his clique maneuvering until his death in 1947) also went on to generalize their initial flinch, characterizing the USSR as a new form of class society, "bureaucratic collectivism."

The Shachtman minority had counted on the support of some 40 percent of the party and the majority of the SWP's youth organization, i.e., some 800 members. By the fall of 1940, the WP claimed only 323 members. This produced a "dead cat bounce" effect: the center of gravity of the early Workers Party moved to the left of the original petty-bourgeois opposition, as the more right-wing elements—with Burnham in the lead—simply took the opportunity of the split from the SWP to exit from the field of politics altogether. During WWII, the WP was a left-centrist formation, groping toward a full-blown theory to justify their flight from Soviet defensism.

When Hitler turned on Stalin (as Trotsky had predicted) and invaded the USSR in June 1941, there was a fight in the

WP over whether to defend the Soviet Union; a handful of WP youth in Los Angeles went back to the SWP when the WP failed to make good on Shachtman's earlier declaration that he would defend the USSR in case of invasion. The WP's position of class neutrality in the war between Germany and the USSR represented another giant step toward the WP's consolidation of its revisionist course.

But the USSR-U.S. alliance after June 1941 put into abeyance domestic anti-Sovietism and allowed for a relatively leftist presentation of the "Third Camp." With the opening of the war industries the previously chronically unemployed petty-bourgeois WP youth were able to get industrial jobs and were a real factor in the trade unions, competing with the SWP as a class-struggle opposition to the social-patriots in the Rooseveltian trade-union bureaucracy and the Stalinist Communist Party. The WP considered itself a section of the Fourth International; at the end of the war there were abortive "unity" negotiations between the WP and SWP.

In 1948, Shachtman definitively turned his back on the Fourth International, reflecting his rapid rightward motion in the face of renewed bourgeois anti-Sovietism with the onset of the Cold War. In 1949, the Workers Party, no longer aspiring to the leadership of the American working class, changed its name to the Independent Socialist League (ISL); most of the WP youth had long since left the unions for graduate school and petty-bourgeois careers. The press run of the Shachtmanite paper *Labor Action*, which had been 20,000-25,000 in the midst of WWII, plummeted to just over 3,000 by 1953. The ISL were vicarious social democrats, advancing the possibility of a peaceful road to socialism in Attlee's post-war Britain and trying to pressure Auto-workers bureaucrat Walter Reuther to form a labor party. But the AFL and CIO bureaucracies were in the vanguard of the anti-Communist crusade. By the time of their liquidation into the dregs of American social democracy in 1958, the Shachtmanites were declaring, "We do not subscribe to any creed known as Leninism or defined as such. We do not subscribe to any creed known as Trotskyism or defined as such" (*New International*, Spring-Summer 1958). They soon disintegrated, with Shachtman and his closest co-thinkers ending up alongside George Meany in the most anti-Communist right wing of the Democrats, while Michael Harrington gravitated to the more liberal wing of the Democrats and Hal Draper mucked around in the Berkeley New Left, helping to found the Independent Socialists, precursor to the American ISO.

### A Program Wrapped in a "Theory"

While the Cliffite version of "state capitalism" is today better known on the left than the earlier "bureaucratic collectivism," the difference between the two theories is more a matter of context than of fundamental content. Cliffism is the British analog to American Shachtmanism, based on an identical political impulse and program but expressed on a different national terrain.

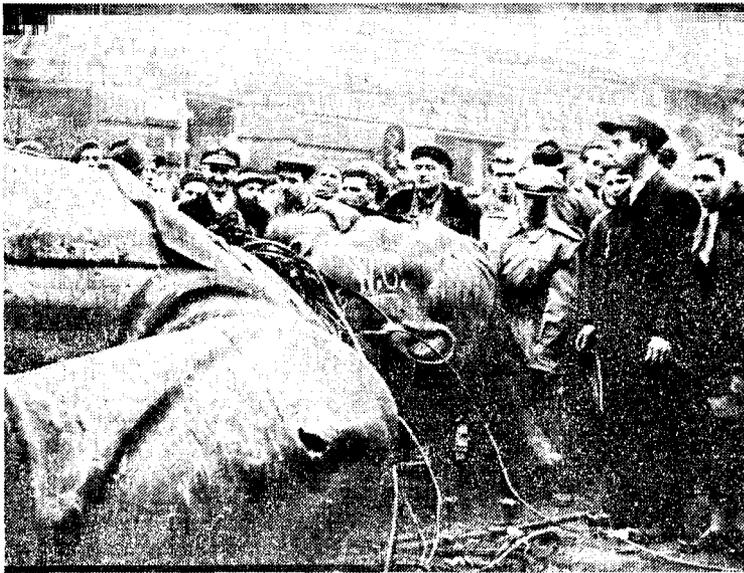
The British Trotskyist movement was already deeply fragmented and buried in the ruling Labour Party when Cliff bowed to the pressures of imperialism's Cold War offensive during the Korean War. Hence the fight against Cliff's revisionism was not the definitive polarization between petty-bourgeois and proletarian tendencies that the 1940 fight had been for American Trotskyism. But Cliff's break with revo-

lutionary Marxism was if anything more programmatically decisive. Cliff had already declared his intention to put a minus sign over the whole Soviet experience, working out the "state capitalist" theoretical justification for his abandonment of the defense of the world's first workers state. Operating in Britain, with his capitulation to the bourgeois social order mediated through "little England" social democracy, Cliff is able to posture rather more to the left than the later Shachtman.

On the level of "theory," Cliff rejected the idea that the Soviet bureaucracy was a new "bureaucratic collectivist" ruling class and resuscitated the Kautskyan notion that the USSR was merely a form of capitalism. Cliff's putative credentials as a theoretician are based on his 1955 book, *Stalinist Russia: A Marxist Analysis*. In this work he attempts a purportedly "Marxist" economic analysis to prove the "state capitalist" nature of the Soviet bureaucracy, simply by grossly and dishonestly redefining terms which have a precise meaning for Marxists: competition, accumulation, commodity, value, etc. According to Cliff, a "collective" capitalist class (itself an absurdity by any Marxist measure) is driven to accumulate "profit" in order to militarily "compete" with the capitalist West, generating a market economy driven by the law of value. Cliff had to do extreme violence to Soviet reality to make it fit this "theory." (See "The Anti-Marxist Theory of 'State Capitalism'—A Trotskyist Critique," *Young Spartacus* Nos. 51-53, February, March and April 1977. For a discussion of the fallacy of "state capitalist" theory through an examination of classical Marxist economics, see especially Ken Tarbuck, "The Theory of State Capitalism—The Clock Without a Spring," published in the *British Marxist Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 1969-70, reprinted in July 1973 as No. 5 in the *Marxist Studies* series of the SL/U.S.)

The arguments of Cliff, and Shachtman before him, dovetailed with and sometimes led the way for overt Cold Warriors, as well as the social democrats who have made careers out of anti-Communist crusading throughout the world. Although, as we have seen, it took a while for the full anti-Soviet implications of Shachtman's split from Trotskyism to be played out, when he died in 1972 Shachtman had spent his last decade as an unalloyed social-patriot, even backing U.S. imperialism's attempt to drown the Vietnamese social revolution in blood. Perhaps his most concrete service to imperialism was as braintruster for the bureaucracy of the American teachers union, an epitome of "AFL-CIA" trade unionism, which worked as an arm of the U.S. State Department, backing and bankrolling anti-Communist gangsters who smashed combative leftist labor unions in West Europe after World War II and providing a "working-class" cover for the fascistic "captive nations" crowd working for counterrevolution in the "Soviet bloc."

In essence, "bureaucratic collectivism" is based on a formal syllogism: The means of production belong to the state, the state "belongs" to (i.e., is controlled by) the bureaucracy; therefore the bureaucracy "owns" the property and constitutes a ruling class. But property has to be personally owned to be of continuing benefit to individuals—this is the bottom line for understanding exploitation. "Bureaucratic collectivism" dispenses with the very basis of Marxism, the understanding that there are two main classes in capitalist society, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, defined by relationship to the means of production. Shachtman's theory posits the



AP

existence of a new "bureaucratic" ruling class, not defined by private ownership of the means of production. According to Shachtman, "bureaucratic collectivism" had the possibility to become the dominant mode of production worldwide, vying with both capitalism and socialism.

Shachtman's theory was a product of his times. Much in the air in the U.S. of the 1930s was the idea that big corporations were no longer controlled by their owners, but by managers. An influential exposition of this view was *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1932), by A.A. Berle and G.C. Means. (Of course, writing off the importance of ownership in capitalist society was greatly facilitated by the Great Depression, when no dividends were being produced anyway.) This impressionistic view of a new managerial elite animated *The Managerial Revolution*, the opus of Shachtman's erstwhile theoretician, James Burnham.

Bureaucratic collectivism posits that it is the lust for disembodied power, and not the private accumulation of wealth, that is the decisive motor force in human history. The logic of this view is also a profound historical pessimism, no longer seeing any possibility for the revolutionary proletariat to gain the consciousness needed to lead humanity out of its historic impasse. To paraphrase George Orwell in his 1946 essay, "James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution," in Burnham's view the fate of the majority of the human race could be summarized as "a boot in the face, forever." For many of those who left the Trotskyist movement in this period, the historical pessimism toward the prospects for proletarian revolution led to reconciliation with "democratic" imperialism. Trotsky's former collaborator Victor Serge and the founding Chinese Trotskyist, Chen Duxiu, followed the logic of their despair into the camp of the "Allied" imperialists in WWII.

For a Marxist, a ruling class is a layer of people defined by their ownership of the means of production—not mainly by their ideology, their morality or lack thereof, their hunger for power, their standard of living, etc. The point is not to give a pejorative description of Soviet reality, but to analyze its *laws of motion* and direction of development. Against the early proponents of "state capitalist" theories, Trotsky noted:

"The attempt to represent the Soviet bureaucracy as a class of 'state capitalists' will obviously not withstand criticism. The



Der Spiegel

Proletarian political revolution in Hungary, 1956: Stalin's statue toppled by insurgent workers. Hungarian officer Pal Maleter (right) vowed: "There will never be capitalists and landowners in Hungary again."

bureaucracy has neither stocks nor bonds. It is recruited, supplemented and renewed in the manner of an administrative hierarchy, independently of any special property relations of its own. The individual bureaucrat cannot transmit to his heirs his rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus. The bureaucracy enjoys its privileges under the form of an abuse of power. It conceals its income; it pretends that as a special social group it does not even exist. Its appropriation of a vast share of the national income has the character of social parasitism. All this makes the position of the commanding Soviet stratum in the highest degree contradictory, equivocal and undignified, notwithstanding the completeness of its power and the smoke screen of flattery that conceals it."

And he continued:

"One may argue that the big bureaucrat cares little what are the prevailing forms of property, provided only they guarantee him the necessary income. This argument ignores not only the instability of the bureaucrat's own rights, but also the question of his descendants. The new cult of the family has not fallen out of the clouds. Privileges have only half their worth, if they cannot be transmitted to one's children. But the right of testament is inseparable from the right of property. It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class."

— *The Revolution Betrayed*

## The "Theories" of Shachtman/Cliff Go Splat

In terms of their prognosis for the Soviet Union and East Europe, all "new class" theories proved a mockery. The bureaucratic caste was *incapable* of acting as a ruling class; persons with power but without a base for that power in the individual private ownership of the means of production couldn't act like Alfred Krupp, Henry Ford, the Rockefellers or even William the Conqueror. In his book of Shachtmanite writings, Matgamna makes no attempt to measure Shachtman's theorizing against historical development, against the workers revolts in East Europe in the 1950s, against the ultimate collapse of Stalinism in 1990-91. This in itself condemns the book as an exercise in sterility.

The single example of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution by itself decisively refutes the notion of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a ruling *class*. In the face of a pro-socialist workers political revolution directed against the hated Rákosi regime, the bureaucracy split vertically and 80 percent of the Communist Party went over to the side of the workers revolution. Virtually the entire officer corps of the army, as



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**Afghanistan: U.S.-backed reactionaries shot school-teachers for teaching girls to read. ICL hailed Red Army intervention which defended left-nationalist regime; British Cliffites' *Socialist Worker* embraced imperialist anti-Soviet crusade in Afghanistan, welcomed victory of Afghan fundamentalists.**

**Socialist  
Worker**

—May 1988

—5 October 1996

Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs.

But this does not mean giving

But Taliban's success comes from popular disenchantment with the leaders who oppose it—the forces guarding Kabul melted away last week.

Tragically, the Taliban has no answer to the terrible crisis of the country either.

It smashes a return to the I

well as the Budapest chief of police, refused to suppress the working-class insurgency. Who ever heard of a ruling class behaving like this?

In the incipient proletarian political revolution in the DDR in 1989-90, and later in the Soviet Union, we *fought* to the best of our (limited) ability to mobilize the East German and the Soviet proletariats against the enveloping counterrevolution, fighting against the abdicating heirs of Stalin who simply handed over first the East European deformed workers states (most importantly the DDR) and then the USSR itself to the capitalists. Many of the Soviet and German workers whom we introduced to Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* told us that its descriptions of life under Stalinism read as though they had just been written. Stalinist ideology, dictated by the bureaucracy's desire to maintain its privileged position, was an eclectic mélange of Marxist terminology used to dress up the utterly anti-Marxist program of "socialism in one country," "peaceful coexistence" and a definition of "anti-imperialism" as the struggle between "progressive" and "reactionary" peoples. The Stalinists *perverted* Marxism, politically disarming working classes which were atomized by repression, destroying the only possible long-term basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat, a class-conscious working class fighting in its historic interests.

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky linked the survival of the gains of October not only to the economic foundations of the workers state but also to the consciousness of the Soviet proletariat: "The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown. It has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the

consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution."

### Shachtman/Cliff: Anti-Communism vs. Marxism

The documents published in *The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism Volume I* reveal how greatly the sands of Shachtmanite theory shifted over time. This shows that "bureaucratic collectivism" was useless as an attempt to understand reality and project its future development. Shachtman begins by arguing during the 1939-40 faction fight that the Soviet Union cannot be defended because the Stalinists will *not* overturn capitalist property relations in Finland and the Baltic states. By 1948, he and the rest of the Workers Party ideologues are arguing that the Soviet Union cannot be defended because in East Europe the Red Army *is* overturning capitalist property relations (thereby supposedly showing that it is a new ruling class).

Shachtman left the SWP arguing that revolutionaries should defend the collectivized property of the USSR if imperialism *really* threatened it, and he was still arguing this in the pages of the *New International* in December 1940. But when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the defense of the USSR became operational, he changed his tune and argued that Soviet defensism was impermissible because the USSR was militarily allied with the "democratic" imperialist camp.

In his one foray into original "theorizing," Shachtman argued in his December 1940 "Is Russia a Workers' State?" that the USSR was "bureaucratic state socialism," and that revolutionaries should still defend its collectivized "property forms" while recognizing that it lacked collectivized "property relations." This utterly spurious distinction between property forms and property relations, which lacks any basis in Marxism, was subjected to a devastating critique by Joseph Hansen ("Burnham's Attorney Carries On," *Fourth International*, February 1941). Joe Carter also attacked this false dichotomy invented by Shachtman; Matgama's book reprints Carter's article, "Bureaucratic Collectivism" (*New International*, September 1941)—*minus* the attack on Shachtman.

When the Workers Party adopted the position that the Soviet bureaucracy was a full-blown "bureaucratic collectivist" ruling class in December 1941, they mimicked Trotsky in continuing to argue that Stalinist rule was a phenomenon unique to Russia, which arose due to the deforming isolation of the first workers state. Thus they posited a ruling class with no past and no future, no necessary relation to the means of production; one whose official "ideology" denied the very fact of its existence.

With the Red Army's occupation of East Europe at the end of the war, bureaucratic collectivism blossomed into full-blown Stalinophobia, as the Workers Party insisted that Stalinist bureaucratism was a competitor to capitalism for world domination:

"What is before us concretely is the development of Stalinist Russia as a full-fledged reactionary empire, oppressing and exploiting not only the Russian people, but a dozen other peoples and nations—and that in the most cruel and barbarous way....

"The theory that the Stalinist parties (like the traditional reformist organizations) are agents of the capitalist class, that they 'capitulate to the bourgeoisie,' is fundamentally false. They are the agencies of Russian bureaucratic collectivism."

—Workers Party resolution, *New International*, April 1947 (reprinted in *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*)



Friends of Afghanistan Society



Workers Vanguard

**Afghan militawomen take up arms against CIA-backed Islamic cutthroats. Defense organizations of ICL campaigned for aid to victims of siege of Jalalabad.**

Trotsky expected that the brittle Stalinist bureaucracy would be overthrown in the working-class upsurge which would inevitably be provoked by WWII. Instead, the reformist Stalinist and Social Democratic parties deflected working-class struggle at the war's end, allowing the invading Allied armies to restabilize capitalist rule in West Europe. In East Europe, the Red Army's occupation in the wake of the fleeing Nazis and the Nazi-allied ruling classes provided a breathing space. Stalin's creation of deformed workers states in East Europe was dictated by military/security concerns as the Allied imperialists turned on their erstwhile ally and began the Cold War. Indigenous peasant-based revolutions by Communist-led forces in Yugoslavia and in 1949 in China also created new deformed workers states.

The Shachtman writings proudly trotted out by Matgamna in his book are permeated with Cold War anti-communism, as is obvious from assertions such as "Stalinism is shown at its 'purest' in the slave labor camps" (from a July 1947 article by Louis Jacobs [Jack Weber] published by Matgamna), or "Slave labor is not an accidental or surface excrescence of the Stalinist regime; it is integral, inherent, irreplaceable" (from a December 1947 *New Internationalist* article that Matgamna doesn't reprint). The Stalinist gulag—which was designed for *political suppression*, not economic exploitation—did constitute a system of forced labor in Siberia and other areas where it was impossible to get workers to go voluntarily for low wages. But such methods are incompatible with labor requiring any skill or training. Far from proving "irreplaceable" to the Soviet economy, in the liberalization that followed Stalin's death they were replaced with more rational forms of financial incentives. Capitalist counterrevolution, in contrast, has left the Siberian population as surplus, outside the political economy, left to die of starvation, disease and cold.

When the Soviet degenerated workers state was finally destroyed by Stalin's heirs, the process unfolded in a manner which strikingly conformed to Trotsky's projections. Thus in 1936 Trotsky had written:

"Bourgeois society has in the course of its history displaced many political regimes and bureaucratic castes, without changing its social foundations.... The state power has been able either to co-operate with capitalist development, or put brakes on it. But in general the productive forces, upon a basis of private property and competition, have been working out

their own destiny. In contrast to this, the property relations which issued from the socialist revolution are indivisibly bound up with the new state as their repository....

"A collapse of the Soviet regime would lead inevitably to the collapse of the planned economy, and thus to the abolition of state property. The bond of compulsion between the trusts and the factories within them would fall away. The more successful enterprises would succeed in coming out on the road of independence. They might convert themselves into stock companies, or they might find some other transitional form of property—one, for example, in which the workers should participate in the profits. The collective farms would disintegrate at the same time, and far more easily. The fall of the present bureaucratic dictatorship would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture."

—*The Revolution Betrayed*

### **Stalinism: Gravedigger of Revolution, Gravedigger of the Workers States**

The unraveling of Stalinism over the course of decades had a significant generational component, as did the Stalinists' destruction of proletarian consciousness. The regime of terror and lies did much to extirpate socialist idealism among the toiling masses. Starting from the theory of "socialism in one country," Stalin pushed nationalist ideology as the basis of loyalty to the state. Russian nationalism was instrumental to the USSR winning World War II against Hitler (after an initial collapse of the army, demoralized by Stalin's blood purges, which enabled the Nazis to overrun huge swaths of Soviet territory).

After Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet bureaucracy was no longer able to use mass terror as a weapon against political opposition or economic crimes. With the economic situation in the USSR and East Europe recovering from the devastation of the war and, following a series of pro-socialist workers uprisings and protests in East Germany, Hungary and Poland which threatened the Stalinist regimes, the Khrushchev years were marked by a policy of increased production of consumer goods and a general increase in the standard of living for the workers. The large-scale corruption of the Brezhnev years greatly undermined residual egalitarian values in the population. The subsequent generation of the bureaucracy, exemplified by Gorbachev, reflected the increased weight in Soviet society of a privileged layer of bureaucrats' children, technocrats and other would-be yuppies who aspired to hobnob in Western capitals with

their opposite numbers from Harvard Business School at comparable income levels. Beginning with experiments in "market socialism," justified as the only way to revitalize the Soviet economy (workers democracy of course not being an option), this layer had little internal resistance to scrapping Stalinist ideology outright: "socialism" has failed, long live capitalism. When Gorbachev proved unable to ram through his "capitalism in 500 days" shock treatment, he was replaced by the more ruthless ex-Stalinist bureaucrat, Yeltsin, who eagerly tried to sell the country to American imperialism.

The central event of the Russian counterrevolution was Yeltsin's August 1991 "counter-coup" against the inept "perestroika coup" of Stalinist has-beens. Virtually all the anti-Soviet fake-Trotskyists either openly hailed Yeltsin and/or seized on the opportunity to declare that the Soviet degenerated workers state was instantly dead. Only the ICL sought to rally the working people of the USSR to rise in political revolution to defeat capitalist restoration. The ICL mass-distributed our article "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" throughout the Soviet Union. Yeltsin's consolidation of his imperialist-backed power grab for "democracy"—in the absence of mass resistance by the working class to the encroaching capitalist counterrevolution—spelled the final destruction of the degenerated workers state.

Yeltsin's counterrevolution was prepared by the introduction of economic measures known in East Europe as "market socialism" and in Russia as *perestroika* (restructuring). Tito's use of market-oriented "reforms" in Yugoslavia pre-figured Gorbachev's *perestroika*. They were characterized by the atrophy of centralized planning, allowing enterprise relations to be largely governed by market forces. Closely associated with the abolition of the state monopoly on foreign trade was decentralization on regional lines, generating powerful pressures for breaking down the multinational character of countries such as Yugoslavia and the USSR, as wealthier republics were favored by the terms of trade established by market forces. These economic factors provided a huge boost to reactionary nationalist ideology, as—particularly given the absence of much capital—nationalism was used as the main battering ram for capitalist restoration in the ex-Soviet ex-bloc, leading straight to hideous, all-sided "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans and elsewhere.

In our propaganda throughout this period, the Spartacists

warned of the anti-egalitarian impact of "market socialist" policies, the deadly danger of allowing the penetration of international finance capital into the economies of the deformed workers states and the growth of nationalist rivalries within these states. In our 1981 pamphlet, *Solidarność: Polish Company Union for CIA and Bankers*, we laid at the Stalinists' door the responsibility for the destruction of the historically socialist consciousness of the Polish proletariat. Our analysis and predictions were strikingly confirmed by events, but it cannot be too strongly emphasized that our purpose was not merely to analyze but to intervene with our revolutionary program to fight for socialist consciousness, to rally Soviet and East European workers to defend the remaining gains of October against their deadly enemies abroad and at home.

In our pamphlet on "Market Socialism" in Eastern Europe, published in July 1988, we explained:

"The program of 'market socialism' is basically a product of liberal Stalinism. Enterprise self-management and self-financing is the road to economic chaos. It generates unemployment and inflation, widens inequalities within the working class and throughout society, creates dependency on international bankers, intensifies national divisions and conflicts, and enormously strengthens the internal forces of capitalist restoration....

"The nationalities question has been at the heart of the politics of 'self-management.' The social pressure for ever greater decentralization has come *not* from below—from workers in the shops—but from the bureaucracies in the richer republics, Croatia and Slovenia. The economic effects of devolution have in turn given rise to virulent national resentment in the poorest regions, especially in Kosovo, where the Albanian nationality in Yugoslavia is concentrated....

"The decentralizing measures of the '60s also radically altered the way in which the Yugoslav economy interacted with the world capitalist market. In 1967, enterprises were allowed to retain a portion of the foreign exchange which they earned. Since then the scramble over foreign exchange has been a major source of regional/national and inter-enterprise conflict, at times leading to outright economic warfare....

"There is an *inherent tendency* for Stalinist regimes to abandon central planning in favor of an economic setup with the following major elements: output and prices determined through atomized competition between enterprises; investment, managerial salaries and workers' wages geared to enterprise profitability; unprofitable enterprises are shut down, resulting in unemployment; price subsidies are eliminated, resulting in a higher rate of inflation; the role of petty capitalist entrepreneurs is expanded, especially in the service sector; increased commercial and financial ties to Western and Japanese capitalism, including joint ventures, are encouraged.

## Spartacist pamphlet

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Yugoslav deformed workers state in 1991—instigated by the same imperialist powers that just waged a war of terror against Serbia—was prepared by the former Stalinist regime's pro-capitalist market "reforms." This 1988 collection of *Workers Vanguard* articles analyzes how "market socialism" widened social inequalities and intensified ethnic and national divisions, enormously strengthening the internal forces of capitalist counterrevolution.

\$1 (32 pages)

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These measures do not amount to creeping capitalism, as many Western bourgeois commentators and not a few confused leftists contend. But they do strengthen the internal forces for capitalist counterrevolution....

"Within the framework of Stalinism, there is thus an inherent tendency to replace centralized planning and management with market mechanisms. Since managers and workers cannot be subject to the discipline of soviet democracy (workers councils), increasingly the bureaucracy sees subjecting the economic actors to the discipline of market competition as the only answer to economic inefficiency. The restoration of workers democracy in the Soviet Union is not just an abstract ideal but a *vital condition* for the renewal of the Soviet economy on a socialist basis."

A restored revolutionary workers regime in the USSR would have fought to extend the revolution to the citadels of world imperialism, the necessary prerequisite for the creation of socialism.

### The Economic Program of the Left Opposition

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was a temporary retreat undertaken by the Bolsheviks after the devastation of the Civil War in a backward, overwhelmingly peasant economy in which industry had broken down and was utterly disorganized. The early NEP legislation, drawn up under Lenin's direct guidance, while allowing free trade in agricultural produce, severely *restricted* the hiring of labor and acquisition of land. However, what began as a temporary retreat was later transformed by Bukharin and Stalin into a continuing policy reflecting the class interests of the peasantry. In 1925 restrictions were greatly liberalized in the direction of favoring the growth of agrarian capitalism. Kulaks and "NEP men" were welcomed into the party, where they became a significant wing of the now-ascendant bureaucracy.

The advocates of "market socialism" in Gorbachev's Russia looked back fondly to the NEP of the mid-late 1920s, whose ideological exponent was Nikolai Bukharin and whose chief implementer was his then-bloc partner, Joseph Stalin. Bukharin urged the peasantry, "Enrich yourselves!" and declared that socialism would proceed "at a snail's pace." He insisted that the expansion of industrial production in the Soviet Union should be determined by the market demand of the small-holding peasantry for manufactures.

In his 1922 work, *From N.E.P. to Socialism*, E. A. Preobrazhensky had advocated the necessity of "primitive socialist accumulation" to build up the resources for the expansion of the Soviet industrial base. Trotsky's Left Opposition, to which Preobrazhensky adhered, insisted on the need for rapid industrialization and central planning. As early as April 1923, in his "Theses on Industry" presented to the Twelfth Party Congress, Trotsky pointed to the phenomenon of the "scissors crisis" (the lack of sufficient manufactured goods to exchange for agricultural produce, leading the peasants to withhold food from the cities). In 1925, Trotsky warned that "if the state industry develops more slowly than agriculture...this process would, of course, lead to a restoration of capitalism" (*Whither Russia?*).

The historian Alexander Erlich recounted the party debates in his classic work *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928* (1960). Against the policies of Bukharin/Stalin, the Left Opposition called for increased taxation of the kulaks to finance industrialization and for the "systematic and gradual introduction of this most numerous peasant group [the middle peasants] to the benefits of large-scale, mechanized, collective agriculture" (*Platform of the Opposition* [1927]). The Left Opposition advocated speeding up



Workers Vanguard

September 1981: Spartacists demonstrate in front of Solidarność office at teachers union headquarters in New York, exposing Solidarność as company union for CIA, Vatican and Wall Street.

the tempo of industrialization not only to relieve the "scissors crisis" but, most importantly, also to increase the social weight of the proletariat.

Bukharin's policy fueled the forces of social counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. The policy of "enriching" the kulaks predictably led not only to the exacerbation of class distinctions in the countryside, as the poor peasants were virtually reduced to their prerevolutionary status as sharecroppers, but also to blackmail of the cities by the kulaks. Meanwhile, the NEP men had continued to grow in strength: at the end of 1926, nearly 60 percent of the total industrial labor force worked in privately owned small-scale industry, under the grip of petty capitalists who controlled supply and distribution. By 1928, the kulaks were organizing grain strikes, threatening not only to starve the cities but to undermine the economic foundations of the workers state itself.

Stalin was the leader of the conservative bureaucratic caste that had usurped power in 1924. He feared for the future of his regime *which had arisen on the property forms of a workers state*. Capitalist restoration threatened the bureaucracy's base of power and privilege and was not an option. He saw no other course but to lash out with an unplanned, ill-conceived and brutal policy of forced collectivization to break the hold of the kulaks and a forced-march industrialization. In seeking by his own methods and for his own reasons to maintain the working-class foundations of the Soviet state, Stalin had no choice but to co-opt key aspects of the Left Opposition's program advocating rapid industrial development that he had previously vehemently opposed. As a result Stalin broke his bloc with Bukharin, whose economic policies were leading directly toward a complete social overturn of the degenerated workers state. (Bukharin and his expelled supporters internationally became known as the Right Opposition.)

In light of these events, it is revealing that Cliff and Matgama date the ascendancy of their respective "new ruling classes" (or capitalist restoration) to this period. But since Stalin's crackdown on the kulaks demonstratively prevented

the restoration of capitalism in 1928, their real focus is Bukharin and his supporters who opposed the Stalinist bureaucracy *from the right*. Thus they retroactively place themselves outside of and *in opposition to* Trotsky's International Left Opposition and its program of unconditional defensism from the beginning.

Today the fostering of powerful capitalist-restorationist economic forces within the framework of a deformed workers state has already gone much further in China than was seen in Tito's Yugoslavia or Gorbachev's Russia. Many of the social gains of the Chinese Revolution are being obliterated as unemployment has reached massive proportions while state-owned factories are being closed or privatized, and the monopoly of foreign trade is being undermined. The Chinese bureaucracy is itself a major participant in joint ventures with foreign capitalists in the "Special Economic Zones." But the bureaucracy cannot fully implement its retrograde aspirations without breaking the resistance of the Chinese proletariat. Once again, the alternatives are posed: proletarian political revolution to defend the socialized economic basis of the state, or imperialist-backed capitalist counterrevolution.

### Postscript: Sean Matgamna, Epigone of Shachtman

Sean Matgamna appears to have entered political life as a member of the Stalinist Communist Party, but in 1959 he was won to the ostensible Trotskyism espoused by the late Gerry Healy. Healy's organization recruited a whole layer of Communist Party cadre after the 1956 Hungarian workers uprising by championing the Trotskyist program of proletarian political revolution to defend the anti-capitalist gains in the degenerated and deformed workers states. Emerging from deep entry in the Labour Party, in the late 1950s and early 1960s the Healyites displayed in journals such as *Labour Review* an impressive literary orthodoxy and command of Marxist literature and history. Underlying it all, however, was a fundamental political banditry that manifested itself first in internal bureaucratic practices. Matgamna was expelled by

Healy in 1963, but he broke with him politically only a year later, when the Healy organization renounced any entry work in the Labour Party. Over the next two decades Matgamna entered, fused with or flirted with almost every other tendency claiming the mantle of Trotskyism in Britain, from Ted Grant's Militant Tendency, to Tony Cliff's International Socialists, to the Pabloites, to Workers Power.

In 1979, in the midst of the imperialist hue and cry over the Red Army's intervention into Afghanistan, Matgamna's tendency, organized as the International Communist League, abandoned their paper position for the military defense of the Soviet Union, claiming that the consequences of the Soviet Union's defense of the left-nationalist government which sought limited land reform and to teach women to read and write were "unconditionally reactionary." During the subsequent anti-Communist hysteria of Cold War II, Matgamna's group, which remained deeply mired in the Labour Party, howled with the imperialists for the anti-socialist, anti-Semitic Polish Solidarność, supported capitalist reunification in Germany and hailed the counterrevolutions which destroyed the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states in East Europe in 1990-91.

Today Matgamna's tendency, now called the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL), is still mired in the Labour Party—in fact, the New Labour Party, which Tony Blair is trying to remold as a capitalist party by severing its historic link with the trade unions. As good Labourites, the AWL takes their place with those who seek to put a "working-class" face on craven loyalty to their "own" imperialism. Nowhere is this more clear than in Northern Ireland, where the Matgamnaites (along with Taaffe's Militant Labour, now called the Socialist Party) are notorious for their revolting affinity for British imperialism's fascist Loyalist gunmen like Billy Hutchinson, leader of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP). Obscenely portraying the PUP, a front for the murderous Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), as a legitimate representative of the Protestant working class, the AWL has featured Hutchinson as a speaker at their events and given him a platform

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in their journal. In 1995, an AWL summer school featured a "debate" with Ken Maginnis, "security" spokesman for the Ulster Unionist Party and a paid adviser to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Needless to say, the AWL refuses to call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland, parroting the imperialist lie that the troops are some kind of neutral arbiter between Catholic and Protestant communities instead of an integral part of the armed fist of Orange supremacy.

With the outbreak of the NATO war against Serbia, the first large-scale war in Europe since World War II, the AWL swam comfortably in the stream of the whole British fake left, which slavishly supported the capitalist government of Blair's New Labour and its aggressive forward posture in support of NATO's terror bombing of Serbia, and in support of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), a puppet of NATO imperialism. The AWL was so dedicated to the British/U.S.-led NATO war that it avoided even the fig leaf of the "Stop the War" demonstrations. But it did mobilize for a 10 April 1999 Kosovo demonstration in London which was fulsomely in support of the NATO bombing. From the beginning, when even Tony Blair was hesitating, Matgamna was calling for ground troops: "If NATO troop landings put a stop to the Serb's [*sic*] genocidal drive against the Kosovars we will be glad of it.... Socialists cannot one-sidedly denounce NATO and the US without either endorsing or being indifferent to the genocidal imperialism of Serb Yugoslavia" ("The Issues for Socialists," *Action for Solidarity*, 2 April 1999). Today—in spite of all the rhetoric in favor of "independence for Kosovo" during the war—the AWL naturally has no objections to Kosovo being militarily occupied by the major NATO imperialist powers. This was NATO's intention from the beginning.

Throughout most of his political incarnations in the 1970s, Sean Matgamna, nominally a Soviet defensist, held that the Russian question was a "tenth-rate issue," immaterial to the real stuff of British "Trotskyism," which, as he learned at the feet of Gerry Healy and Ted Grant, was to "make the Labour lefts fight." But the illusion that the Russian question didn't matter was only possible during the brief window of "détente," when U.S. imperialism, weakened by its defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, needed to buy itself a little time before going back on the offensive. When in 1979 the Carter administration of U.S. imperialism seized on the Soviet Union's military intervention in defense of the modernizing left-nationalist government in Afghanistan to launch the anti-Soviet "human rights crusade" that marked the opening of Cold War II, Matgamna rushed to join the parade as virtually the entire spectrum of fake-left tendencies jumped on the anti-Soviet bandwagon on the side of the bloodthirsty Islamic militias and their CIA backers. Suddenly the "tenth-rate" question of Soviet defensism became the central question of a loyalty oath to British and world imperialism.

Capitulating to bourgeois anti-Sovietism all down the line, in 1988 Matgamna's organization took the position that Stalinism represented a new form of class society, with the bureaucracy constituting a "bureaucratic state-monopoly ruling class." The positing of a new form of class society between capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat was in essence a restatement of Shachtman's "bureaucratic collectivism." When it comes to "little England" Labourite anti-Communism, Matgamna is even more crazed than Cliff. Matgamna resurrects Shachtman because he needs to

distinguish himself on a theoretical level from Cliff's SWP, which in Britain occupies the ostensibly Trotskyist reformist terrain that Matgamna aspires to. Matgamna is also so far gone in crass social-patriotism that he is no longer put off by Shachtman's unsavory end.

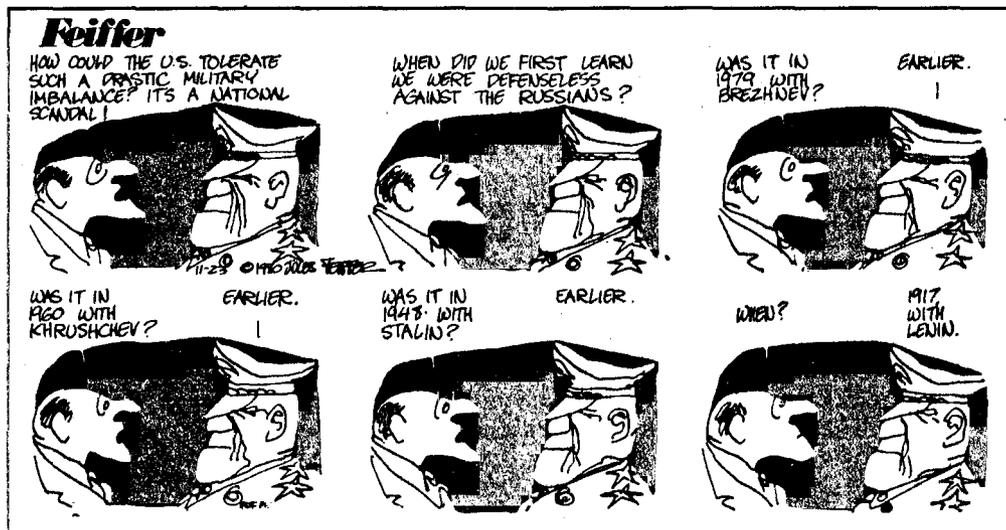
Of course, the Shachtman who emerges from the pages of *The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism* is molded to be congenial for today's "death of communism" left. The real Shachtman was an equivocal figure—an early Communist and one of the founding leaders of the SWP, his break from Trotskyism led him into the service of our class enemies.

As we have already seen, in the period right after his split from Cannon's SWP, Shachtman appeared as more of a centrist, occasionally making correct critiques from the left of theoretical problems and flinches within the Trotskyist movement. Our tendency has always viewed the history of our movement critically and so we have acknowledged and learned from those instances when the Workers Party was correct against the SWP. One example was the SWP's failure to see that when the U.S. directly took control of the fight against Japanese imperialism in China during World War II, the previously supportable anti-colonial struggle of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist troops became subordinated to the war effort of Allied imperialism.

Especially important for authentic Trotskyists is the Shachtmanites' devastating critique of the "Proletarian Military Policy." The PMP, for which Trotsky himself bore a heavy measure of responsibility, represented a profound revision of Marxism on the fundamental question of the *class nature of the capitalist state*. Because the PMP did not involve his own area of decisive departure from Marxism, Shachtman in 1940-41 was able to score some correct points against Cannon and the SWP (see especially Shachtman's polemic, "Working-Class Policy in War and Peace," first published in the *New Internationalist*, January 1941, reprinted in our *Prometheus Research Series* No. 2, "Documents on the 'Proletarian Military Policy'" [February 1989], published by the Central Committee archive of the ICL's American section).

The PMP was first proposed by Trotsky in 1940, in the last months of his life. World War II had already started in Europe and a brutal air war was raging over Britain, but the United States had not yet entered the war, although it was clear that they would. The PMP was an impatient and misguided attempt to find a bridge between the deep anti-fascist sentiments of the working class and the revolutionary program of overthrowing capitalism. It consisted of a series of demands for trade-union control of military training for the *bourgeois* army. These demands were a prominent part of the propaganda of the American SWP and especially the British Workers International League (WIL) in the early years of the war. The PMP's thrust was reformist—it implied that it was possible for the working class to control the central core of the capitalist state, the army. It ran counter to the Trotskyist program of revolutionary defeatism toward all imperialist combatants, especially the "main enemy" at home. In the context of an interimperialist war where "anti-fascism" was the main ideological cover for the Anglo-American side, the PMP easily shaded over into social-patriotism, as Shachtman pointed out.

In the U.S., 18 leaders of the SWP and Minneapolis Teamsters union were prosecuted and jailed by the government for their opposition to the imperialist war. But



American cartoonist Jules Feiffer views the Cold War. From 1917 onward, the imperialist bourgeoisies were bent on destruction of the USSR.

their advocacy of the PMP did somewhat denature their revolutionary defeatist propaganda. In England, where the threat of a German invasion loomed as a real possibility, the WIL went much further toward full-blown social-patriotism, initially raising the slogan "arm the workers" and showing softness on the defense forces of the Home Guard. WIL propaganda called for "workers control of production" to end the "chaos" in war production; in 1942 Ted Grant gloated over the victory of Britain's Eighth Army in North Africa, hailing it as "our" army. Only when it became clear in 1943 that the Allied camp would win the war did the PMP become a dead letter in both the U.S. and Britain.

The only area where Matgamna *doesn't* agree with Max Shachtman are Shachtman's left criticisms of the orthodox Trotskyists in WW II. Matgamna supports the PMP and insists on military support to Chiang Kai-shek even after his forces became subordinated to the Allied war effort. Being a consistent revisionist, Matgamna goes even further, openly advocating *social-patriotism*, "at least for Britain and France":

"The Proletarian War Policy was, as expounded by the SWP/USA and the WIL/RCP in Britain, a confused mystification that rationally added up to a policy of *revolutionary defencism*. Revolutionary defencism means that the revolutionaries want to prosecute the war but do not abate their struggle to become the ruling class in order to do so. That is what [what] the Trotskyists, or most of them, said amounted to. To reject this because Britain and Germany were both imperialist is far too abstract."

—Workers' Liberty, June/July 1999

Here Matgamna blatantly echoes the bourgeois propaganda of WW II that this was a war of "democracy" against "fascism" when in fact it was a war between competing imperialist alliances, as was WWI. He understands full well and makes abundantly clear that he supports the PMP precisely because it was bourgeois defensist of the Allied side. So for Matgamna, there was no basis for defending the USSR against Nazi Germany but it was correct to defend Britain and France! What a perfect summary of anti-Soviet social-chauvinism, which in this case actually places Matgamna somewhere to the right of Winston Churchill. In retroactively making common cause with social-patriotism in WW II, Matgamna finds historical support for his current craven capitulation to British imperialism as it runs point for NATO in the first war in Europe since 1945.

As Shachtman's Stalinophobia was a bridge to the Cold

War led by the U.S. imperialists, the PMP in Britain was an open door to reconciliation with the left wing of Labour Party reformism and parliamentary cretinism. Their revolutionary fibre substantially eroded, the English Trotskyists could not stand up to the illusions in the capitalist Labour government of Major Attlee installed to contain the massive working-class unrest after the war. By 1949, all wings of ostensible British Trotskyism had liquidated themselves into the Labour Party.

The Labourite social-democratic substrate underlying British ostensible Trotskyism was fully displayed in their enthusiasm for Solidarność, the company union of the Vatican and Wall Street for capitalist counterrevolution in Poland. In September 1983, during the annual TUC Congress, Gerry Healy published in his *News Line* a flashy "exposé" of Arthur Scargill, based on a letter Scargill had written that rightly condemned Solidarność as anti-socialist. This set Scargill up for an orgy of red-baiting by the TUC tops and bourgeois press, which was used to isolate the mineworkers union on the eve of the heroic 1984-85 miners strike. The Healyites thus proved to be of considerable service to Margaret Thatcher in her campaign to smash the miners and break the spine of the British labor movement. The entire panoply of fake-Trotskyist charlatans in Britain—from Healy to Cliff to Matgamna to the Pabloite United Secretariat groupings—combined to cheer Solidarność as the authentic voice of the Polish working class. Their championship of Solidarność was concrete proof of their shared acceptance of the reformist framework of anti-Communist, "little England" nationalist Labourite politics. During the strike, Matgamna's group campaigned for a general election to put in power the Labour Party led by Neil Kinnock, widely despised by the striking miners for his scabberding line. In a sordid postscript, in 1990 Matgamna's Socialist Organiser group, along with Workers Power, sponsored a tour by a Russian fascist, Yuri Butchenko, who was working in cahoots with the CIA and MI6 in an effort to smear Scargill on false charges of misappropriating money donated during the strike by Soviet miners.

Operating on British terrain where anti-Americanism is a cheap shot, Matgamna seeks to disassociate himself from Shachtman's support to U.S. imperialism in Vietnam and Cuba, asserting that "This end to Shachtman's political life must for socialists cast a dark shadow on his memory."

But the unmistakable stench of Matgamna's own social-patriotism reeks in passages like the following, from the introduction to his book:

"In the post-war world where the USSR was the second great global power, recognition that the USA and Western Europe—advanced capitalism—was the more progressive of the contending camps, the one which gave richer possibilities, greater freedom, more for socialists to build on, was, I believe, a necessary part of the restoration of Marxist balance to socialist politics."

Here is a groveling apology for the crimes of British imperialism in Palestine, Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, India, Hong Kong and for the brutal imperialist wars against the Algerian independence struggle and the Vietnamese Revolution. Only a smug social democrat who holds in utter contempt the struggles of the oppressed masses in the countries strangled by the Western imperialist powers could write such a passage. But then Matgamna's 156-page introduction, which purports to deal comprehensively with Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism, never once mentions the Left Opposition's fight against Stalin's strangulation of the second Chinese Revolution in 1925-1927. The permanent revolution was never part of Matgamna's nominal "Trotskyism." He has no hatred for the Stalinist program of class collaboration—he fully shares it.

In common with the imperialist bourgeoisie (and the Stalinists, for that matter), Matgamna equates the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky with the Stalinist bureaucratic caste which usurped power in 1924, taking the first steps toward self-consciousness with its false dogma of "social-

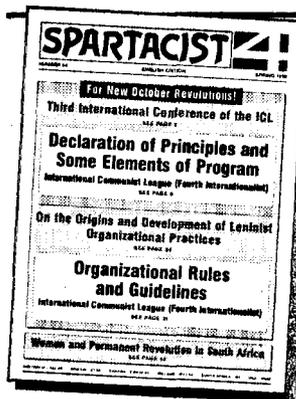
ism in one country." He equates the bureaucracy of 1925-28—which represented a bloc of the centrist elements around Stalin with the Bukharin/Tomsky faction conciliatory of capitalist restoration—with the ascendant bureaucratic centrist Stalin clique after 1928. And he equates all of the above with the anti-revolutionary Stalinist apparatus which surrendered the German proletariat to Hitler without a shot in 1933, proving, as Trotsky wrote, that "The present CPSU is not a party but an apparatus of domination in the hands of an uncontrolled bureaucracy" ("It Is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew," 15 July 1933). In short, Matgamna deliberately seeks to obscure the fact that a *political counterrevolution* took place in 1924 that was the qualitative turning point after which the Stalin faction had become ascendant and the USSR had become a degenerated workers state. This qualitative turn was verifiable—a different program carried out by a different leadership with different methods alien to Bolshevism. In Matgamna's (and Kautsky's) view, Stalinism grew organically and inevitably out of Leninism and the Trotskyist Left Opposition was irrelevant.

Indeed, for Matgamna the "original sin" was the October Revolution itself. Writing in the introduction to his collection, Matgamna asserts: "The taking of power in 1917 turned out to have been a kamikaze exercise, not only for the Bolshevik party in its physical existence, though ultimately it was that, but kamikaze for a whole political doctrine." Matgamna echoes the same arguments made by Kautsky and the Mensheviks who claimed at the time that

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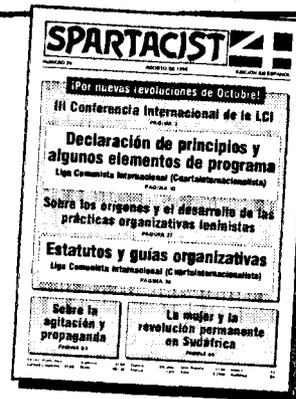
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**War is the mother of revolution: Petrograd soldiers raise banner for Third International in June 1917. ICL fights for new October Revolutions.**

Russia was not sufficiently “economically mature” for the proletariat to take power, a rationale for their gut hatred and fear of workers revolution.

Matgamna states openly what is in fact the real program of all the revisionist British ex-Trotskyists: opposition to new October Revolutions and prostration at the feet of the British Labour Party. The political line of these revisionists, whether or not they are formally members of the Labour Party, has boiled down *at best* to the posture of “make the Labour lefts fight.” Yet for Matgamna and his ilk, even this has become somewhat of a fiction, as his support to “democratic” imperialism—past and present—indicates. His chauvinist support to the NATO bombing of Serbia put him to the *right* of “left” Labourites such as Tony Benn. In contradistinction to all the fake lefts, we fight to forge a party with a revolutionary program to split the working-class base from the bourgeois leadership of the Labour Party, as part of a revolutionary strategy to overthrow capitalism in the British Isles.

As Shachtman was liquidating his organization into the U.S. Socialist Party, he wrote an article entitled “American Communism: A Re-Examination of the Past” (*New International*, Fall 1957), lamenting the Communists’ split with the Social Democracy. This nostalgia for the old American social democracy was telling. Among other things, Shachtman had to ignore the touchstone question of the American black population—a question on which the difference between the old SP and the early CP was qualitative. Thus, Shachtman in 1957 retrospectively embraced the tacit racism of the American social democracy.

Shachtman was sympathetic to the earlier Lenin, before he had completed his evolution from a revolutionary social democrat into a communist. What Shachtman really hated about Lenin *the communist* was Lenin’s recognition of the need for a political split in the working class as the precondition

for proletarian revolution. In 1920, at its second congress, the Comintern codified this rejection of the Kautskyan “party of the whole class.” The “21 Conditions for Admission to the Communist International” drew a sharp programmatic line between communism, on the one hand, and the reformist (and particularly the centrist) opponents of revolution, on the other.

All the “state capitalist” and “new class” theories of the USSR, from Kautsky to Shachtman to Cliff and Matgamna, were predicated on the search for an illusory “third camp” between capitalism and Stalinism, which always proved sooner or later (mainly sooner) to be firmly situated at the side of their “own” ruling class. We take pride in having fought to the limits of our ability to defend the remaining gains of October against imperialism and counterrevolution. Today we fight for the unconditional military defense of the remaining deformed workers states: China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea. We are for proletarian political revolution to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracies that have driven these workers states to the brink of capitalist counterrevolution.

Trotsky’s predictions that “socialism in one country” would prove bankrupt, a step backward from the possibilities for world socialism opened by the Russian Revolution of 1917, were confirmed in the negative. Today our struggle is to vindicate Trotsky’s program through new October Revolutions worldwide to smash the system of capitalist imperialism and establish proletarian state power on a world scale. This task has been rendered immeasurably harder after the final undoing of the Bolshevik Revolution, accomplished thanks not only to the Stalinists themselves but to those like Cliff and Matgamna who hailed counterrevolution abroad as they embraced the social-democratic labor bureaucracies in their own countries.

Today these fake-left formations carry forward their strategy of class betrayal in supporting social-democratic governments of austerity, racism and imperialist war in a dozen European countries. They are obstacles to proletarian consciousness which must be exposed and swept away in the course of building the revolutionary Trotskyist parties required to put an end to the system of capitalism in its death agony. ■

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# On Trotsky's Concept of a "Reiss Faction" in the Soviet Bureaucracy

by Joseph Seymour

The document reprinted below was written in December 1995 by Joseph Seymour, as part of an internal discussion in the ICL. Seymour addresses the false view of Jan Norden, then editor of Workers Vanguard, that in our fight for proletarian political revolution in East Germany (DDR) in 1989-90, the ICL was searching for a Trotskyist wing of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Norden asserted this at a public forum he gave at Berlin's Humboldt University in January 1995. This speech was a public expression of Norden's opportunist appetite to "regroup" with the Communist Platform (KPF) of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the social-democratic remnants of the former ruling Stalinist bureaucracy. Norden retrospectively denied the ICL's role as the conscious vanguard in the incipient political revolution in the DDR, repeatedly intoning that "the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership." Meanwhile he trivialized the crimes of Stalinism, including making the absurd claim that the DDR Stalinists could not "conceive" of a political revolution. Indeed, Norden's comrades in the KPF not only could conceive of political revolution, they had done everything they could to suppress one: they knew full well that they would have been its targets!

Too weak, too incoherent and too cowardly to form a faction, Norden and a couple of supporters engineered their expulsions from our party, subsequently setting up the Internationalist Group (IG). The IG has generalized its pursuit of alien class forces, including its claim that the Chinese Stalinists cannot lead a counterrevolution. The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, affiliate of the IG's fraudulent "League for the Fourth International," crossed the class line by dragging the Volta Redonda municipal workers union into the capitalist courts. Norden's Humboldt speech is printed in the ICL's International Bulletin No. 38, "Norden's 'Group': Shamefaced Defectors from Trotskyism" (June 1996). Readers are also referred to International Bulletin No. 41, "The Fight for a Trotskyist Party in Brazil" (April 1997).

In Norden's speech at Humboldt University last January, he raised the possibility of a "Reiss faction" emerging during the terminal crisis of the DDR in 1989-90. In his recent document "A Reply to the German Question" (17 November 1995), he elaborates:

"I raised the 'Reiss faction'—a reference to Trotsky's point that the bureaucracy, due to its dual nature, will split under the impact of a political revolution—in order to make the point, in particular regarding the Communist Platform, that *there was no such section of the bureaucracy in the DDR*...."

"But the question of whether there was a 'Reiss faction' was not some kind of irrelevant or deviant issue that I invented. We didn't ignore the SED, the party of the East German bureaucracy and throw all its members into one bag."

Ignace Poretsky (Reiss), who had joined the newly formed Polish Communist Party in 1919, was a senior member of the Soviet intelligence services. In 1937, he openly denounced Stalinism and proclaimed his adherence to the Fourth International. Shortly thereafter he was murdered in Switzerland by Stalin's agents. Trotsky saw Reiss as repre-

senting a potential for a communist opposition to Stalin within the cadres of the Soviet state.

Norden's understanding of a "Reiss faction" is wrong and confused. First, such a formation is *not at all synonymous* with those elements of a Stalinist bureaucracy who go over to the side of an unfolding political revolution. As the term "faction" clearly denotes, Trotsky was here projecting the emergence of a left opposition within the bureaucracy *in advance* of a political revolution or the collapse of Stalinist bonapartism in society at large.

Furthermore, Trotsky was *not* describing any and every current within the bureaucracy to the left of Stalin. A Reiss faction meant a genuinely communist opposition made up



Vladimir Kibalchich



**Ignace Reiss's 1937 declaration for the Fourth International was printed in Left Opposition's bulletin: "Only our victory—that of the proletarian revolution—will free humanity of capitalism and the U.S.S.R. of Stalinism."**

of seasoned cadres who understood and adhered to the principles of Bolshevism. In this sense the potential for a Reiss faction was specific to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It is *not* a trans-historic concept applicable to all Stalinist bureaucracies in all times and places. There are no Chinese Ignace Reisses in Beijing today or Cuban Ignace Reisses in Havana. There are confused left Stalinists, yes, but not high-level functionaries who share *our* communist program.

During the 1989 crisis in China, at least two dozen senior commanders in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) disobeyed orders to suppress the protests. Had the protests developed into a workers' insurrection and mutinies in the army, these and many other PLA officers would likely have gone over to the insurgent masses. But they would not have constituted a Reiss faction or any kind of faction at all, i.e., an oppositional grouping based on a definite program. Chinese military cadres and civilian officials who support a popular uprising will be politically heterogeneous and on average will not have a higher level of socialist consciousness than rank-and-file Chinese workers or soldiers. By contrast, Ignace Reiss manifestly had a far higher level of communist consciousness than the mass of Russian or Ukrainian workers at the time. More generally, many cadres of the Soviet state in the 1930s (e.g., Leopold Trepper) considered themselves to be good communists who accommodated themselves to Stalin as a "lesser evil."

The tendency of the bureaucracies of the degenerated/deformed workers states to split under conditions of political revolution has *nothing* to do with Stalinist ideology, its

claim to embody the principles of "Marxism-Leninism." The labor bureaucracy in *capitalist countries* will behave in a parallel way under comparable conditions. Faced with a mass, working-class radicalization, opening the prospects for social revolution, some trade-union officials and reformist politicians will move leftward, in some cases genuinely, in others hypocritically. During the period of revolutionary turbulence after the First World War, a number of social-democratic leaders opportunistically adapted to the leftward radicalization and pro-Bolshevik sympathies of their base. For example, the French social democrats L.-O. Frossard and Marcel Cachin, who were ardent chauvinists during the war, joined the majority of the French Socialist Party which adhered to the Third International and formed the French Communist Party.

Norden's misconceptions about a "Reiss faction" exemplify a deviation which developed in our party during Cold War II: a tendency to draw a fundamental line of division between Stalinism and social democracy. Neither Norden nor anyone else in our tendency would deny that the bureaucracy of the German Social Democracy has in its own way a contradictory nature. It is not one reactionary mass nor is it counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core. Yet neither Norden nor anyone else in our tendency maintains that there is a potential for a Reiss faction in the present-day German Social Democratic bureaucracy.

Trotsky's concept of a Reiss faction derived neither from the sociological nature of the Soviet bureaucracy nor the particularities of Stalinist ideology but rather from certain historically conditioned features of the Soviet bureaucracy in the 1930s. A significant section of the bureaucracy had experience in the pre-1917 revolutionary movement against the tsarist autocracy. A far larger number joined the Communist Party during the Civil War when Trotsky was the recognized co-leader with Lenin of the Soviet state and world Communist movement. Many senior cadres of the Soviet state had been involved in the Trotskyist, Zinovievite or smaller left oppositions during the 1920s. While they had for various reasons capitulated to Stalin, these ex-left oppositionists constituted, as Isaac Deutscher described it, a distinct *milieu* within the upper reaches of the Soviet political order. It was these historically specific factors which underlay the potential for a communist (i.e., Trotskyist) faction crystallizing among the cadres of the Soviet state at that time.

A major aim of Stalin's Great Purges was to eliminate that potential by physically exterminating former left oppositionists and other critically minded Soviet officials and intellectuals. And he succeeded in doing so. The second generation of the Soviet bureaucracy exemplified by Leonid Brezhnev was ignorant of the fundamental antagonism between Stalinism and Bolshevism. This was perforce also true of the Stalinist bureaucracies which emerged with the post-World War II deformed workers states.

No elements of the Soviet bureaucracy under Brezhnev or the Chinese bureaucracy under Mao shared the views expressed in Reiss' letter proclaiming his adherence to the Fourth International such as:

"What is needed today is a fight without mercy against Stalinism! The class struggle and not the popular front, workers' intervention in the Spanish revolution as opposed to the action of the committees.

"Down with the lie of socialism in one country! Return to Lenin's International!"

—reproduced in Elisabeth K. Poretzky, *Our Own People* (1969)

In fact, many members of the Soviet Brezhnevite and Chinese Maoist bureaucracies would have found Reiss' letter unintelligible. And I am referring here not to terminology and formulations but political substance.

A Reiss faction in the specific sense that Trotsky conceived it was no longer possible in the bureaucracies of the post-World War II Sino-Soviet states. But could a "Reiss faction" in a looser sense—a left opposition of a roughly centrist character—have developed in the postwar Stalinist regimes? I believe this was possible only in the *first generation* of the bureaucracy when many of its members were originally leftist militants in reactionary capitalist states. The most prominent figures in the deformed workers states who exhibited a strong sense of socialist idealism—Pal Maleter in Hungary, Vladimir Dedijer in Yugoslavia, Che Guevara—conform to this biographical pattern. The experience of the redoubtable DDR intelligence chief Markus Wolf was somewhat comparable in that he was a child of Jewish Communists who fled from Nazi Germany to the USSR. Wolf's political outlook and values were formed under the shadow of the Holocaust.

The second, not to speak of the third, generation of the Stalinist bureaucracies were and are made up of people who inherited or were co-opted as youth into positions of social privilege and political influence. The crimes of capitalist imperialism are for them mere rhetoric to be used when and if the occasion warrants. A 40-year-old Cuban economics official today cannot have the same political consciousness as Che Guevara because he does not have the same experiences as Che Guevara. As a footloose Latin American radical, Guevara was an eyewitness to the 1953 Bolivian Revolution and the following year served as a minor official in the left-nationalist Arbenz regime in Guatemala which was overthrown by the CIA.

During Cold War II it was necessary for us to emphasize the contradictory nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy against the pseudo-Trotskyist advocates of the "bourgeois-democratic" revolution in the Soviet sphere. But that contradiction must be understood *dialectically*, not statically. As is now obvious, the Soviet and affiliated bureaucracies were *not* committed to maintaining the status quo by carefully balancing between left and right. The *historical tendency* of all Stalinist bureaucracies is to bring about capitalist restoration by one means or another. The Transitional Program thus describes the bureaucracy "becoming *ever more* the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers state" [emphasis added].

This tendency is not linear but is punctuated by *generational change*. It is no accident that the rapid rightward slide of the Soviet bureaucracy culminating in capitalist counter-revolution occurred when the Brezhnev/Andropov generation was replaced by the postwar generation of Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Shevardnadze. Nor is it an accident that one of Deng Xiaoping's sons is a big-time real estate operator with direct ties to a Hong Kong billionaire. The Chinese masses call the children of the top officials "the princelings." This expresses a popular understanding that these are people born to positions of social privilege, political influence and increasingly Western levels of wealth. And being determines consciousness.

To search for a "Reiss faction" in the present-day Chinese, North Korean, Vietnamese and Cuban bureaucracies would be futile and totally disoriented.

—4 December 1995

**Forge a Trotskyist Party! For Workers Revolution!**

**Lessons  
of Indonesia  
1965**



New York Times

**A million Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese were massacred in 1965 bloodbath which ushered in the rule of Suharto.**

After 32 years of repressive military rule, the massive student-centered protests that exploded in May of 1998 brought an end to the blood-drenched reign of Suharto. The Indonesian dictator rose to power through the 1965 slaughter of over a million Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese in one of the most savage massacres in modern history. Hundreds of thousands were arrested and thousands interned for years; some of them languish in the regime's dungeons to this day. The bloody slaughter in 1965 was the direct product of the support by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), as well as their mentors in Peking and Moscow, to the bourgeois national government. The PKI allied itself with the capitalist government of then-President Sukarno, Indonesia's first nationalist leader following independence from the Dutch in 1949. Leftists in the People's Democratic Party (PRD) are following the same dangerous class-collaborationist path in Indonesia today, supporting Sukarno's daughter, Megawati Sukarnoputri, a capitalist politician and leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P).

The white terror that raged through the archipelago in late 1965 through early 1966 was perpetrated by an alliance between the army and Islamic fanatics mobilized in a holy war against Communism and with the direct involvement of the American CIA and its Australian junior partner. Three decades later, historians must rely on very limited sources, as many of the particular events leading to the bloodbath are still obscured by the cover-ups and lies spun by the powerful and guilty. It will take victorious workers revolution to write the true history of the catastrophe, for those who have the most to cover up—the bloody capitalist rulers of Indonesia and the imperialist overlords—are still in power today.

The vacuum of authentic communist leadership was decisive in Indonesia in 1965. The U.S. imperialists, up to their necks in the blood of the Indonesian people, were simply, in the words of U.S. ambassador Marshall Green, doing "what we had to do and you'd better be glad we did because if we hadn't Asia would be a different place today" (quoted in *Ten Years' Military Terror in Indonesia*, Malcolm Caldwell,



AFP

**University students carry anti-Suharto banner in massive 1998 demonstration against reactionary Indonesian regime. A Trotskyist party must be forged to unite workers, poor peasants, discontented students, oppressed minorities behind the proletarian program of socialist revolution against the brutal capitalist system.**



Uimonen/Corbis Sygma

**East Timorese victims of militia death squads sponsored by Indonesian army after overwhelming pro-independence vote in August 1999.**

ed. [1975]). The imperialists and native reactionaries behaved according to their own class interests. But the workers were betrayed by their misleadership.

In March 1966, as the culmination of the bloodbath, the PKI and its mass organizations were formally banned. And as well, the dissemination and teaching of Marxism-Leninism has been prohibited. The Suharto regime systematically lied about the events of 1965 in an attempt to extirpate communism from the collective memory of the working masses. Left liberal writer Benedict Anderson noted perceptively that the various bourgeois contenders to rule Indonesia—not only Suharto's handpicked successor Habibie, but also Megawati Sukarnoputri, as well as Abdurrahman Wahid of the National Awakening Party—have staunchly refused to criticize the horrid massacres perpetrated by Indonesia's rulers in 1965 (*New Left Review*, May/June 1999). Even today the Indonesian bourgeoisie stands by its class butchers.

This strongly indicates the bourgeoisie's fear of an insurgent proletariat, the potential gravedigger of Indonesian capitalism. The working class has grown explosively in recent decades. In 1958, the industrial proletariat numbered about 500,000 and the country's manufacturing base was largely centered on handicrafts. Beginning in the mid-1980s huge factory zones were built—largely by foreign capital—transforming rural towns and small cities in East and West Java and northern Sumatra into massive concentrations of industrial production.

The 1997-98 East Asian economic crisis and the IMF-dictated austerity bailout have produced horrific suffering among the Indonesian masses. Millions have already been laid off and in August of 1998 it was estimated that 15,000 workers were losing their jobs every day. In the same month barely fifty percent of Indonesian children were reported to be enrolled in school. As prices soar, millions have been driven below the poverty line including sections of the once "upwardly mobile" urban middle class. Malnutrition is widespread and last year in West Java alone a staggering four million people were estimated to be threatened with starvation.

**East Timor Independence Now! All Indonesian and All UN Imperialist Troops Out Now!**

Indonesia, earlier known as the Netherlands East Indies, endured the boot of Dutch colonial rule for over three centuries. Occupied by Japanese forces during World War II, the

country won its independence in 1949. With its extensive natural resources, low-wage labor and strategic position astride the gate to the Pacific Rim, it has remained a magnet for the neocolonial ambitions of imperialist powers. Indonesia's multinational population, cobbled together under colonial rule into a huge prison house of peoples, is predominantly Muslim. Religious minorities are targets for persecution, while the small population of ethnic Chinese, constituting less than 5 percent of Indonesia's more than 200 million people, has historically been the focus of virulent Javanese nationalism. Across the archipelago from Aceh to Irian Jaya, oppressed national groups struggle against the stranglehold of the Javanese-centered bourgeoisie and its brutal military machine. At least 2,000 Acehnese were killed or abducted by the Indonesian army in the early 1990s. Since January 1999, communalist terror continues to erupt between Christians and Muslims on the island of Ambon.

Thousands of East Timorese have been murdered and thousands have fled their homes to literally run for their lives from an orgy of killing unleashed by pro-Indonesia death squads in the wake of an August 30 vote when the overwhelming majority of East Timorese rejected a sham autonomy deal, clearly opting for independence. Now, under the pretext of defense of the East Timorese, the United Nations is sending an imperialist army, including a large contingent of Australian troops, to occupy East Timor. Imperialist military intervention in East Timor has no more to do with defending the population than did the U.S.-led war against Serbia and occupation of Kosovo with "humanitarian" concern for the Kosovo Albanians. Fearing further turmoil throughout Indonesia, as the army and its militia gangs run amok, the U.S. is promoting a military force spearheaded by its Australian imperialist ally to maintain neocolonial "stability" by propping up the blood-drenched regime. Meanwhile, Australia has its own interests in the region: Irian Jaya is within grabbing distance of the troops occupying East Timor.

The idea that military intervention by Australian and U.S. imperialism will bring "freedom" to the East Timorese is grotesque—ask the Australian Aborigines or the black population subjected to police-state violence in the ghettos in the U.S. about their rulers' commitment to the rights and welfare of the oppressed! As our comrades in the Spartacist League/Australia wrote (*Australasian Spartacist*, Spring 1999): "These same imperialists backed Indonesia's annexation of the former Portuguese colony in 1975, leading to the deaths of more than 200,000 East Timorese. For 30 years they supported and armed the bloody dictator Suharto while training the Indonesian army, including the Kopassus special forces killers.... These are the imperialist mass murderers who slaughtered millions in their losing effort to defeat the Vietnamese revolution."

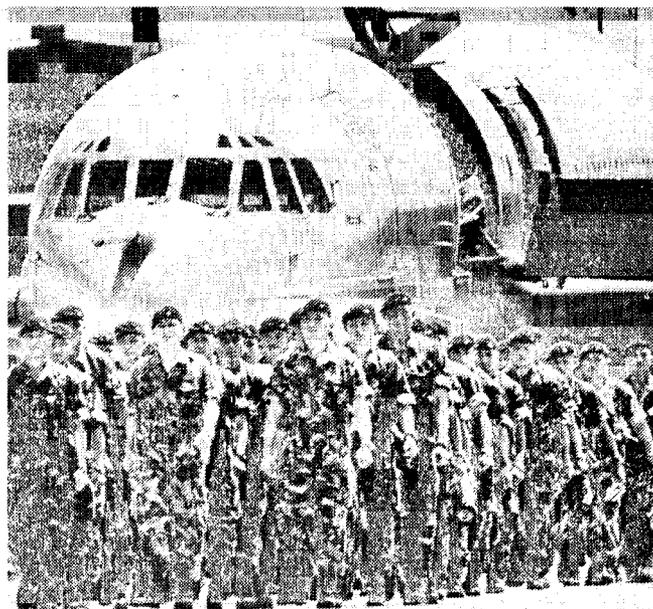
While the fake left, from the Cliffite International Socialist Organization to the United Secretariat (USec), capitulates to the chauvinist wave of patriotic gore sweeping Australia and criminally supports imperialist intervention in East Timor, we in the International Communist League uniquely fight for internationalist unity in struggle of the proletarians of the region against the capitalist rulers. Imperialist intervention is counterposed to the urgent need to mobilize the powerful Indonesian proletariat in struggle against the dominant Javanese chauvinism fostered by the bourgeoisie. A Trotskyist party in Indonesia would fight to mobilize the working class to demand Indonesia get out of East Timor, while

opposing imperialist intervention. Championing independence for East Timor, it would fight against national oppression of all the oppressed peoples in the archipelago.

**For Proletarian Independence!  
For Permanent Revolution!**

Students and other activists in Indonesia demand "reformasi." But reform of the capitalist state apparatus does not challenge the rule of the bourgeoisie and end the exploitation and oppression of the workers and oppressed. Whether led by the former cronies of Suharto or by Sukarno's daughter Megawati (who may possibly be allowed to take office after winning the June 1999 election), the government will continue to be the servant of the forces of capitalist depredation, religious reaction and anti-Chinese racism. From the debacle of "People Power" in the Philippines a decade ago to the replacement of generals overly compromised in mass killings by new "human rights" generals in South Korea, massive and courageous struggles have been coopted into supporting some wing of the bourgeoisie which sees financial and political advantage for itself in polishing up the façade of the system of capitalist misery.

The left-nationalist PRD, formed in 1994 as an umbrella group of student, worker and peasant associations, while courageously struggling against the brutal military regime, openly pushes alliances with chauvinist bourgeois politicians like Megawati Sukarnoputri, who supported Suharto's annexation of East Timor and today denies its right to independence. They have embraced her call for alliances with Islamic opposition forces. "The PRD is now seeking to form a united front with other parties against the common enemies...to generate the strongest possible movement against the regime and force the major opposition parties—the National Mandate Party of Amien Rais, the National Awakening Party of Abdurrahman Wahid and PDI-Struggle—to take a more consistent stand for *reformasi total*" (*Green Left Weekly*, [paper of the Australian Democratic Socialist Party], 2 June 1999). The PRD's call for a provisional government—"a democratic coalition government comprising progressive forces...controlled by people's councils" (*Green Left Weekly*, 25 November 1998)—is a program which would tie the working class to a mythical "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie and is an obstacle to the necessary struggle to mobilize the proletariat around its class interests. The illusion of a "democratic revolution" carried out arm in arm with the



Reuters

**British troops arriving in Australia for deployment in East Timor. ICL demands: East Timor Independence Now! All Indonesian and All UN Imperialist Troops Out Now!**

oppressors can only disorient and disarm the masses.

A multinational state with a narrowly based ruling class and with enormous social contradictions between a technologically advanced industrial sector and a countryside stamped in pre-capitalist times, Indonesia in many respects resembles tsarist Russia—modern industry grafted onto a backward society with manifold forms of oppression that are a heritage of the pre-industrial past, reinforced in Indonesia by over three centuries of Dutch colonial rule. In countries of belated capitalist development, the perspective for resolving the fundamental democratic questions posed by combined and uneven development is provided by the theory of permanent revolution, developed by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky and vindicated by the victory of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

Trotsky explained that in economically backward countries the weak national bourgeoisie—tied by a thousand strings to imperialism and fearful of its "own" working

Australasian Spartacist



Jon Reid



Australasian Spartacist

Australian social-chauvinists on the march (left): ISO calls for imperialist sanctions in guise of union bans, while DSP calls openly for sending in troops. Australian Spartacists (right) forthrightly oppose imperialist intervention.



class—is incapable of realizing the goals of classical bourgeois revolutions (national independence, agrarian revolution) such as the French Revolution of 1789. He wrote that “the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses” (*The Permanent Revolution* [1930]). The genuine liberation of colonial and semicolonial countries can only be achieved through the successful struggle of the proletariat for state power, leading all the oppressed. To this end the working class must forge a revolutionary leadership—a Leninist-Trotskyist party. If it is not to be strangled by backwardness and imperialist intervention, the struggle for proletarian revolution in Indonesia must be linked to the fight for workers rule in the advanced capitalist societies.

The series of financial collapses which have swept through Southeast and East Asia underlines not only that periodic crises are endemic to the capitalist system but that the fate of the Indonesian masses is strongly linked to workers’ struggles elsewhere. The interdependence of the regional economies is highlighted by the millions of workers who have migrated to other countries to find work during the “boom” which has now gone bust. As those workers are thrown out on the street or expelled, it is urgent for the workers movement everywhere to fight deportations and call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. The ICL fights for a socialist Asia—for proletarian revolutions from Indonesia to South Korea, from Australia to Japan, the industrial powerhouse of the region. Central to this perspective today is the struggle for proletarian political revolution in China to stop the galloping danger of capitalist restoration.

### **The PKI’s “United National Front”: Program of Betrayal**

Formed in the years immediately following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the PKI was founded by Dutch Marxist Henricus Sneevliet and others out of the largely Dutch Indies Social Democratic Association (ISDV) which had steadfastly opposed colonial rule. Seeking inroads into the indigenous masses, the ISDV entered Sarekat Islam (SI), a nationalist organization which grew out of an Islamic trading organization founded in 1911 to advance the cause of

Javanese traders against their Chinese rivals. The ISDV called on this peasant-based movement “to become the organization of the worker and small peasant class” (Ruth McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* [1965]). The ISDV’s embrace of Islam as a political force played into the Dutch colonialists’ “divide and rule” policies, encouraging persecution of not only non-Muslim minority peoples but also Muslims whose religious practice did not conform to the official orthodoxy of *santri* or devout Muslims. As well, it encouraged the growth of religious forces that were the deadly enemies of social progress.

While courageously reaching out in solidarity to the oppressed Chinese minority, the early PKI continued the ISDV’s policy of immersion in the SI. After being expelled in 1921, the PKI even set up its own “Red Sarekat Islam” groups. This ran counter to the Theses on the National and Colonial Question adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International (CI) in 1920. In the Theses, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin stressed the need to “under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is in its most embryonic form” and underlined “the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners, and mullahs, etc.”

At the Fourth CI Congress in 1922, PKI leader Tan Malaka represented Indonesia and took an active part in framing the policy of the CI on the national and colonial question. He was critical of Lenin’s sharp statement against Pan-Islamism at the Second CI Congress, defended the PKI’s entry into Sarekat Islam and declared that Pan-Islamism “is a nationalist liberation struggle.” The PKI’s futile strategy was conditioned by the absence of any sizeable indigenous proletariat in Indonesia at the time. Its political accommodation to Islamic nationalism was profoundly disorienting for those struggling to implant communism in the colonial and semicolonial world.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was based on the Bolshevik program of revolutionary internationalism, the fight for international extension of the revolution. But the isolation of the new workers state, particularly after the failure of the 1923 revolution in Germany, facilitated the rise of the



**Shantytown in the shadow of Jakarta high-rises. The wealth amassed by Suharto and his cronies fueled widespread sentiments for “reform” of the corrupt regime. But only thoroughgoing socialist revolution shattering the capitalist order can even begin to redress the impoverishment of the “Third World” masses.**



1917 October Revolution in Russia showed advanced workers and intellectuals throughout the world a road forward out of social backwardness and imperialist subjugation. Members of the Eastern Bureau at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, Moscow, 1922: Sen Katayama (front row, center), Ho Chi Minh (front row, left), Tan Malaka (back row, third from left), M. N. Roy (back row, center).

conservative, nationally narrow Stalinist bureaucracy. To justify and consolidate the Thermidorian political counter-revolution in 1924, Stalin advanced the dogma of “socialism in one country” as a cover for a reactionary and utopian policy of seeking to appease world imperialism by forswearing the fight for proletarian revolution elsewhere. Under this policy, the once-revolutionary parties of the Comintern sacrificed the workers’ own class interests through class-collaborationist policies motivated as forestalling hostile imperialist intervention against the USSR.

During the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, the Comintern ordered the Communist Party to literally disarm the proletariat, hold down the class struggle of workers and peasants against the “anti-imperialist” bourgeoisie and liquidate into Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang, the party of the national bourgeoisie. In the name of unity of the “patriotic” anti-imperialist forces, Stalin and his then chief ideologist Bukharin put forward a “bloc of four classes” including the national bourgeoisie, urban petty bourgeoisie, workers and peasants. Stalin had to impose this line over the objections of Chinese Communist leaders who knew very well that the Chinese bourgeoisie—merciless exploiters of the workers and peasants, and entirely intertwined with the brutal warlords—would play no role in the liberation of China except as its mortal enemy. The fruit of Stalin’s strategy was the defeat of the revolution, as the Guomindang drowned the Chinese working class in blood. Stalin/Bukharin’s policies were opposed by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The Chinese events led Trotsky to generalize from the earlier experience in tsarist Russia and extend the application of the theory of permanent revolution more generally to economically less advanced countries. (See “Permanent Revolution vs. the ‘Anti-Imperialist United Front’: The Origins of Chinese Trotskyism,” *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 53, Summer 1997.)

As Trotsky wrote:

“The official subordination of the Communist Party to the bourgeois leadership, and the official prohibition of forming soviets (Stalin and Bukharin taught that the Kuomintang ‘took the place of’ soviets) was a grosser and more glaring betrayal of Marxism than all the deeds of the Mensheviks in the years 1905-1917.”

—*Permanent Revolution*, 1930

By the mid-1930s, the Comintern had become a consciously anti-revolutionary force. After Hitler came to power as a result of the betrayals of the German Communists and Social Democrats, the Comintern explicitly endorsed support to liberal capitalist governments under the guise of the “popular front against fascism.” Since the main colonial powers were precisely these “democratic” imperialist states, such as France, Britain and Holland, the new Comintern line meant that it ceased to oppose colonialism. In World War II, for example, after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, the Communist Party in British-ruled India *opposed* the struggle for national independence; in the French colony of Indochina, the CP dropped its opposition to French imperialism. Similarly, in accordance with the USSR’s military alliance with the Allied armies in World War II, the Stalinists supported the Dutch imperialists in Indonesia against the Japanese. It was only the Trotskyist Fourth International that pursued a revolutionary line in the war. While calling for unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state, the Trotskyists took a position of *revolutionary defeatism* towards all the imperialist powers in their sordid struggle for colonial booty.

Indonesia was occupied by Japan in early 1942. By then the PKI had long ceased to exist organizationally, its members in prison, underground, or in exile. In 1926-27 the PKI had led an attempted uprising cruelly put down by the Dutch colonialists. Many of the rebels were shot and well over five thousand were imprisoned. Nationalists and Communists were interned in the notorious Tanah Merah concentration camp in the swamps of New Guinea. Accumulated bitterness at the Dutch colonialists led many Indonesians to greet the Japanese imperialists initially as a liberating force, an illusion that was soon shattered by the brutality of the occupying power. Typical of many nationalist politicians in the colonies of the European “democratic” imperialist powers, Sukarno lent his services to the Japanese occupying forces. Suharto too was a young officer in the Japanese-sponsored “self-defense corps.” The collaboration of Sukarno and other Indonesian leaders with the Japanese occupiers underscores how bourgeois nationalism in the colonial and semicolonial countries is necessarily dependent on one or another imperialist power.



Early PKI opposed Javanese chauvinism: banner in Chinese, Arabic and Dutch at 1925 PKI meeting in Jakarta.

Following the Japanese invasion, the retreating Dutch had transported hundreds of PKI members and other political prisoners to Australia. The PKI militants came under the wing of the Australian Communist Party (CPA), which instructed them to subordinate the struggle for independence to the Allies' war effort. After the war, the CPA led a labor boycott of Dutch shipping in solidarity with the renewed independence struggle. However, this effort was designed to dovetail with the aims of Australian imperialism, then under a Labor government, which sought to extend its influence to Indonesia in the waning days of Dutch colonial rule.

In the early postwar period, Stalin sought to reassure his wartime imperialist allies that the Communist parties in the West and colonial world were reliable instruments for suppressing revolutionary struggle. After the defeat of the Japanese, when the Dutch were fighting a rearguard action in the futile hope of reasserting their earlier rule, the PKI pursued policies that were even more conciliatory to the Dutch colonialists than those of bourgeois nationalists like Sukarno.

The military reverses suffered initially by the Western powers at the hands of the Japanese greatly destabilized the old colonial empires throughout Asia. When the Japanese occupation forces surrendered, there was often a vacuum of power, providing excellent opportunities for proletarian revolutionaries. However, the PKI—having decisively compromised with imperialism—was no such force. The Indonesian masses' deep bitterness at colonialism was channeled into support for bourgeois nationalism. When the Dutch were finally driven out in 1949, it was Sukarno who emerged on top.

Despite a political program insufficient to the cause of proletarian revolution and which could only lead to defeat, the early PKI included tens of thousands of subjectively revolutionary militants, as reflected in the role of party members in the uprisings of 1926-27. The party as reconstituted after the war was very different. The PKI in the period following World War II and up to the events around the 1965 coup is not analyzed in depth in this article. It is a period meriting further study, particularly regarding how the party acquired a mass base, the degree to which the party was tied financially and otherwise to the capitalist rulers, as well as the impact on the PKI of the Korean War and consolidation of a deformed workers state in North Korea and the 1949 Chinese Revolution.

Under the period of Sukarno's rule, the PKI grew phenomenally, becoming the largest Communist party in the capitalist world with over 3 million members and 14 million supporters in affiliated trade-union, peasant, youth, women's and cultural organizations. It had a fair degree of support among ethnic Chinese whom the party defended publicly against national chauvinism. But the PKI was a reformist obstacle to revolution; its politics defined by tailism and capitulation to bourgeois nationalists like Sukarno.

The PKI embraced Sukarno's "Nasakom" doctrine: the union of nationalist, religious and communist organizations. PKI chairman D. N. Aidit proclaimed in 1961 that the party must "place the national interest above the interests of class" (Donald Hindley, *The Communist Party of Indonesia 1951-1963* [1966]). The PKI leadership preached "joint unity" with Sukarno and the Nationalist Party (PNI) to form a "united national front, including the national bourgeoisie" which would carry out "not socialist but democratic reforms."

To maintain their uneasy alliance with the weak bourgeoisie, the Indonesian Stalinists restrained the working class and contained the class struggle. In 1957 when Sukarno called for a general strike against Dutch enterprises in an attempt to pressure them to cede control of Dutch New Guinea, workers, including those in PKI-led unions, seized factories, plantations and other Dutch enterprises. The PKI responded by supporting the demand to turn them over to army management.

Far from appeasing the class enemy, the PKI leadership's betrayals only served to lull the masses. In 1964, mass struggles by the land-starved, rent-gouged and debt-ridden peasantry swept East and Central Java as the PKI sought to enforce the Sukarno government's ineffectual 1960 land reform legislation. For the PKI this "unilateral action" campaign was a lever to secure a greater share of governmental power. But the seizure of land from large owners, handing it over to poor peasants, was explosive. Particularly in East Java, the big landlords were usually *santri* (devout) Muslims and not infrequently Muslim community leaders and religious scholars. Local Islamic schools often possessed sizeable land holdings of their own. At their behest, *santri* mobs were mobilized "in the name of Allah" to crush "the atheists."

With no perspective of fighting for proletarian power, the PKI could have no intention of taking on the entrenched

reactionary forces of Indonesian society and the state. Pledging support to "Pancasila"—the "Five Principles" of belief in one god, humanism, patriotism, democracy and social justice—a dogma devised by Sukarno in 1945, the PKI groveled before Sukarno and the reactionary Muslim clerics as it sought to pressure the bourgeoisie. Nonetheless the party maintained a secular image as it fought for the separation of religion and the state against the efforts of the Islamic parties to impose a theocratic state through an Islamic constitution.

The PKI wallowed in national chauvinism, making the anti-Malaysia "Confrontasi" campaign of 1962 a focal point of support for the government. Earlier, in 1948, the PKI led a revolt in the city of Madiun which was crushed by Sukarno's forces and more than 35,000 PKI members and sympathizers were imprisoned. The PKI repudiated the uprising and grotesquely elevated Sudirman, the general who suppressed the left in Madiun, to its roster of "Heroes of the Working Class" (Leslie Palmier, *Communists in Indonesia* [1973]). The PKI worked to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the regime, raising the slogan, "For the Maintenance of Public Order, Help the Police"! In 1961, when the government ordered all parties to furnish it with membership lists, the PKI leadership dutifully handed over names and addresses.

Sukarno's bloc with the PKI was an attempt to both prop up his fragile bonapartist regime and to co-opt the growing party by bringing it into his "Nasakom," arguing that the PKI "would be more controllable inside the government than outside." However, "if at any time the PKI departed from their Indonesian nationalism," Sukarno assured U.S. Ambassador Hugh Cumming Jr., "he would crush them as he did in Madiun" (Audrey and George Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy* [1995]).

### "30 September Movement" and the Destruction of the PKI

By 1965, the military and its landlord and Muslim allies became increasingly aggressive in their anti-Communist stance. As one general ominously boasted: "We knocked them down before [at Madiun]. We check them and check them again" (quoted in *Bangkok World*, 28 March 1965). Tensions were exacerbated when Sukarno's deteriorating health called into question his continued ability to rule as "supreme arbiter" between the antagonistic forces maneuvering in the "national unity" government. Rumors of a drastic change abounded including that a Council of Generals was preparing for a coup on October 6, Armed Forces Day. Anti-Communist rumor mills were rife with talk of a Communist "takeover."

Events came to a head on the night of 30 September 1965 when a group of disgruntled, pro-Sukarno junior officers led by Lieutenant-Colonel Untung kidnapped six top rightist army generals, who were subsequently killed. After seizing the Jakarta radio station, the rebels broadcast a message in the name of the "30 September Movement" declaring their action a preemptive strike, thwarting a rightist military coup by a "Council of Generals" backed by the CIA.

On October 1 Suharto, then commander of the army's strategic reserve, Kostrad, assumed leadership of the army. By the morning of October 2 he had dispersed the weak forces of the "30 September Movement" and brought the city under his control. On October 3, he was appointed by Sukarno to restore security and order. The following day he



AP

Chinese shop owner victimized in 1998 racist riots.

closed the PKI's two main newspapers. Poised for months, the army seized the opportunity to denounce the PKI as the "mastermind" behind the "30 September Movement" and moved to crush the vulnerable Communists.

At that critical juncture the Stalinists declared their loyalty to the "democratic" military, urged complete reliance on Sukarno and directed supporters to refrain from provoking the army and anti-Communist groups! The PKI expressed its support for Sukarno's "national unity" appeals and his "settlement" of the question of the "30 September Movement" and denounced the demonstrations which erupted against the mounting anti-Communist campaign. Emboldened by the abject groveling of the PKI, the military launched mass arrests of Communists.

The campaign to destroy the PKI was spearheaded by an alliance of the army officer corps, a coalition of Islamic organizations, Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, and student "action fronts" whose leadership was largely drawn from the same parties and youth organizations formerly affiliated with Masyumi, an Islamic party banned by Sukarno in 1960. The first anti-Communist action front, KAP-Gestapu (Action Front for the Crushing of the "30 September Movement"), was formed on October 1 with the approval of a leading Jakarta military commander, who also promised to provide weapons.

A vicious disinformation campaign emanating from the military was already preparing the ground for the pogroms by demonizing and dehumanizing the PKI and its supporters



Militant



Photo Deppen

**Reformist, pro-Maoist PKI's alliance with nationalist leader Sukarno paved way for 1965 massacre: remains of PKI Jakarta headquarters in October 1965; Sukarno fêted by Mao on earlier visit to China.**

like the PKI women's organization Gerwani. As noted by Benedict Anderson:

"On 4 October 1965, Suharto and his group received a detailed autopsy carried out by military and civilian forensic experts on the bodies of the generals killed on 1 October. The report made it quite clear that the generals had been shot to death, and their corpses further damaged by being dumped down a deep well at Lubang Buaya. But, on 6 October, the mass media, wholly controlled by Suharto forces, launched a campaign to the effect that the generals had had their eyes gouged out and their genitals severed by sadistic Gerwani women."

—*New Left Review*, May/June 1999

Events moved swiftly as word was passed to Muslim anti-Communist groups that a "sweep" of the Communists should begin. KAP-Gestapu rallies, comprised largely of Muslim students, rampaged through the streets and ransacked and burned down the PKI's Jakarta headquarters, aided by a passing army patrol. Their anti-Communist banners incited "Ban the PKI," "Hang Aidit." Meanwhile, forces of the staunchly Muslim NU descended on the homes of Aidit and other PKI cadre and destroyed them along with buildings of the PKI's mass organizations. Among the targets was the Chinese-owned Res Publica University, burnt to the ground by anti-Communist mobs who reportedly beat one Chinese student to death. Mobs then targeted shops, homes and persons of Chinese descent.

On October 14, Sukarno appointed Suharto commander in chief of the armed forces. The next day Suharto dispatched the elite shock troops of the army, the RPKAD paramilitary commandos, under the command of the violently anti-Communist Sarwo Edhie to Central Java to "clean up" the province and restore order. The CIA-linked Sarwo Edhie had recently returned from military training in Australia. When he and his RPKAD troops arrived in Semarang on the north coast of Central Java, mobs immediately burnt the PKI headquarters to the ground. The ruthless campaign began almost immediately against anyone suspected of Communist sympathies and quickly spread to East Java and other provinces:

"The troops went from village to village, taking their victims away by the truck-load to be killed. Many were obliged to dig their own graves.... Sometimes an entire village population, excepting infants, was exterminated when the para-commandos suspected it of being wholly PKI."

—Brian May, *The Indonesian Tragedy*, 1978

Spontaneous self-defense efforts by PKI militants, especially in the Communist strongholds in Central Java, were easily crushed as the PKI youth, armed only with bamboo spears, arrows and slingshots, were no match for the army.

In East Java the reactionary forces of the "black-shirted" Ansor, the youth organization of Nahdlatul Ulama, readily joined the slaughter, encouraged by calls of their leaders that "the extermination of the Gestapu/PKI and the Nekolim is a religious duty...this struggle [is] nothing less than a holy war (jihad)" (quoted in B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* [1971]). Thus was full revenge extracted by local NU officials and landlords for the desperate land struggles of the previous year.

On the majority Hindu island of Bali, the massacres became so frenzied, including against Javanese and Chinese merchants, that Suharto ordered a halt so that the execution of Communists could proceed in an orderly fashion. Members of youth gangs belonging to Sukarno's PNI were actively involved in murdering leftists. In North Sumatra, fear of "Red China" became the rallying cry for the Islamic parties and mass demonstrations at the Chinese consulate sparked a generalized pogrom against Chinese. In Aceh, Islamic fundamentalists took care of matters without waiting for orders. In other parts of Sumatra, the army killed as many as a fifth of the rubber plantation workers. In North Sulawesi, it was the Christians who were the executioners.

As the killings raged throughout Indonesia, rivers were choked with logjams of human corpses:

"...thousands of bodies were hurled into rivers; bamboo barriers were put across the entrances of irrigation channels in the Kediri district to ward off corpses as they drifted down to the sea. In Surabaya the bodies became a danger to public health.... And in some areas skewered, decapitated heads were left on display in the streets to symbolize victory and to warn others who might be tempted to transgress."

—*The Indonesian Tragedy*

### Who Benefits from Alleged "Communist Plot"?

Although the events of September-October 1965 are still largely buried, one thing is obvious: the assertion of Suharto that the PKI "masterminded" the events of September 30 and "murdered the generals" is a lie and a convenient pretext to justify the massacre of the PKI. The simple truth is that the PKI was a tame, thoroughly legalistic organization. One

historian, no friend of communism, scoffed at the idea that PKI leader Aidit would have sought to overthrow the government: "Perhaps most important, such action was completely out of character for Aidit. We have seen how his policy was based entirely on support for Sukarno and, in general, avoidance of unconstitutional action" (*Communists in Indonesia*).

Colonel Latief, one of the key officers of the "30 September Movement," asserts that the officers' "plot" was a provocation in which Suharto himself figured. Arrested in 1965, Latief remained in prison for almost 34 years until his release in late March of this year. He maintains that he met Suharto on the evening of September 30 to confirm the planned kidnapping of the army generals that night. Given Suharto's rank as commander of the Strategic Army Reserve, Kostrad, it is simply incredible that an attempted coup against the army tops would have failed to target him first and foremost. Moreover, many of the officers of the "30 September Movement" had close personal and military links to Suharto.

Even as the PKI leaders and cadres were being hunted down and executed, the Stalinist betrayers still pledged their undying support for Sukarno and the "progressive national bourgeoisie." PKI leader Njoto, shortly before his execution, declared to an *Asahi Shimbun* journalist from his prison cell:

"The powers of President Sukarno, in combination with the forces of the people, shall determine Indonesia's fate and future.... The PKI only knows one Head of State, supreme commander, great leader of the revolution, namely, President Sukarno, and knows no other."

—quoted in *New Left Review*, March-April 1966

As the massacres escalated, Sukarno dispensed with his "neutrality." On December 1, he attacked the PKI as "rats that have eaten a part of a big cake and tried to eat the pillar of our house," concluding "now let us catch these rats...and I will punish them." PKI head Aidit was captured and executed by a firing squad on December 18. The "first stage" of the "national democratic revolution" ended with the massacre of a million people—Communists, workers, peasants, women and minorities.

### PKI's Maoist Godfathers Disarmed Indonesian Communists

In September 1966, with the Indonesian revolution drowned in blood, the surviving PKI leadership issued a statement of "self-criticism" from exile which was published one year later in *Peking Review*. The statement criticized the PKI for failing to adopt an "independent attitude toward Sukarno" but still upheld the fatal "two-stage revolution" strategy, reasserting that "our Party must work to win the national bourgeoisie over to the side of the revolution."

The PKI upheld the Maoist variant of Stalinism and for years the Chinese bureaucracy had uncritically hailed the PKI's leadership. The Chinese leadership declared that the PKI had "creatively applied and developed Marxism-Leninism" (quoted in Sheldon Simon, *The Broken Triangle* [1969]). Yet Beijing refused even to protest the massacre. The first mention of any disturbances in Indonesia was on October 19, three weeks after the Suharto coup. The Chinese Stalinists loaded all the responsibility on supposed pro-Moscow "revisionists" in the PKI leadership, cynically adding that defeats are salutary:

"In the final analysis, the many kinds of persecution against the Indonesian Communist Party and the Indonesian people by the Suharto-Nasution Right-wing military clique will only serve to speed the upsurge in the Indonesian revolution and hasten its own doom."

—*Peking Review*, 14 July 1967



ICL fights for Trotskyist party in China to mobilize Chinese proletariat against encroaching capitalist counter-revolution: *Spartacist* No. 53 (\$1.50) features articles on Chinese Trotskyism and on the fight for political revolution today; ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program available in Chinese (\$1).

The strategy of the "bloc of the four classes" against imperialism and for a "national democratic revolution" thus led to defeat in Indonesia as in China four decades earlier. In 1927 Trotsky denounced the Menshevik/Stalinist accommodation of the national bourgeoisie as a blueprint for counter-revolution:

"Foreseeing the inevitable departure of the bourgeoisie, Bolshevik policy in the bourgeois revolution is directed towards creating an independent organization of the proletariat as soon as possible, to impregnate it as deeply as possible with mistrust of the bourgeoisie, to embrace the masses as soon as possible in the broadest form and arm them, to aid the revolutionary uprising of the peasant masses by all means. The Menshevik policy in foreseeing the so-called departure of the bourgeoisie is directed towards postponing this moment as long as possible, while the independence of policy and organization of the proletariat is sacrificed to this aim, the workers are instilled with confidence in the progressive role of the bourgeoisie and the necessity of political self-restraint is preached.... But this postponement is utilized by the bourgeoisie against the proletariat: It seizes hold of the leadership thanks to its great social advantages, it arms its loyal troops, it prevents the arming of the proletariat, political as well as military, and after it has acquired the upper hand it organizes the counterrevolutionary massacre at the first serious collision."

—*Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, 1927

The betrayal of the Indonesian working masses by China and the PKI in 1965 demonstrated in blood that despite their "anti-revisionist" posture the Maoists were qualitatively no better than their Kremlin counterparts. The betrayal of revolutionary struggles abroad served to undermine the very existence of the degenerated and deformed workers states. As we noted in the wake of the Indonesian defeat: "Thus China is now almost totally isolated as she faces U.S. imperialism—a fruit of the Mao bureaucracy's policies of coexistence with 'friendly' capitalist governments and cowardly subordination of the interests of the working people to the special interests of the Maoist national ruling caste" (*Spartacist* No. 5,

November-December 1965). A few years later the Mao bureaucracy consummated an alliance with U.S. imperialism, directed against the USSR, which contributed to the ultimate destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

Today the fate of the Chinese Revolution itself is at stake. Less than a decade after the final undoing of the 1917 Russian Revolution by the usurping Stalinist bureaucratic ruling caste, their Chinese counterparts are on a headlong drive to sell off and dismantle the Chinese deformed workers state. But they can accomplish this only by breaking the resistance of the powerful Chinese proletariat. The alternatives are starkly posed: either workers political revolution to throw out the bureaucrats and defend the collectivized property forms of the workers state, *and* necessarily to extend the revolution, or capitalist counterrevolution to finish the job that the Chinese bureaucracy has begun. The outcome has enormous implications for the working class throughout Asia and all the world. To make the working class conscious of its historic tasks—overcoming its political atomization and the pervasive nationalist, anti-revolutionary ideology which is the legacy of decades of Stalinist misrule—what is required is revolutionary leadership, a vanguard Leninist-Trotskyist proletarian party.

### U.S. Imperialism's Leading Role in the 1965 Bloodbath

As part of its Cold War crusade to "roll back" Communism, U.S. imperialism embarked on intensive covert and military assaults throughout the "Third World" from Guatemala to Iran to Southeast Asia. Agonizing over the "loss of China" after the victory of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, the U.S. sought to stem the tide of peasant-based revolutions in Asia by escalating imperialist interventions in the region from Korea to Burma to Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines. With the declaration in Bandung in 1955 of the Non-Aligned Movement headed by Sukarno, and the PKI winning 27 percent of the votes in local elections in 1957, the U.S. feared Indonesia was drifting dangerously toward Communism. The Cold Warriors Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles, launched subversive operations against Indonesia, actively supporting the regional rebellion that declared an independent state in the Outer Islands in



**Pramoedya Ananta Toer's powerful novels depicting Indonesia under colonial rule led to decades of imprisonment by the Dutch occupiers and their Indonesian capitalist successors.**

1958. Weapons and military equipment were supplied by the U.S., Britain and Australia. American aircraft flying from American bases in the Philippines bombed targets in eastern Indonesia. Funds poured in to the devoutly Islamic Masyumi party which was closely allied with the rebels. However the rebellion was crushed.

Today the U.S. bourgeoisie screams about Islamic "terrorism," but in fact American imperialism consciously cultivated and sponsored fundamentalist movements as a bulwark against Communism in its crusade to destroy the Soviet Union. At the height of the Cold War in the 1950s John Foster Dulles proclaimed: "The religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious values. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find it and develop it" (quoted in Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* [1957]). The imperialists found and developed their common bond with the reactionary Islamic Masyumi party in the late 1950s and later cemented it in 1965 by helping the fundamentalist Islamic mobs carry out the anti-Communist bloodbath.

The CIA, aided and abetted by the Australian security forces ASIS, was up to its neck in the Indonesian bloodbath. It helped carry out, in the words of its own 1968 report, "one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century." Com-

## Imperialism, the "Global Economy" and Labor Reformism

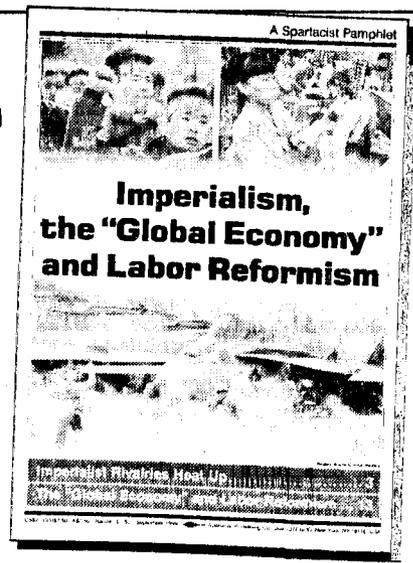
This pamphlet assesses recent changes in the world economy in a historical perspective, from the origins of modern imperialism in the late 19th century through the capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the former USSR and its aftermath. Reformist ideologues of "globalization" seek to obscure the role of the capitalist nation-state and the danger of interimperialist war which is inherent in capitalism, while amnestying the refusal of the labor bureaucracies to wage class struggle against their respective bourgeoisies.

Exploitation, poverty and social degradation can be eliminated only through proletarian revolutions in the imperialist centers as well as the neocolonial countries, laying the basis for an international planned socialist economy.

\$2 (32 pages)

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munists were hunted down by the military and Islamic mobs using hit lists containing 5,000 names of PKI members supplied by the CIA. Robert J. Martens, who headed the U.S. embassy group of State Department and CIA officers in Jakarta and who spent two years compiling the lists of Communists, boasted, "It really was a big help to the army," adding, "I probably have a lot of blood on my hands, but that's not all bad" (*San Francisco Examiner*, 20 May 1990).

As early as March 1964, U.S. Ambassador Howard Jones tried to persuade army chief Nasution that the army "should take matters into its own hands against the PKI." Jones went on to say that: "From our viewpoint, of course, an unsuccessful coup attempt by the PKI might be the most effective development to start a reversal of political trends in Indonesia wherein the army would be free to crack down on the Communists" (*Subversion as Foreign Policy*). At the end of 1964, a Dutch intelligence officer with NATO predicted "a premature communist coup...foredoomed to fail, providing a legitimate and welcome opportunity to the Army to crush the communists and to make Soekarno a prisoner of the Army's goodwill" (quoted in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 9, No. 2 [1979]).

Days after the coup, on October 5, the CIA in a telegram to the White House wrote: "The army must act quickly if it is to exploit its opportunity to move against the PKI." A cable to the State Department in early November noted U.S. officials "made clear [to the Army] that Embassy and US G[overnment is] generally sympathetic with and admiring of what Army [is] doing" (Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise* [1995]). The U.S. bourgeoisie expressed its admiration and delight in a *Time* magazine article calling the massacre "The West's best news in years."

The 1965 anti-Communist massacre in Indonesia drastically altered the direction of political developments in Southeast Asia. It emboldened the U.S. imperialists to launch an all-out takeover of South Vietnam. The stabilization of Indonesia under a reign of anti-Communist terror subsequently allowed the U.S. ruling class to extricate itself from its losing war in Vietnam, confident that the "Communist threat" in Asia had been contained. Under Suharto's "New Order," Indonesia was a linchpin in the U.S.-organized ASEAN alliance directed particularly against the Chinese deformed workers state. In turn, Washington backed its butchers to the hilt including the training of the murderous Kopassus forces.

To alibi their class-collaborationist policies, reformists point to the nefarious role of the CIA in the massacre in Indonesia in 1965, the coup that toppled Allende in Chile, and every other defeat. That the CIA is up to its neck in the blood of the oppressed is not exactly news. But central political responsibility lies with the class-collaborationist "leaders" of the workers and oppressed who set up their own followers for slaughter at the class enemy's hands, blocking the road to the socialist revolutions which alone can break the power of the imperialists and their neocolonial bourgeois junior partners.

### Growth of Islam

The current wave of political Islam that swept through the historically Muslim world opened with the coming to power of Khomeini in Iran in 1979. The rise of religious fundamentalism as a mass movement in countries such as Indonesia and Iran is a reactionary reflection of both the absence of a communist alternative and the manifest bankruptcy of nationalism. This process is not limited to the Islamic coun-



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In the face of massive anti-government protests, Suharto announces his resignation, May 1998, as his former underling Habibie (above right) looks on. "Reform" candidate Megawati Sukarnoputri (below) aims to put a civilian face on continued rule of the bloody-handed Indonesian military.

Reuters



tries: in Hindu-majority India as in Muslim Algeria, formally independent bourgeois-nationalist regimes, unable to alleviate mass poverty or advance toward social justice, offer the masses only chauvinism and religious reaction. For the masses, religion becomes not only a consolation but an illusory opposition to an unbearable status quo. Today, as Indonesia reels under the imperialists' world economic crisis, and in the wake of the destruction of the Soviet Union, religious obscurantism and mystical superstition are increasing. The rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism within Indonesia, particularly amongst the urban middle classes, is seen in the number of *mushollas* (prayer rooms) in city office blocks, the overflowing mosques at Friday prayers and huge prayer rallies, the *hajj* tours and the number of women donning the Islamic headscarf (*jilbab*).

In his final years, and as support to his regime started to erode among many sections of the bourgeoisie, Suharto allied himself squarely with Islamic forces to prop up his regime. Promoting Islam "as a source of ethical and cultural guidance," the Suharto government "allocated large sums for higher Islamic education...[and] for the construction of mosques, prayer halls and Islamic schools. In central Java alone, the number of mosques almost doubled in the 12



Australasian Spartacist

**Australian Spartacists at 1997 demonstration against Suharto dictatorship call for proletarian class independence, defend East Timorese refugees.**

years before 1992 from 15,700 to 28,700" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1998). Suharto approved a law that made religious instruction compulsory in public schools and another that reaffirmed the independence of religious courts and their equality with civil courts. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca and took the additional name of Muhammad.

Most importantly, Suharto presided over the establishment of, and consulted regularly with, the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), a body headed by Habibie and including cabinet ministers, senior officials and a number of Islamic intellectuals. Under the post-Suharto government of Habibie, ICMI activists have found a greater role in the cabinet and as advisers to the president.

Feeding off despair and frustration fueled by the economic crisis, a multitude of Islamic parties have formed seeking to head off the anger and the struggles of the workers. Among the newly formed parties is the National Mandate Party (PAN), allegedly secular although led by the Islamic leader Amien Rais who until recently headed up Muhammadiyah, and the National Awakening Party (PKB), a political offshoot of the traditionalist Islamic organization Nahdatul Ulama whose youth played a leading role in the 1965 massacre. NU is headed by Abdurrahman Wahid. Megawati Sukarnoputri looks for alliances with both Rais and Wahid. Seeking an "Islamic society," and with a history of anti-Chinese, anti-Christian bigotry, Rais now claims a greater "appreciation of the plurality of the nation," in order to bolster his bid for its leadership (*Inside Indonesia*, January-March 1999). But in his doctoral thesis, an apologia for the clerical-fascistic Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, whose program he admired, he wrote: "racism and systematic terror were absent in the Brotherhood." In the late 1940s this forerunner of Hamas mobilized a terror campaign against Communists and Christian Copts under the slogan "Communism = atheism = liberation of women."

Amongst those promoting Amien Rais today in Indonesia are the International Socialist Organization (ISO), who foster

deadly illusions that this Muslim leader could create "a rank and file revolutionary movement in the army, to split it from below" (*Socialist Worker* [Australia], 6 March 1998). Writing of the student protests against Suharto, they grotesquely compared them with the anti-Communist Islamic mobs of 1965-66!

"The most impressive action was at the University in Jakarta, where students once played a role in bringing down the previous Sukarno regime."

Thus *Socialist Worker*, tailing the anti-Communist prejudices of the student movement of today, adopts a tone of neutrality toward the CIA-backed bloodbath of a million Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese which installed Suharto! Their shameless portrayal of Islamic reaction, from Iran to Algeria to Indonesia, as an "anti-imperialist" and "revolutionary" alternative, is premised on their outright rejection of the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat. In 1979, the ISO along with most of the left interna-

nationally supported the "Iranian Revolution" which brought Khomeini's reactionary Islamic regime to power. This virulently anti-Soviet organization cheered on the reactionary CIA-armed *mujahedin* in Afghanistan, whose victory over the Soviet Red Army has led to mass terror against women.

The Indonesian PRD peddles illusions in "progressive" and "democratic" Islam. A PRD Internet posting of 27 October 1998 declares "That Islam constitutes a democratic force in Indonesia—and other states—is already proven," belittling the threat of Islamic fundamentalism as a bogey of the military ("Islam Democrats are the biggest threat to the military," *PRD Info-Pembebasan*)! The growth of Islam can only be a force for reaction, particularly targeting women and religious minorities. As we wrote:

"The growth of political Islam, in all its variants, poses a particularly deadly threat to the multiethnic proletariat, to the deeply oppressed women, to the besieged Chinese minority and all the national and religious minorities which make up this prison house of peoples. It is urgently necessary that the proletariat as a class enter the area of struggle fighting for its own historic interests and as champion of all the oppressed."

—*Workers Vanguard* No. 692, 5 June 1998

## For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

Both under Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" and Suharto's "New Order," women were subjected to the harsh dictates of Islamic law including a ban on abortion. To reinforce the hold of conservative Islamic interests, Suharto made religious education compulsory in public schools and codified the oppression of women in the 1974 marriage law and the "Panca Dharma Wanita," the Five Duties of Women, tying them to the patriarchal family as wives, mothers and caretakers of their households. Today Megawati continues to define women's role as domestic slavery, telling them: "Ladies, as chairman I instruct you to read the newspapers after you finish cooking" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 February 1999).

Mydans/NY Times



**Workers at Nike plant. Indonesian women workers will be in the forefront of the fight against capitalist exploitation and semifeudal enslavement.**

During the 1965 massacre the army deliberately targeted women, launching a vicious campaign aimed at the PKI-affiliated Gerwani women's organization:

"Gradually, new elements were being introduced which all pointed to the central conclusion the Indonesian public had to reach: Communism is so immoral and anti-religious that it leads 'our' women to neglect their womanly duties. Instead of being loyal wives and good mothers, obedient to the state ideology Pancasila and religion, they become politically active and morally loose unleashing their frightful sexual powers in indecent ways and committing unspeakable atrocities. Therefore, the public was made to understand, it was perfectly justified to wipe out Communism and especially Gerwani and thus cleanse the society and restore order."

—Wim F. Wertheim, "The Truth About Gerwani: the Gender Aspect of the Suharto Regime,"  
Internet posting (no date)

In recent years, spurred by massive imperialist investment in the region over the past two decades, particularly by foreign capital, a vibrant young proletariat has been created. Women workers, fighting for the right to organize in independent trade unions and for wage increases and better working conditions, including maternity leave, played a militant role in workers' struggles against the Suharto dictatorship. This was exemplified by Marsinah, a young militant who became a hero to millions after she was brutally murdered in the wake of labor struggles in East Java in 1993. Pro-PRD trade unionist Dita Sari, released from prison in early July after three years of incarceration, has also become a symbol of militant women's resistance to capitalist oppression.

Many of Indonesia's female proletarians are recent arrivals from villages where traditional jobs have been replaced by mechanization or lost through encroaching urbanization. While horribly exploited in the factories and often housed in prison-like compounds in huge factory complexes which they are not allowed to leave without permission, these young women have also found some freedom from the social pressures of family and village life, particularly the pressure to marry, often in arranged marriages. But under conditions of dependent capitalism, social gains for women are not only contradictory but reversible according to the needs of the economy. Today under conditions of economic contraction in Indonesia and throughout Asia, women work-

ers are threatened with mass layoffs. For many Indonesian women this means a return to the even more brutal oppression of rural village life.

The fight for abortion rights is an explosive question in Indonesia today. Abortion is illegal and, according to 1994 statistics, 450 out of every 100,000 pregnant women die—the highest maternal death rate in Southeast Asia—with 16 percent of these deaths resulting from unsafe abortions (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 1998).

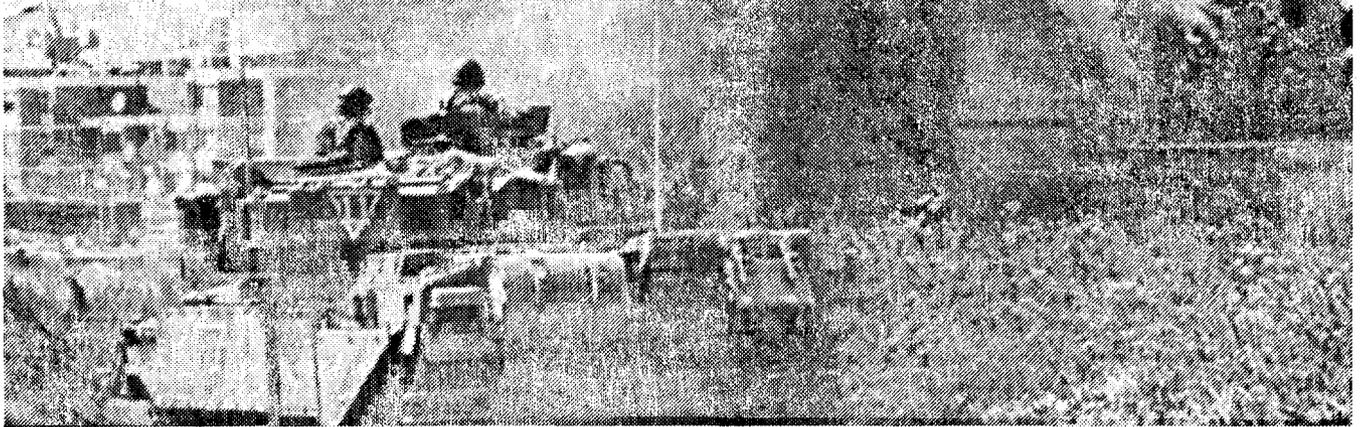
The struggle for women's emancipation is integral to the proletarian class struggle to overthrow the system of capitalist exploitation. Nationalists in power—from the openly reactionary to the allegedly "progressive"—promote and reinforce the "traditional" national culture, intimately tied to the dominant religion, which in all cases is the enemy of women's liberation. Authentic communists fight to end patriarchal practices oppressive to women, like the polygamy system and the bride price—legacies of social backwardness which are today upheld by religious reactionaries in league with the capitalist rulers. We fight for full equality for women, for free abortion on demand and for the separation of religion and state.

As in the 1917 Russian Revolution, women workers will be in the forefront of the fight against capitalist and semifeudal enslavement in Indonesia. As Leon Trotsky said in 1924 of the newly liberated Muslim women of the Soviet East: "There will be no better communist in the East, no better fighter for the ideas of the Revolution...than the awakened woman worker."

The Indonesian military and their imperialist backers sought to bury communism in 1965. But the ineradicable contradictions of imperialist capitalism draw new generations of workers and youth into struggle. Out of these layers must be cohered the nucleus of a Leninist vanguard party, fusing declassed revolutionary intellectuals with class-conscious workers. Such a party, based on an internationalist program and taking as its starting point the historically based understanding that the proletariat and the bourgeoisie have no class interests in common, must finally break the chains of dependent capitalism by leading the proletariat to power at the head of all the oppressed. ■

## Down With Imperialist Occupation of Kosovo!

# All U.S./UN/NATO Forces Out of the Balkans Now!



AP

British NATO troops watch conflagration in Pristina, June 14. Imperialist occupation—whether under the auspices of the U.S.-dominated NATO, European “security” forces or the United Nations—will bring only more bloodletting to the peoples of the Balkans.

The U.S. imperialists and their NATO allies—crucially assisted by the “soft cop” role played by Boris Yeltsin’s capitalist Russia—succeeded in bringing Serbia, a small, dependent country, to its knees. Under the U.S./NATO “peace” diktat, Kosovo has been turned into a NATO protectorate with 50,000 occupation troops for an indefinite period. This was NATO’s goal from the beginning, not its cynical talk of protecting the Kosovo Albanians. As proletarian internationalists who called forthrightly for the defeat of the NATO imperialist forces and for the military defense of Serbia, the International Communist League denounces this predatory “peace” dictated by the world’s bloodiest mass murderers.

As in the one-sided 1991 war against Iraq, the imperialists systematically went after the infrastructure necessary for the civilian population to survive: electrical generators and distribution grids, water purification plants, citywide central heating plants, factories, hospitals, apartment complexes. Indeed, the “democratic” U.S./NATO imperialists have wreaked more devastation in Serbia than did German imperialism under Hitler’s Nazis in World War II. For months, NATO had been readying plans for a ground invasion of Kosovo. The [London] *Observer* (18 July 1999) noted that “the dramatic surrender by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic last month came only three days after Britain and the US finalised plans for a massive ground invasion of Kosovo—code-named B-Minus—to be launched in the first week of September.”

Again giving the lie to the imperialist pretext that the war was a mission to defend “human rights,” from the moment NATO troops began rolling into Kosovo, the Serb and Gypsy (Roma) populations have been subjected to brutal “ethnic cleansing,” including the massacres of whole families. The terms of oppression have been reversed for the peoples inhabiting Kosovo: the Albanians were subjugated and victimized by the Serb-chauvinist Milosevic regime, yet today only a small fraction of the Serbian population remains, driven out of Kosovo through murderous terror. The imperialists—who are currently hostile to an independent Kosovo and any talk of a Greater Albania—have made it clear that they will be calling the shots.

The war was prosecuted in the U.S. by Clinton’s Democrats, and, significantly, in Europe by governments headed by social-democratic and ex-Stalinist parties. Tailing their own bourgeoisies, the reformist and centrist fake left assiduously lined up behind the imperialist warmongers’ cry of “poor little Kosovo.” Their opposition to NATO bombing was purely nominal, as we note in the 21 April Declaration of the ICL reprinted on page 43. Thus, reflecting French imperialism’s own frictions with the American-dominated NATO, Alain Krivine’s Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) explicitly called for imperialist intervention in the guise of the United Nations or the European-dominated Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This is in line with the majority position of the

## Down With Imperialism! For Workers Revolution!

United Secretariat (Usec) that “we can’t condemn all UN and NATO interventions. We have to take them case by case” (*Socialist Action*, April 1999). Similarly, Alex Callinicos, a leading spokesman for Tony Cliff’s British Socialist Workers Party, was a signatory to a statement in the *New Statesman* (10 May 1999) calling for OSCE intervention in Kosovo as an alternative to NATO.

The right-centrist British Workers Power (WP) marched in lockstep behind Blair’s Labour government, the most beligerent of the imperialist powers. Fake leftists like WP who clamored for “independence for Kosovo” and supported the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army) did so as a thin cover for their support to the war aims of the imperialists. This was clear when WP joined in a “Workers Aid for Kosova” rally on April 10 which was shot through with slogans like “NATO Good Luck” and “NATO Now or Never.” Subsequently Workers Power and a number of other Labourite groups sponsored a May 11 meeting which featured prominently two unvarnished pro-NATO speakers. One was a rabid pro-Albanian nationalist, who told the audience that anyone who didn’t support NATO should stay home (see *Workers Hammer* No. 169, July/August 1999)!

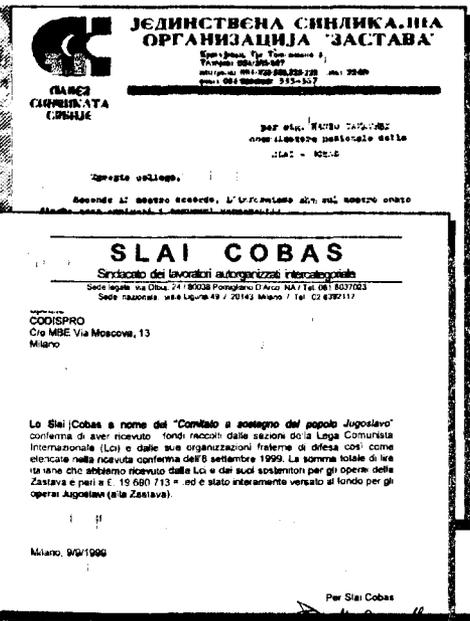
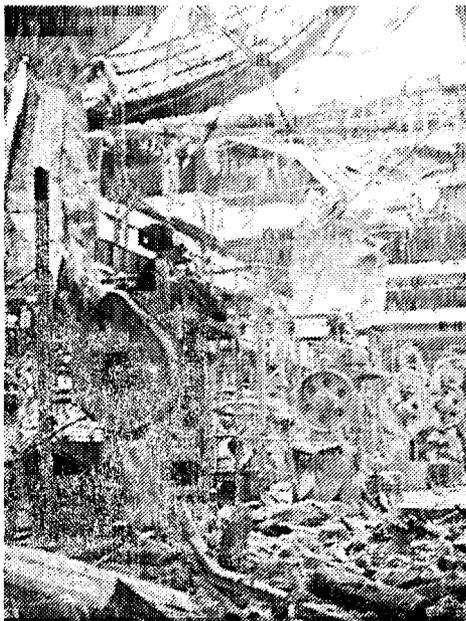
Now that NATO has triumphed, WP proclaims: “Everyone should welcome the withdrawal of the genocidal forces that have driven nearly a million Kosovars from their homeland and made another half million refugees in the woods and mountains. But they cannot welcome the conversion of Kosova into a nominally United Nations (but in reality a Nato) protectorate” (*Workers Power*, June 1999). It was the duty of all who want to see imperialism defeated to defend Serbia against imperialist attack. Workers Power is here *welcoming* the defeat of the Serbian army by NATO imperialism and in reality spreading illusions in the UN.

Our exposure of the revisionism of the fake left and our interventions with our revolutionary internationalist program earned us the enmity of all the “leftist” little drummer boys

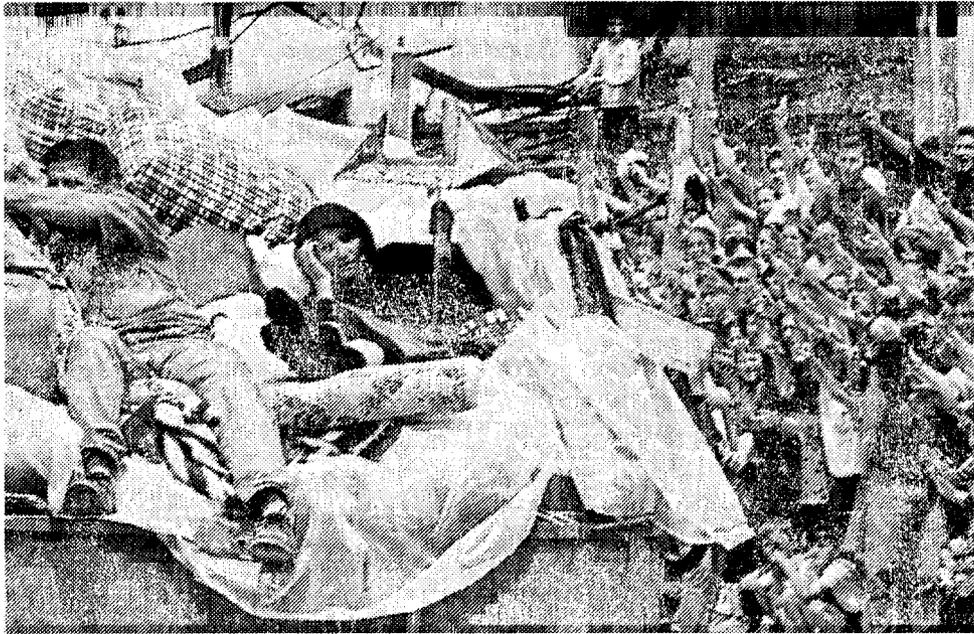
for NATO. Lutte Ouvrière (LO), frenzied after we unmasked their pro-imperialist line at the forum on the Balkans War at the LO fête near Paris on May 24, unleashed a 20-man goon squad against the ICL at the fête’s conclusion; our comrade Xavier Brunoy, editor of our French paper, *Le Bolchéviek*, had his arm deliberately broken in four places.

In April, while NATO was terror-bombing Serbia, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) convened a “commission,” supposedly to “investigate” but actually to alibi a physical attack by one Ian Donovan, an anti-communist nut and now a CPGB supporter, on a Spartacist League/Britain spokesman, Eibhlin McDonald. Yet the facts of the attack were never in dispute, not even by Donovan. He had slammed his fist in McDonald’s face during a demonstration in London in January commemorating the Bloody Sunday massacre of Northern Irish Catholics in 1972 by British troops commanded by Michael Jackson (who today commands the NATO occupation force in Kosovo). Donovan went berserk when McDonald, who is Irish, exposed his support to the pro-imperialist Socialist Party, notorious for sponsoring fascist Loyalist leader Billy Hutchinson. The CPGB’s “commission” was an expression of its loyalty to the Labour Party in power and the interests of British imperialism: a nasty little show trial to smear the Spartacist League because we uniquely fought against Blair and the Labourite swamp’s bloody Balkans War. The CPGB sought so blatantly to whitewash the imperialist terror bombing that our British comrades dubbed them “Jamie Shea socialists” (after the British-born NATO press secretary). The CPGB proclaimed: “It is obvious to all but the wilfully stupid that Nato has attempted to minimise civilian casualties” (*Weekly Worker*, 10 June 1999). In fact, civilian casualties *far exceeded* military casualties during the NATO bombing!

The pseudo-Trotskyists have largely redefined themselves as liberals and social democrats, rarely even paying lip



ICL joined in material aid campaign for victims of NATO terror bombing which destroyed Zastava auto plant in Kragujevac in April. Campaign provided a vehicle for working people to take a stand against their “own” imperialists. Right: September 9 COBAS letter confirms receipt of “funds collected by the sections of the ICL and its fraternal defense organizations...equal to 19,690,713 lire.” Top letter from Zastava to COBAS confirms receipt of fund drive collections.



As NATO forces moved into Kosovo, tens of thousands of Serbs and Gypsies fled pogromist attacks. Serbian residents leaving Mitrovica as Albanian mob jeers, June 17.

service to Leninism. A meeting of the international executive committee of the USec, for example, voted last February to eliminate from its statutes any reference to the 1917 Russian Revolution, the first four congresses of the Communist International and the Transitional Program (the founding document of the Fourth International). At a London public meeting in July, French USec leader Krivine disparaged those who stand openly as Trotskyists, claiming that the task today was to be a “revolutionary,” which he defined as “leading the social movement” in conjunction with other forces, including Christian socialists. In actual fact, the USec’s record is one of uniting with clerical *anti-socialists*, like counterrevolutionary Polish Solidarność. Confronting Krivine, a comrade of the SL/B pointed out that the USec never was the Fourth International, and that that programmatic heritage belongs to the ICL. The comrade noted that Krivine & Co. belonged in the Second International. The fake lefts’ loyalty to their own bourgeoisie in the war against Serbia was a logical outgrowth of their earlier support to imperialist-

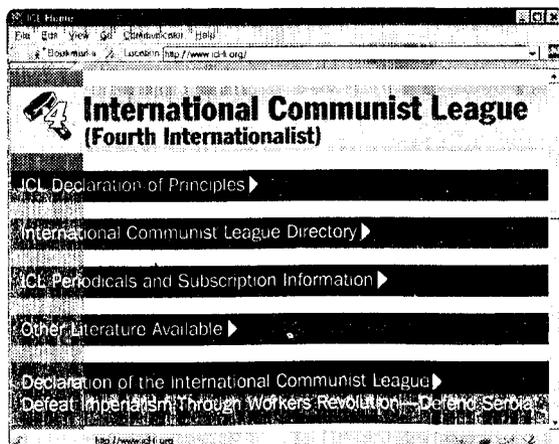
sponsored counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states like Yugoslavia.

The proletariat was much less enthusiastic about this war than the supposed leftists who cheered “human rights imperialism.” Even in the U.S., where there were no mass protests, workers’ attitudes toward the war ranged from passivity to skepticism. On May Day, throughout Europe and as far away as Australia and Japan, the Balkans War was the hot issue, in spite of the labor bureaucrats’ efforts to focus on economic concerns. Proletarian opposition to the war was particularly explosive in Italy and Greece. On May 13 in Italy, over a million workers joined in a one-day political strike initiated by the syndicalist COBAS around the slogan “Not a life, not a lira for this war.” The COBAS also initiated a fund drive for Yugoslav workers, launched after the Zastava auto plant in Kragujevac, Yugoslavia was bombed and destroyed by NATO, which knew full well that it was protected by a “live shield” of workers. Despite our political differences with the COBAS, ICL sections participated actively in the Zastava fund drive, which provided a useful vehicle for working people to take a concrete stand against their own imperialist butchers.

NATO leaders celebrated the unity of the Western powers in the war against Serbia. But behind the façade of unity, the war accentuated tensions among the major capitalist powers which have been intensifying since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Germany and other West European states are intent on building up a military force independent of the U.S. to match their increasing economic rivalry with American imperialism.

The struggle against imperialist war cannot be conducted separately and apart from the class struggle. Only socialist revolution can overthrow the system of capitalist imperialism which breeds war. It was the October Revolution of 1917, led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, which took Russia out of World War I and created the world’s first workers state, a beacon of revolutionary internationalism for the proletariat everywhere. Our struggle is to reforge the Fourth International as an instrument that can lead the working masses forward to new October Revolutions and a world socialist society. ■

## Visit the ICL Web Site!



[www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org)



# Defeat Imperialism Through Workers Revolution—Defend Serbia!

We reprint below the 21 April 1999 ICL Declaration on the Balkans War issued in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish and Spanish. Comrades of the ICL sold and distributed the Declaration in 15 countries on May Day.

The imperialist war against Serbia is already the biggest military conflagration in Europe since World War II. Having pounded Serbia for weeks with bombs and cruise missiles, there is a growing crescendo among the Western imperialists for a full-scale invasion of the rump Serb-dominated Yugoslav republic. Once again the Balkans have become the powder keg of Europe, bringing us a step closer to a new world war. As proletarian internationalists fighting to build a world party of socialist revolution, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) says: *Defeat imperialism through workers revolution! Defend Serbia against U.S./NATO attack! Down with the United Nations economic sanctions! All U.S./UN/NATO troops out of the Balkans!*

A 25 March statement of the Spartacist League/U.S. asserted:

“Every blow against U.S. imperialism in the Balkans will help to weaken the class enemy, providing an opening for the working class and oppressed here to fight against the torrent of attacks being leveled by Wall Street and its political agents, the Democratic and Republican parties. We fight to build the multiracial revolutionary workers party, forged in the crucible of class struggle, which is the necessary instrument to lead the working class to the overthrow of this entire system based on racism, exploitation and war through a socialist revolution which rips industry and power away from a small handful of filthy rich and creates an egalitarian socialist economy.”

**All U.S./UN/NATO Troops  
Out of the Balkans!  
For a Workers Europe!**

In Europe, the brutal imperialist attacks on Serbia are being carried out by capitalist governments headed by social democrats and ex-Stalinists. As the military historian Clausewitz once said, war is the continuation of politics by other means. Having demonstrated their loyalty to the bourgeoisie at home by enforcing racist capitalist austerity, today the social democrats are if anything more vigorous than their right-wing predecessors in doing the imperialists' dirty work abroad. The *Berliner Zeitung* (25 March) observed: “That a red-green government sent units of the Bundeswehr into a military intervention for the first time since the founding of the Federal Republic is saving the country from an unproductive ideological and political conflict.” At the onset of the war, sections of the International Communist League immediately issued statements unmasking the imperialist war propaganda and seeking to mobilize the workers of the world against their “own” bourgeoisies.

The destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state ushered in a sharp rise in regional wars and imperialist military adventures, as a virulent new nationalism became the hammer of counterrevolution. Interimperialist strife, previously held in check by the need for a common anti-Soviet alliance, erupted anew. Just beneath the surface of the current unity of the NATO “allies” over the bombing of Serbia lie fundamental and escalating interimperialist rivalries expressed in the growing trade war between the U.S. and Europe, as well as Japan. The post-Soviet world increasingly resembles the pre-1914 world. It was imperialist



Novosti



Asahi Shimbun

machinations stoking nationalist hatreds in the Balkans which led directly to World War I.

Today, NATO bombing is a trip wire for a broader and even bloodier international conflagration, potentially drawing in Greece, Turkey and Russia. While acting as a soft cop for NATO, capitalist Russia's denunciation of the U.S./NATO military attack on Serbia is in line with its ambition to assert itself as a regional imperialist power. Both Russia and the U.S. have huge nuclear arsenals, and the U.S. has already demonstrated its readiness to use these weapons with the nuclear incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Who could believe that the French, the British or the Israelis would be any more restrained? Capitalism is an irrational system, and the mad drive for profit and power inherent in this system will inevitably lead to a nuclear third world war if it is not stopped through international proletarian revolution.

### Imperialists Rain Terror on Yugoslavia

NATO's war against Serbia has nothing to do with "human rights" or defense of the Albanian population of Kosovo against "ethnic cleansing." This war is not about the Kosovo Albanians. It is a war of domination aimed at realizing long-standing American plans to insert a substantial U.S./NATO military presence in Serbia through subduing, or if necessary dislodging, Milosevic. Since when do the imperialists care about the oppressed peoples? Hundreds of thousands of immigrants are deported every year by the European governments. Indeed, these same governments went into a virtual frenzy at the thought of having to open their borders to the refugees from Kosovo.

The ICL stands in the tradition of V. I. Lenin, whose "Socialism and War," a powerful handbook of revolutionary internationalism written in 1915 and circulated clandestinely to workers and soldiers throughout Europe during the war, teaches:

"The standpoint of social-chauvinism is shared equally by both advocates of victory for their governments in the present war and by advocates of the slogan of 'neither victory nor defeat.' A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, and cannot fail to see that the latter's military reverses must facilitate its overthrow."

Lenin stressed that in the case of an imperialist war

against a small nation or semicolonial people, it is the duty of the working class not only to fight for the defeat of one's "own" government but to defend the victims of imperialist aggression. In the present war, we are for the military defense of Serbia, without giving the Milosevic regime a shred of political support. We called for the right of self-determination for the Albanian population of Kosovo against the Serb-chauvinist regime in Belgrade until the Albanian separatists became simply a pawn of NATO's predatory designs. For Marxists, the democratic right of self-determination for the Kosovo Albanians is necessarily subordinated *now* to the struggle against the imperialist bombing and threatened invasion.

In fact, the all-sided nationalist bloodbath in the Balkans was directly instigated by the imperialists in their drive to destroy the former deformed workers state of Yugoslavia through capitalist counterrevolution. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was born out of World War II, when Tito's Communist partisans battled the occupying Nazi German Wehrmacht as well as the Croatian fascist Ustasha and Serbian royalist Chetniks. Tito's partisans were the only force in Yugoslavia during the war that opposed communalism. But the socialist and democratic ideals to which the Tito regime publicly appealed were undermined by the bureaucratic deformations and the inherent limitations of Stalinism, with its program of building socialism in one country. Tito introduced "market socialism," which opened Yugoslavia to imperialist economic penetration and reinforced disparities among the various regions, fueling resurgent nationalism.

After Tito's death the bureaucracy began to fracture along national lines. Milosevic, who promoted "market reforms" as head of the central bank, launched his political career by appealing to "greater Serbia" chauvinism particularly against the Kosovo Albanians. In this, he embodied the link between capitalist restoration and nationalism. But Milosevic was not alone in this regard. His Croatian counterpart, Franjo Tudjman, idolizes the World War II fascist Ustasha—a puppet of the German Nazis—and Bosnian leader Alija Izetbegovic is a rabid nationalist and Islamic reactionary. Marxists oppose the poison of nationalism and fight for the class unity of the workers of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia,

**Imperialists are the world's greatest war criminals: Nazi death camp at Auschwitz; U.S. nuclear incineration of Hiroshima.**

Montenegro and Kosovo in overthrowing all the bloody nationalist regimes of the region, from Milosevic to Tujman. For a socialist federation of the Balkans!

The terminal crisis of Titoist Yugoslavia came in early 1991, when newly elected right-wing nationalist governments in Croatia and Slovenia declared secession from the federated state. Germany moved in to steamroller its European allies into recognizing their independence. The U.S. then joined Germany in throwing its weight behind an independent Bosnia under the leadership of Muslim nationalist forces. In Croatia the U.S. and Germany provided the fascist Tujman regime with not only large quantities of modern weaponry but also high-level training and advisers. This enabled the Croatian army in mid-1995, in league with NATO's air assault, to rout the Bosnian Serb military forces. Hundreds of thousands of Serb civilians were expelled by Croatian forces in the largest single act of "ethnic cleansing" in the war. At the same time, the U.S. covertly funded and armed Islamic fundamentalist killers in Bosnia including the *mujahedin* cutthroats who had fought against the Soviet army in Afghanistan.

### Euro "Socialists"

War is always a decisive test for revolutionaries. Trotsky insisted that a proletarian position on war required "a complete and real break with official public opinion on the most burning question of the 'defense of the fatherland.'" The fake left proves Trotsky's point in the negative. They join in the imperialists' war cry over "poor little Kosovo" while rejecting the defense of Serbia, whose very *right to national existence* is under attack by the imperialist powers. Despite a pacifist veneer of opposition to the bombing, they march in lockstep behind the war aims of their own imperialisms and the social-democratic or popular-front governments whose election they supported. The camouflage: stop the NATO bombing; the message: go to war in the Balkans with ground troops under EU control. For today's "death of communism" leftists, who long ago gave up any confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, the bloody imperialists—whether under the flags of the UN or the EU or NATO—are the means for bringing "human rights" to the oppressed peoples of the world!

In its supposedly "antiwar" propaganda, the European "left" is simply acting as the spokesman for their own imperialist bourgeoisies, whose interests are by no means the

same as those of the American imperialists: "The partnership with NATO in the Yugoslav crisis is simply a cloak, masking great differences between the United States and its European allies," a former UN official told the San Francisco *Chronicle*. The same article (15 April) quoted a range of people running the gamut from left to right "who view the intervention in Kosovo as a thinly disguised effort to impose Washington's will on Europe's future." In France, the *Chronicle* noted, "newspaper commentaries are so unremittingly hostile to the United States that a reader might well imagine Paris is at war with the Pentagon, rather than with the Yugoslav army," while former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt complained about being "held on a leash by the Americans."

Thus, the "left" is running point for their own capitalist ruling class: their "anti-Americanism" is a cheap substitute for and an obstacle to anti-imperialist proletarian internationalism. Swimming with the tide of bourgeois "public opinion," the slogans of the "left" dovetail with those of outright fascists; for example, in Germany the Nazis raise the call, "No German blood for foreign interests!"

Perhaps the most blatant of the *pro-war* "leftists" are the former Stalinist parties, exemplified by the French CP, which is of course in the government. Headlining, "Europe and France Must Participate in Building Peace," a leaflet signed by the PCF along with the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) in Rouen complained that the NATO bombing hasn't gotten rid of Milosevic: "Milosevic is still in place! The Albanians are being hunted down or massacred! These are the first results of the military adventure. In contrast, peace in the region implies active and determined support to the weak social and democratic forces fighting against the nationalist dictatorships and for the right of ethnic minorities."

The fake-Trotskyist LCR, the French organization of the United Secretariat (USec), in its own press is more explicit in beating the drums for war. The LCR openly called for *imperialist military intervention in Kosovo* under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—a European-dominated military bloc—or the United Nations. In its 1 April issue, *Rouge* declared:

"NATO was not the only, and above all not the best, linchpin for an accord. The conditions for a multinational police force (particularly composed of Serbs and Albanians) could be found under the auspices of the OSCE to enforce a transitional accord."



Reuters

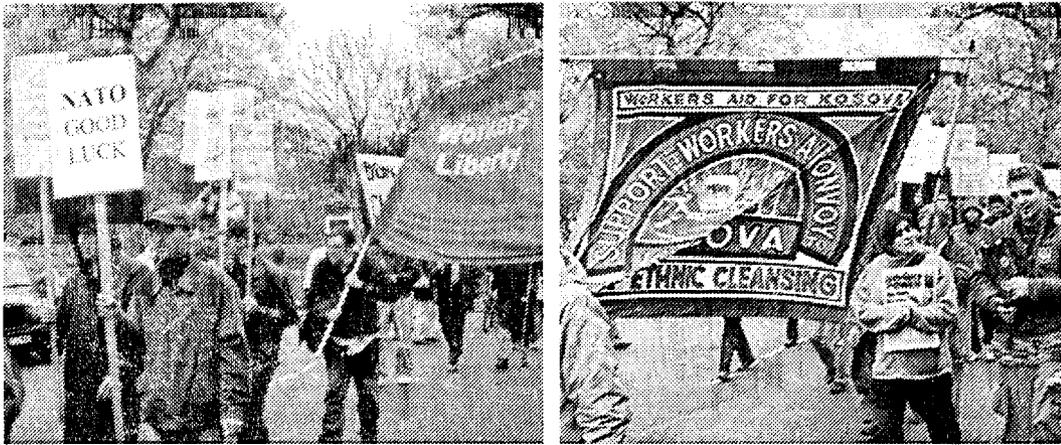


La Repubblica



Der Spiegel

**Imperialist-instigated counterrevolution ripped apart Yugoslav deformed workers state in early 1990s, fueling all-sided "ethnic cleansing." From left: Bosnian Muslim fundamentalists, Croatian soldiers giving fascist salute, Serbian Chetnik chauvinists.**



Workers Hammer photos

**Fake lefts march for war aims of "human rights" imperialism: Labourite "Alliance for Workers Liberty" and centrist Workers Power (near left) at April 10 "Workers Aid for Kosova" rally in London.**

The following week a *Rouge* statement advocated an accord with Serbia that would be policed by "a multinational force under UN control." The UN—truly a den of thieves and their victims—has been an instrument for imperialist militarism from the 1950-53 war against the North Korean deformed workers state to the slaughter of tens of thousands of Iraqis in the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf.

Alain Krivine's USec is acting as a mouthpiece for the interests of French imperialism, counterposing to the U.S.-dominated NATO intervention the call for a European imperialist expeditionary force in the Balkans. Rifondazione Comunista (RC) in Italy and the PDS in Germany (as well as some SPD members like ex-party chairman Oskar Lafontaine) push much the same brand of nationalist anti-Americanism. While the American government is the foremost imperialist military power, this attempt to depict the European imperialist states as more benevolent than the U.S. is nothing but vile social patriotism. Presumably, then, the German bourgeoisie of Auschwitz is morally better than its American counterpart? And what about the dirty history of French colonialism in Algeria and Indochina, or the British empire's history of pillage and murder in Ireland, the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Middle East? And it was the Italian bourgeoisie which invented concentration camps in Libya, which first used poison gas against the Ethiopian population, and which carried out countless acts of butchery in the Balkans during World War II.

The French pseudo-Trotskyist organization Lutte Ouvrière (LO) has a well-deserved reputation for catering to the backward prejudices of the working class by ignoring special oppression, whether it be women's oppression, homophobia, racism or the national question in France, where along with the rest of the fake left it denies the right of self-determination for the Basques in France. But they too have suddenly become champions of the right of self-determination of the Kosovo people. In its 9 April issue, Lutte Ouvrière writes: "If the French government, as well as the other Western governments, were really helping the Kosovars, it would be noticeable and we would not see the endless lines of refugees that we see on TV." Despite its claimed opposition to NATO military attacks, the logic of this position is that the imperialists should intervene more decisively and really crush the Serbs. By demonizing Milosevic—rather than the imperialists—as the main enemy in this conflict, LO serves as a left apologist for the bourgeoisie.

In the same vein, the minuscule International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT), which sneers at independence for Quebec

and more generally is notorious for its indifference to the rights of oppressed peoples, such as the Catholics in Northern Ireland, today howls for "independence for Kosovo"—apparently they only champion independence for those who have imperialist sponsorship.

In Italy, Rifondazione preaches confidence in the UN and calls for a conference of European *capitalist* powers to resolve the Balkans crisis. RC revels in anti-Americanism in order to alibi its support to its own ruling class. RC's call to shut down the NATO air base in Italy is raised from the perspective of Italian nationalism and in the interest of a stronger capitalist Europe directed against its imperialist rivals (like the U.S.). We Trotskyists appeal not to the bourgeois state, but rather to the Italian proletariat to mobilize labor actions against the U.S./NATO bases, from which a deadly war is being launched against the interests of all workers—Serbian, Italian, Albanian and American. We say: Smash the counterrevolutionary NATO alliance through workers revolution!

A four-page supplement issued 10 April by *Proposta*, the limp "left opposition" of RC, never calls for immediate withdrawal of Italian troops from the Balkans. *Proposta* supported the previous "Ulivo"/RC bourgeois government which invaded Albania.

Social chauvinism means defense of "national interests," i.e., calling on the working class to identify with the imperialist aims of the ruling capitalist class. It means the explicit abandonment of class struggle by reformists and pro-capitalist trade-union leaders. Thus, the Italian CGIL-CISL-UIL bureaucrats called off a railroad strike as soon as the war broke out. Serbian workers are not the enemy of Italian rail workers! The enemy is the Italian bourgeoisie!

As Lenin asserted: "Opportunism and social-chauvinism have the same politico-ideological content—class collaboration instead of the class struggle, renunciation of revolutionary methods of struggle, helping one's 'own' government in its embarrassed situation, instead of taking advantage of these embarrassments so as to advance the revolution." The reformist trade-union leaders are bribed with the crumbs of imperialist profit. In France unions get more revenue from the state and the capitalists than from their own members. Fake left groups like LO and LCR emulate this political corruption by taking their own financial subsidies from the bourgeois state. But he who pays the bills calls the political tunes! We struggle for the *complete independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state!*

Under the impact of a major war in Europe involving the

imperialist powers, we are presented with the spectacle of erstwhile “revolutionaries” and “anti-imperialists” joining pro-imperialist war rallies. The centrist Workers Power joined the deeply Labourite Alliance for Workers Liberty in a 10 April “Workers Aid for Kosova” rally in London dominated by NATO and Albanian flags and placards screaming, “NATO Good Luck” and “NATO Now or Never.” “Workers Aid for Kosova” is modeled on “Workers Aid for Bosnia,” initiated in 1993, which, under the guise of providing humanitarian aid for workers in Bosnia, promoted support to the Bosnian Muslim government and worked hand in glove with UN troops in the fratricidal war between Serbs, Croats and Muslims. It thereby served as a stalking horse for direct imperialist military intervention against the Bosnian Serbs.

A statement distributed at a London public meeting of 30 March by WP’s international, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), claimed to defend the Serbs against NATO attack—“though not in Kosova which they have no right to occupy”! At the same time, WP urges the Albanian separatists “to take full military advantage of the imperialist bombing to drive out the ‘Yugoslav’ forces,” adding: “If [Clinton and Blair’s] primary concern were for the Kosovars they would recognise their statehood, and give the KLA the weapons to drive out the Serbian troops.” This is an unvarnished appeal to the NATO imperialists.

Workers Power has in fact supported every reactionary force in the Balkans (including in Serbia) as long as they are opposed to the imperialists’ current main enemy, Milosevic. Thus, in June 1991 when the German Fourth Reich was engineering the destruction of the Yugoslav deformed workers state, they called for immediate recognition of the capitalist-restorationist Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence. A year later WP’s Austrian affiliate, the ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt, was involved in a “united front” with the local chapter of Vuk Draskovic’s Serb National Rebirth, an organization of Great Serbian monarchists and Chetniks, then in opposition to Milosevic. During the 1995 NATO air strikes, WP refused even on paper to defend the Bosnian Serbs against imperialism.

It could not be clearer that the fake lefts are social-chauvinists whose bottom line is support to imperialist war aims in the Balkans, despite the theoretical contortions they go through in trying to reconcile their lip-service opposition to NATO with their support to the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army, which is now simply a pawn of NATO. Against the social-chauvinists of his time, Lenin polemicized against Karl Kautsky, a central leader of the German SPD who during the first interimperialist war maintained “loyalty to Marxism in word, and subordination to opportunism in deed.” Lenin wrote that “Kautsky ‘reconciles’ in an unprincipled way the fundamental idea of social-chauvinism, recognition of defence of the fatherland in the present war, with a diplomatic sham concession to the Lefts—his abstention from voting for war credits, his verbal claim to be in the opposition, etc.” (Lenin, “Socialism and War,” 1915). But today’s “leftists” like Workers Power are indeed far to the right of a Karl Kautsky.

It took the opening of the first imperialist world war, World War I, and an orgy of chauvinism to shatter the Second International and for the “socialists” of that time to lead the working class to the slaughter. Today, as the first bombs were being dropped on the Balkan peoples, what passes for the “left” was already prostrate before its own imperialism. In the face of World War I, Lenin called on the workers to turn the interimperialist war into a civil war in all belligerent countries, demanding a split of authentic socialists from the Second International.

The fake left’s ideological prostration before imperialism reflects their many years’ support to Western imperialism against the Soviet Union in the name of “democracy” and “human rights.” As long as the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe existed, as Trotskyists we called for their unconditional military defense against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. We fought for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies. In contrast, the fake left supported all manner of pro-capitalist forces in the name of “anti-Stalinism.” The state-capitalist British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of Tony Cliff along with its satellites and fake Trotskyists like

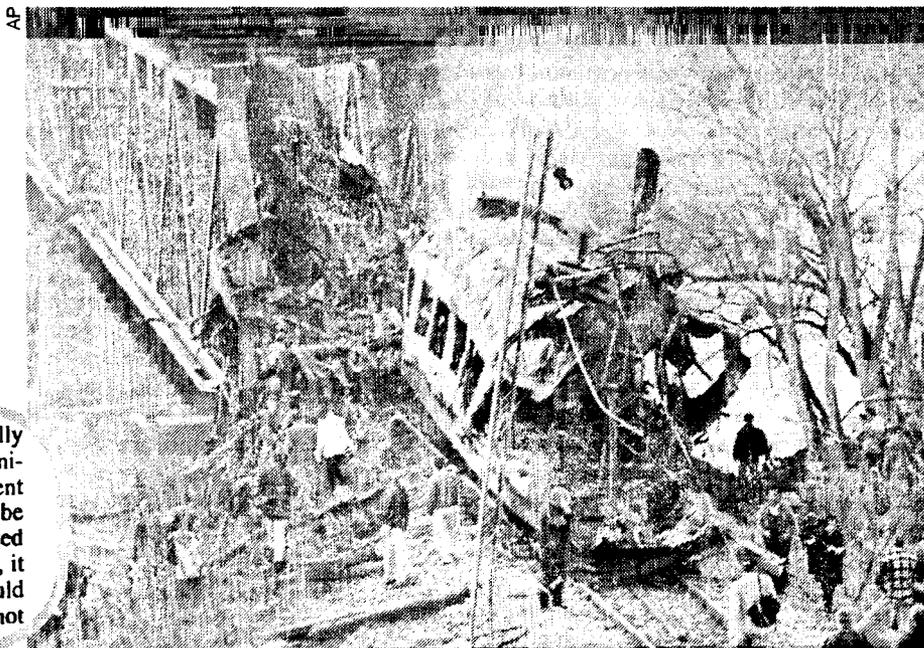
**Imperialist terror bombers struck at factories, TV stations and other civilian targets in Serbia: bombs destroyed passenger train on April 12, killing at least ten.**

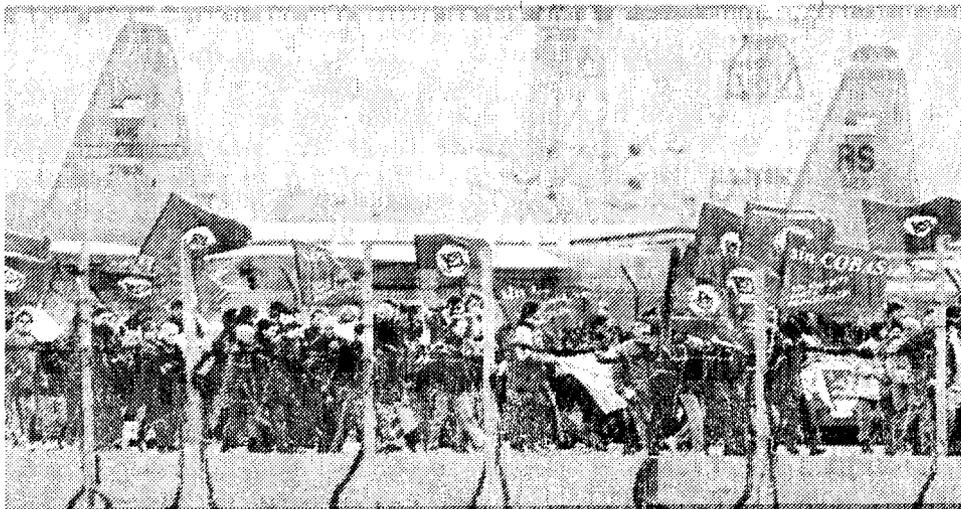
**“Leftist” apologists for NATO, like the *Weekly Worker* in Britain, spread lies aimed at painting brutal U.S./NATO attack in “humanitarian” colors.**

**weekly  
worker**

10 June 1999

It is obvious to all but the wilfully stupid that Nato has attempted to minimise civilian casualties. It has spent billions on developing weapons to be as accurate as possible. If Nato wanted to conduct a deliberately brutal war, it could carpet-bomb Belgrade. It could turn it into another Dresden. It is not





Photo/Reuters

Italian unionists protest in front of NATO airbase at Aviano in April. On May 13, over a million Italian workers joined in a one-day political strike against the war.

the USec and Workers Power (the latter with some contradiction) all opposed the intervention of the Soviet Army into Afghanistan, the last objectively progressive act of the Kremlin bureaucracy. In the early 1980s they joined in fervent support to CIA/Vatican-sponsored Polish *Solidarność*, which was in the forefront of the drive for capitalist restoration in East Europe. A decade later, all these groups cheered on Yeltsin and his pro-imperialist “democrats” as they launched the counterrevolution which was to destroy the Soviet Union.

The SWP, who rejoiced when New Labour was elected, tails after Labour “left” Tony Benn, saying, “Tony Benn has opposed the Falklands War, the Gulf War and this war” (SWP pamphlet, “Stop the War,” April 1999). Tony Benn is a “little England” nationalist who called for UN sanctions during the Gulf War and today complains the bombing doesn’t have UN authorization. Meanwhile, the press of the Socialist Party (formerly “Militant”) calls for “workers’ action to overthrow Milosevic” (*Socialist*, 16 April) while, needless to say, never calling for British workers to overthrow British capitalism.

Politically apart from the British “poor little Kosovo” crowd is the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), headed by mine-workers leader Arthur Scargill. An SLP press release of 24 March, quoting Scargill, forthrightly branded Labour Party prime minister Tony Blair a murderer. It pointed to the hypocrisy of the imperialists, noting that “Britain still occupies part of Ireland.” However, Scargill’s statement that the bombing is being carried out “without even the fig-leaf of a United Nations Security Resolution” implies confidence in that institution of the imperialists. A more left-wing statement by the Normanton Constituency SLP is titled: “Defend Yugoslavia and Iraq—Fight Imperialism.” The statement correctly nails Blair’s New Labour Party as “anti-working class, pro-imperialist.” It says, “We firmly believe in the principle of the right of nations to self determination, and in the case of Yugoslavia that means the right of a sovereign nation to solve its own problems.” However, both SLP statements are uncritical of Milosevic’s virulent Serb-chauvinism.

Yet in the April/May issue of its *Socialist News*, the SLP says nothing about defeating imperialism, hints at a call for ground troops (“Neither Clinton nor Blair has any intention of putting their soldiers into Kosovo on the side of the Kosovar Liberation Army”) and calls on “UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov and the Pope to devise a form of peace negotiations

which would stop the bombing”! Talk about an unholy alliance—the Pope who was a key operative for *Solidarność* counterrevolution in Poland, the chief of the UN which invaded Haiti and Somalia and is starving Iraq, and the prime minister of capitalist “post-Soviet” Russia the SLP now beseeches to bring us peace! Scargill’s opposition to the Vatican-sponsored *Solidarność* was used by the Thatcher government as a union-busting spearhead against Scargill and the British miners before and during their 1984-85 strike.

Militants in the SLP who want to oppose British imperialism must understand that the “old Labour” political tradition which the SLP fondly harks back to is anything but anti-imperialist. The “little England” nationalists of the pre-Blair Labour Party “left” stood on the side of their own imperialism from India to Ireland to the “virginity testing” of Asian women seeking admittance into Britain. The line of Labourism is the so-called parliamentary road to socialism—as though the ruling class would hand over state power to the proletariat after a democratic election; in the meantime, they seek to participate in the “humane” administration of the capitalist system. You can’t fight imperialist war without a revolutionary fight against the capitalist system which breeds war.

### The Working Class Must Fight National and Racial Oppression

Under Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks led the Russian working masses to successfully smash the capitalist state in October 1917. The Bolsheviks took revolutionary Russia out of the imperialist carnage, and founded the Communist International for the purpose of spreading the revolution worldwide.

But unlike in Russia, the sharp revolutionary opportunity presented by the first World War did not lead to the proletariat overthrowing the bourgeoisie in Western Europe. The chief responsibility for this lies with the social democracy. These bloodhounds of counterrevolution served their bourgeois masters well, butchering revolutionaries like the German communists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The pressure of imperialist encirclement on the economically backward Soviet state, the devastation of the Russian working class in the civil war that smashed the counterrevolutionary Russian and imperialist forces, and the failure of proletarian revolution abroad set the stage for a political counterrevolution in 1924 (Thermidor), in which political

power was usurped by a nationalist, parasitic caste headed by Stalin and his heirs. Their false dogma of "building socialism in one country" meant in practice an accommodation to imperialism. The Stalinist program of class collaboration has led to the defeat of incipient workers revolutions from China in 1925-27 to Spain in 1936-39, Italy 1943-45 and France in May 1968. Having destroyed the revolutionary internationalist consciousness of the Soviet proletariat, the Stalinist bureaucracy finally devoured the workers state, ushering in the capitalist counterrevolution of 1991-92.

U.S. imperialist president Jimmy Carter waged Cold War II under the rubric of "human rights." Today, "human rights" imperialism is the watchword of the imperialists and their hangers-on to justify their war aims. During World War I, Britain and France justified their war against Germany in the name of liberating Belgium while Germany claimed to be fighting for the liberation of Poland from Russia. Lenin savagely ridiculed this bourgeois deception. While strongly supporting Poland's right to self-determination, he argued that raising this slogan in the context of an interimperialist war could only mean "stooping...to humble servitude to *one* of the imperialist monarchies" ("The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," July 1916).

While the bourgeoisies today howl about "poor little Kosovo," they perpetuate numerous instances of national and racial oppression, including in western Europe. The French bourgeoisie oppresses and expels thousands of North Africans and other *sans papiers* from "la belle France." Germany has deported Kurds back to sure repression and possible death in Turkey, while Bosnian refugees were victims of mass deportations by the Fourth Reich. Italy sank a ship of Albanian refugees on the high seas. Roma and Sinti peoples are hideously tormented across "socialist" Europe.

The repression of the Basque people exposes what capitalist "European unity" is all about: trans-national police-state coordination of terror against oppressed peoples fighting for liberation. We demand freedom for the Basque nationalists in French and Spanish prisons, and call for the right of self-determination of the Basques, north as well as south of the Pyrenees!

The ICL fights for the immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland as part of the fight for an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles. In this situation of interpenetrated peoples, in which the Catholic minority is currently oppressed within the sectarian Orange statelet, we recognize that there is no equitable solution to national oppression short of the mobilization of the proletariat throughout the British Isles for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, smashing the Orange statelet in the North as well as the Catholic clericalist state in the South.

While screaming about Milosevic, the imperialists are silent about the oppression—including massive forced population transfers—of Kurds in Turkey. The government of Turkey, the southeast bastion of NATO, has carried out a 14-year war against the oppressed Kurdish population that has left some 30,000 dead, totally destroyed 3,500 villages and forced more than three million Kurds to flee their homes. It is notable that the leader of the petty-bourgeois nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, was tracked down by the CIA and was denied asylum by every European country, while in Germany the PKK is banned. We say: Freedom for Öcalan! Down with the persecution of Kurdish militants! For a Socialist

**General Michael Jackson, now commander of NATO "peacekeepers" in Kosovo, led British troops in Northern Ireland who perpetrated the infamous 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre of Catholics in Derry.**



AP



Peress/Magnum

Republic of United Kurdistan!

The domestic face of bourgeois nationalism is the sharp increase in racism directed at Europe's dark-skinned and Eastern European immigrant communities, who face massive deportations and state and fascist violence. Immigrants who are no longer needed as "guest workers" for low-paid dirty work are being thrown out while second-generation youth in particular are viewed with contempt by the rulers: with no jobs and no future for these youth, the ruling class fears them as social tinder waiting to explode. Across Europe, capitalist regimes administered by supposed "socialists" unleash their cops to terrorize minority youth, while in Blair's Britain the oppression of blacks and Asians has become such an acute embarrassment that the government was forced to acknowledge "institutionalized racism" in the police.

Racist oppression is integrally linked to the mechanism of capitalist exploitation. Social-democratic regimes and popular-front governments (coalitions which tie working-class parties to the bourgeoisie in government) have been put into office since the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the express purpose of destroying the "welfare state." The capitalist rulers no longer feel obligated to maintain a high standard of living for Western workers to compete with the social benefits of the planned economies of the East European deformed workers states resulting from the victory of the Red Army in World War II. As the bourgeoisie seeks to drive up the rate of exploitation, immigrants are not only targeted for deportation but are used as convenient scapegoats for unemployment and immiseration. Anti-immigrant racism is the cutting edge of attacks on the whole working class. The interests of the working class and minorities must advance together, or they will fall back separately. The workers movement must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and refugees from right-wing repression.

Along with the intensification of the bourgeoisies' war against their own working masses, the final undoing of the

October Revolution has intensified social reaction, and as always women are among the chief targets. Capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has pauperized women, driving them out of jobs and back to the tyranny of "Kinder, Kirche, Küche." Across Western Europe and North America, abortion rights are under concerted attack, while in the so-called "Third World" (but not only there), fundamentalist religious forces are on a rampage of anti-woman terror, seeking to buttress every kind of familial and social obstacle to the emancipation of women.

The fake left spreads the illusion that putting the social democrats into power is a means of "fighting the right" and the fascists. This is a bald-faced lie. These capitalist governments have relentlessly persecuted the immigrants, while protecting the fascist gangs who spread their murderous terror. Appealing to the racist bourgeois state to ban the fascists is simply suicidal and augments the arsenal of state repression, which will invariably be used against the left, not the right. We fight to mobilize the social power of the organized proletariat at the head of all the oppressed to smash fascist provocations!

West Europe's dark-skinned proletarians are not just defenseless victims but an important component of the working-class forces capable of destroying the racist capitalist system. To mobilize the power of the integrated proletariat, however, requires a political struggle against the social-democratic parliamentary and union leaderships, which are transmission belts for racist poison into the working class and whose pro-capitalist policies have simply perpetuated the conditions of mass immiseration and despair which serve as the breeding ground for fascism. Only active engagement in the urgent social struggles against racial oppression and repression can lay the basis for the unity of the multiethnic proletariat against the bourgeoisie. But the labor "leaders" pursue the opposite policy, for example by organizing the racist cops into the trade unions. Cops are not workers! We demand: Cops out of the unions!

To once and for all smash the fascists—the armed gangs which capital holds in reserve to use against the working class—requires socialist revolution. But the fake lefts who politically tail the larger social-democratic bourgeois workers parties are totally incapable of a bold assault on the capitalist system. It is instructive that the electoral platform of the LO-LCR lashup in the European parliamentary elections does not even mention "socialism," let alone "revolution." For these timid reformists the maximum program is to go back to the good old days of the "welfare state"—the program of social democracy! It is a measure of the retrogression of proletarian consciousness since the destruction of the Soviet Union that most of those who once paid lip service to the *Fourth* International, founded by Leon Trotsky and destroyed by revisionism, have become open mouthpieces for the politics of the Second International, which the heroic Rosa Luxemburg already aptly described as a "stinking corpse" at the time of the First World War! In sharp distinction to these pseudo-Trotskyists, who openly acquiesce to capitalist rule, we fight for *new October Revolutions*, which requires the reforging of the Fourth International as a world party of socialist revolution!

### **Down With Maastricht! For a Workers Europe!**

Previously a diplomatic appendage to the anti-Soviet NATO alliance, today the European Union is an unstable adjunct to the economic, military and political priorities of

the European capitalists, and is directed against the workers of Europe and non-European immigrants, as well as against Germany's main imperialist rivals, the U.S. and Japan. With Germany as its strongest component, the European Union is also an arena in which the fundamentally conflicting interests of the major European bourgeois states are expressed.

Because capitalism is organized on the basis of particular nation states, itself the cause of repeated imperialist wars to redivide the world, it is impossible to cohere a stable pan-European bourgeois state. The perspective of a progressive European "superstate," as preached by Jospin, Schröder et al. is a bald-faced lie. As Lenin noted long ago, a capitalist United States of Europe is either impossible or reactionary:

"Of course, *temporary* agreements are possible between capitalists and between states. In this sense a United States of Europe is possible as an agreement between the *European* capitalists...but to what end? Only for the purpose of jointly suppressing socialism in Europe, of jointly protecting colonial booty *against* Japan and America" ("On the Slogan for a United States of Europe," August 1915).

In contrast, Workers Power actually maintains that the EU is progressive, or potentially so, arguing that "to some extent European workers will be better armed to fight back on a continental scale after the implementation of the terms of Maastricht" (*Workers Power*, June 1992). Thus WP becomes the mouthpiece for capitalist "united" Europe. As Trotsky wrote of the centrists of his time, "But it is a law that whoever is afraid of a break with the social patriots will inevitably become their agent" ("Lessons of October," 4 November 1935). In a parody of parliamentary cretinism, WP even calls for a Europe-wide constituent assembly!

LO similarly had an abstentionist position on Maastricht. In reality, these groups act as left democrats, seeking to put a "democratic" face on capitalist reaction. We stand with Lenin. The "unity" of the EU has been directed against the proletariat and oppressed: raining bombs on Yugoslavia, policing the borders against "illegal" immigrants, turning over Öcalan to the torture chambers of Turkey.

A statement for the European Parliament issued by Scargill's SLP calls for getting Britain out of the European Union. Titled "Vote Us In to Get Us Out," the statement presents the EU and the Maastricht Treaty as the root cause of rising unemployment and the general worsening of economic conditions. This obscures the fact that, with or without the Maastricht Treaty, the main enemy of the workers of each country is their "own" bourgeoisie. Thatcher's Britain pioneered the dismantling of the "welfare state" years before there was any serious talk of a common European currency. Our opposition to the EU is based on a proletarian internationalist perspective, not the nationalist protectionism of the SLP. Only the overthrow of capitalism through workers revolution and the establishment of a *Socialist United States of Europe*, as part of a worldwide socialist society, can lay the basis for the development of productive resources that will genuinely benefit mankind.

### **Reforge the Fourth International!**

Sharply impacted by the Asian economic collapse, the Japanese economy has suffered its greatest crisis in 50 years. Japanese imperialism, for its part, has reacted with an aggressive attempt to refurbish bourgeois militarism. As the U.S. and its NATO allies began their barrage of cruise missiles and bombs against Serbia, the Japanese navy fired at two vessels suspected of being North Korean spy ships. This was only the second time in the postwar period that the navy has fired

its weapons, the other time being in 1953 against the USSR off Hokkaido.

A statement by the Spartacist Group of Japan (SGJ) noted: "While endorsing the U.S./NATO massacre of Serbs, the Japanese ruling class is well aware that American imperialism's role as top world cop is also directed against them, America's main imperialist rival in the Pacific. Since the destruction of the Soviet Union, the Japan-U.S. security treaty less and less suits the real interests of the Japanese bourgeoisie. Already the second biggest military spender in the world, Japanese imperialism is pushing the revised military guidelines to prepare its own battle-ready army and navy."

Asserting "Not one man, not one yen for the imperialist military!" the SGJ emphasized that the struggle against imperialist war cannot be conducted separate and apart from the class struggle:

"Japanese workers must join with workers from Indonesia to the Philippines in the struggle for a socialist Asia, in the unconditional military defense of China, North Korea and Vietnam against imperialist attack and for proletarian political revolution. What is needed is an uncompromising proletarian party to lead the working class to state power."

The sharp escalation of interimperialist rivalry, reflected in the growth of bourgeois militarism in the U.S., Europe and Japan, expresses a fundamental law of imperialism. Imperialism is not a policy that can be made more humane, as the liberals and reformists contend, but "the highest stage of capitalism," as Lenin defined it: "Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed."

Lenin sharply polemicized against Kautsky's theory of "ultra-imperialism," today resuscitated as "globalization," which claimed that the great capitalist powers could peacefully agree on the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital. Lenin asserted, to the contrary, that "the only conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, interest, colonies, etc., is a calculation of the *strength* of those participating, their general economic, financial, military strength, etc." The small number of imperialist powers are engaged in a ruthless struggle to improve their relative competitive position by increasing the rate of exploitation of their domestic working class, by plundering the colonial and semicolonial world and by seizing markets at the expense of their rivals. Thus, the basis is laid for new wars to redivide the world in accord with the changing relative strengths of the imperialists. As Lenin asserted: "'inter-imperialist' or 'ultra-imperialist' alliances, no matter what form they may assume, whether of one imperialist coalition against another, or of a general alliance embracing *all* the imperialist powers, are *inevitably* nothing more than a 'truce' in periods between wars" (Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*).

The view held by fake leftists like Workers Power that a European capitalist superstate can be constructed by peaceful means is simply a modern-day variant of Kautsky's theory. Another variant is the view that the existence of nuclear weapons will restrain the capitalist imperialists—at least the "democratic" imperialists—from resorting to a new world war. In a polemic with Peter Taaffe's Committee for Workers International we pointed out that this demonstrated touching faith in the democratic imperialists, who gratui-



Workers Vanguard

**Spartacist League/U.S. intervenes at San Francisco antiwar protest, June 5. Imperialist war is endemic to capitalist system and will be ended only by workers revolution.**

tously atom-bombed their already defeated enemy at the close of World War II. Today's "leftists" who expect rationality and restraint from the imperialist rulers have deliberately short memories: the bloody-handed carpet bombers of Vietnam have little rationality and even less scruples.

There is an element of fatuousness in the presumption on the part of the American bourgeoisie that Russia's weakness and indebtedness preclude it from military intervention. The Russia of the tsars was not strong when it chose to mobilize against Austria (and therefore Germany) in WWI. None of the combatants indulged in such "rational" calculation; they all expected the war to be over in a few short months. This is how wars start, and our centrist opponents are as foolish as the bourgeoisies they tail in this regard. We are not dealing with a rational social system, but rather with imperialism. *Only world socialist revolution can save mankind from a barbaric outcome.*

Writing on the aftermath of Hitler's coming to power, the Russian revolutionary leader and founder of the Fourth International Leon Trotsky wrote: "The catastrophic commercial, industrial, agrarian and financial crisis, the break in international economic ties, the decline of the productive forces of humanity, the unbearable sharpening of class and international contradictions mark the twilight of capitalism and fully confirm the Leninist characterization of our epoch as one of *wars and revolutions*." He concluded "War and the Fourth International" (1934) by asserting: "It is indisputable at any rate that in our epoch only that organization that bases itself on international principles and enters into the ranks of the world party of the proletariat can root itself in the national soil. *The struggle against war means now the struggle for the Fourth International!*" We seek to carry forward the work begun by comrade Trotsky: *Reforge the Fourth International!* ■

## Women and Revolution...

(continued from page 56)

advocated national and international women's sections of the party aimed at extending the influence of the party to layers of working-class and peasant women whose participation in the revolutionary movement was vital.

The active championing of the emancipation of women is crucial to the struggle to forge a vanguard party capable of overthrowing the capitalist order, the source of oppression and exploitation today. The oldest social division of labor was along sex lines. Later, when leaps in productivity generated social surplus, society became divided into classes, bringing with it the institution of the state as the executive committee of the ruling class. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Friedrich Engels explained that the monogamous patrilineal family arose "to make the man supreme in the family, and to propagate, as the future heirs to his wealth, children indisputably his own." Under capitalism, the institution of the family remains the central source of the oppression of women and is crucial in ensuring that the bourgeoisie's property is transmitted from one generation to the next through "legitimate" heirs. For the proletariat, the institutionalized family means the burden of raising the next generation of workers, caring for the sick and aged, and instilling bourgeois codes of "morality" and obedience to authority.

While each country has its own particular social reality, the family and the oppression of women are central to class society everywhere. Proletarian women, subjected to double oppression, play a key economic role as part of the reserve army of the unemployed, drawn into wage labor at boom time and fired at the next downturn. Today in imperialist-dominated countries such as Indonesia and Mexico, women workers are a vital component of a young, vibrant proletariat. As we emphasized in the ICL "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" adopted at the Third International Conference (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

"In countries of belated capitalist development, the acute oppression and degradation of women is deeply rooted in pre-capitalist 'tradition' and religious obscurantism. In these countries the fight against women's oppression is therefore a motor force of revolutionary struggle. The condition of women in the most advanced capitalist countries, while far different, shows the limits of freedom and social progress under capitalism; revolutionists are the most consistent champions of women's elementary democratic rights such as free legal abortion and 'equal pay for equal work'."



In the tradition of the women's section of the early Communist International, *Women and Revolution* applied Marxist worldview to a range of issues, from sex and culture to class battles internationally.

In seeking to forge a Leninist party as a tribune of the people, championing the rights of all the oppressed, we fight for the workers movement to take up the struggle for women's rights as an integral part of its battle against the capitalist system. At the same time, we expose bourgeois feminism, whose aim is the promotion of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women into the old boys' club of power and privilege, as an enemy of proletarian women. In this we stand in the tradition of Clara Zetkin and the revolutionary wing of the German Social Democracy before World War I, whose struggle for women's emancipation and against bourgeois feminism so effectively polarized the women's movement along class lines that with the ascension of the Third Reich the bourgeois feminists flocked to support the Nazis.

Partly as a result of our intervention for a revolutionary program linking the struggle against special oppression to the fight against the entire capitalist order, in 1977 the Spartacist League won over and fused with the Red Flag Union (RFU), a collective which developed out of the gay liberation/Maoist/New Left milieu. The last issue of *Red Flag* appeared as a special fusion supplement to *Workers Vanguard*; *W&R* (No. 16, Winter 1977-78) reprinted the RFU document "Homosexual Oppression and the Communist Program."

As our organization extended its international roots, *Women and Revolution* increasingly reflected this change. While it formally remained the journal of the SL/U.S., *W&R* came to serve as a journal of the ICL as a whole, soliciting contributions from all ICL sections. We expanded *W&R*'s editorial board and initiated the regular publication of *Women and Revolution* pages in the presses of our non-English-language sections. *W&R* earned a modest but enthusiastic readership, particularly among immigrant and minority women, from London to Toronto to Sydney, Australia. Our article "80 Million Women Maimed: The Crime of Female Genital Mutilation" (*W&R* No. 41, Summer/Autumn 1992) was sold to many African women in Europe and was translated in the press of the ICL's French section. The same issue of *W&R* featured "Korean Women Expose 'Comfort Girl' Atrocities: Japanese Imperial Army Enslaved Women," which also appeared in *Spartacist Japan* No. 13 (September 1992) and intersected events in Japan organized by Japanese of Korean descent.

Meanwhile, in the United States the tumultuous social struggles of the civil rights and Vietnam antiwar movements in the 1960s and early '70s had ebbed. Concessions wrung from the capitalist rulers when they feared social unrest came under new attack. A vicious anti-sex witchhunt was part of the attempt to regiment the American population behind the global anti-Soviet war drive. As women's right to abortion came under increasing attack by the capitalist state and organized religion, bourgeois feminist groups like NOW attempted to channel protests into electoral support for the capitalist Democratic Party and appeals to the state to "protect" abortion clinics.

As our comrades joined in defense of the abortion clinics, *Women and Revolution* fought against feminist ideology and stressed that the struggle to defend and extend abortion rights necessarily meant a fight against state intervention in all areas of private life. Meanwhile, the feminists and their fake-left supporters entirely bought into the right-wing crusade to stamp out "deviant" sex. This has included hysteria over pornography, deranged fantasies of day-care "sexual abuse" leading to the victimization or imprisonment of hundreds, the "date rape" frenzy (which conflated the real crime of rape with unpleasant sexual experiences) and, most recently, the "sex predator" witchhunt. The "date rape" and anti-

pornography furor is a reversion to the old double standard in which women are stereotyped as passive victims. Most ominously, the anti-sex witchhunt has led to an enormous strengthening of the forces of bourgeois repression.

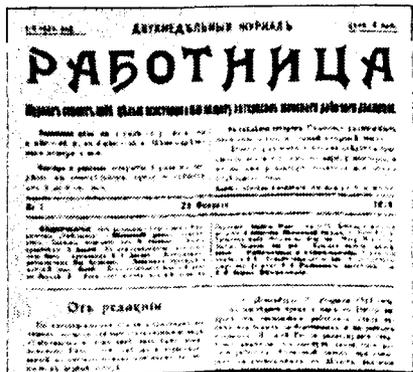
The relative lack of social struggle in the United States and the growing opportunities for our party around the world motivated the ICL's decision to put more of our too-scarce resources into international extension. As a result, the SL/U.S. now finds itself, for the time being, without sufficient resources to continue the regular publication of *Women and Revolution* as a separate journal. This decision was taken reluctantly, especially as the struggle for women's rights has continued to be a major political issue worldwide, particularly with the rise of Khomeini's Islamic dictatorship in Iran in 1979.

The status of women emerged as a vital issue in the renewed Cold War drive to destroy the Soviet Union launched by the imperialists when Soviet troops intervened in Afghanistan in late 1979. This was particularly clear in the case of the Afghan civil war, which pitted a Soviet-backed left-nationalist regime against CIA-armed, tribalist *mujahedin* cutthroats. We raised the call: "Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of October Revolution to Afghan peoples!" However degenerated by Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, the USSR remained a workers state. The fight to defend women's rights was integrally linked to the Trotskyist program of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution and of proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Kremlin's withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, foreshadowing capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR itself, led ultimately to the victory of the Taliban Islamic reactionaries who have driven women back to social seclusion and murderous subjugation. And in Poland, the rise of imperialist-sponsored *Solidarność* in 1980 marked the beginning of an ultimately successful crusade—using Pope Wojtyla's Catholic church as a battering ram—for capitalist restoration, which has driven women out of the workplace and eliminated the right to abortion.

Women have been among the biggest losers in the capitalist counterrevolution which destroyed the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states, as the profit

Central Museum of the Revolution, Moscow



**Rabotnitsa (The Working Woman),**  
 Bolshevik women's journal.  
 Communist cadres of Zhenotdel,  
 Soviet commission for work  
 among women, teach literacy in  
 Soviet Central Asia, 1924.





Articles under *Women and Revolution* masthead appear in press of ICL sections in Italy, France, Poland, Germany, Japan and Mexico.

system of capitalist "democracy" dismantled social gains like abortion rights, free education and plentiful day-care centers. While every other left tendency on the planet capitulated to the ideological pressure of imperialist anti-Communism, the ICL mobilized our entire international to intervene in the incipient proletarian political revolution in East Germany in 1989-90 as part of our fight to preserve and extend the revolutionary gains of the working class.

In China today, where the very existence of the remaining gains of the 1949 Revolution hang in the balance, the Beijing regime's introduction of capitalist market "reforms" has already brought back not only massive unemployment throughout the country and untrammelled exploitation in the so-called "special economic zones" but rampant prostitution and the buying and selling of women as "brides" (see "China: 'Free Market' Misery Targets Women," *W&R* No. 45, Winter/Spring 1996). As the only road forward, the

ICL calls for proletarian political revolution in China and the other remaining deformed workers states—Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam—to oust the bureaucracy and establish workers democracy as part of the global struggle for socialist revolution.

The downfall of the Soviet degenerated workers state was a world-historic defeat. As we wrote in our "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program":

"History speaks its verdicts loudly. The ascendancy of counter-revolution in the former USSR is an unparalleled defeat for working people all over the world, decisively altering the political landscape on this planet.... "Trotsky's assertion in the 1938 Transitional Program that 'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat' predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness. The reality of this post-Soviet period adds a new dimension to Trotsky's observation. The only way in which this regression can be overcome and the working class can become a class for itself, i.e., fighting for socialist revolution, is to reforge an international Leninist-Trotskyist party as the leadership of the working class. Marxism must once again win the allegiance of the proletariat."

The fight for the emancipation of women is a powerful lever in the struggle for proletarian revolution worldwide. Thus it is particularly appropriate for *Women and Revolution* pages to be incorporated into *Spartacist*. Articles on the woman question will still be published under the *W&R* masthead in sectional presses of the ICL, and *Workers Vanguard* will continue to expose every manifestation of the oppression and inequality of women which the entrenched power of organized religion and the whole system of capitalist rule engender in the U.S. and abroad.

Only the overthrow of the capitalist system once and for all will secure our rights and lay the foundations for a new world in which the institution of the family will be replaced with collective childcare and housework. *Women and Revolution*, as part of *Spartacist*, is a valuable tool in the rebirth of an authentically communist Fourth International in the wake of the collapse of Stalinism. It remains one of the most effective vehicles for the International Communist League to champion the liberating goals of communism and the necessarily global struggle for a classless society. ■

## Women and Revolution

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## Spartacist League/Britain

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**SPARTACIST** CANADA 

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Postfach 5 55, 10127 Berlin, Germany

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## Dublin Spartacist Group

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## Ligue trotskyste de France

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

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## Spartacist/South Africa

Spartacist, PostNet Suite 248  
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Johannesburg 2000, South Africa

## Spartacist League/U.S.

Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, USA

**WORKERS VANGUARD**

*Biweekly organ of the Spartacist League/U.S.*  
\$10/22 issues (1 year)  
International: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail

# Women and Revolution



## *Women and Revolution* and ICL Perspectives

# For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

*This article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 703, 25 December 1998. WV is the biweekly paper of the Spartacist League/U.S., American section of the ICL.*

In a move undertaken to consolidate the party's political resources, the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee voted last year to suspend publication of *Women and Revolution*, the journal of its Commission for Work Among Women, for the immediate future. As mandated by the delegates at last winter's Third International Conference of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), *Spartacist*, the theoretical journal of the ICL's International Executive Committee, will now regularly publish articles under the *Women and Revolution* masthead on the woman question and related issues of special oppression. The first such article, "Women and Permanent Revolution in South Africa," appeared in *Spartacist* No. 54 (Spring 1998).

*Women and Revolution* was established in 1971 as a special journal seeking to intervene with a communist program into the women's movement developing out of the breakup of the New Left in the United States. While that movement dissipated years ago, the SL maintained *W&R* as the only

Marxist journal in the United States dedicated to the question of the liberation of women, a question which intersects social struggle in every country. Because the woman question is so deeply rooted in culture and society, *W&R* became a natural vehicle for our Marxist party to treat a wide range of subjects such as art, religion and anthropology.

We are proud to offer the first bound volume of this unique journal, containing *W&R* Nos. 1 through 20 (May/June 1971 to Spring 1980), with an index of the articles. Most notably, this volume includes our articles on the history of early communist work among women. We look to the tradition of the Russian Bolsheviks, to the authority of their paper *Rabotnitsa* (*The Woman Worker*) and to the Leninist principles of the early Communist International (CI), which established a women's section and an international women's journal. The Bolsheviks rejected the demeaning notion that the liberation of women was "women's work" and saw it as a task of the party as a whole. Early issues of *Women and Revolution* printed "Methods of Work Among the Women of the Communist Party" from the CI's Third Congress in 1921, which

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**Spartacist/PDC  
contingent at 1989  
Washington, D.C.  
abortion rights rally. ICL  
campaigns for  
aid to embattled city  
of Jalalabad following  
Soviet leader Gorbachev's  
treacherous withdrawal of  
troops from Afghanistan.**

