

1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour of action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International"

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EARL DOTTER

Class Struggles in the 'Economic Miracle'

Korea: Workers Resurgent

The summer of 1994 was a hot one for the South Korean ruling class. Rice farmers about to be ruined by cheap imports, students fighting for national liberation and unification, and even Buddhist monks opposed to corruption within their order took to the streets to confront the regime. Most importantly, almost 100,000 industrial workers engaged in mass strikes, which combined economic demands with the fight for independent trade unions. When the Korean state responded to these struggles with massive deployments of riot police, the hollowness of the Kim Young Sam regime's democratic pretensions was revealed, along

with the social fault lines that underlie the Korean "economic miracle."

During his 1992 election campaign, Kim Young Sam promised to eliminate the corruption which had been standard practice under the former military rulers. When Rev. Suh Ui Hyon arbitrarily decided to extend his tenure as General Secretary of the Chogye-Sa Temple in Seoul, he met resistance from the younger monks of the Chogye Order, the dominant Buddhist sect in South Korea. They had discovered that their "supreme patriarch" had been using the temple to enrich himself and funnel money to the ruling



Militant shipyard workers defy company thugs

Democratic Liberal Party, including a \$9.7 million "donation" to Kim Young Sam's presidential campaign (*AP On-line*, 14 April 1994). When the reform-minded monks decided to oust the corrupt Suh Ui Hyon, the government responded with brute force. Monks and riot police engaged in pitched battles for control of the temple. When 300 of their followers were arrested, the elders of the Chogye Order decided to kick out the corrupt Suh Ui Hyon. The scandal exposed Kim Young Sam's fraudulent promises of "reform."

Farmers took to the streets to protest the government's attempt to scrap supports for rice production, in compliance with the Uruguay Round of the GATT negotiations. This is no small matter in a country where rice is *the* basic staple, yet the cost of production is more than *three times* that in the United States. The removal of the rice tariff will devastate the six million South Koreans who live on farms. Most farmers already live in substandard conditions. They were especially outraged because during the 1992 presidential race, Kim Young Sam had campaigned hard *against* allowing foreign rice to enter the Korean market. When 7,000 students and farmers assembled at the Democratic Liberal Party's headquarters in Yoido Plaza, Seoul, on 18 June to demand that Kim Young Sam keep his election promise, the president called in 14,000 riot police to disperse them. However, recognizing the depth of the anger at the government's plan, he decided to "postpone" passage of the bill.

A few months later, in mid-August, students organized the fifth "pan-national unification rally" at Seoul National University (SNU). The rally, organized by *Hanchongnyon* (Federation of Korean Student Councils), called on the government to sign a peace treaty with the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea) as a step toward the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas. The conservative rulers of the South view this demand as communist in-

spired. Several hundred militant students commandeered a train and took it from Kwangju to the SNU rally (*Korea Times*, 14 August 1994). The government reacted with brutal force. Eight thousand riot police attacked the demonstrators with helicopters, tear gas and truncheons. The students actively defended themselves with clubs and Molotov cocktails. Several hundred people (both students and riot police) were hospitalized and 2,400 students were arrested.

South Korean Workers Take the Offensive

Yet it was the working class that proved to be the most militant sector of society last summer. Not since the "Great Workers' Struggle" in the summer of 1987, which toppled the Chun Doo Hwan dictatorship, had there been such an impressive show of force by labor. Subway workers in Pusan and Seoul, hospital workers, Korean National Rail workers, Hyundai Heavy Industry workers, Kia Motor workers, Daewoo autoworkers and Kumho Tire workers—almost 100,000 in total—walked off the job. These strikes were particularly significant because the workers raised *political* as well as economic demands. Many of the striking unions were affiliated to the illegal *Chonnodae* (Korean Council of Trade Unions—which recently launched the Preparatory Committee for a Democratic Trade Union Federation). The *Chonnodae* has been struggling for two years to displace the government-controlled Federation of Korean Trade Unions.

The focus of the government's counterattack was the rail union, *Chongihyop*, which was engaged in one of the most militant strikes. On 26 June, 5,000 riot police attacked the Kyunghee and Dongduk Women's Universities, where rail workers were holding a sit-in, and arrested 357 unionists. The strike forced the government to operate the national rail system with the army.

In the city of Ulsan, headquarters for most of Hyundai's industrial empire, locked-out shipbuilders were able to force the company to negotiate. The hundreds of company thugs guarding the premises proved no match for the de-

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Bosnian War and the Left

Balkan Barbarism

Since the destruction of the Yugoslav deformed workers' state and the emergence of pro-capitalist governments in its former republics, the Balkans has seen the revival of a phenomenon that had for many years been thought to be a thing of a dark and distant past. Bloody inter-ethnic wars, the forcible expulsion of people from regions where they had lived all their lives, massacres of villagers belonging to the "wrong" ethnic group—the reemergence of all these things has shaken belief in the inevitability of progress. One of the central tenets of Western bourgeois liberalism and social democracy, that the collapse of Stalinism and the triumph of the market would bring a new era of political freedom and economic prosperity, has been shattered, as rival nation builders launch bloody wars of territorial expansion, destroying the lives of millions of people in the process. It is a sanguinary reminder that capitalism is a system whose nation-states were forged over the corpses of millions of victims of "inferior" nationalities.

The aspiring bourgeois nation builders of the Balkans are only carrying out, over the corpse of the former workers' state, the same bloody national consolidation that their imperialist big brothers completed centuries ago. The difference is that, in the epoch of imperialism, rather than forging modern, "civilized" nation-states, the result will be backward semi-colonies ruled by reactionary bonapartist cliques. It all makes a mockery of the U.S. State Department theoretician Francis Fukuyama's contention that the collapse of Soviet "communism" meant that history had come to an end, and a new era of peace and harmony was at hand.

Many individuals who recently considered, or may still consider, themselves opponents of capitalism have been affected by the massive rightward backwash from the collapse of the Stalinist regimes. More than a few liberals, who once liked to think of themselves as opponents of imperialist intervention, now call on the U.S. and NATO to take up arms for "progressive" purposes: against the Haitian junta, against Saddam Hussein and against "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia. This was epitomized in Britain by the conversion of Fred Halliday from a prominent New Left spokesman in the 1960s and 70s to an apologist for George Bush's war against Iraq. It also resonates in the chorus of demands from American rad-libs and British social democrats that Clinton intervene in the Balkans by bombing the Bosnian Serbs to help the Muslims.

In the U.S., the interventionist pack is led by the British-born Christopher Hitchens, a columnist for the *Nation* magazine, who until recently billed himself as a staunch opponent of American imperialism. He is joined by Bogdan Denitch, America's leading social democrat and himself a Serbian. Even Alexander Cockburn and Noam Chomsky, who inhabit the left fringe of the rad-lib spectrum, have called for a UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia, as if the "blue berets" could, or would, act independently of the U.S. and other imperialist powers.

But first prize for post-cold war knavery must surely go to Tim Wohlforth, the erstwhile screaming maniac of American pseudo-Trotskyism, who is now enjoying a second incarnation as a mild-mannered social democrat. Wohlforth writes:



RON HAVIV—SABA

Bosnian Muslim woman grieves

"We must favor international intervention, including military action, in Bosnia. This should be truly international action carried out through the U.N. Yet the reality is that such U.N. initiatives require American support and an American content. We need to work toward the establishment of a permanent United Nations peace force to act in similar situations around the world."

—In *These Times*, 26 July 1994

During his inglorious career as Gerry Healy's American majordomo and leader of the Workers League, Wohlforth demonstrated a cavalier disregard for the truth whenever it conflicted with the organizational exigencies of the moment. Perhaps today he has actually convinced himself that, after the downfall of Stalinism, the imperialist tiger will suddenly begin to act like the lamb of mercy. But such fantasies in the end only add up to a rationale for the fact that Wohlforth and his ilk lack the political backbone to stand fast against the prevailing reactionary winds.

B-52 Liberalism and the 'Revolutionary' Left

The rapid shift to the right by social democrats and liberals has affected much of the ostensibly revolutionary left. One manifestation of this mood is the "Workers Aid for Bosnia" (WAB) campaign organized by various British left groups. This campaign has struck a real chord with many British workers who are rightly appalled at the carnage in the former Yugoslavia and want to "do something" about it. Thus in 1993 WAB attracted support from striking workers at the Timex factory in Dundee, Scotland who organized an aid convoy "From Timex to Tuzla." Such actions by trade unionists are an expression of a real internationalist impulse. But these workers are being misled by a campaign



November 1994: Bosnian government soldiers celebrate

whose left social-democratic politics are designed to obscure the fact that this war is a barbaric result of capitalist counterrevolution in the Balkans. What is worse, the campaign does not fight against, but actively panders to, the sentiment in favor of imperialists "doing something" by bombing the Bosnian Serbs.

Thus the British-based rump of Workers Aid, dominated by Cliff Slaughter's Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), has raised the slogan "Open the Northern Route [to Tuzla]." This amounts to a call for the British and other UN "blue berets" to blast their way through Serb-held territory to allow the Workers Aid convoys through. Meanwhile, the International Workers Aid, dominated by European sections of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec)—particularly Britain's Socialist Outlook and the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR)—is no better. Its slogan, "Open Tuzla Airport" (closed by Serb bombardment), is also directed at imperialist/UN forces.

The British Workers Power group (WP), leading section of the centrist League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), takes a characteristic Janus-faced position with regard to Workers Aid. WP does not actually endorse the campaign because "it has...issued propaganda differentially hostile to the Serbs, and has even evinced political support to the pro-capitalist Izetbegovic Bosnian government" (*Workers Power*, No. 170, September 1993). But they support the activities of the campaign nevertheless. This allows them to posture as left critics of WAB on occasion, without directly criticizing the rampant social-democratic/liberal illusions upon which the campaign is based.

'Multi-ethnic' Bosnia—A Reformist Pipe Dream

The reformist and centrist left attempt to justify their support to the predominantly Muslim Bosnian government in the current war by pointing to its pronouncements at the time it declared independence from Yugoslavia. The Bosnian president, Alija Izetbegovic, came out with a lot of rhetoric about "multi-culturalism" and "multi-ethnicity." *Socialist Outlook*, newspaper of the British USec section, later began to whine about the betrayal of these hopes by the Bosnian government:

"The Izetbegovic government has indicated that it is willing to accept the concept of a 'Muslim' state. This is a big retreat from the multi-national, multi-religious Bosnia envisaged in the 'platform of the Presidency' published in Sarajevo, 26th June 1992. Izetbegovic has also talked about the need to create a 'Muslim' army. This weakens the fight for Bosnian independence."

—*Socialist Outlook*, No. 53, 27 November 1993

But Izetbegovic's real designs (as opposed to his calculated liberal rhetoric) were always clear enough for those who took the trouble to find out. A letter in the Summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Policy* from Michael Mennard, a former member of the U.S. foreign service, reported that Izetbegovic is the author of a tract entitled "The Islamic Declaration: A Programme for the Islamization of Muslims and the Muslim Peoples." According to Mennard:

"...Izetbegovic's work is diametrically opposed to his multicultural dream. For example, Izetbegovic speaks assertively about 'the incompatibility of Islam with non-Islamic systems. There can be neither peace nor coexistence,' he emphasizes, 'between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions.' So much for a multicultural and multireligious society.

"Moreover, Izetbegovic, the protagonist of a unified Bosnia, also says: 'The upbringing of the people, and particularly means of mass influence—the press, radio, television and film—should be in the hands of people whose Islamic moral and intellectual authority is indisputable.' Nothing is said about what the Croat and the Serb members of the media can expect. Convert to Islam to keep their jobs?

"The bottom line is that Izetbegovic never renounced any of the above statements. Whenever asked about it, he refused to comment."

Izetbegovic, a consistent pro-capitalist nation builder, understands that a bourgeois nation-state is usually built upon a single nationality, and necessarily oppresses other nationalities. This is in marked contrast to the cynical and/or naive USec reformists, who pretend it is possible to have, in the words of Peter Gabriel, "Games without frontiers, war without tears"!

Genuine multi-ethnic bourgeois states are very rare. The United States, for instance, contains components of virtually every nationality on the planet. But, although there is a definite hierarchy among ethnic groups in the U.S., immigrants have historically been pressed to shed their national cultural identities in favor of a new, American identity.

There are two small multi-ethnic states in Western Europe: Switzerland and Belgium. Three quarters of the Swiss population is of German ethnicity, with a sizable French-speaking minority, and small groups of Italian and Romansh speakers. It took centuries of wars of conquest, on the one hand, and amalgamation/association between small separate mini-states or cantons, on the other, to create the Swiss confederation. The consolidation of the Swiss multi-ethnic state was a product of the epoch of progressive capitalism.

As for Belgium, its foundation was very much on the basis of Catholicism, which was the binding that held together the French-speaking Walloons and the Dutch-speaking Flemish against Protestant Holland. Belgium is a product of the failure of the Dutch reformation to extend itself to the southern Netherlands and drive out the Spanish monarchy. The French Revolution freed Belgium from the Spanish Hapsburgs' Austrian successors, and laid the foundations for a Belgian bourgeois state, based on a common, largely Catholic, identity. Belgian national independence was won through a national liberation struggle against the

reactionary union with the Dutch imposed by the victors of Waterloo. This occurred in conjunction with the revolutionary struggles that erupted in 1830 in France.

The Belgian and Swiss states were forged as genuinely multinational bourgeois states, and not on the basis of the national oppression of one people by another. They were among the highest achievements of the epoch of progressive capitalism. But to expect such things to be duplicated in the epoch of capitalist decay is a reformist pipe dream. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Yugoslav workers' state, which unleashed the current round of nationalist conflicts in the Balkans, was a giant backward step in the social sphere. The multi-national character of the Belgian state is currently under attack with the rise of the ultra-rightist Flemish "Vlaams Blok" based on Dutch speaking separatism. This is an ominous development; it shows that the historic achievements of the bourgeoisie are by no means secure in this reactionary period.

Stalinophobia and Nationalist Cheerleading

Behind the reformist and centrist capitulation to "Bosnian" nationalism and illusions in the potentially "progressive" role of imperialism in the new Balkan wars are two political tendencies shared by many centrists and left reformists. One is Stalinophobia, i.e., a refusal to distinguish the social gains of the deformed and degenerated workers' states from the reactionary bureaucracies that ruled them, and hence a refusal to defend collectivized property against capitalist restoration. The various pseudo-Marxist groups displayed their Stalinophobia when they applauded the breakup of the Yugoslav deformed workers' state. The second is a classically New Left approach to the national question in situations of interpenetrated peoples (i.e., ethnically mixed populations). Some peoples are seen as inherently "progressive" because they are oppressed, and other peoples—the oppressors—are viewed as inherently reactionary, and therefore unworthy of any national rights or guarantees. This way of thinking is evident in the inclination of the centrist/reformist left to imagine that Bosnian Muslims can do no wrong, and that the Serbs are unmitigated villains.

The groups currently involved in Workers Aid for Bosnia—USec, LRCI, WRP, et al.—previously supported the various secessionist movements in the disintegrating Yugoslav workers' state. They all adhere to the proposition that the question of national self-determination supersedes the question of property forms, i.e., which class shall rule in the social sphere. But they were not prepared for the consequences of their position. They apparently did not realize that the splitting of the Serbs and Croats into competing nation states was counterposed *in real life* to the existence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This peculiar blindness, and the reflex of much of the supposedly "progressive" milieu to support the Croatian nationalists, was accurately characterized by BBC and former *Guardian* correspondent, Misha Glenny:

"On the whole, Croatia's case was presented with considerable sympathy in the West European media. Those of us who were not uncritical of Tudjman's programme were subject to ever more poisonous attacks as the war spread. Most shocking of all were the people I had known for many years from left and liberal circles in the United Kingdom who had fallen under the spell of Croatian nationalism. These people demonstrated their consistent solidarity with a small-minded, right-wing autocrat as a consequence of losing the ability to argue rationally. In extreme situations, nationalism appears to neutralize that part of the mind which is able to

fathom complex equations."
—*The Fall of Yugoslavia*, 1993

This is an insightful description of the hysteria and willful blindness that has characterized most of the left-liberal/social democratic milieu over events in the former Yugoslavia. It should have been obvious that a rupture between Serbia and Croatia would inevitably polarize the large Serbian and Croatian populations of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those who advocated "self-determination" as a panacea for the ills of the former workers' states may be full of sympathy for the Muslims today. But they were not doing them any favors then. This was recognized by Izetbegovic *at the time*. As Glenny explains:

"The death sentence for Bosnia-Herzegovina was passed in the middle of December 1991 when Germany announced that it would recognize Slovenia and Croatia unconditionally on 15 January 1992. So distressed was Alija Izetbegovic by this news that he travelled to Bonn in a vain effort to persuade Kohl and Genscher not to go ahead with the move. Izetbegovic understood full well that recognition would strip Bosnia of the constitutional protection it still enjoyed from the territorial claims of the two regional imperia, Serbia and Croatia."

Dynamics of Bosnia's Communal War

The standard centrist-reformist view of the war in Bosnia is that it is purely a matter of external aggression by the Serbian government. And perversely, given the record of much of the left in supporting Croatian nationalism, sometimes the Croatian government is mentioned as a co-conspirator. According to the 5 February 1994 issue of *Socialist Outlook*:

"It is not true that the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia is a 'civil war' between three groups of nationalists, equally responsible. The war, and the rise of ethnic nationalism, was pioneered and led by the Serbian leadership in Belgrade....
"The people resisting aggression from Serb and Croat forces in multi-ethnic Bosnia deserve our solidarity and support."

While Serbian and Croatian irredentism is an important factor in the war in Bosnia, the view that the Bosnian conflict is "not a civil war," that the Bosnian government's opponents/allies are purely and simply puppets of outside forces, and that the war would not be taking place without the latter's interference, is a denial of reality. The Croats have switched from being semi-allies of Izetbegovic to outright opponents. After signing a U.S.-brokered pact in March 1994, they are once again allied with the Muslims. The Bosnian Serbs constitute a political and military force in their own right, as the recent falling out between Belgrade and the Bosnian Serb leadership over the latest imperialist peace plan illustrates.

The multi-ethnic character of the Bosnian republic was a product of political decisions taken by the Yugoslav workers' state. Dusko Doder, former East European bureau chief for the *Washington Post*, provided the following description of Tito's attempts to undercut the traditional nationalist hostilities and establish the "fraternity and unity" of the peoples of the Balkans:

"...Tito's scheme went beyond balance, and that forms the core of the Serb grievances today. Given Serbian domination in Alexander's Yugoslavia, Tito sought to weaken the Serbs by dividing them internally. In addition to the three constituent nations of Alexander's Yugoslavia—Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—Tito turned prewar 'Southern Serbia' into the republic of Macedonia, made the tiny former Serb kingdom of Montenegro a nation in its own right, and created two federal units within Serbia itself—the 'autonomous re-

gions' of Kosovo, with its sizable Albanian population, and Vojvodina, where many Hungarians, Romanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, and other minorities lived.

"The largest obstacle to Tito's plan lay between Serbia and Croatia, where a mixed population lived. That region, Bosnia, was the crucial problem of Yugoslavia, both literally and metaphorically. Conscious that both Croatia and Serbia laid historical claim to Bosnia, Tito declared even during the war that its future would be 'neither Serbian nor Croatian nor Muslim but rather Serbian and Croatian and Muslim.' As his Yugoslavia was to be a multinational socialist state, Bosnia would be its most genuine portion. The cradle of a revived Yugoslav idea, it would become a republic in its own right."

—*Foreign Policy*, Summer 1993

During the 1960s the Yugoslav Stalinists proclaimed Yugoslavia to be a commonwealth of equal nations and nationalities, each of which ruled itself. In 1964 the Bosnian Muslims were elevated to the status of a "nation" by the Titoists. The 1974 Yugoslav constitution proclaimed the sovereignty of the nations of Yugoslavia:

"For the Bosnian Muslims, the new constitution opened the prospects of a future embryonic nation-state. Their recognition as Yugoslavia's sixth nation 10 years earlier meant that the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina had a nation of its own, just like Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The 1974 constitution became the departure point for the Bosnian Muslim national assertiveness that in the post-Tito period provoked an adverse reaction among the Bosnian Serbs. Their loss of ethnic domination coupled with political liberalization marked a decline in the Serbs' share of political and economic power in Bosnia-Herzegovina."

—*Ibid.*

To understand the roots of the bloody communalist conflict in Bosnia today, it is important to understand the significance of the mechanisms of tri-national parity that existed in Bosnia under the Yugoslav deformed workers' state:

"In every sphere of Bosnian life (with the critical exception of the JNA [Yugoslav People's Army]) the three communities were equally represented. The importance of this concept cannot be underestimated as its violation by the Moslems and Croats, as well as by the international community, is at the core of the Serbs' decision to fight. It implies that Bosnia's polity consists of 'three constituent nations' and that major constitutional changes may only be made if agreed to by all three sides. This reaches to the very heart of post-war Yugoslavia, a state which, uniquely, was constructed on a dual concept of sovereignty: the sovereignty of the republics and the sovereignty of the nations. Independence, it follows, cannot be granted to a republic unless the nations of the republic also seek that independence.

"The decision by the European Community to recognize Slovenia and Croatia pushed Bosnia into the abyss. Once this had happened, the Bosnian government had only three roads along which it could travel and each led to war. It could have stayed in the rump Yugoslavia and been ruled over by Milosevic and Serbia. It could have accepted the territorial division of Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia, as suggested by Tudjman and Milosevic. Or it could have applied for recognition as an independent state. The Croats and Moslems considered the first solution unacceptable; the Moslems and Yugoslavs, the second; and the Serbs, the third. This enforced choice could not have been presented at a worse time—Serbia and Croatia had been radicalized by the trauma of a war which neither side had yet won and neither side lost...."

—Glenny, *op cit.*

The bulk of the centrist/reformist left, in asserting that the Bosnian war is *simply* a matter of aggression by Bel-

grade (and sometimes Zagreb), absolve themselves of responsibility for supporting the destruction of the Yugoslav workers' state and dismiss the significance to the Serbian population in Bosnia of the loss of their former constitutional guarantees. Bosnia's Serbs were well aware of the consequences of the dissolution of the system of mutual veto and did not relish a future as an oppressed minority in a Muslim-dominated Bosnia. They decided instead to use their military clout (due to Serbian dominance in the Yugoslav Army) to carve out as big a piece of territory as possible with the aim of eventual incorporation into a Greater Serbia.

Those "Marxists" who have taken sides in the squalid communalist bloodletting in the Balkans can only do so by ignoring or denying the complexities of the national question in the former Yugoslavia. The progressive steps of the Tito regime in this sphere were ultimately doomed because of the Stalinist regime's Yugo-centred narrowness and its political expropriation of the proletariat. They nevertheless provide a glimpse of how the national question would be addressed by a revolutionary workers' state. The pseudo-Trotskyist left allowed their Stalinophobic hatred of the Yugoslav deformed workers' state to blind them to its progressive achievements in the national sphere. Having applauded the destruction of Stalinism, they now scream bloody murder about the reactionary consequences of the break-up of Yugoslavia. And, having cheered the breakup of Yugoslavia, they now pursue the New Left logic of support to "progressive" peoples against "reactionary" ones.

They are guilty of the same opportunist error regarding the Middle East and Ireland. But, in these two cases, by tailing the "nationalism of the oppressed," the centrist/reformist left posture as the most intransigent opponents of imperialism. In Bosnia they are capitulating to the pressure exerted by the bourgeois media.

'Ethnic Cleansing': Serbs, Croats & Muslims

In the absence of any popular righteous causes in the world today, the petty bourgeois intelligentsia have latched onto the plight of poor little Bosnia as a *cause celebre*. The imperialist media (at least in the English-speaking world) have tended, by and large, to present the conflict in Bosnia as a case of defenseless Muslim citizens (and sometimes Croats) being attacked by heavily armed gangs of vicious, bloodthirsty Serbs. The UN resolutions and occasional displays of NATO airpower have been directed at the Serbs.

The Serbian forces are certainly guilty of horrendous crimes. But there have also been a substantial number of Serbian victims of "ethnic cleansing," both in Bosnia and Croatia. An article in the 24 June 1994 issue of *Radio Free Europe's Research Report* cites estimates from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of 530,000 (predominantly Croat) refugees in Croatia and 540,000 refugees (mostly Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia) in Serbia and Montenegro.

One of the more interesting studies of the Western media's depiction of the Bosnian war was Peter Brock's "Date-line Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press" (*Foreign Policy*, Winter 1993). Brock's article addressed the one-sided treatment of the conflict in the imperialist media:

"By late 1992, the majority of the media had become so mesmerized by their focus on Serb aggression and atrocities that many became incapable of studying or following up numerous episodes of horror and hostility against Serbs in Croatia and later in Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Perhaps the most sensational stories of Serb criminality were the reports of widespread and systematic rape of Muslim women by Serbian fighters. Brock reports:

"The January 4, 1993, *Newsweek*, for one, quoted unsubstantiated Bosnian government claims of up to 50,000 rapes of Muslims by Serb soldiers.

"An inquiry by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights soon presented a more moderate estimate, however. Its investigators visited Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia from January 12 to 23, 1993. In its report of February 10, the commission, while refraining from giving an official estimate, mentioned a figure of 2,400 victims. The estimate was based on 119 documented cases. The report concluded that Muslims, Croats, and Serbs, had been raped, with Muslims making up the largest number of victims."

Brock also cites a series of examples in the popular media to illustrate the bias and manipulation of the facts:

"The 1992 BBC filming of an ailing, elderly 'Bosnian Muslim prisoner-of-war in a Serb concentration camp' resulted in his later identification by relatives as retired Yugoslav Army officer Branko Velec, a Bosnian Serb held in a Muslim detention camp.

"Among wounded 'Muslim toddlers and infants' aboard a Sarajevo bus hit by sniper fire in August 1992 were a number of Serb children—a fact revealed much later. One of the children who died in the incident was identified at the funeral as Muslim by television reporters. But the unmistakable Serbian Orthodox funeral ritual told a different story.

"In its January 4, 1993, issue, *Newsweek* published a photo of several bodies with an accompanying story that began: 'Is there any way to stop Serbian atrocities in Bosnia?' The photo was actually of Serb victims..."

In a subsequent issue of *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1994) an anonymous "senior U.N. official" commented that:

"Most international personnel in the former Yugoslavia have been well aware of the general pattern that Peter Brock describes in his article; it has been a conversational cliché. It was especially characteristic of the 15-month period from late spring 1992 to late summer 1993."

The LRCI, USec and assorted other leftists who have jumped to take sides in the bloody communalist struggles in Bosnia demonstrate both an indifference to Marxist theory and social facts, and an acute sensitivity to the current moods of the radical political milieu in which they seek influence. The inclinations of the individuals who compose these milieus are shaped to a very considerable extent by the presentation of events in the bourgeois media. So it is no surprise to see most of the pseudo-revolutionary organizations finding one reason or another to side with the Muslims.

Pseudo-Trotskyists often attempt to dress up the latest trends in petty bourgeois opinion with Marxist phraseology. The British Workers International League (WIL), for example, in a piece entitled "Bosnia—Why We Defend the Muslims" in the June 1993 issue of *Workers News*, asserted that, "The national question is always a reflection, even if a distorted one, of the class struggle." The national struggle certainly affects the class struggle, and frequently the question of national oppression and class oppression are connected (for example in the use of Palestinian labor by the Zionist rulers of Israel). But it is mistake to imagine that the national question is *always* a "reflection...of the class struggle." Leninists oppose national oppression (like other forms of extra-class oppression) without confusing the national question and the social one.

In the vicious communalist civil war in Bosnia, the WIL can only hint at a "class struggle" angle through an oblique sociological reference to the "mostly urban" Muslims ver-



JOBARD—SIPA PRESS

UN 'peacekeepers' at work

sus the "predominantly peasant" Serbs. If national struggles are in fact "reflected" class struggles, why does the WIL assert that, "In conflicts between Serbia and Croatia we are defeatists on both sides"?

LRCI Flip-Flops on Bosnia

Workers Power has a curious record on the wars in the former Yugoslavia. When Serbia and Croatia went to war over the mainly Serbian inhabited territories of Slavonia and Krajina in Croatia, the LRCI denounced the conflict as "a reactionary, nationalist war on both sides" and noted that:

"Revolutionary communists from the early years of this century have seen the answer to the extreme national complexity and intermixing of the peoples of south-east Europe in the creation of a Federation of the Balkan Peoples."

—*Trotskyist International*, September 1991

When the conflict between Serbia and Croatia touched off war in Bosnia between the Bosnian Serbs (supported by Milosevic's army) on one side, and an uneasy Muslim-Croat alliance on the other, the LRCI was once again defeatist on both sides:

"we cannot interpret the actions of any of the national-chauvinist parties of Bosnia-Herzegovina or their backers in Croatia and Serbia as expressing the legitimate democratic right for separate statehood, i.e. a demand for freedom from oppression rather than for privileges and the 'right to oppress' others. Their actions reveal this.

"The three communities do not inhabit clear contiguous areas which could be separated to join their respective states or form an independent 'Muslim' state.

"...Therefore, Marxists should not support secession and should not recognise 'self-determination' where this is aimed at, or inevitably leads to the violation of, the national rights of others."

—LRCI statement, 25 April 1992, *Trotskyist Bulletin*, May 1992

The statement went on to call for "multinational defence militias" and concluded: "Only under the power of the workers and peasants of Bosnia-Herzegovina could the fears of national oppression be dispelled and economic life restored."

All very good. But a few months later, after the Croats abandoned the Muslims, the LRCI changed its tune and declared that, "the character of the Muslim's struggle changed into a war of justified resistance against ethnic an-



REUTERS—MILE JEISEVIC

Serb militias have the upper hand in Bosnia's civil war

nihilation" ("LRCI Resolution—War in the Balkans," *Workers Power*, December 1992). If by "defense" of the Muslims WP meant the right of a community faced with pogroms to defend itself, no one could object. Revolutionaries defend any community (Muslim, Croat, or Serb) against pogromists. But Workers Power meant much more than this:

"Our aim in the defence of the Bosnian Muslims remains the establishment of a multi-ethnic Bosnian state. Previously, this was best pursued by a tactic of generalised defeatism and a fight for joint multi-ethnic resistance against pogromists of all stripes. Now it requires the ability of the Muslims to remain an integral part of what is left of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Previously, we supported the defence of all ethnic groups against pogroms and forcible removal from their homes and villages. Now we fight for the establishment of military control of all and any areas within Bosnia-Herzegovina by Muslim forces—our aim remaining to establish multi-ethnic workers' and peasants' councils."

—*Ibid.*, emphasis added

The LRCI's call for the victory of the Bosnian Muslims over the Croat and Serb forces means supporting a *war of conquest* by Izetbegovic's Muslim army. In typical centrist fashion, WP sought to hedge its position with the following disclaimer:

"Common military action with the Muslim forces must not extend to political support for the official Muslim leaders and their reactionary and pro-capitalist aims. We do not share nor support the territorial ambitions of many of their leaders to force the Serbian and Croat nationalities into a unified capitalist state of Bosnia-Herzegovina threatening them in turn with national oppression...."

"Such a 'solution'—which would require in the first instance massive imperialist military support—would only lead to further national tensions, not to building a bridge between the nationalities."

—*Ibid.*

Thus the LRCI combines a call for "the establishment of military control of all and any areas within Bosnia-Herzegovina by Muslim forces" with a claim to oppose the latter's "territorial ambitions." For good measure they tack on a call for a "multi-ethnic workers republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina." The rationale for the line change was presented by

Workers Power leader Dave Stockton in an article in the May 1993 issue of the LRCI's *Trotskyist International*:

"At the start of the war in Bosnia the LRCI supported neither the Croat-Bosnian government nor for the Serb's [sic]. We recognised the right of every community, Muslim, Serb or Croat...to defend themselves against ethnic cleansing."

This right is one that every genuine Leninist continues to uphold. But not the LRCI, as Stockton explains:

"Events in the autumn of 1992 altered the situation with regard to the Bosnian Muslims. The collapse of the Muslim-Croat alliance and the secret deal between Serbia and Croatia to carve up Bosnia made it clear that the character of the war had changed. For the Muslims...it became...a war against genocide."

When the Croats abandoned their former Muslim allies it changed the military balance of forces, but not the fundamentally communalist character of the conflict. Stockton is unable to explain why Marxists should suddenly support Muslim forces taking "military control of all and any areas within Bosnia-Herzegovina," i.e., conquering the Croatian and Serbian areas. He admits that the Muslim regime is "a willing accomplice of imperialism" and acknowledges that its forces are guilty of "atrocities" and "ethnic cleansing," but suggests that such things are not so important after all because:

"For Leninists approaching the national question, the task is to say who is systematically oppressed, who is fighting a justified war of national defence, who is fighting a war for national privileges and aggrandisement?"

The simple formula of defending the oppressed is perfectly adequate in situations where the oppressed people constitutes a more or less homogeneous population within a clearly demarcated territory, and is oppressed by an outside force, e.g., the Québécois in Canada or the people of East Timor and Indonesia. Things are more difficult where the populations are mixed or interpenetrated, with two or more different nationalities living on the same piece of land. By applying Stockton's simple formula in such complicated situations, one ends up supporting the "right" of the currently oppressed nation to drive out or conquer other nationalities and reverse the terms of oppression. This is so palpable today in the Balkans that WP is forced

to qualify its position with a whole series of caveats and "buts."

WP initially responded to the outbreak of war in the Balkans with an attempt to formulate an anti-communal program. But, true to its history of centrist vacillation, WP abandoned this position as soon as it became unpopular. If, as they claim, the LRCI's decision to support the Muslims was motivated by the shift in military fortunes that occurred when the Croats broke their bloc, *why did the position not change again in March 1994 when the Muslim-Croat bloc was reconstituted?* The answer is, of course, that the LRCI's line change was based on opportunist organizational calculations, not considerations of principle. Once it became clear that forces to its right (i.e., USec, WRP) were building a sizable pro-Muslim "solidarity" movement, WP trimmed its own position so as not to miss out.

A Trotskyist Program for the Balkans

The Marxist attitude to the national question in situations of interpenetrated peoples was first formulated by the revolutionary Spartacist tendency in the 1970s. We uphold that tradition today. As we stated in our 1986 document "For Trotskyism!":

"Both the Irish Protestants and the Hebrew-speaking population of Israel are class-differentiated peoples. Each has a bourgeoisie, a petty bourgeoisie and a working class...Leninists do not simply endorse the nationalism of the oppressed (or the petty-bourgeois political formations which espouse it). To do so simultaneously forecloses the possibility of exploiting the real class contradictions in the ranks of the oppressor people and cements the hold of the nationalists over the oppressed. The proletarians of the ascendant people can never be won to a nationalist perspective of simply inverting the current unequal relationship. A significant section of them *can* be won to an anti-sectarian class-against-class perspective because it is in their objective interests."

—1917, No. 3, Spring 1987

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A Trotskyist program for the Balkans must begin from this basic understanding. While actively fighting every form of national or communal oppression, class-conscious workers must reject any form of nationalism and defend the rights of all peoples to exist. All communities, whether Serb, Croat or Muslim, have the right to defend themselves, and a communist organization in the region would have the responsibility to aid them in whatever way practicable. An authentic communist organization would seek to intervene against the communalists through the formation of a multi-ethnic workers' militia. Such a militia must contain representatives of all three communities. The workers' movements of every nation have a material interest in stopping communal slaughter, because the spread of poisonous nationalism and chauvinism will inevitably be used as a battering ram by the aspiring bourgeoisies. The example of integrated multi-ethnic workers' militias could have an important influence on advanced workers in other Balkan nations—Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece—all of whom have a vital interest in halting a regional conflagration growing out of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

We support the right of *all* peoples displaced by the savage "ethnic cleansing" campaigns to return to their places of origin. Yet this elementary democratic demand can only be implemented by a genuine anti-nationalist working-class movement with representation from all the former combatant nationalities themselves, which is linked to workers' organizations from Balkan nations outside the former Yugoslavia.

A resurgent workers' movement in the Balkans would seek to establish soviets of workers' and farmers' representatives, from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, from the Carpathians to the Aegean. Only representative organs of the working class and poorer farmers would have the authority and political strength to resolve the tangled and conflicting ethnic claims equitably and democratically, and thus put an end to the communal wars in Bosnia and elsewhere in the region. Only such organs of power, fused into a Socialist Federation of the Balkans, could provide an effective alternative to the murderous nationalism of the nascent bourgeois state apparatuses that have already wreaked havoc on the region.

Despite the Tito regime's serious efforts to suppress traditional ethnic hostilities (efforts which, for several decades, met with considerable success), the narrow nationalism of the program of "socialism-in-one-country" (defined by the frontiers established by the treaty of Versailles) doomed the attempt. This national narrowness was compounded by Stalin's betrayal of the Greek revolution at the end of World War II, as part of the deal reached with the imperialists at Yalta and Teheran.

A socialist Balkan federation must be genuinely multinational. It must include Rumanians, Bulgarians, Albanians and Greeks. The slogan of a "multi-ethnic workers' republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina" is both narrow and utopian. Large sections of the population of Bosnia do not at this point want to be part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. As Marxists, we neither advocate the destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina nor its preservation by force. The question of exactly what constitutional arrangements can best resolve the conflicting national/communal appetites of this former Yugoslav republic can only be settled by negotiations among elected representatives from the different populations under the aegis of proletarian state power in the region—a broad, all-inclusive Balkan federation. ■

Down with Duvalierism—Break with Aristide!

Haiti Under U.S. Guns

Reprinted below is the IBT's 18 September 1994 statement on the impending American intervention into Haiti.

With a flurry of threats, "human interest" stories and invocations of democratic principle, the U.S. government laid the groundwork for the occupation of Haiti. The ostensible purpose was to rescue the Haitian population from the bloody rule of Lieut. General Raoul Cédras, who came to power in 1991 by overthrowing Haiti's popularly elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Yet Cédras and his death squad regime have operated all along with the implicit support of the U.S. Finally, under U.S. military pressure, he has agreed to step down and participate in smoothing the way for Aristide's formal reinstatement.

The State Department's Haitian policy has been chiefly determined by a desire to prevent a mass social explosion in one of the most miserable neo-colonies of the imperialist New World Order. Cédras had to go because he had outlived his usefulness to his masters. He has successfully beheaded the various plebeian grassroots organizations that brought Aristide to power, but his regime was too unpopular and too narrowly based to ensure stability.

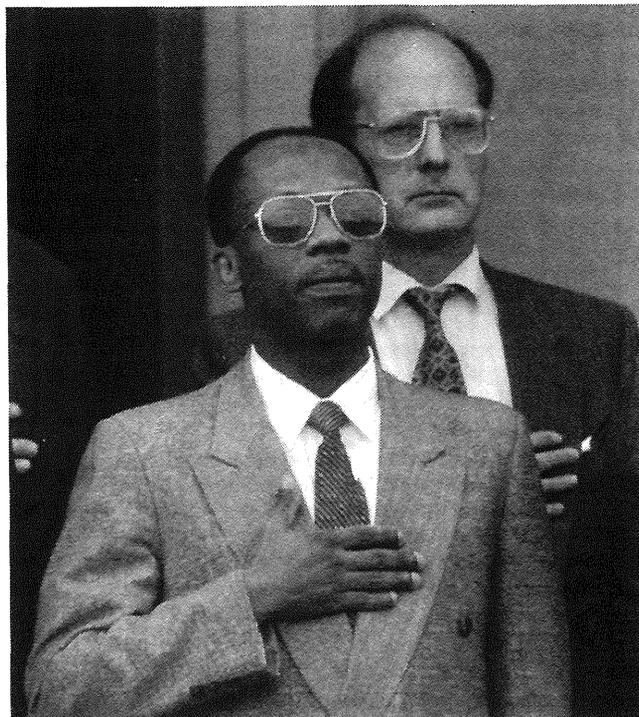
For weeks Clinton hinted he would prefer that some "reformed" elements in the Haitian officer corps replace Cédras. The intent was to leave the Haitian army intact for use against the civilian population and at the same time avoid direct American responsibility for administering the Haitian nightmare. U.S. invasion strategists have announced that one of their main concerns is "possible revenge killings by supporters of Father Aristide" (*New York Times*, 14 September) aimed at the officer corps and other elements of the neo-colonial ruling class who have supported Cédras. Stanley Schrager, U.S. Embassy spokesman in Port-au-Prince, was reported to have said that:

"any invasion plans would provide for keeping the army intact after the invasion, but without its leaders and in a much less ominous role."

Despite the brutal repression carried out by the Cédras regime, Marxists flatly oppose any intervention by the U.S., its imperialist allies or puppets. It is the duty of the international workers' movement to support militarily any Third World regime, however repulsive, against imperialist invasion. All the recent media stories about desperate refugees and hungry children, and all the sanctimonious condemnations of Cédras by the "world community," are a camouflage for an intervention aimed at preserving the status quo in the poorest and most desperately oppressed neo-colony in the Americas. Trade-union militants in North America, the Caribbean and Latin America should call for political strikes against the occupation of Haiti, and refuse to handle military supplies for the invaders.

Haiti—Client State of U.S. Imperialism

Bill Clinton's preparations for attacking Haiti more or less followed the script of George Bush's 1989 assault on Panama (perversely dubbed "Operation Just Cause"). First there was a media barrage of "outraged public opinion" about the lack of human rights and democracy. Neo colonial leaders who had been on the CIA payroll for years were



NEWSWEEK

Aristide swears allegiance to U.S. Imperialism

found to be drug traffickers and murderers (see *New York Times*, 14 November 1993: "C.I.A. Formed Haitian Unit Later Tied to Narcotics Trade"). The next step was to locate an international body (preferably the United Nations) willing to "request" U.S. intervention. In Panama this set the stage for the Marines to arrive, guns blazing. After they spilled enough blood to ensure "stability" (i.e., obedience to Washington), a new puppet regime was sworn in to serve and protect the agents and mechanisms of imperialist exploitation.

Unlike other recent foreign adventures by U.S. imperialism, such as the invasions of Panama and Grenada, or the Gulf War, which enjoyed solid ruling class support, plans for the invasion of Haiti divided the American ruling class. Most Republicans and some Democrats opposed the invasion because they preferred Cédras to Aristide. But all talk by Clinton and his backers about democracy and respect for "human rights" is hypocritical cant. The divisions in Washington over Haitian policy were merely disputes over which tactics were better suited to maintain American imperialist control.

Since the Marines invaded Haiti in 1915, the country has been dominated economically and politically by the U.S. Haiti is a predominately agrarian society, yet because American agribusiness uses the best land to produce crops for export, most of the country's food must be imported. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, and most of its citizens can only afford to eat once a day. As a result, 90 percent of Haitian children suffer from malnutrition. Three-quarters of the population makes less than \$200 per

year, while the top one percent of the population absorbs almost half of the national income.

Haiti and 'American Democracy'

The Haitian Republic was the product of the only successful slave revolt in history. The triumph of the Haitian slaves in 1804 in the richest colony in the Americas posed an immediate threat to all the adjacent slave-based economies, particularly those of the southern United States. The U.S. joined with the European colonial powers in an overtly racist attempt to strangle the black republic in its infancy with an economic and political blockade. While the U.S. recognized all the former Spanish colonies in the Americas by the 1820s, it refused to recognize Haiti until 1862, after the southern states had seceded from the Union.

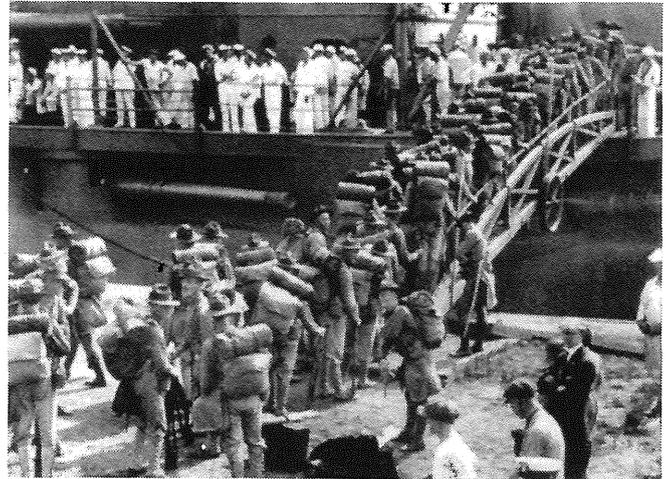
Under the saintly peacemaker Woodrow Wilson, U.S. Marines invaded Haiti in 1915, ostensibly to spread the benefits of democracy and freedom. The ungrateful Haitians responded with the "Cacos Insurrection," which the Marines savagely suppressed. The national parliament was disbanded and a new constitution was written which gave the U.S. complete political and administrative control over Haiti. The U.S. authorities duly ratified it with a "democratic" plebiscite which recorded a remarkable 99.9 percent vote in favor. U.S. agricultural concerns moved in during the occupation to "lease" a quarter million acres of the best farmland, in the process dispossessing 50,000 peasants.

Since 1934 Haiti has been ruled by a series of ruthless dictators. François ("Papa Doc") Duvalier ruled from 1957 until his death in 1971 when his son Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") took over. Under the Duvaliers, the *Tontons Macoutes* (paramilitary secret police) murdered thousands of people for "crimes" such as criticizing the regime or joining unions or other popular organizations. For a time, the U.S. regarded Papa Doc (who was given to demagogic black nationalist outbursts) as being a bit too independent. Relations with the U.S. improved during the 1960s, particularly after the crushing of the Haitian Communist Party, and the passing of the April 1969 "Anti-Communist Law," which made "profession of communist belief, verbal or written, public or private" punishable by death (*Haiti: State Against Nation*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot).

Under Baby Doc, U.S. corporations were encouraged to take advantage of Haiti's abundant cheap labor and set up light industrial assembly plants. There was talk of Haiti becoming the Taiwan of the Caribbean. But while labor was cheap, the lack of infrastructure, rampant corruption of the regime, social instability and the vagaries of the world market combined to limit the growth of industrial production.

The chain of events leading to the current occupation began in February 1986 when Baby Doc was overthrown by an escalating wave of strikes and semi-insurrectionary mass demonstrations. General Henri Namphy, head of the National Governing Council, assumed control. Political prisoners were freed and promises were made to hold democratic elections in the near future. But the military rulers were mainly concerned with controlling and demobilizing the heterogeneous popular movement and safeguarding the social hierarchy. During the first year under Namphy, it is estimated that there were more civilians murdered by the state than during the preceding fifteen years under Baby Doc. This was seen as the inevitable, if regrettable, cost of restoring "stability" after the convulsive mass struggles that toppled the Duvalier regime.

What particularly disturbed the state authorities was the



UPI—BRETTMAN

U.S. Marines embarking for Haiti, 1915

"uprooting" (*Dechoukaj*) of the dreaded *Tontons Macoutes* by the masses. This alarmed the liberal "anti-Duvalierist" sections of the elite, who launched a massive, and successful, publicity campaign against this form of popular justice. Many of the *Macoutes* who escaped *Dechoukaj* turned up among the right-wing *attachés* (paramilitary assassins) supporting Cédras.

In January 1988 there was a presidential election won by Leslie Manigat, a Christian Democrat. Eight months later he was overthrown by a military coup led by another general, Prosper Avril. Once again there were promises of a new life, an end to state terror and Duvalierism. Once again the masses hoped that life would improve. Once again they were disappointed. In March 1990 the Haitian masses again took to the streets, and a coalition of opposition groups called for a general strike to begin on 12 March. The U.S. ambassador, Alvin P. Adams, advised Avril that his time was up. Just before the threatened general strike, Avril boarded a U.S. Airforce jet for Miami.

Aristide's Election Worries U.S.

Alarmed by the continued growth of popular organizations and their increasingly radical mood, the U.S. State Department pushed for elections as the easiest and cheapest means to stabilize the situation. The exercise was intended to put Marc Bazin, a former World Bank official who had served briefly as Baby Doc's finance minister, into the presidential palace. Bazin represented a modernizing technocratic layer in the Haitian ruling class that favored closer economic integration with the U.S. Washington poured an estimated \$36 million into Bazin's campaign and he appeared headed to an easy victory.

This prospect evaporated when the Front for Change and Democracy (FNCD—the traditional party of the liberal merchant capitalists) abruptly dumped its candidate in favor of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a prominent cleric who had survived several *Macoute* attacks. Within weeks, a million new voters registered, and the movement dubbed *Lavalas* ("the flood") was born.

Aristide's candidacy rested on an alliance between the traditional Haitian merchant bourgeoisie and the burgeoning and politically amorphous popular movements of students, peasants, urban slum dwellers, trade unionists and Catholic social activists. Aristide, a proponent of "liberation theology,"



U.S. troops patrol Port-au-Prince

"had close contacts with the traditional bourgeoisie. A few rich Haitian merchants had underwritten his education and travels as a young priest as well as his orphanage, Lafanmi Selavi."

—*NACLA Reports* (January 1994)

Aristide proposed to carry out a modest land reform and to eliminate Duvalierist corruption, cronyism and terror. Against the candidate of the State Department:

"Aristide's program called for support for Haiti's faltering national industries, a land reform to revitalize Haitian agriculture and increase self-sufficiency, stanching the hemorrhage of contraband imports through regional ports, raising the minimum wage, and overhauling the government bureaucracy."

—*Ibid.*

Aristide won an overwhelming mandate—67 percent of the votes—while the State Department's candidate, Bazin, finished a distant second with a mere 14 percent.

Aristide preaches the debilitating message that the desperately poor Haitian masses can achieve social liberation under imperialism. He promotes illusions that the U.S., France, Canada and other imperialist powers in the "world community" can be induced to act as agents of progress in Haiti. But for all Aristide's servility, the imperialists instinctively distrust any politician in such a desperately poor country who enjoys substantial popular support. They know that any expression of mass politics can quickly escape the control of the liberation theologians, liberals and reformers who initiate it.

In the few months he was in power, Aristide enacted some minor fiscal reforms, closed a few tax loopholes, removed a layer of corrupt officials and reduced Haiti's foreign debt. Under Aristide the stream of political and economic refugees fleeing the death squads was reversed and thousands of expatriates began to return.

With Aristide in power, Washington suddenly became extremely interested in "human rights" in Haiti—something that had been ignored in the past. The U.S. was particularly worried about reports of a few incidents of "class-based" retribution against wealthy Duvalierists.

American financiers, in particular Citibank and Bank of Boston, were alarmed at reports that Aristide had raised \$500 million in foreign aid without resort to the U.S. financial system. Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas,

but it has never rescheduled its foreign debt and had been a dependable source of revenue for U.S. banks. The U.S. Agency for International Development (U.S.AID) objected to Aristide's proposed price controls on basic foods and denounced his plan to raise the minimum hourly wage from 33 to 50 cents as a disastrous mistake.

The 30 September 1991 coup by Raoul Cédras is widely presumed to have been covertly supported by the U.S. The 1 November 1993 issue of the *New York Times* reported that: "Key members of the military leadership controlling Haiti and blocking the return of its elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, were paid by the Central Intelligence Agency for information from the mid-1980's at least until the 1991 coup...."

The U.S. formally condemned the coup and called for the eventual reinstatement of Aristide. Yet, within a week of Cédras's coup, as army and *attaché* gangs were engaged in the bloody extermination of Aristide's supporters, the U.S. ambassador to Haiti, Alvin Adams, produced a thick dossier on alleged human rights violations during Aristide's brief tenure. The corporate media in the U.S. obediently played this up as a big story, all but ignoring the brutal repression launched against the popular organizations that had supported the deposed president.

U.S. Embargo Starves Masses

To demonstrate its opposition to the coup, the U.S. imposed a trade embargo that explicitly *exempted* American companies with Haitian branches. In the first year of the imperialist embargo, Haitian exports to the U.S. jumped dramatically (from \$110 million in 1992 to \$160 million in 1993). Meanwhile prices for food and other consumer goods shot up, as friends of the regime seized the opportunity to engage in profiteering. It appeared that the embargo was not aimed at the Haitian military at all, but rather at grinding the impoverished workers and peasants into passively accepting whatever regime the U.S. imposes.

Under Clinton the U.S. has combined rhetorical support for Aristide with portrayals of him as an erratic, obstinate, uncooperative psychopath. The 1 November 1993 *New York Times* quoted Brian Latell, the CIA's "chief analyst for Latin America," as describing Aristide as "unstable and as having a history of mental problems." Latell considered Cédras to be one of "the most promising group of Haitian leaders to emerge since the Duvalier family dictatorship was overthrown in 1986," and claimed that during a July 1992 trip to Haiti he "saw no evidence of oppressive rule."

In order to avoid appearing unreasonable, Aristide entered into a round of "negotiations" with Cédras in June 1993 under the auspices of the UN in New York. To avoid the massive demonstrations from the expatriate Haitian community (60,000 of whom had rallied in October 1991 to denounce the coup), the meetings were held on Governor's Island in New York City harbor. The outcome of the "negotiations" had been arranged in advance by their sponsors. The military dictators got to appear on the world stage as a legitimate party in a domestic dispute. Aristide got an empty promise that he could resume his duties in late October 1993. Bill Clinton proclaimed the talks to be "an historic step forward for democracy."

On 11 October 1993, in a highly publicized media event, the U.S. frigate *Harlan County*, with hundreds of American and Canadian troops, was chased out of Port-au-Prince by a handful of *attaché* thugs waving handguns. Juan Gonzalez, a reporter for the *New York Daily News*, had learned

of the plan a day earlier at a Duvalierist meeting in Port-au-Prince *which was also attended by U.S. embassy personnel!* The lesson for Cédras and his supporters was clear:

"The leader of the paramilitary organization FRAPH, responsible for so much of the [attache] terror, said that 'My people kept wanting to run away, but I took the gamble and urged them to stay. Then the Americans pulled out! We were astonished. That was the day FRAPH was actually born. Before, everyone said we were crazy, suicidal, that we would all be burned if Aristide returned. But now we know he is never going to return.'"

—*Z Magazine*, July 1994

Over 4000 individuals associated with the popular movements have been murdered under the Cédras regime, while many thousands more have been driven underground or into exile. The attempt to destroy the organizations of the poor, extensively documented by Americas Watch, a hemispheric human rights organization, was not born of a completely irrational bloodlust on the part of Cédras. The popular movements in Haiti were perceived as a potential danger to the whole structure of neo-colonialism in the region. Noam Chomsky's quotes Americas Watch in drawing the conclusion that:

"The terror is functional: it ensures that even if Aristide is permitted to return, 'he would have difficulty transforming his personal popularity into the organized support needed to exert civilian authority'..."

—*Ibid.*

This explains the apparent contradiction of U.S. policy after the coup. While officially denouncing Cédras, the White House (under both Bush and Clinton) was in no hurry to oust him. Instead U.S. policy combined democratic posturing with attempts to reconcile the two "extremes" represented by Cédras' naked state terrorism and Aristide's toothless reformism. If Aristide made enough "compromises" to demobilize the popular movements, then perhaps Cédras would relent and a "political settlement" could be reached.

U.S. Hands Off Haiti!

A few months ago Washington was glossing over reports of the crimes of the junta:

"In April, a cablegram signed by William L. Swing, the American Ambassador in Haiti, and sent to [U.S. Secretary of State Warren] Christopher asserted that Father Aristide and his supporters were exaggerating and even fabricating reports of human rights abuses."

—*New York Times*, 13 September

In the months that followed the U.S. position gradually hardened, and by August the White House began to take a more belligerent stance. Preparations went ahead for landing some 20,000 American troops (with a few token contingents from various Caribbean dependencies and other vassals). For months the press has been full of accounts of how the Cédras regime was murdering orphans, raping young girls and starving infants. This was accompanied with absurd and crudely racist claims that the exodus of a few thousand Haitian boat people posed a vital "security risk" to the U.S. But the American population has shown little enthusiasm for intervention in Haiti. At the same time, Congressional Republicans complained that Clinton is timing his gunboat diplomacy with an eye to giving the Democrats a boost in the November polls.

Cédras is a repulsive murderer, but he is a minor player who has served his masters well. The plebeian movements have been beheaded. Aristide's room for maneuver has



MAGGIE STERBER

Duvalierist thugs demonstrate against Aristide

been reduced, and he has promised to leave the presidency after a year. His craven pleas to the "international community" (i.e., the big capitalist powers) to take "some action" against Cédras have provided a cover for imperialist occupation.

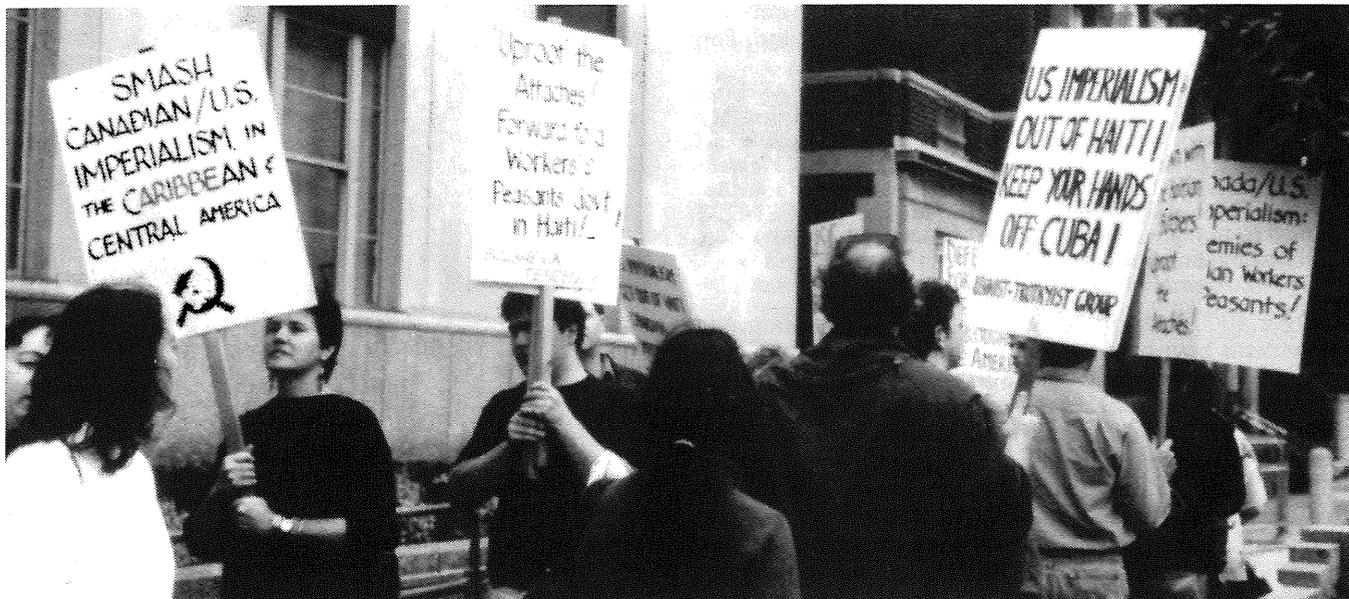
The arrogance and cynicism of the American ruling class, prating about its "humanitarian" mission, is matched by the credulity and muddleheadedness of much of the self-styled "solidarity" milieu. Most of the Haitian left (like the left internationally) recognized that the Duvaliers and their successors were creatures of the imperialist world system. And yet the illusions persisted that somehow the U.S. (with its Canadian junior partner staying a half-step behind, as befits an "impartial" mediator) could somehow be pressured or maneuvered into playing a "progressive" role in Haiti. The *only* reason for any U.S. intervention is to preserve the neo-colonial social order that has condemned the masses of Haitians to lives of desperate poverty, hunger and misery.

Aristide is returning as a figurehead for an American occupation. He will be recorded in history as a traitor to the Haitian nation. He will deliver nothing to the millions of desperately poor Haitians who put their faith in him because his reformist program amounts to guaranteeing the interests of the wealthy elite and their imperialist partners.

Haiti and the Permanent Revolution

The Haitian ruling class knows that the exercise of democratic rights (freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to organize unions and to strike) by the masses would pose an immediate threat to their power and property. This is why in countries like Haiti, any serious struggle for democratic reforms tends to very quickly pose the question of political power, i.e., social revolution.

In quasi-colonial countries such as Haiti, the working class may be small in numbers, but its political role is pivotal. It is the only social force with both the internal cohesion and material interest to lead a successful struggle to



1917 PHOTO

United-front demo in Toronto, 24 September 1994, called for 'U.S. Out of Haiti!' and 'Canada: Hands off Haiti!' Endorsers included Bolshevik Tendency, Canada-Cuba Friendship Committee, Labour Militant, Leninist-Trotskyist Group and Socialist Action. The Trotskyist League (Canadian satellite of U.S. Spartacist League) refused to endorse.

overturn capitalist property and sever the connection to imperialism. Even in countries like Haiti, where the working class is tiny and dispersed, it can still act as the leader of the dispossessed of the country. In the struggles against both Namphy and Avril, strikes by teachers, civil servants, taxi and truck drivers, power workers and employees in the state-run factories and flour mills played an important part in the massive popular upsurge that toppled those regimes.

To make even minimal social gains, the Haitian masses must be prepared to expropriate the foreign multinationals (as well as their Haitian dependents), smash the exploiters' state, and establish armed bodies of workers and the oppressed. A successful seizure of power by a Haitian workers' and peasants' government could provide a powerful impetus for revolutionary struggle by workers in the neighboring Dominican Republic and ignite the entire Caribbean basin.

A revolutionary upsurge in the region would open new prospects for the Cuban Revolution, which the imperialists are attempting to strangle. In Clinton's 15 September televised speech announcing the occupation of Haiti, he explicitly denounced Cuba as the other blemish on "democracy" in the Western Hemisphere, ominously signaling that the intervention against Haiti can open the door to a military assault on the Cuban deformed workers' state. The Cuban Revolution, deformed though it is by the Stalinist regime headed by Fidel Castro, represents an important gain for the working people of the world—and one that must be fiercely defended against the counterrevolutionary intrigues of imperialism.

A revolutionary upsurge in Haiti would find a powerful echo throughout Latin America. It would also electrify the 300,000 largely working-class Haitian exiles concentrated in several important urban centers in North America (New York, Miami and Montreal). A breakthrough in Haiti would have an immense impact on the consciousness of millions of black proletarians in the U.S. and radically transform the political landscape.

The key to social revolution in Haiti is the forging of a Leninist party rooted in the Haitian masses, particularly the

working class, armed with a political program (the program of the Permanent Revolution first articulated by the great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky) which links the democratic struggles to the necessity of expropriating the capitalist exploiters and establishing a workers' and peasants' government.

Workers of the World Unite!

The capitalists recognize that they have common interests across national boundaries. In recent years the transnational corporations have increasingly pitted workers against each other internationally by shifting production from one area of the globe to another in deliberate, and often successful, attempts to ratchet down wages and living conditions. The result is that the standard of living for North American workers has been dropping for twenty years. Juliet Schor, in *The Overworked American* (1991), writes that "to reach their 1973 standard of living" production workers "must work 245 more hours, or 6-plus extra weeks a year."

Today, more than ever before, working people are compelled to see themselves as participants in a global, rather than a regional or national, economy. The corollary of this reality is that the victories and defeats of working people and their allies in any area of the world affects those in every other area. International solidarity is not some empty idealistic notion, it is an urgent necessity for the working class today. North American workers have a direct material interest in defeating our "own" rulers' gunboat diplomacy in Haiti, just as we have a vital interest in defending the Cuban Revolution (the main target of imperialism in the Caribbean).

- **Down With Gunboat Diplomacy! Down with U.S. Occupation of Haiti! Defend the Cuban Revolution!**
- **Down With Duvalierism—Break with Aristide!**
- **Forward to a Haitian Workers' and Peasants' Government in a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean!**

Ernest Mandel vs. the Spartacist League: A Dismal Symmetry

Reprinted below is the text of a leaflet distributed at the 11 November 1994 debate in New York City between Ernest Mandel of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) and Joseph Seymour of the Spartacist League/U.S. (SL). The event drew 400 people, a fair size for a left meeting in New York these days, but it nonetheless proved a disappointment for almost everyone in attendance.

Comrade Mandel appeared tired and in poor physical health. His demeanor suggested that he was participating under protest. His rambling presentation was short on program, but full of generalities about the international class struggle and the necessity to wield mass influence if one aspires to change history. He floated the notion that the current global situation was one of deadlock in which neither the working class nor the bourgeoisie is able to deliver decisive blows. Several speakers from the floor pointed out that this dovetails neatly with the USec's ongoing dissolution into the social-democratic/broad-left swamp. One of the few direct polemical attacks that Mandel made against the SL was the ludicrous assertion that defending the right of the Soviet Union to possess nuclear weapons was somehow equivalent to advocating nuclear war.

Comrade Seymour responded with a litany of the USec's liquidations, adaptations, hallucinations and betrayals. Where Mandel's presentation had been padded with vague allusions to history, Seymour's manner, normally analytical and persuasive, had a somewhat strident and declamatory character. At several points he invoked the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht by the German social democrats, suggesting a parallel with Mandel's adaptation to the counterrevolution in East Europe. It seemed odd that the SL's leading intellectual hardly addressed the objectivist political methodology that underlies the long series of liquidationist adaptations that constitute Mandel's political history. It was almost as if he wanted to show that he wasn't one of the cliquish petty-bourgeois literary types currently under attack in the SL's public press.

The USec supporters who spoke during the discussion period seemed tired, disorganized and depressed. Many of them were old-timers who seemed uninterested, or unable to defend their international tendency's political record. Steve Bloom, a leading Mandel supporter in New York, asserted that the USec's long chronicle of failed opportunist maneuvers and political zigzags was evidence of political health. The one charge levelled by the USec supporters that Seymour could not handle—because it is true—was the observation that the SL is only willing to participate in joint activities (united fronts) with other leftist groups when it has organizational control.

If the USec speakers were pathetic, the SLers were merely unimpressive. But that was bad enough, as the long-anticipated debate with the Karl Kautsky of the late twentieth century had been the focus of considerable internal preparation. This was the SL's opportunity to reinvent itself as the healthy, dynamic and re-politicized organization advocated in the pages of the current issue of *Spartacist*. But this was hardly the impression conveyed by most of the SL speakers. Their interventions had a pre-packaged quality and their expressions of emotion seemed forced. The long

years of playing "we are the party" in small rooms full of the converted have evidently not done much to sharpen their political skills.

The meeting descended into near chaos during the summaries when Mandel, piqued by the indictments of his opponent, began a prolonged interruption. Seymour shouted at him to "shut up" but Mandel continued to babble and suggested that the SL might want to send up a few goons to remove him from the stage. Several individuals in the audience began heckling and a particularly persistent one was removed by SL marshals.

We were pleased that two of our comrades had the opportunity to speak and expose the pseudo-Trotskyists on the platform for their responses to the triumph of counter-revolution in the Soviet bloc. But overall the event had a rather degenerate quality. Mandel, once characterized by the SL as possessed of an "agile mind" and "impressive erudition," presented a sad spectacle. But in the end, the SL could do no better than emerge as sore winners.

It is something of a puzzle as to why Ernest Mandel has chosen to debate the Spartacist League at a time when his entire political outlook has proved bankrupt. For more than forty years the leading theoretician of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) has attempted to tailor Trotskyism to fit various non-proletarian forces, ranging from maverick Stalinists like Tito, Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara, to outright reactionaries such as the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalists and Poland's openly pro-capitalist Solidarnosc.

In the past period the USec has allowed itself to be blown with the prevailing political winds: far to the right. This opportunism was carried to the most revolting extremes when a USec affiliate in Australia formed a political alliance with the expatriate representatives of the Croatian Ustashi, an organization that exceeded even the Nazis in its brutality against Jews in German-dominated Yugoslavia during World War II. Equally appalling was a September 1989 article in the USec's leading English language magazine, *International Viewpoint*, endorsing a call for the rehabilitation of the Estonian "Forest Brothers," a band of World War II Nazi collaborators. And, in August of 1991, when Boris Yeltsin, and the pro-capitalist forces he led, delivered the death blow to the Soviet workers' state, Ernest Mandel and his comrades were to be found, in spirit if not in the flesh, on the barricades of the counterrevolution. Tariq Ali, a former British USec leader turned cynical careerist, captured his former mentor's shameless opportunism perfectly in his satirical novel, *Redemption* when the main character, obviously modeled on Mandel, hatches a grand scheme for "deep entry" into the world's major churches in an attempt to capitalize on the global resurgence of religion!

How does anyone claiming to be a Marxist end up in the company of mullahs, anti-Semites and open counterrevolutionaries? The motivation is an overweening desire not to be unpopular. Comrade Mandel hopes to avoid the isolation real revolutionaries must often face by adapting politically to the "mass movements" of the moment, regardless of their political character. The ideological rationale is that

such movements are guided by some hidden hand of history, some unconscious "process" or "dynamic" that must inexorably steer them in a revolutionary direction despite the reformist, or even reactionary, intentions of their leaders. The necessity for Marxists to fight for leadership on the basis of their own program—Lenin's whole conception of the vanguard party—is thus thrown out the window.

In the 1960s and 70s, as the USec was seeking to trim Trotskyism to the latest political fashions, Mandel's opponent in tonight's debate, the then-revolutionary Spartacist League (SL), consistently opposed his opportunism from a revolutionary Marxist standpoint. To Mandel's kowtowing to Third World peasant-based guerrilla movements, the SL counterposed the Marxist program of *proletarian* revolution. When the USec was trying to worm its way into the good graces of the Sandinistas, the SL argued that the class-collaborationist policies of the Nicaraguan regime would lead to disaster. As the USec, along with the rest of the ostensibly revolutionary left, was hailing Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution," the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) stood virtually alone, insisting that the triumph of Islamic fundamentalism represented no progress over the bloody rule of the Shah. In 1981, while the USec was singing the praises of Solidarnosc, the iSt branded Lech Walesa a clerical reactionary, and denounced Solidarnosc as an imperialist-backed vehicle for capitalist restoration.

On all these points of contention history has now rendered an unambiguous verdict. The New Left infatuation with Third World guerrillas has become a memory, along with the New Left and most guerrilla movements themselves. The Nicaraguan masses have discovered that the "third road" between capitalism and socialism is a dead end. Khomeini's victory in Iran did not produce a mass radicalization, but rather the theocratic dictatorship—drenched in the blood of thousands of leftists—that rules in Teheran today. And Lech Walesa heads a fledgling capitalist state being built on the backs of the Polish workers.

Throughout the years when he was bowing to Khomeini and sidling up to Walesa, Mandel dismissed the SL and other left critics as irrelevant ultra-left sectarians. Now, after events have definitively falsified his every perspective, and with his organization in an advanced state of disintegration, he suddenly chooses to debate. Mandel can only be unaware of his disadvantage if he is oblivious to the lessons of history. Despite his prodigious erudition and literary output, theory is not for him a means for comprehending reality and guiding revolutionary action, but an ideological gloss for the USec's latest get-rich-quick scheme. When one such scheme fails, he blithely proceeds to next one, and hopes that no one will remember what he had said a few years or even a few months earlier.

Robertson's Spartacist League: No Alternative to Mandel's USec

The International Bolshevik Tendency stands on the record of the revolutionary Spartacist League of the 1960s and 70s. Unfortunately, the Spartacist League has since undergone a profound political degeneration, and can no longer provide a consistently revolutionary alternative to Mandel's opportunism.

The decline of the SL began in the late 1970's, when the wave of student radicalism that permitted the Spartacist League to grow significantly had clearly ebbed, and James Robertson, the group's founder/leader gradually moved to consolidate his absolute and despotic personal control. The

mechanism for this was a series of destructive and largely apolitical purges, which targeted cadres who exhibited any significant degree of political independence or critical capacity.

The result is the Spartacist League of today: an involved and depoliticized obedience cult centered on James Robertson. The External Tendency, precursor of the Bolshevik Tendency, was founded in 1982 by former iSt members who had been driven out during the purges. In 1990, the Bolshevik Tendency fused with the Gruppe IV. Internationale of Germany and the Permanent Revolution Group of New Zealand to launch the International Bolshevik Tendency. These three groups, all founded by former iSt cadres, shared a commitment to carry forward the struggle for Trotskyism that the SL had abandoned. They also shared a recognition that no organization, however formally "correct" its paper program, can ever lead the working class to power if its members are taught—as the Robertsonites are taught by their leaders every day—that blind obedience is the highest virtue of revolutionaries.

The SL leadership has responded to our critique of their internal regime by suggesting that those who dare expose the unpleasant truth about life in Robertson's group are doing the work of either the FBI or the Mossad (Israeli secret police). We therefore note with interest that the SL's latest Perspectives and Tasks document, reprinted as the Autumn 1994 issue of *Spartacist*, contains an organizational self-appraisal that echoes many of the criticisms we have leveled at them over the years.

The document laments the group's lack of connection to the trade unions. It bemoans the membership's "overly passive and propagandist (at best) or abstentionist (at worst) posture in some of the big battles for abortion rights," and concedes that "our skills at effectively combating our opponents have become blunted." On the international front, the document complains that "we do not yet have any cohesive party collective outside the United States," and that the overseas sections that constitute the International Communist League (ICL) are little more than "Potemkin villages" which often have been unable to grapple politically with what is going on in their own countries." The organization's New York center (which, according to the document, is full of "office-bound" routinists) is apparently also dysfunctional, and lacks a "cohesive, effective Political Bureau and I.S. bodies to lead the work in the SL/U.S. and internationally."

What Went Wrong?

This unflattering self-portrait undoubtedly reflects the thinking of James Robertson, who, from his vantage point of semi-retirement in the Bay Area, can look upon the organization he has built with greater detachment. He is obviously not pleased with what he sees. But, precisely because the Spartacist League is his own creature, Robertson cannot provide a plausible explanation of what went wrong. The document attributes the SL's sorry state to the current reactionary political times. And it would be foolish to deny that the Reagan/Bush years, the collapse of Stalinism, the decline of industry, the capitalist offensive against the working class, the deterioration of the educational system and the resulting depoliticizing and a-historicizing of a whole generation, would create severe difficulties for any revolutionary organization. But this is only half the story.

The other half—the half that Robertson and his syc-

phants and captive intellectuals cannot acknowledge—consists in the role that they themselves played in bringing the group to its present pass. The SL did in fact lose some of its trade-union supporters to layoffs and factory closings. Others got tired and quit. But there were other trade unionists (including Detroit autoworkers, and prominent long-shore militants) who were victims of irrational purging campaigns. In the early 1980s, the SL leadership turned away from union work and ripped up an important base in the communications industry, where an SL-supported caucus was recognized as the national opposition to the bureaucracy. These acts of political cannibalism had nothing to do with de-industrialization. They were driven by Robertson's frustration with the time-consuming and difficult nature of revolutionary trade-union work, coupled with his paranoid fear that trade unionists who acquired their own base among workers might some day end up leading a factional opposition inside the SL.

The trade unionists were not the only ones to get the chop. At about the same time, the organization was suddenly discovered to be full of shits, pigs, thieves, sexual manipulators, crypto-racists, renegades on the Russian question, and at least one proto-fascist. The layer of talented youth who put out *Young Spartacus* were forced out in the so-called clone purge of 1978. The following year, Bill Logan, former head of the Australian and British sections, was framed and expelled at the group's first international conference as a "sociopath." Less spectacular purges followed throughout the early 1980s in almost every section of the SL.

The Shadow of the Succession Struggle

Is it any wonder, after having thus divested themselves of some of their most creative and political elements, that the SL is now full of time servers, with limited ability to intervene in the left? Can there be any mystery as to why the New York center, which had long been trained in unconditional obedience to a single individual, should cease to function effectively when that same individual retires to California? The current difficulties of the center presage the chaotic power struggle that will erupt when Number One is no longer around to settle all disputes by personal fiat.

The first rumblings can be heard in the Perspectives and Tasks document, which asserts that the succession problem can be solved provided the group does "not shy away from fights." In Spart-speak, a "fight" is a regime-initiated trashing of a particular individual or grouping. The current targets seem to be the leading members of the editorial board of *Workers Vanguard*, who are chastised as "furiously defensive, turf-conscious, hyper-sensitive, arrogant, cliquish [and] anti-Leninist." The members of the WV collective, who have slavishly endured such abuse for years, may be missing a few vertebrae, but they constitute the brightest and most political element in the group, and are therefore the most logical candidates for future leadership. The fact that Robertson is now publicly attacking the ed board indicates that he is determined not to relax his personal grip on the SL, even if he has ceased to run it directly.

For 25 years Robertson's group had no factions and no tendencies. This rather embarrassing record was broken this year when two senior members in Toronto proclaimed a (generally rightist) political opposition within the ICL. Polemics with the dissidents (who have since founded the Leninist Trotskyist Group) provided an opportunity for Robertson to try to oxygenate his ranks, while also giving



SICHOV—SIPA

Tanks in Moscow during the August 1991 coup

proof of the ICL's richly democratic internal life. The oppositionists drew different conclusions. They report that the leadership instructed the membership not to speak to them outside formal political meetings, and noted how on all disputed questions, "the whole of the leadership acquiesced immediately to Robertson's whimsy." They concluded that in the ICL, "reality is what the super leader believes it to be at a given moment."

Politics and the Regime Question

The moribund organization that Robertson bemoans was shaped with his own bureaucratic hatchet. He may regret what the SL has become, but the leadership's commandist style and the instant submission demanded of the ranks are now too deeply ingrained to change fundamentally. Over the years we have met many people in and around the Spartacist League who argue that the character of the internal regime doesn't matter so long as its political line remains essentially correct. To this we replied that an organization without a democratic internal life lacks the capacity to correct the errors of its leader, and must inevitably go off the rails politically.

The first confirmations of our prognosis came in a series of rightist departures from the SL's Trotskyist past. In 1981, SL contingents appeared in the Central American solidarity demonstrations waving the flag of the Salvadoran FMLN, the military wing of the popular front. In 1983, when a U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut was demolished by an Islamic fundamentalist truck bomb—an act which any Trotskyist organization worthy of the name would regard as a justified blow against the imperialist invaders—the SL responded with the mealy-mouthed, social-patriotic call for "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!" This was followed in 1984 by an absurd offer to defend the Democratic Convention taking place that summer in San Francisco from the imaginary danger of a fascist/Reaganite attack. And in 1986, when the space shuttle Challenger, loaded with anti-Soviet espionage devices and U.S. military personnel, self-destructed, the SL decried its fate as "tragic."

Why this sudden solicitude for imperialist troops and

capitalist political parties? The answer is that Robertson's organization had acquired some substantial material assets, and he was enjoying a comfortable lifestyle at his members' expense. He worried that some eager Reaganite prosecutor might be looking for a domestic surrogate for the "Evil Empire." Thus it was necessary to signal that the SL were not the fire-breathing revolutionaries they sometimes sounded like in the pages of *Workers Vanguard*.

The SL's central cadre were generally prepared to overlook these "minor" departures from Leninism, but they cannot ignore the demonstrated political incapacity of the infallible leader's response to the protracted crisis and eventual collapse of the Soviet bloc. For a group which long considered itself to possess special competence and "uniquely correct" insights on the Russian question, this had particular significance. With the onset of the second cold war, the SL leadership began to exhibit clearly Stalinophilic behavior—that is, to identify politically with certain factions and personalities within the Stalinist bureaucracy. An early example was the 1980 call to "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" rather than simply calling for its military victory, as the SL had for the Viet Cong in the 1960s. In 1982 an SL contingent in an anti-Klan demonstration was dubbed the "Yuri Andropov Brigade," after Brezhnev's recently appointed successor. This became the subject of a series of polemics between ourselves and the SL leadership in which the latter's Stalinophilic tilt was clearly revealed. When Andropov died in 1984 WV ran a laudatory *in memoriam* box for him on the front page.

In 1989, when the DDR (East German) regime entered its terminal crisis, the Spartacist League and its overseas branches made an extraordinary investment of cash and personnel in an attempt to influence the outcome. The intervention was based on two premises: first, that a proletarian political revolution was actually underway, and, second, that a wing of the bureaucracy would break to the left and resist capitalist reunification. This self-delusion reached absurd heights when Robertson traveled to Berlin and tried to arrange an audience with Markus Wolf (DDR

master-spy), Gregor Gysi (head of the DDR's ruling party) and/or Soviet military commander General B.V. Snetkov. But instead of availing themselves of Robertson's advice on how to oppose capitalist restoration, the ruling Stalinist apparatus collaborated in liquidating the workers' state. Eventually, when reality could no longer be denied, the ICL cadres were plunged into profound confusion and demoralization—from which they have not recovered to this day.

Getting Russia Wrong

This disorientation prevented the SL from responding in a principled fashion when the Stalinists actually did attempt to hold the line against counterrevolution—in Moscow in August 1991. In the confrontation between the open partisans of capitalism gathered around Boris Yeltsin, and the sclerotic Stalinist "hardliners" attempting to preserve the status quo, the SL took no side. For this abject failure they give several thoroughly unconvincing rationalizations: first, that the coup leaders and the followers of Yeltsin were equally dedicated to capitalist restoration, which even the SL does not really believe; second, that the coupists never tried to move against Yeltsin, which is not true; and third, that they made no attempt to mobilize the working class, which is true but irrelevant—Trotskyists have never demanded that the Stalinists mobilize the working class as a condition for supporting them militarily against counter-revolutionaries.

Throughout the 1980s, and especially in its intervention in the DDR, the SL leadership began to look to sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy to oppose the imperialists and defend the workers' states. When the East German Stalinists failed to do so, the Robertsonites were bitterly disappointed that the bureaucrats had proved unworthy of their high hopes, and refused to side with the wing of the Soviet Stalinists that did eventually attempt to resist, however inadequately. This kind of political zigzagging is typical of centrists. By contrast, we criticized the SL for its affinity for Yuri Andropov and its illusions in the DDR Stalinists, but also sided with the coup leaders against Yeltsin in 1991. We

A Modest Proposal

The 25 November 1994 *Workers Vanguard* (WV) report on the Spartacist League's (SL) debate with Ernest Mandel was accompanied by a short item entitled "Origins and Honesty," responding to our leaflet. We appreciate the attention, but feel obliged, at the risk of sounding ungrateful, to note that the polemic was not honest regarding the origins of the differences between the SL and ourselves. The SL reproaches our cadres with never having argued our differences while in their organization. In fact, it is virtually impossible to conduct meaningful arguments or discussions in a group whose leaders spend a good deal of their time attempting to sniff out and eliminate *potential* critics, not to mention actual ones. In "Jimstown," the right to form factions is little more than a juridical fiction.

The WV polemic charges us with withholding material pertinent to our history because we fear exposure as "a pusillanimous bunch of quitters." In fact we sell the 1982 "Declaration of an external tendency of the iSt," as well as every issue of the *Bulletin of the ET*, the *Trotskyist Bulletin* series and, of course, 1917. In these we have described the course of the degeneration of the once-revolutionary SL. But most of the record of the purges and witchhunts that

drove out so many cadres exists only in the form of audio tapes in the SL's archives. We have long advocated that the SL "play the tapes" for interested members of the left and workers' movement who wish to determine for themselves who is telling the truth. But the SL leadership has, in its wisdom, consistently declined.

Another proposal that the SL leaders have repeatedly turned down is for a public (or even a private) debate to air our political differences. The sole exception to this policy occurred in March 1994, when two members of the Australian Spartacist League visiting Wellington, New Zealand decided on the spot to debate us. This was apparently viewed as a grievous mistake by the SL's New York headquarters which maintains a strict policy of flatly refusing to debate with the International Bolshevik Tendency. What makes this particularly odd is that for years the SL press has published a far greater number of polemics against us than any other opponent. Yet we are the only left group the SL refuses to debate.

Which brings us to our ever-so-modest proposal: comrades of the Spartacist League, have the political courage to follow comrade Mandel's example—*let's have a debate!*

saw the Stalinists as being neither more nor less than what they were.

Since Yanayev's aborted Moscow coup, SL attempts to redeem their failure have only succeeded in entangling them even more hopelessly in a web of self-contradiction. They argue that, although they did not take a side in the coup attempt, they were not neutral. But if, as they also claim, both sides were equally intent on restoring capitalism, what was wrong with being neutral? They claim that they would have supported the coup leaders militarily if the latter had mobilized the Soviet working class to crush Yeltsin. But if the coup leaders were also restorationists, why should we want to see the workers take their side? On the other hand, if the coup leaders were resisting restoration, was it not the duty of Trotskyists to defend them regardless of whether or not they called out the workers? The Spartacist League can answer none of these questions.

Nor can they say exactly when the former USSR ceased to be a workers' state. For well over a year the SL downplayed the significance of the coup in order to minimize the importance of their failure to take a side in it. SLers continued to insist that, despite Yeltsin's victory, nothing fundamental had changed in the USSR. Then, out of the blue, they announced that the Soviet workers' state was no more. But no word on when, why or how. They simply say that, however the transformation came to pass, it did not take place in August 1991, and confine themselves to vague mutterings about Russia gradually transforming itself into a capitalist state sometime after 1991 as a result of the lack of working-class resistance to Yeltsin.

These errors were compounded last year, when, after first correctly describing the October 1993 shoot-out between Yeltsin and Rutskoi as a "squabble between corrupt and cynical factions" of the counterrevolution, and noting that "Rutskoi/Khasbulatov and the fascist-infested 'red-brown' coalition that supported them are no less hostile to the working class than is Yeltsin" (WV, 8 October 1993), Robertson reversed the position, and *Workers Vanguard* announced without any explanation that they should have sided with Rutskoi/Khasbulatov against Yeltsin. Thus the SL, which refused to support the Stalinists militarily against the capitalist restorationists when the survival of the Soviet Union was at stake, ended up taking sides when the counterrevolutionaries fell out among themselves two years later.

The Spartacist League now finds itself in a state of complete confusion regarding the single question that more than any other had defined it as a tendency—the Russian question. This is not simply a case of faulty analysis. The adaptation to Stalinism in the early 1980s, like the social-patriotic deviations, could easily have been reversed in a healthy, democratic-centralist group. Even the misestimate of the situation in the DDR, or the failure to grasp the significance of the August 1991 events, do not in themselves constitute betrayals. Honest revolutionaries can make mistakes. The SL, however, lacks the capacity for correcting these mistakes that only a democratic internal life can provide. It is the doctrine of Robertsonian infallibility, and the adamant refusal to acknowledge that an opponent could be right where it was wrong, that drives the SL to persist in and compound its original errors, to play havoc with reality in the process, and finally to descend gradually into incoherence.

In the SL we have a living illustration of why the question of a group's internal regime cannot be divorced from its politics. Any leader whose authority cannot be ques-

tioned must inevitably come to regard the group's program as synonymous with the preservation of his own personal authority. The reverse side of this coin is that the leader's mistakes become incorporated in the program. Error feeds upon error, until the organization ends up in a very different political place from the one in which it began. James Robertson, by destroying any semblance of internal democratic life in the SL and reducing those below him to silence on all important questions, long ago took the first irrevocable steps on the road to political oblivion.

Red Ain't Dead!

The protagonists in tonight's debate display a certain dismal symmetry. They illustrate two of the most common pitfalls for revolutionary organizations in periods when the workers' movement is in retreat: the tendency to opportunist adaptation on the one hand, and, on the other, the tendency to turn inward and become a lifeless, deracinated leader cult. Yet such degenerations are not inevitable. The party that led the world's only successful proletarian revolution was neither an opportunist swamp nor a bureaucratic cult of personality. The Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, based upon the working class, succeeded in drawing to itself the most advanced revolutionary elements of its own society, and combining a rich internal democratic life with the capacity for unified and decisive action. We take this party as our model. There can be no guarantees in revolutionary politics, but two things are certain: first, that the only answer to the deepening political and economic disarray of the international capitalist order is workers' revolution; second, that without a Leninist party such a revolution will never see victory. In this, the epoch of wars and revolutions, the future of humanity hinges on the question of proletarian leadership.

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terminated assault of 3,000 workers, who stormed the gates and seized control of the massive shipyard. A thousand shipbuilders immediately commandeered a multi-million dollar natural gas supertanker and the heavy cranes in the yard, and stockpiled food and implements for self-defense. Although police boats surrounded the occupied supertanker, Hyundai management understood that an all-out assault on the yard would mean substantial property damage, and so instructed the government not to risk an attack. After 61 days, the company finally blinked and offered an 11 percent wage increase (plus bonuses), and dropped all charges against 41 union leaders.

Kim Young Sam's Response: Anti-Communist Witchhunt

For all its democratic pretenses, President Kim Young Sam's civilian administration reacted to the recent struggles of the workers, farmers and students much as its military predecessors did in the past. Seizing on the ravings of Park Hong, a deranged Jesuit priest, the government attributed the wave of social unrest to a handful of conspirators directed by North Korea. This absurd allegation in turn provided justification for invoking the draconian National Security Law (NSL) which was introduced by the dictatorship of Syngman Rhee in December 1948 to criminalize dissent. When Kim Young Sam was a bourgeois opponent of the military, he used to call for abolishing the NSL. Today he finds it well suited to his purposes.

The South Korean government used the death of North Korea's "Great Leader," Kim Il Sung, to launch a witchhunt against the left. Declaring Kim Il Sung a "war criminal," the regime invoked the NSL to declare illegal all expressions of remorse at his passing. Riot police were dispatched to campuses around the country to arrest students who allegedly set up mourning shrines to burn incense in honor of Kim Il Sung. Scores of students were detained, interrogated and charged with various offenses. One law student, Kim Song Ok, was charged under the NSL. If convicted, he could face the death penalty.

The Prosecutor General's Office also announced that nine university professors were under investigation for violations of the NSL. Their "crime" was collaborating on a textbook entitled *How to Understand Korean Society*, which was supposedly aimed at "instigating class struggle and violent revolution" (*Korea Times*, 4 August 1994). The police immediately pulled the offending tome off bookstore shelves, and the professors were summoned to the prosecutor's office to discuss the "ideological problems of the book." It is clear that this whole "investigation" is intended to intimidate the academic community—the book had been approved by the state censor's office four years earlier! The professors involved courageously refused to answer the summons served on them.

Park Hong's deluded allegations helped propel a wave of anti-communist hysteria, but he went too far when he implicated the bourgeois Democratic Party, which had supported the crackdown on *Jusapa* and other leftist students. Democratic Party leaders denounced Park Hong for suggesting they were connected to *Jusapa*, and demanded that he back up his charges. When the government asked Park

to provide evidence, he claimed to have obtained his information from activists in the confessional "and refused to identify them, citing his duty as a priest" (*Korea Times*, 23 August 1994). Park's fellow priests were not impressed with his behavior and released a statement saying that his "allegations are utterances from wild fantasies" (*Korea Times*, 22 July 1994).

Kim Young Sam may have been popularly elected, but democratic rights in South Korea are highly circumscribed, particularly for the workers' movement and the left. The president's election promises of political freedom, and his pledge to break the power of monopolistic business conglomerates (known as the *chaebol*), have been scrapped. Workers are not even allowed to organize independent unions, let alone build a party to represent their interests. The military officers responsible for the May 1980 massacre of over 2,000 citizens in Kwangju (participants in a popular uprising against Chun Doo Hwan's coup d'état) remain free, while leftist prisoners of the old regime, including 36 members of the *Sanomaeng* (Socialist Workers League) languish behind bars. In October 1994 the government extended its reactionary crackdown against the workers' movement by rounding up Choi Il Bung and dozens of other members of the International Socialists (see accompanying article, page 20). None of this is accidental. Political repression of the working class is absolutely central to the Korean "economic miracle."

Roots of the 'Economic Miracle'

Before the end of World War II Korea was a predominantly agricultural society, dominated by Japanese imperialism. The history of modern Korea begins in 1945 with the American victory over Japan. It soon became clear that Korea was on the front line in the war to contain "communism." Situated between Japan and the Sino-Soviet bloc, the Korean peninsula was of great strategic importance for American imperialism.

Korea emerged from Japanese occupation with an extremely weak and discredited ruling class. When Japan annexed Korea in 1910, the traditional *Yangban* landlord class had been displaced or co-opted by the Japanese, while the industries constructed were largely Japanese-owned. With the collapse of Japanese colonialism, Korean peasants and workers immediately organized "people's committees," which began to carry out land reform at the expense of the *Yangban* collaborators. Simultaneously, Korean workers affiliated with the *Chon Pyong* (National Korean Labor Council), led by the Communist Party, began to take over the abandoned factories. For a short period in 1945 the bulk of industry was actually run by workers.

After its surrender, the Japanese army handed over control to the representatives of the people's committees, led by Yo Un Hyong. When the U.S. Army arrived at Inchon Bay on 8 September 1945, the people's committees sent a delegation. The American military commander, General John R. Hodge, refused even to meet them, and proceeded to set up the American Military Government in Korea which immediately moved to suppress the *Chon Pyong* and the people's committees. In consolidating power the American authorities used military force to crush a general strike by the *Chon Pyong* in 1946, and to suppress the Yosun mutiny in the Korean Army and the rebellion on Cheju Island.

The Americans assembled a state apparatus in the southern half of the peninsula out of the remains of the



Pusan hospital workers protest oppressive labor laws

Japanese colonial government. These collaborators, mainly coming from the *Yangban* class, coalesced to form the Korean Democratic Party, under the corrupt leadership of Syngman Rhee. The American military, in an attempt to undercut the bitter resentment felt by the Korean masses toward the former Japanese, and now American, puppet administrators, introduced a very limited land reform, allowing each peasant family about one hectare of land. Only 38 per cent of the territory seized from the Japanese was distributed in this way; the rest was sold on the market. In return, peasants had to give the government 30 per cent of all their crops for five years, while the traditional *Yangban* elite was generously compensated with lucrative government posts and control over the factories left over from the colonial period.

Over the years the U.S. invested heavily in turning South Korea into a viable bulwark against "communism" in Northeast Asia. Between 1945 and 1976, South Korea received \$5.7 billion in economic and \$6.8 billion in military aid which helped establish a formidable modern army of 600,000 men with a U.S.-trained officer corps.

In 1960 a massive student uprising overturned the corrupt Rhee regime, and supported an unstable liberal government. This ended in 1961, when a military coup d'état crushed the popular student movement, ushering in a dictatorship headed by General Park Chung Hee. This coup proved a turning point for South Korean capitalism. The new leadership represented young nationalist military officers with few loyalties to the traditional Korean elite and with ambitions to turn South Korea into a major economic power. This gave the modernizing military regime a relatively free hand. Park Chung Hee established the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA, renamed the Agency for National Security Planning under Chun Doo Hwan in 1980) which aimed to create an all-embracing corporatist state: local governments were brought under central control, banks were nationalized, labor unions, and even professional associations, were overseen by the KCIA. The new regime also drew up an economic plan to promote new

export-based industries and sought and found financing for additional domestic industry. According to the liberal economist Lim Hyun Chin:

"At the core of the outward-looking development policy was export promotion of manufactured goods, first through labour-intensive industrialization and next through capital-intensive industrialization. The premise underlying such a policy was that if Korea maximized its comparative advantage of cheap labor by inducing foreign investment to build labor intensive industries, it could compete effectively in the world market by specialization of labor-intensive commodities. Once this is achieved, Korea could then shift its comparative advantage from cheap labor to knowhow by building capital-intensive industries. Capital intensive industries would enable Korea to increase its competitiveness in the world market by specializing in technology-intensive commodities. In short, export promotion industrialization would...promot[e] capital accumulation."

—Lim Hyun Chin, *Dependent Development in Korea*

Judged strictly in terms of economic expansion, Park's development program was a startling success. The average annual growth rate of the economy between 1961 and 1979 was 9.1 percent, and continues today at a rate of two to three times those of North America and the European Union. Per capita GNP exploded from a meager \$25 in 1962 to \$6,518 in 1991. South Korea has established itself in the international market as a major exporter.

Secrets of Capitalist Success: Exploitation and Repression

The workers of South Korea did not do so well under the police state set up by Park Chung Hee. One of the most important components of Park's corporatist system was the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (KFTU) which acts as a national company union. In South Korean factories, the law permits only one "union." Normally this "union" is not organized by the workers, but by company managers who select workers to "lead the union." Companies pay the salaries of these "union officials" and even provide the offices and furniture. The role of the company union is to ensure that wages remain "reasonable" and production is not disrupted. Naturally the KFTU has always been a member in good standing of the pro-imperialist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, whose heroes include Lech Walesa and Lane Kirkland. The U.S. State Department/AFL-CIO agency in Seoul, the Asian-American Free Labor Institute, cooperates closely with the KFTU, and regards workers' demands for real unions as "communist provocations."

When workers attempt to push the compliant KFTU unions into action, the companies often counter by organizing *kusadae* bands. The *kusadae* (or "Save our Company" committees) are gangs of company thugs and scabs (often organized in paramilitary fashion) who violently intimidate workers challenging the company unions. When company unions and *kusadae* gangs are not enough to contain workers' struggles, the bosses can count on the state to step in.

Ensuring "labor peace" has been the key to South Korea's competitive edge on the world market. As George E. Ogle, the author of *Dissent Within the Economic Miracle*, noted:

"Under the forced march of the early 1980's while productivity of these highly sophisticated commodities shot up at a rate of about 24 percent per year, the real income of the workers rose less than 15 percent. The exporters herald the difference as Korea's comparative advantage."

The entire system, which has served the South Korean bourgeoisie so well, depends crucially on preventing the workers from developing their own independent institutions. This is why all such attempts have met with violent attacks by the state.

The Rise of an Independent Labor Movement

The crushing of the *Chon Pyong* movement in the 1940s set the tone for the next forty years in the South Korean labor movement, with most struggles being smothered or crushed. Although there were many examples of heroic sacrifice and struggle, the corporatist labor system remained intact until the massive strike waves of the "Great Workers' Struggle" in 1987. This whole arrangement has subsequently been dislocated; many KFTU unions have withheld dues from the center, and struggles for reform have accelerated.

The "Great Workers' Struggle" began with a wave of massive demonstrations in late June 1987, during the interregnum between dictator Chun Doo Hwan and his hand-picked successor, Roh Tae Woo. Hundreds of thousands of Koreans poured into the streets to demand sweeping constitutional reforms. To avert a social explosion Roh hastily announced plans for direct presidential elections. This opening was all the labor movement needed. The pent-up frustration of decades boiled over; during the next four months over 3,400 strikes erupted. Within a year the *minju* (democratic) union movement was born and soon embraced several hundred thousand workers, organized in 2,800 union locals. The movement was strongest in the largest factories of the *chaebol*. Seventy percent of plants with more than 1,000 workers went on strike. The state-run union federation was paralyzed, with 80 percent of its constituent unions ceasing to pay dues.

The *minju* union movement has only recently attempted to consolidate itself as an alternative to the state-run unions. Although the mass struggles led by the *minju* unions during their first three years raised workers' real wages by 45 percent, the *minju* unions have not yet been able to break down the onerous labor control system. Their national coordinating body, the *Chonmodae*, is only two years old. It remains illegal and is today supported by only 420,000 workers compared to the 1.3 million in the state-run KFTU. The 1994 summer strike wave failed to achieve significant gains despite its militancy because the government and *chaebol* were able to muster sufficient force to repress the strikers. Hundreds of unionists were arrested, including Kim Young Gil and Yang Kyoo Hyon, co-presidents of the *Chonmodae*.

Yet the influence of the *minju* movement has continued to grow. Having lost many of its largest unions, including those at Daewoo and Hyundai, the KFTU leadership recently proposed a merger of the two union federations (*Korea Times*, 30 October 1994). The *Chonmodae* reportedly responded that it would only consider a merger if the KFTU completely severed its connection to the government and campaigned for the repeal of Korea's draconian labor laws.

At every step the independent unions come up against the repressive power of the state. While union organization is vitally important, it is becoming clear to many advanced workers that union activism by itself cannot substitute for the political organization required to counter the moves of the capitalists and their repressive apparatus. This requires a workers' party committed to the struggle to replace the *chaebol's* dictatorship with a workers' and farmers' Korea.

Such a party could reach sectors of the working population that the unions now find difficult to organize. For example, in the last two years, some 100,000 foreign workers have been brought to South Korea as "trainees." These "trainees," who come from Africa and South and Southeast Asia, are being used to lower wages and working standards. They do the dirtiest and most dangerous work, but are paid a paltry \$200 to \$260 per month. They make up some 10 percent of the workforce in small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms. While the government has encouraged the recruitment of these workers, it is also engaged in promoting hostility toward them as carriers of "foreign" diseases, e.g., AIDS. There have been threats to kick out some 5,000 workers who are in South Korea "illegally." It is vitally necessary for the Korean working class to undercut the poisonous chauvinism of the bosses and fight for full civil, political and economic rights for these foreign-born workers, who can provide native workers with a powerful ally.

A revolutionary workers' party would also take the lead in struggles around the unresolved national and democratic tasks in Korea. The 1980 Kwangju massacre (which was approved by American military authorities) demonstrated that the presence of U.S. troops in South Korea is not only aimed at the deformed workers' state in the north, but also presents a direct threat to workers' struggles. The U.S. Army constitutes a reliable last-ditch ally of the *chaebol* against an insurgent population. The struggle for ousting the U.S. imperialist forces can only be consistently championed by a workers' party. A revolutionary proletarian party would also reach out to the millions of small farmers in their struggles to defend their living standards. Under the rule of the working class, it would make sense to promote voluntary collectivization as a means of increasing agricultural productivity, as well as raising incomes and improving living conditions. A workers' party would also campaign for a revolutionary solution to the post-war partition of Korea, through social revolution in the South to expropriate the *chaebol* and establish the rule of workers' councils and proletarian political revolution in the North to overthrow the corrupt bureaucratic dictatorship of Kim Jong Il.

Korean Students & the Struggle Against the State

The South Korean students have been very important allies of the workers' movement and have provided both practical support and many of the organizers of the *minju* unions. For generations Korean universities have been a breeding ground for the leftist and anti-imperialist movements that have fought successive imperialist occupiers and military dictatorships. Yet despite the long tradition of struggle against Japanese colonialism and military rule, until 1980 most politically active students had illusions in liberal democracy, and even in the role of the United States. The Kwangju massacre changed that. The failure of the mass struggles to topple the military regime in 1980 led to a *sasang tujaeng* (ideological struggle) on the campuses. There were extensive debates about the role of students and other social groups in the struggle against the regime, the character of the regime, and, most importantly, the ultimate goal of the struggle. Until the early 1980s, students had embraced the *sammun* ideology of national liberation, oppressed people's liberation and democracy. After Kwangju two main tendencies emerged within the radical student movement: the National Liberation (NL) group and the Na-



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'Great Leader' and 'Dear Leader'

tional Democracy (ND) group.

Both tendencies defined their politics in Marxist terminology, but they had radically different approaches. The NL tendency emphasized the neo-colonial character of the regime, and argued that the main conflict was between American imperialism and domestic social forces. In the struggle for "national liberation" the NL argued that the *minjung* should form an alliance with the national bourgeoisie against the imperialists and the monopolist *chaebol*. The NL therefore sought to mobilize the *minjung* solely on questions of national liberation—kicking out American troops and unification with North Korea. The ND took a more left-wing position, and denied that the so-called national bourgeoisie could play any progressive role historically. They sought to mobilize the workers and peasants of South Korea on class issues: organizing unions and building a revolutionary workers' party. When the ND became the Constitutional Assembly (CA) tendency, they consciously embraced Lenin's pre-1917 formula, as elaborated in *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*, of a two-stage struggle for socialism. In the first stage, the workers and peasants must fight to establish a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," which CA (following Lenin) believed was possible only through armed insurrection. Only after the victory of the first stage could a second, socialist, revolution be prepared.

The 1987 presidential elections presented an important test for these two tendencies. The election revealed in practice how each group would align with existing social forces. The three candidates in the election were Roh Tae Woo (the ruling party's candidate and successor of Chun Doo Hwan), Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung. The latter two were bourgeois oppositionists who had made names for themselves by defying the previous military dictatorships. They were in the same party until they quarrelled over who would get to run for president. There were no political differences: they both called for the repeal of the NSL, but were clearly pro-capitalist and very anti-communist. The NL, which was coming under the influence of *jusa* (Kim Il Sung Thought), called for a "critical" vote to Kim Dae Jung. The CA, in contrast, called for the formation of a *Minjung*

party on a program of nationalizing the *chaebol* and dismantling the oppressive state apparatus. Many *jusa* students, who could not stomach their leaders' support to an openly capitalist candidate, joined with the CA in building the *Minjung* party.

Today there are four major tendencies on the student left. The largest and most right wing is the *Jusapa* (formerly NL). They have become uncritical admirers of North Korea and Kim Il Sung's autarkic theories of total self-reliance (*juche*) in the construction of socialism in half a country. The repulsive and ridiculous celebration of Kim Il Sung's leadership and his discredited strategy has put the North Korean deformed workers' state in a desperate situation. The contraction of production in this socialist paradise should have made the bankruptcy of *juche* clear to all. The considerable economic and industrial progress made in previous decades was, despite all the proud declarations of "self-reliance," made with the help of considerable amounts of Soviet aid. Now North Korea is facing an economic crisis, and is desperately seeking investment from the South, and even offering "Special Economic Zones" like those in China to encourage foreign capitalist investment.

Under Kim Il Sung, foreign currency earned from rice exports was used to further his personal cult, with millions of copies of his unreadable works published in every major language on earth, while the North Korean masses lived on cheap imported corn. Money was also spent purchasing thousands of pages advertising his "thought" in prominent capitalist newspapers around the world. His son, the "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il, lives in luxurious villas, where he enjoys rare delicacies like Black Sea Caviar and the livers of blue sharks. The bizarre regime, with its forced adulation of the "leader" and police-state surveillance of the population, is hardly a pole of attraction for workers in South Korea. Revolutionaries take no pleasure in the current difficulties of the North Korean deformed workers' state. We stand for workers' political revolution to overthrow Kim Jong Il and replace the bureaucracy he heads with institutions of proletarian democracy. At the same time, we defend North Korea against capitalist assault from without and counter-revolution from within.

Taking their cue from the North Korean regime, the *Jusapa* have become indistinguishable from petty-bourgeois nationalists, and rarely make even a token reference to socialism, Marxism or the working class. Their calls for "reunification" have degenerated into cheering reconciliation between Seoul and Pyongyang. This unity mongering is extremely dangerous because it does not distinguish between a revolutionary reunification (through social revolution in the South and workers' political revolution in the North) and the kind of counterrevolutionary reunification that took place in Germany. A capitalist reunification of Korea would mean counterrevolution in North Korea, and would be a severe blow to all Korean workers and peasants. Although we respect the courage of the *Jusapa* cadres in their opposition to the South Korean state, and defend them against capitalist repression, genuine socialists can only hope that the best militants of this tendency break from the dead end of Stalinist nationalism.

One wing of the former Constituent Assembly tendency, the People's Democracy (PD), unites various leftist anti-*Jusapa* students. They reject any collaboration with bourgeois democrats and look to a mass proletarian uprising to smash the power of the *chaebol*. Unfortunately, by basing their program and perspective on Lenin's pre-1917 formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry,"

This is not a utopian proposition: a revolutionary victory in Korea would immediately find an echo in the powerful Japanese proletariat with its substantial Korean component; it would inspire a generation of young fighters around the world to struggle against their own rulers; it would shatter the bourgeois lies about "the death of communism" and unleash a wave of class struggle that would sweep the Pacific Rim.

Korean workers do not have to go very far to discover an internationalist tradition. When their country was subject to Japanese colonialism from 1910 to 1945, Korean revolutionaries drew inspiration from the model of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. In China, the Russian Far East, and even Japan, Korean youth studied the example of the Bolshevik Revolution in order to create their own communist movement. Korean delegates attended the Soviet-sponsored Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920,

and were also represented at the early congresses of the revolutionary Communist International. Hundreds of Koreans were active with communist and anti-imperialist groups in China and in the Russian Far East.

The Korean proletariat has shown tremendous capacity for struggle, from the creation of the *Chon Pyong* after World War II, to the militant union struggles of today. To go forward to victory it is necessary to forge revolutionary workers' parties in both halves of the peninsula, fighting for political revolution to dislodge the unstable Stalinist regime in the North and for a socialist revolution in the South that will expropriate the *chaebol*, smash the capitalists' repressive apparatus and establish a united, socialist Korea. The International Bolshevik Tendency has begun publication of a Korean edition of 1917 in order to help connect the struggles of Korean workers and students today with the best traditions of revolutionary Marxism. ■

Free South Korean Leftists!

Thirty-six supporters of the International Socialists of South Korea (ISSK), including Choi Il Bung, the group's leading figure, were arrested last October in the Republic of Korea. Their only "crime" was the advocacy of leftist ideas. These militants are the latest victims of South Korea's draconian National Security Law, which is designed to crush all forms of working-class and socialist opposition. In 1992, 42 members of the ISSK were imprisoned under the same law. Some of them, including Choi Il Bung, were only released from jail in December 1993. Meanwhile several dozen members of the Socialist Workers League are still imprisoned.

The ISSK is politically aligned with Tony Cliff's British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) has profound political differences with the SWP/ISSK, but we recognize that it is the duty of every leftist to actively defend these comrades against the attacks of the South Korean regime.

On learning of these arrests, our comrades in New York, Berlin, Toronto and New Zealand immediately contacted the respective national sections of the International Socialists to express our solidarity with their imprisoned co-thinkers and to offer our practical support in building opposition to this repression. IBT sections sent protest statements to the South Korean regime. Our North American comrades charged:

"The persecution of leftists and unionists by your administration shows the world that your government's pretensions to democracy are entirely fraudulent, and that the Republic of Korea continues to operate as a virtual police state. The IS was charged under the draconian National Security Law with 'thought crimes.' It is outrageous that the advocacy of socialist ideas, and participation in union struggles, should be classified as criminal activities in South Korea.

"We demand that all charges against the Korean IS be dropped, that members of the IS, as well as the Socialist Workers League and all leftists and labor activists imprisoned under the National Security Law be freed immediately."

The Permanent Revolution Group (PRG), New Zealand section of the IBT, initiated a national united-front campaign to defend the ISSK. Among the left groups to support this initiative were Tony Cliff's New Zealand co-thinkers, as well as comrades of Workers Power/NZ. Four demonstrations were held, one in each of the major centres in New



Zealand (Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington).

In Wellington, trade unionists joined militants from the PRG, the Socialist Workers Party (formerly the Communist Party of New Zealand) and the Asian Solidarity Group, in a demonstration outside the South Korean embassy on 11 November. Representatives of the united front, who attempted to deliver a letter to the South Korean embassy demanding the release of the ISSK comrades, were blocked by the police, apparently on instructions by embassy officials.

The pseudo-democratic regime in Seoul must not be allowed to get away with persecuting militants of the workers' movement. Leftists and trade unionists internationally must take up the cause of the imprisoned South Korean socialists: an injury to one is an injury to all!

Protest statements can be sent to:

President Kim Young Sam,
Blue House,
1 Sejongro Jung-Gu,
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Homophobia...

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case. In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer of the French general staff, was court-martialed for treason, degraded, and sent to prison. When it subsequently became clear that he was innocent, the right-wing, clericalist, anti-Semitic general staff did their best to suppress the truth. Throughout 1898-99 there were frequent street clashes between the Dreyfusards (intellectuals, socialists and bourgeois radicals) and the French right. While some leftists argued that the working class had no interest in defending a bourgeois military officer who had no connection to the workers' movement, this conflict shook the Third Republic almost to its foundations. The majority of French socialists understood that it was important to uphold democratic rights and to connect this struggle to the movement against capitalist rule.

Historically homosexuality has been persecuted because of its "unnaturalness" and the supposed threat it poses to the reproduction of the species. These two rationalizations are in fact closely related, as what is supposed "unnatural" about homosexual activity is that it is not procreative. In fact there is no reason to think that homosexuality has any more impact on reproductive statistics than recreational heterosexual intercourse, masturbation or celibacy.

It is simply not possible to know for sure how biogenetic and social influences interact to determine sexual preference, although, while there is no demonstrated biological function for a unidirectional sexuality, it is clear that in contemporary society there is very substantial social pressure encouraging an exclusively heterosexual orientation. A more tolerant social atmosphere may lead to an increase in homosexual behavior, but that does not necessarily imply an increase in the proportion of people with a homosexual preference, or a decline in reproductively significant heterosexual behavior. Certainly the need to reproduce the human population is not threatened by homosexuality; the quantity of heterosexual activity necessary for reproductive purposes is a small fraction of what goes on.

Homosexuality Before Capitalism

The intensity of social prejudice, and the legal sanctions employed against male and female homosexual behavior, has varied considerably with time and place. On the whole, homosexuality (in particular patterns) was accepted in classical antiquity. In 1980, a Yale University professor, John Boswell, published *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, which described how, from the mid-eleventh to the mid-twelfth century in Catholic Europe, there was a veritable flowering of explicitly gay activity and writing, including erotic poetry, in the priesthood. This corresponded with the enforcement of the ban on priestly marriage, which until that time had been permitted (as it still is in the Eastern Church). Homosexual priests were among the strongest supporters of the ban on heterosexual marriage, but the fundamental basis for the shift was the need for the church to adapt itself to the feudal mode of production. In most feudal societies land was inherited by the eldest son, and that principle could have rapidly depleted church landholdings. Consequently it was necessary to prevent the clergy from marrying and having sons.

The outlawing of heterosexual activity in the priesthood

required either accepting homosexuality as a norm, or, alternatively, banning homosexual activity as well. The matter was decided at the Third Lateran Council in 1179, which imposed sanctions against homosexuality. The decision was not immediately reflected in local legal codes, but between 1250 and 1300 sodomy passed from being legal to being punishable by death in most countries in feudal Europe.

Although its origins lay in the requirements of the church, it is hardly surprising that the doctrine of sodomy as a particularly iniquitous sin applied universally, or that it soon became an ecclesiastical crime for the whole population, and later a crime before the king's courts. Nor is it surprising that there was an uneven tendency over time for the prohibition to lose its force.

Capitalism and the Nuclear Family

Persecution of homosexuals declined from the 14th to 19th centuries, and then increased sharply in the late 1800s. This outburst of homophobia was clearly linked to the promotion of the nuclear family as the social norm, and the associated prohibition on extra-marital sex.

In the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, Marx and Engels described the proletarian family (as distinct from the bourgeois family) as a vestigial and decaying institution. However, within a couple of generations the nuclear family was firmly established as the characteristic form of proletarian domestic life under capitalism.

The capitalist mode of production does not require any particular form of domestic arrangement for the working class. As long as there is a sufficient supply of new workers ready to sell their labor power, the manner in which working-class reproduction takes place should not, at least in the abstract, be a matter of vital concern to the bourgeoisie. In the early days of the industrial revolution, proletarian domestic life was characterized by decaying pre-capitalist, multi-generational family forms. The transition from the field to the factory was a traumatic one, marked by massive social dislocation and domestic disorder (with associated drunkenness, child abuse, etc.). The employment of men, women and children for very long hours at subsistence wages proved an impediment to the development of the nuclear family. This is what the *Manifesto* described as "the bourgeois clap-trap...about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child" when the development of large-scale industry meant that "all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour."

The absence of strongly patterned domestic arrangements in the early proletariat did not serve capitalism well. It did not prove easy to integrate childbearing, nursing and child-raising into the factories and other enterprises. Over time, bourgeois society accepted that these functions could best be carried on outside the factory. This is the material basis of the proletarian nuclear family. That is its origin, and even today that is its sustenance.

The historical development of the family was conditioned by the necessity for socializing young proletarians, looking after the aged, and providing healthcare and emotional support for the laboring population. It was shaped ideologically by the practices of the ruling class (developed earlier to meet its own needs).

The nuclear family also provided a measure of social cohesion and stability for the bourgeois order. A male wage earner, demeaned at work, could accept his lot more readily if he had his personal needs met at home where he was

“boss.” He thereby became an important participant in moulding the next generation of workers into acceptance of the hierarchical nature of class society. At the same time his domestic responsibilities reinforced the power of the employer—a worker had to consider his dependent wife and children before slugging the foreman or voting to go on strike.

For all its utility, however, the nuclear family proved difficult to entrench in the proletariat, and required considerable ideological as well as legal and material support. In England there were a battery of props—from the Factory Acts limiting hours of work for women and children, to the emphasis on plebeian chastity, temperance and self sacrifice by the various non-conformist Christian denominations. By the end of the 19th century, as the hegemony of the nuclear family was gradually established, childhood became prolonged, motherhood was promoted as the proper full-time occupation for women, prostitution became an outcast occupation, and homosexuals were despised and victimized.

Homophobia & the Proletarian Family

The bourgeois family discussed by Marx and Engels was based on the premise that an individual bourgeois male must have exclusive sexual access to his wife (in order to guarantee that his property be eventually inherited by his own blood relatives). This did not require prohibiting extra-marital sexual activity (whether heterosexual or homosexual) for the husband. Such activities did not threaten the line of property succession, so there was no obvious necessity for their prohibition. However, the establishment of the nuclear family as the primary domestic social institution for the proletariat and other plebeian strata required such taboos.

In part it was simply a matter of suppressing alternatives to the nuclear family, with their potential counter-exemplary effects. If you are trying to convince a population that bliss consists in a man working in a factory, with a woman looking after five children at home—not an inherently easy task—then it is not useful to permit more agreeable domestic configurations. Homosexual couples or bachelor groupings with access to prostitutes, or other more bohemian combinations, might be seen as more interesting, fulfilling, or more materially comfortable than membership in a proletarian family.

There is another, related strand to the genesis of modern homophobia. Under nineteenth-century capitalism the central conditioning fact of proletarian domestic life was that the entire cost of raising the next generation was a private rather than a social responsibility. Children could not sustain themselves financially, nor could their caregivers. The nuclear family required that mothers and children be supported by a male, who must be productive enough to command a wage sufficient for that purpose. This required that childbearing be delayed, which, in the absence of modern technologies of family planning, required a high degree of teenage chastity. This was not easily achieved. It involved a certain level of frustration and social tension, and required the backing of authoritative religion as well as state intervention through age-of-consent laws and the like.

There are difficulties with banning teenage heterosexual intercourse while permitting homosexual activity, unless teenage homosexuality is carefully institutionalized, as in English public schools. Consequently, in the latter part of the 19th century, there was considerable fear that without



STACY ROSTENSTOCK—IMPACT VISUALS

Homophobes hoist ‘family values’

powerful counter-pressures, libidinous male teenagers would channel their energies in a homosexual direction. The fear that heterosexuality would succumb before the homosexual onslaught was frequently cited as the justification for anti-homosexual measures in this period. The fear of the “corruption of youth,” together with the importance of maintaining the power of the father in the family as against any homosexual competitor, were themes of the prosecuting lawyers, judges and newspapers during the trials of Oscar Wilde in the 1890s, which were crucial in the articulation and structuring of anti-homosexual moralism in Britain and elsewhere (see, for example, H. Montgomery Hyde, *Oscar Wilde*, 1976).

Women were seen as less socially significant, and as essentially asexual. Their sexual lives were therefore not subject to such active persecution. Young women were far more closely supervised than men and much more likely to be confined to the home. The greater success in suppressing teenage female sexuality meant that lesbianism was largely ignored, and in general the extremes of homophobic prejudice were reserved for men. Lesbian activity was generally described as women engaging in “male” behavior.

Early Socialists and Homophobia: the Schweitzer Case

There is a considerable history of opposition in the workers’ movement to the oppression of homosexuals, particularly in Germany, home to the largest and most influential socialist movement in the period before World War I. In August 1862, two elderly ladies enjoying a quiet stroll through a public park in Mannheim came across a talented young lawyer named Jean Baptiste von Schweitzer and an unidentified youth in a highly compromising situation. As a result Schweitzer spent two weeks in jail and was disbarred. It was suggested that this incident made him unfit for membership in Ferdinand Lassalle’s General German Workers Association (see James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, 1975). Lassalle defended Schweitzer as follows:

“What Schweitzer did isn’t pretty, but I hardly look upon it as a crime. At any rate, we can’t let ourselves lose someone with such great ability, indeed a phenomenal person. In the long run, sexual activity is a matter of taste and ought to be left up to each person, so long as he doesn’t encroach upon

someone else's interests. Though I wouldn't give my daughter in marriage to such a man."

—John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)*, New York, 1974

In 1864 Lassalle died as a result of a duel (over a woman) and Schweitzer became the leader of the Lassalleans for the next eight years. While the Eisenachers, the grouping supported by Marx and Engels, engaged in sharp political exchanges with the Lassalleans, the public polemics do not seem to have been polluted by homosexual baiting. In May 1875 the two groups fused to form the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD), which became the leading section of the Second (Socialist) International.

The SPD and the Homosexual Question

August Bebel (a leader of the Eisenachers and the pre-eminent leader of the SPD) spoke up on a number of occasions in the Reichstag in defence of homosexuals and against the penal provisions of the criminal code. He is quoted as saying on one occasion:

"But gentlemen, you have no idea how many respectable, honorable and brave men, even in high and the highest positions, are driven to suicide year after year, one from shame, another from fear of the blackmailer."

—Lauritsen and Thorstad, *op cit.*

One case taken up by German Marxists was that of Oscar Wilde in England, prosecuted in 1895 under the 1885 Labouchere amendment which illegalized homosexual activities. Eduard Bernstein, leading theoretician of the SPD's right wing, wrote a substantial article defending Wilde in the April and May 1895 issues of *Die Neue Zeit*. Bernstein commented that:

"Although the subject of sex life might seem of low priority for the economic and political struggle of the Social Democracy, this nevertheless does not mean it is not obligatory to find a standard also for judging this side of social life, a standard based on a scientific approach and knowledge rather than on more or less arbitrary moral concepts."

—Lauritsen and Thorstad, *op cit.*

He rejected the notion that homosexual acts should be persecuted as "unnatural," and pointed out that very little done by human beings is "natural"—including carrying on a written discussion. He observed that judgments of what is natural or unnatural for human beings are reflections of the state of development of society rather than nature, and made the point that "moral attitudes are historical phenomena."

Bernstein noted that in most of the great civilizations of antiquity (the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans) homosexual love was freely practiced and remarked that: "same-sex intercourse is so old and so widespread that there is no stage of human culture we could say with certainty were free from this phenomenon." He denounced theories of homosexuality as illness, as a form of disguised moralism, a point taken up by another Social Democrat, Adolf Thiele, in the 1905 Reichstag debate on the subject. Karl Kautsky, representing the SPD's left wing, also came out against the oppression of homosexuals. Yet despite the public statements of many of its most prominent representatives, the party as a whole did not take a position on the subject.

The founders of the Marxist movement shared many of the prejudices of their times on the question of homosexuality. Marx apparently made only a single written reference to the subject, although in 1869 he had passed on to Engels

a copy of a book on the subject by K.H. Ulrich, who was the first person to seriously work for a liberalization of the law on homosexuality. There is no indication that Marx actually read the book (almost certainly *Die Geschlechtsnatur des mannliebenden Urnings*) lent to him by Wilhelm Strohn, a German communist who lived in Bradford. In a letter to Engels dated 17 December 1869, Marx remarked: "Strohn will be returning from here to Bradford, and desires you to return him the *Urnings* or whatever the paederast's book is called."

Engels had commented on the book in a letter to Marx of 22 June 1869. He prefaced his remarks with a complaint that Wilhelm Liebknecht, their German co-thinker, was being too conciliatory with the Lassalleans, who were led by Schweitzer:

"The *Urnung* you sent me is a very curious thing. These are extremely unnatural revelations. The paederasts are beginning to count themselves, and discover they are a power in the state. Only organisation was lacking, but according to this source it apparently already exists in secret. And since they have such important men in all the old parties and even in the new ones, from Rosing to Schweitzer, they cannot fail to triumph. '*Guerre aux cons, paix aus trous-de cul*' will now be the slogan [translated by the editors of the *Marx-Engels Collected Works* as "War on the cunts, peace to the arse-holes"]. It is a bit of luck that we, personally, are too old to have to fear that, when this party wins, we shall have to pay physical tribute to the victors. But the younger generation! Incidentally it is only in Germany that a fellow like this can possibly come forward, convert this smut into a theory, and offer the invitation *introite*, [enter] etc....If Schweitzer could be made useful for anything, it would be to wheedle out of this peculiar honourable gentleman the particulars of the paederasts in high and top places, which would certainly not be difficult for him as a brother in spirit."

In his published work, Engels made only three unenlightened and moralistic remarks (all within a short section of the second chapter of his groundbreaking *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*).

Homosexuality in Czarist Russia

In Russia under the Czars, the climate was relatively liberal. Russia had not experienced the feudal wave of homophobia that swept Western Europe. The Romanov dynasty by the late 19th century was attempting to implant capitalist industry, but it was not seeking to promote the proletarian nuclear family. There were only two articles in the Tsarist criminal code related to homosexuality. Article 995 prohibited anal sex (but not other homosexual activities), and article 996 covered homosexual rape and the seduction of male minors or mentally retarded men (see: Simon Karlinsky, in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, London, 1989). One historian cited by Karlinsky claims that the only known prosecution under these articles in the 1890s concerned a male schoolteacher who seduced a thirteen-year-old pupil—within five years the teacher was back on the job.

In the 1890s there were a number of prominent gay sets in Russia. The flamboyant Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich frequently took his current lover to public functions. Those in Diaghilev's circle did not hide their homosexuality, and there was also a highly significant gay literary milieu including national celebrities like Kuzmin and Kluev. "Their homosexuality was known to everyone and caused no problems in their social or professional lives" (Karlinsky, *op cit.*).

In this relatively liberal climate the Bolsheviks (like

Marx and Engels before them) were not compelled to address the question of the oppression of homosexuals, and neither Lenin nor Trotsky are thought to have written anything on this issue either before or after the October Revolution. It is quite clear, however, that Trotsky had a relaxed and tolerant attitude to the question. In *Literature and Revolution*, published in 1924, he produced some literary criticism of some openly homosexual poetry without any homophobic bias. He also wrote a sympathetic—almost tender—obituary in the 19 January 1926 issue of *Pravda* for Sergei Esenin, an openly bisexual poet (see *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*, New York, 1972).

Homosexuality after the Russian Revolution

After the Russian Revolution, the revolutionary regime repudiated all Czarist laws deemed to “contradict revolutionary conscience and revolutionary legal awareness” (Decree on the Judicature issued by the Council of People’s Commissars, 5 December [22 November], 1917). This implicitly decriminalized homosexuality, and when a new criminal code was promulgated after the Civil War in 1922, all mention of homosexuality was deleted.

The new regime’s progressive attitude on the question of homosexuality was indicated by the appointment in early 1918 of Georgi Chicherin, a flamboyant and open gay, as People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs. No bourgeois state would have put such a figure in charge of foreign affairs.

(Chicherin’s early relationship and continuing correspondence with the preeminent Russian gay poet, Mikhail Kuzmin, is documented in John E. Malmstead, “Mixail Kuzmin: A Chronicle of His Life and Times” [in English], in volume III of Kuzmin’s collected poetry, *Sobranie stikhotvorenii* [in Russian], edited by Malmsted and Vladimir Markov, Munich, 1977. An account of his unconventional attire and style of work as Foreign Commissar can be found in Alexander Barmine’s, *One Who Survived: The Life Story of a Russian under the Soviets*, New York, 1945).

Scientific opinion in the early Soviet Union was not determined by the “general line,” but many early Soviet sexologists seem to have had a progressive attitude on homosexuality. In 1923 Dr. Grigorii Batkis, the Director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, wrote the following approving description of the new legal code:

“Soviet legislation bases itself on the following principle: *It declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as no one’s interests are encroached upon.*

“Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality—Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called ‘natural’ intercourse. Only when there’s use of force or duress, as in general when there’s an injury or encroachment upon the rights of another person, is there a question of criminal prosecution.”

—*Die Sexualrevolution in Russland* (Berlin, 1925, apparently a reprint of a Russian original published in 1923, quoted in Lauritsen and Thorstad, *op cit.*)

At the same time, however, there remained professionals who regarded homosexuality as a serious illness. In *Sexual Life of Contemporary Youth*, published by the State Publishing House in 1923, Izrail Gel’man asserted:

“Science has now established, with precision that excludes all doubt, [that homosexuality] is not ill will or crime, but sickness....The world of a female or male homosexual is perverted, it is alien to the normal sexual attraction that exists in a normal person.”

—quoted by Karlinsky, *op cit.*



SIMPLICISSMUS

G. V. Chicherin: Commissar of Foreign Affairs, 1918-30

Over time, as the Stalinist bureaucracy gradually took over the levers of power within the Soviet workers’ state, this view of homosexuality grew in influence. One symptom of the deteriorating situation of gays was the rapid decline of Chicherin’s influence after Lenin’s death in early 1924. By the time the *Great Medical Encyclopedia* was published in 1929, homosexuality had been fully pathologized. Homosexuals were increasingly persecuted—the old German revolutionist Klara Zetkin intervened on behalf of some of the victims.

Finally, in 1933-34, homosexuality was formally recriminalized. The reintroduction of state-sponsored homophobia, like the accompanying attacks on women’s rights (e.g., the recriminalization of abortion) were aimed at reinforcing the nuclear family as the basic unit of a conservative social order.

Stonewall and After

In the past few decades the visibility and political clout of the homosexual population has grown considerably, particularly in Europe, North America and Australasia. An important factor in this development has been the militant political struggles waged for homosexual rights, signaled by the 1969 Stonewall riot in New York’s Greenwich Village. The aggressive and self-confident gay liberation movement of the early 1970s developed in the context of a generalized shift to the left politically and a liberalization of attitudes towards sexuality in general. The explosive growth of the women’s liberation movement in this period challenged the legitimacy of the “normal” patriarchal family. Elements of the women’s movement embraced lesbianism (“women-identified women”) as the most consistent expression of feminism.

The limited progress recorded by gays and lesbians is integrally connected to changes in the operation of the nuclear family. The growth of the white-collar sector with jobs that could be performed by either sex, the massive expansion of the female workforce, and the impossibility of maintaining living standards on a single (male) wage, undermined traditional stereotypes about men’s and women’s



1965: Mattachine Society picket at White House

UPI-BETTMANN

“rightful places” in the world. Another important change—connected to the increased efficacy of contraceptive techniques—was the surrender to the teenage sex drive. Widespread teenage heterosexual activity in turn reduces the “danger” that appetites which would otherwise develop in a heterosexual direction would be diverted towards homosexuality, and obviates the need for special measures to counter that “danger.” Homosexual activity is still a potential counter-example to the nuclear family, but in societies where extra-marital sex is tolerated, that threat is merely one of many.

Yet the nuclear family remains a powerful institution in modern capitalist society. It is where the most important emotional needs of individuals (for love, intimacy and emotional security) are supposed to be met. Even for those whose experience of the family is one of misery and alienation, the myth continues to exert considerable influence. With the erosion of working-class living standards, the collapse of social services and growing levels of chronic unemployment within the metropolitan imperialist heartlands, the proletarian family has also become an increasingly important source of support for a substantial section of young adults who might otherwise be destitute. Moreover, at least within the layers of the working class and petty bourgeoisie affluent enough to own real estate or some other substantial material assets, parental control over a potential inheritance operates as a disciplinary mechanism in much the same way as within the bourgeoisie.

The gains recorded by gays and lesbians in the past several decades are substantial, but they are also fragile and reversible. Extra-marital sex, and particularly homosexuality, are still ferociously condemned by powerful forces, of both a clerical-fundamentalist and secular-conservative character. The furious opposition of the Pentagon (and most of Congress) to Bill Clinton’s tentative gestures toward letting open gays and lesbians serve in the military provided a reminder of just how precarious the rights of homosexuals are. Last August the U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly “to cut off Federal money to schools that teach

acceptance of homosexuality as a way of life” (*New York Times*, 2 August 1994). One of the items cited as “disgusting, obscene material” purveyed to students was a book about a lesbian couple entitled “Heather Has Two Mommies.”

As the logic of global economic competition compels the capitalists continually to increase pressure on working-class living standards, the bonds that once united people in the nuclear family are stretched to the breaking point or beyond. Homosexuals, “secular humanists,” abortion-rights advocates and feminists are scapegoated for the collapse of family life, as “family values” becomes the rallying cry of social reaction.

The overlapping anti-abortion, anti-pornography and anti-gay campaigns provide a natural recruiting ground for the fascists, who are currently on the rise in Europe and North America. Gay-bashing is often used as an organizing tool by these fanatical defenders of capitalist irrationality and inequality.

The AIDS epidemic has given rise to a wave of moral panic used to foster anti-gay prejudice, to promote a general fear of sex, and to reinforce religion. Prevention, care and research on HIV/AIDS has been scandalously underfunded by the capitalist rulers of the “New World Order.” Like every other social evil under capitalism, AIDS hits those at the bottom of the social ladder hardest.

In the imperialist heartland it is those who are most dependent on the decaying public health services—the poor and oppressed minorities—who suffer the most. The desperately poor neo-colonies have, of course, been hit far worse than the imperialist countries, with growing proportions of the population in the most productive age groups disabled and dying.

In recent years militant gays and lesbians have aggressively campaigned for more resources to fight AIDS, and have exposed some of the most glaring examples of negligence and abuse. We respect the considerable courage displayed by these activists in confronting the medical establishment and the state, and seek opportunities to engage in common work with them in the future. It is vitally important that deeper social layers become involved in these struggles, and particularly that the organizations of the working class take up these issues as a key part of the struggle for free universal quality health care.

Marxists recognize, however, that there is nothing inherently revolutionary about homosexuality, or about the struggle against AIDS. The gains won by lesbians and gays over the past several decades have led to the development of an upwardly mobile layer of openly homosexual professionals (many associated with the AIDS industry) who desperately crave bourgeois respectability.

Tactics in the Gay Movement

The tactics of militant gay groups vary considerably in their effectiveness. One approach, involving the ostentatious display of gay affection in unexpected settings, is intended to shock heterosexuals into changing their consciousness. This is harmless, and we certainly support the right of homosexuals to be open about their sexual orientation. But as a political strategy it presupposes that the roots of homophobia lie in the consciousness of individuals rather than in the requirements of the capitalist social order.

Another approach involves encouraging gay men and lesbians to “come out” in less ostentatious ways—to be open about their sexuality in the course of their daily lives. Coming out is considered by most gay people not so much

as a political strategy as a personal step toward self-esteem and adjustment, to be made by the individual concerned, depending on his/her circumstances. There are still many homosexuals who understandably fear exposure, who value their right to privacy, and who do not wish to come out.

Inevitably, various bourgeois functionaries are closeted homosexuals, and some of them may engage in the worst kind of homophobic politics. In recent years gay activists have engaged in "outings," i.e., publicly revealing the sexual identities of such prominent right-wing closeted homosexuals. This tactic is not new. It was known in the early German homosexual rights movement as "the path over the corpses," and was used in the early 1900s with disadvantageous results (see Steakley, *op cit*, and Oosterhuis and Kennedy, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany*, New York, 1991). Although Marxists share the gay liberationists' disgust with most targets of outing, as well as a sense of frustration with the lack of progress in gay rights, in general we oppose this tactic. It tends to add to the fears of exposure that burden the ordinary inoffensive closeted homosexual, and creates a climate for the worst kind of muckraking homophobic journalism and an anti-gay backlash.

It is the job of the Marxist party to inculcate scientific consciousness and to lead the proletariat in transcending moralism and mystification. This means opposing the Stalinist promotion of the "socialist family" and the attendant social backwardness toward women and homosexuals. Homophobia, like every other reactionary social prejudice in capitalist society, serves to divide, demoralize and discipline the proletariat, and undercut its capacity to understand its own historic interests. Common participation in class struggle and the fight for social and economic justice can undercut homophobia in the working class and other layers of the oppressed.

A revolutionary party must embody a scientific consciousness of society as a totality. It must seek to incorporate people who feel the oppression of capitalism in every form, and to connect their struggles to the necessity to overturn the social system from which oppression derives. Just as it is useful to have comrades of different generations, different political histories, and different cultural backgrounds, so the particular forms of alienation of gay men and lesbians gives them a variety of perspectives on bourgeois society which significantly enrich the collective Marxist consciousness of the proletarian vanguard.

Against Sectoralism, For Transitional Organizations

Marxists fight against all forms of special oppression (whether of women, blacks, youth, aboriginal peoples or homosexuals) without losing sight of the fact that it is *class society* which lies at the root. Revolutionaries support every reform which advances the situation of the oppressed, but know that, ultimately, social oppression can only be uprooted through the fight for a socialist society—one based on production for human need, not profit.

Unlike sectoralists, Marxists recognize that, because of its economically strategic position, the working class is the decisive factor in the struggle for fundamental social change. Attempts to organize gays as gays, women as women, or blacks as blacks, inevitably lead to cross-class formations, and to confining the struggle within the framework of capitalist rationality. Yet the oppression of gays and



BROOKS KRAFT—SYGMA

Gay veterans of U.S. military

lesbians (in common with other forms of social oppression) can only be successfully challenged with a program that transcends the limits of the existing social order.

A revolutionary party needs transitional organizations to focus the struggles of the oppressed and to recruit the most politically advanced elements to the struggle for workers' power. Where there is the possibility of intervention in a significant gay or lesbian political arena, then a revolutionary party will seek to build a transitional organization for this work. The activities of such an organization, which would be part of a common revolutionary movement with a common discipline, would center on fighting the oppression of gays and lesbians while advancing a program that links these struggles to the necessity for working-class rule.

The fact that Marxists fight all forms of oppression under capitalism does not imply that all forms are equally important for revolutionary strategy. Gay and lesbian oppression is not entirely analogous to the oppression, for example, of blacks in the United States, or of women. Gays and lesbians are not concentrated in particular, crucial parts of the working class, they do not constitute a large or easily organized constituency, and besides, sexual orientation is not as immediately apparent as race or sex. Moreover, on the whole, there is not an important economic component to the oppression of homosexuals—indeed there are economic advantages to childlessness, which in the current social climate is often concomitant with being gay or lesbian.

Whatever progress has been made in recent decades, homophobia remains a "hot button" for the reactionary right, and a powerful tool for the defense of the status quo. The question of the oppression of homosexual men and women is a vital one for Marxists to take up, but it is not a strategic one for socialist revolution—unlike, for example, the woman question.

The oppression of homosexuals is rooted in the requirements of the capitalist system, and their liberation can be achieved only through the rational employment of humanity's immense productive capacity to eliminate poverty, ignorance and social inequality. In a classless society, the state, along with the nuclear family, will start to wither away and be replaced by freer, voluntary forms of human association in which the remarkable plasticity of human sexuality can be expressed without the fear, prejudice and anxiety with which patriarchal, capitalist society has traditionally treated sexual "deviants." ■

Marxism and the Struggle for Gay/Lesbian Rights

Capitalism & Homophobia



CHUCK NACKE—PICTURE GROUP

Revolutionists must seek to understand the gay and lesbian question for both scientific and programmatic reasons. Marxists have always sought to understand society as a whole, and to develop a historical materialist analysis of all social phenomena—from the relations of production to religion, the family, and so on. As Lenin noted in *What Is To Be Done?*, it is not sufficient to give attention only to questions immediately affecting the proletariat:

"The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata, and groups of the population."

We uphold the Leninist conception of a party of the proletariat as the "tribune of the people," which seeks to lead the working class in the fight against all forms of oppression under capitalism, and to link the struggles of the oppressed to the struggle for working-class rule. Marxists oppose all capitalist oppression, and in that spirit clearly oppose the persecution of both male and female homosexuals and others who are oppressed on the basis of sexually related behaviour, such as transvestites and transsexuals, sado-masochists, etc. As long as there is informed consent between participants, we adamantly oppose state intervention.

Capitalism does not concentrate the pain it causes in a single identifiable class easily mobilized as a united force.

If that were the case our task would be simple. Capitalism distributes its pain in seemingly chaotic patterns, leaving its victims to fight for their interests in isolation, each separated from the others—disabled groups, immigrants, religious minorities, the elderly and the young. It is the task of the revolutionary party to champion the interests of all the oppressed, and to organize their struggles around the axis of proletarian revolution.

As Lenin explained, a Marxist must be a:

"...tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat."

—What is to be Done?

This conception was not some temporary tactical stance adopted by the immature Lenin; the defense of democratic rights and the oppressed was integral to Bolshevism. Lenin explicitly disagreed with the notion that as a Marxist, you should "concern yourself only with your own class," and rejected the Mensheviks' advice to "abandon 'Blanquist dreams' of leading all the revolutionary elements of the people...." (*Collected Works*, v. 16).

The classical case in which the issue of the Marxist vanguard as tribune of the people was posed was the Dreyfus

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