

1917

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

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Susan Meisdas/Magnum

The End of Sandinista 'Third Road'

Nicaraguan Revolution in Retreat

For nine years, since the 1979 insurrection which toppled the bloody Somoza dictatorship, Nicaragua has been a society in which economic and political/military power have been "decoupled." After spearheading an insurrection which destroyed the capitalist state apparatus, the Sandinista Front (FSLN) kept control of the army and police, but left the economy in the hands of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie. All the intricate maneuvering surrounding the Arias "peace process," the FSLN's on-again, off-again negotiations with Reagan's

contra surrogates and the "democratic opposition" turn on the contradiction between the economic dominance of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, and its effective exclusion from political power by the petty-bourgeois Sandinista radicals.

This historical anomaly, unprecedented in its duration, must soon be resolved. The capitalists are using their stranglehold over the economy to undermine production and thereby des-

Jesse Jackson: Judas-Goat pg. 10

tabilize the populist Sandinista regime. The Nicaraguan economy is in chaos with a five-digit annual rate of inflation (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 31 July). As living standards sink below those of the Somoza era and the FSLN's popular base shrinks, the vast historical "credit" opened by *el triunfo* has almost run out. Only the enormous political and moral authority accrued by the FSLN through its role in toppling the despised Somoza regime has allowed it to hold the reins of power as long as it has.

At this point the Sandinistas appear committed to cutting some kind of power-sharing deal with the domestic bourgeoisie. They seem willing to trade their current political monopoly and exclusive control of the army and police for assurances of a continuing governmental role for the FSLN. This is a formula for consolidating another "radical" Third World bourgeois state like Algeria, Zimbabwe or Angola. If the FSLN tops cannot negotiate something along these lines, then, presuming they continue to regard bourgeois property as sacrosanct, they could face an attempted coup by pro-capitalist forces in their own ranks or an insurrection of the discontented masses led by some CIA-financed group of reactionaries intent on turning the clock back to the 1950's. One thing is certain: things in Nicaragua can not go on as they are.

FSLN's "Third Road": A Dead End

The Sandinista experiment in creating a "mixed" economy which would guarantee a decent life for the workers and peasants *without* infringing on the prerogatives or lifestyles of Managua's rich and famous—the fabled "third road" between capitalism and socialism—has failed miserably. V.I. Lenin predicted as much almost 70 years ago:

"The main thing that Socialists fail to understand and that constitutes their shortsightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices, and their political betrayal of the proletariat is that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, *there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat*. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty-bourgeois lamentations."

"Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (emphasis added)

In an interview which appeared in *New Left Review* (July/August 1987) Tomas Borge, sometimes depicted as one of the hard-line "Marxists" among the Sandinista comandantes, bluntly described the reality of the "third road":

"the bourgeoisie has not resigned itself to losing political power and is fighting with all its weapons—including economic weapons which threaten the very existence of the economy. It is no accident that the bourgeoisie has been given so many economic incentives, more even than the workers; we oursel-



Ortega, Borge in their hour of victory: July 1979

SILU/Miami Herald

ves have been more attentive in giving the bourgeoisie economic opportunities than in responding to the demands of the working class. We have sacrificed the working class in favour of the economy as part of a strategic plan; but the bourgeoisie continues to resist, sometimes boycotting the economy for the sake of its political interests."

The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie readily accepted the economic incentives for increased production—and either funnelled them into the black market or deposited them in Miami bank accounts. The 19 May issue of *Barricada Internacional*

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Soviets Abandon Women, Leftists to Mujahedeen

Gorbachev's Afghan Sellout

On 15 May the USSR began a pullout of its 115,000 troops from Afghanistan. The withdrawal is being carried out as a result of an agreement signed in Geneva a month earlier by Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union and the United States. The accord commits the USSR to terminate its military presence entirely by February of next year. As of this writing, over half the Soviet force has already been sent home. Whatever unfortunate fate may befall those Afghans who identified themselves with the Kabul regime and its backers, the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan is not likely to be reversed. It is thus appropriate to draw up a balance sheet on the past eight-and-a-half years of Soviet intervention.

When the USSR dispatched its first combat divisions across the Afghan border in December 1979, the anti-Soviet din emanating from Washington and other imperialist capitals grew into a deafening clamor. The intervention, according to the Carter White House and various bourgeois media hacks, was the first step in a Soviet expansionist drive upon the oil lanes of the Persian Gulf. In response Carter slapped new trade restrictions on the Soviet Union, reinstated registration for the draft and boycotted the Moscow Olympics in the summer of 1980. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's chief anti-communist crusader, stood rifle-in-hand at the Khyber Pass to urge the Afghan rebels on against the "red menace," the western media sang paeans of praise to the "fierce," "loyal," and "heroic" Islamic "freedom fighters," defending Afghanistan's independence from "Soviet aggression."

What was the appropriate Trotskyist response to these cold war fulminations? It was necessary, in the first place, to counter the lie of Soviet expansionism with the simple truth that the Afghan intervention represented a defensive move on the Kremlin's part, aimed at protecting a client state on its southern flank against a threatened U.S.-sponsored, right-wing takeover. But even more important was the elementary duty of Trotskyists to denounce the hypocritical indignation over the violation of Afghanistan's "national sovereignty," shared by liberals, assorted Maoists, pro-Third World new leftists, and significant sections of the ostensible Trotskyist movement.

In general, Marxists do not advocate the imposition of social revolution upon nations by military force from without. The indigenous working class, even when a small minority of the population, is best capable of leading other oppressed classes forward in revolutionary struggle. Afghanistan, however, is so monumentally backward that the working class does not exist as a significant social force. In this situation, *some* kind



Islamic fanatic: Afghani Contra

Passow—Network

of outside intervention is necessary to emancipate the Afghan masses from quasi-feudal despotism.

The Soviet intervention did not take place in the best of circumstances. The reformist, pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had come to power in a military coup and had little support outside of a layer of the urban intelligentsia. The PDPA was faction-ridden from the outset, and ineptly attempted to implement its program of reforms with commandist methods. This fueled a popular rightist insurgency, which prompted the Soviets' attempted rescue of the regime.

There is no denying that the great majority of Afghanistan's population supports the *jihād* against the Soviets and their allies. Yet Marxists do not choose sides in social conflicts on the basis of the relative popularity of the opposing forces. Rather, we are guided by the social and political character of the antagonists.

The nature of the contending forces in the Afghan war could not have been clearer. On the one side was a government in Kabul which, through a modest program of land reform, a moratorium on peasant debt, a literacy campaign, and a ceiling on the bride price, was attempting to bring Afghanistan out of the feudal darkness in which it had languished. It was no coincidence that the reform-minded intellectuals and military officers of the PDPA took as their model the Soviet Union, which, since 1917, has acted as an emancipator of Moslem peoples on the Soviet side of the Afghan border. The opposing camp comprised as unsavory a collection of reactionaries as can be found on the face of the earth: tribal patriarchs, feudal landlords,



Dilip Mehta—Contact

Afghan soldiers left in the lurch by Gorbachev's pullout

fanatical mullahs and opium-smuggling brigands, whose legendary hatred of social progress is matched only by their reputation for barbaric cruelty. Taking up arms against such threats to their "traditional way of life" as the spread of literacy and the mitigation of female slavery, these champions of "self-determination" found their natural allies in the military dictatorship of Zia's Pakistan, Khomeini's Islamic Republic and, most significantly, in U.S. imperialism, the world's chief counterrevolutionary gendarme, which has lavished \$2 billion on the insurgents. Only those pseudo-Marxists who do not know the difference between progress and reaction could have any doubt about which side to take in the Afghan war.

The Kremlin bureaucracy did not intervene in order to liberate the Afghan masses, but to keep Afghanistan (a Soviet client state since 1921) from falling into imperialist hands at a time when Washington was beating its anti-Soviet war drums with renewed fervor. They also must have feared that the reactionary contagion of Islamic fundamentalism which had just conquered Iran might penetrate to the Moslem regions of the USSR. But, regardless of the subjective motives of the Soviet bureaucrats, the Soviet army had joined a life-and-death struggle against the forces of oppression. It was (and is) unthinkable that the religious fanatics of the mujahedeen would ever consent to share power with the existing regime in Kabul. Therefore, to prosecute the military struggle successfully, the Russian army could have been compelled to extend the remaining gains of the October Revolution to those areas under its control, thereby in effect imposing a social revolution from above. Such a development would have constituted an immense step forward for the Afghan masses, and a significant blow against imperialism. It was with these hopes in mind that the Bolshevik Tendency joined the international Spartacist tendency (to which the founding members of our group had previously belonged) in proclaiming the slogan "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" (see accompanying article).

Afghan Pullout: Humiliating Defeat for the USSR

Today those hopes are as far as ever from realization. The Soviet Union is leaving Afghanistan with nothing to show for

eight years of combat except tens of thousands of dead and wounded. Far from transforming Afghan society, the Soviet bureaucrats from the outset had as their objective merely restoring the *status quo ante*: a Moscow-friendly regime in Kabul. The Soviets paved the way for their intervention in 1979 by engineering the murder of the militantly reformist Afghan president, Hafizullah Amin, and replacing him with the more "moderate" Babrak Karmal. Since that time the original PDPA land reform decrees have been annulled, religious instruction has been reintroduced into the public schools, over one hundred new mosques have been built under government auspices, tribal chiefs and Moslem clerics have been "elected" to the government and the symbol of Islam has been restored to the Afghan flag. By attempting to

conciliate the khans and mullahs, the Soviets deprived themselves of an important political weapon—measures aimed at social and economic emancipation—that could have infused their ranks with fighting ardor and won the support of a substantial section of the dispossessed peasantry. The result of the Stalinists' attempts to conciliate reaction was a debilitating military stalemate.

When Mikhail Gorbachev finally decided to throw in the towel, the agreement signed in Geneva held no guarantees for the present Soviet client government of Najibullah. It took only a little arm twisting from Moscow to persuade the Afghan leader to sign his name to a document that he no doubt perceived as his own political death warrant.

Throughout the negotiations leading to the Geneva accords, Gorbachev acceded to one demand after another from the White House. The Soviets had initially proposed to pull out of Afghanistan over a period of four years but, when the Americans and Pakistanis suggested that they were thinking of something more like four months, Moscow agreed to nine months. The U.S. then demanded that the Russians agree to pull out half the troops in the first six months, and again Moscow agreed.

The U.S. and Pakistan had initially agreed to cease all aid to the anti-Soviet mujahedeen guerrillas in exchange for the Soviet withdrawal. But before the Geneva accord was even signed, George Shultz stated that the U.S. would not stop supplying the mujahedeen unless the Soviet Union reciprocated by terminating all military support to Kabul. Even this outrageous demand, clearly designed to sabotage the negotiations, did not deter the Soviets from surrendering. The deadlock was finally broken with a codicil to the main accord in which the Russians accepted continued U.S.-Pakistani aid to the guerrillas as long as the Soviets continued to support the Afghan government. With a stroke of the pen, the Kremlin agreed to the continuation of a CIA operation on the southern border of the USSR that dwarfs U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan contras! (Meanwhile the U.S. continues to arrogantly threaten to bomb Nicaragua should a single Soviet MIG fighter jet arrive in its ports.) In short, American imperialism aimed for—and inflicted—a total humiliation on the Russians in Afghanistan.

A good indication of the fate in store for Afghanistan after the Russian withdrawal is given by the recent pronouncements of the Islamic fundamentalists who dominate the guerrilla coalition headquartered in Peshawar, Pakistan. Their chief spokesman is Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who began his political career at the University of Kabul by throwing acid in the faces of female fellow students who declined to wear the veil. These "holy warriors" bridle at the suggestion that the old king, Zahir Shah (who is equivalent to a communist in their eyes) be summoned from exile in Rome to head a new government, and have vowed to fight on, even after the Russians have left, for a regime comprised exclusively of Koran-waving zealots. With apparent U.S. and Pakistani backing, the fundamentalists have already begun to impose a virtual reign of terror upon the "moderate" guerrilla factions. One such "moderate," Bahauddin Majrooh, a former philosophy professor at Kabul University, was murdered by Hekmatyar's men in Peshawar last February for publishing a poll showing widespread support for Zahir Shah. If Afghanistan's traditional reactionary leaders are afraid to speak in public for fear of being next on the fundamentalists' hit list, what kind of treatment can the pro-Soviet government in Kabul, and those who supported it, expect at the hands of the mujahadeen majority?

The withdrawal of Soviet troops will almost certainly be a prelude to a massacre. Among the victims will be women who disdain to enshroud themselves in the head-to-ankle veil, women who insist on their right to read, students, intellectuals and army officers, as well as anyone who refuses to bow five times a day to Mecca—in short, every progressive element in Afghanistan today.

USec on Afghanistan: Menshevik Third Campism

While the bulk of the centrist and reformist currents which proclaim themselves Trotskyist have joined the imperialist-orchestrated chorus denouncing the Soviet intervention, probably the most cynical response has come from Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat." An official USec statement issued on 21 March called for:

"a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan without negotiations between Moscow and Washington. The USSR must withdraw its forces from Afghanistan without delay, and continue to provide aid for the Afghan progressive forces struggling against the feudal-tribal and Islamic reactionaries...."

The hypocrisy of calling "for a defeat of the reactionary forces," while at the same time demanding a pullout of the very forces which *could* defeat reaction, is appalling. To call for a Soviet withdrawal is in effect to call for victory to the imperialist-backed counterrevolution. The USec leaders are fully aware that the inevitable consequence of the Soviet pull-out will be a bloody carnival of reaction. These charlatans claim that while they would like to see a "genuine revolution" against the mujahadeen, unfortunately "the conditions for that are a long way from being assembled today in Afghanistan" and therefore the Soviets must withdraw in order to "improve the

chances for this [revolution] in the long term"! (*International Viewpoint*, 11 July). The cynicism inherent in describing the impending massacre of those Afghans who have thrown in their lot with the struggle against Islamic reaction, as a preparation for a "genuine revolution" at some point in the distant future, is breathtaking.



Gorbachev's Afghan withdrawal: appeasing Imperialism

Trippett/SIPA

The Mandelites' visceral anti-Sovietism has led them to revive the Menshevik/Stalinist theory of "stages," which holds that every country around the globe must indigenously generate the conditions for socialism before the time is right for "genuine revolution." But Professor Mandel and his coterie of flabby petty-bourgeois literary commentators and armchair "solidarity" specialists who constitute the USec leadership won't be on the spot in Kabul when the mujahadeen arrive, and so won't personally participate in "improv[ing] the chances" for revolution. Perhaps if they held tenure in Kabul instead of in Brussels and Paris they might view the prospect of a Soviet pullout with less equanimity.

Leon Trotsky, whose legacy the USec falsely claims, explicitly rejected such stagist notions. Trotsky was aware that despite the fundamentally counterrevolutionary role of the Stalinist ruling caste, it is occasionally forced to take steps to defend, and even extend, the social gains of the October Revolution upon which its rule rests. Had the Kremlin opted to crush the Afghan reactionaries and incorporate that wretched country into the USSR, genuine Marxists would have defended this as a step forward for the Afghan masses. In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky specifically addressed the relation between the survival of the social gains of the October Revolution and the backward peoples of Central Asia when he wrote that, despite "immoderate overhead expenses," the Stalinist bureaucracy, "is laying down a bridge for them to the elementary benefits of bourgeois, and in part even pre-bourgeois, culture." To be consistent the USec should logically reject the extension of the Russian Revolution throughout Soviet Central Asia and into Mongolia—after all, these areas had hardly as-

sembled the conditions for the “genuine revolution” which these modern-day Mensheviks advocate.

Afghan Pullout: Fruits of Perestroika

The Soviet Union is not retreating from Afghanistan in the face of superior military force. By breaking the rebel siege of the provincial city of Khost in December, Soviet troops demonstrated that they are more than able to hold their own against the mujahedeen, even though the latter have recently been equipped with American Stinger missiles and British anti-aircraft guns. The Soviet decision to withdraw is only the most outstanding example to date of Gorbachev’s policy of global capitulation to U.S. imperialism and its allies.

The Soviet retreat from Afghanistan follows close on the heels of the INF treaty, in which the Soviet Union agreed to accept the “zero option” on intermediate-range missiles in Europe, at great military disadvantage to itself. Fidel Castro, at Gorbachev’s behest, is now offering to withdraw Cuban troops from Angola and accept a deal that would bring the rapacious cutthroats of Jonas Savimbi’s South African-backed UNITA forces into the government of that country. Aid to Nicaragua has been curtailed, and the Kremlin is bringing increased pressure on Vietnam to withdraw its forces from Kampuchea. And at the very moment when Israel is up to its elbows in the blood of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, the Kremlin has initiated moves toward the restoration of diplomatic relations with the Zionist state.

These betrayals are the reflection in foreign policy of the economic restructuring (*perestroika*) now under way in the

Soviet Union. Gorbachev has apparently decided that the USSR’s “foreign commitments” (read: aid to anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world) are incompatible with his efforts to modernize the Soviet economy. By placating the imperialists on the international front, Gorbachev hopes to undercut Reagan’s anti-Soviet war drive and reduce Western pressure on the Soviet Union. He thinks this will allow him to channel part of the resources now used for military production and foreign aid into the flagging Soviet domestic economy.

Such policies are a recipe for disaster. They can only succeed in convincing the imperialists that the “get-tough” approach to the Soviet Union has finally paid off. This will in turn whet their appetite for reconquest of the land of the October Revolution. The Soviet bureaucrats are practiced in the art of treachery. Just as the belief in economic autarky and “peaceful coexistence” led the Stalinists to betray revolutions in China in 1927, Spain in 1936, Greece in 1946, so it leads them today to deliver Afghanistan into the deadly embrace of khans and mulahs.

Gorbachev’s willingness to abandon the thousands of Afghan women, students and progressive intellectuals who trusted the Kremlin oligarchs, serves as a stark reminder that the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy endangers the social gains upon which it rests. The defense of those gains, and their extension, ultimately depends on the success of a proletarian political revolution, led by a conscious Trotskyist party, which will obliterate the parasitic caste that Gorbachev represents and restore the internationalist and revolutionary mission of the state established by the October Revolution.■

Bending the Stick Too Far...

On the Slogan ‘Hail Red Army!’

Since the formation of our political tendency, six years ago, our polemics with other leftists on Afghanistan have revolved around the fundamental question of which way to point the guns—at the imperialist-backed mujahedeen or at the Soviet army. The slogan “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!”, which we carried over from the Spartacist League, left no room for confusion on that question. But the impending Soviet betrayal in Afghanistan has demonstrated that this slogan was flawed. To continue to “hail” the Soviet army as it cuts and runs is absurd on its face; but any of Gorbachev’s Stalinist predecessors could just as easily have carried out the same betrayal. Thus we have to conclude that more careful attention to the Trotskyist criteria for evaluating the military actions of the Soviet bureaucracy would have prevented us from adopting this mistaken formulation in the first place, and hence spared us the necessity of having to withdraw it along with the retreating Soviet army.

Trotskyists have always been careful to distinguish between *military* and *political* support to the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Stalinist ruling caste in the Soviet Union, for all of its counter-revolutionary betrayals, still exercises power within the framework of collectivized property established by the October

Revolution. The Soviet Union is thus the object of implacable imperialist hostility. In the face of capitalist aggression, the Stalinist bureaucracy cannot defend itself without simultaneously defending, and in certain cases extending geographically, the socialized property forms upon which its rule is based. Trotskyists, who consider these property forms a historic gain for the working class, place themselves unambiguously on the same side of the barricades as the Stalinist bureaucracy in any military confrontation with imperialism.

But military support to the Soviet Union no more implies confidence in the bureaucracy or its methods than, for example, support for the PATCO strike in 1981 implied endorsing Lane Kirkland and the AFL-CIO officialdom who sold out the strike. Just as we point out that unions can best be defended by replacing the present labor traitors with a revolutionary leadership, so we argue that only through the ouster of the Stalinist bureaucrats can the social advances embodied in the degenerated/deformed workers states be consistently defended. To the national insularity, treachery and contempt for the masses of the Stalinists, we counterpose our own program of workers democracy and revolutionary proletarian



Kremlin oligarchy November 1982: (from left) Brezhnev, Tikhonov, Chernenko and Andropov—Gorbachev's decision to withdraw could have been made by any of his predecessors

MoscowNews

internationalism. Thus military support to the Stalinists against imperialism does not imply one iota of political support for them or their methods.

The trouble with the slogan "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" is that it failed to distinguish between political and military support. The Soviet army (which has not officially been called the "Red Army" since 1946) is the military arm of the Kremlin bureaucracy. The army's policies are those of the bureaucracy. Its role is therefore a contradictory one, like that of the bureaucracy itself. Insofar as the Russian army defends the Soviet Union against imperialism (and this was indeed its purpose in going into Afghanistan), we are on its side militarily. If it sweeps away oppressive social structures and replaces them with collectivized property in the areas under its control (and this was undoubtedly *one possibility* of the Russian intervention), we will support such measures. But to support the Soviet army uncritically (i.e., to "hail" it) would put us in the position of having to apologize for the Stalinists when they accommodate themselves to the social *status quo* or undertake a cowardly retreat. And, not surprisingly, this is exactly what they have done in Afghanistan.

Some SL supporters argue that "Hail Red Army!" was simply an emphatic way of lending military support to Soviet forces, against the cold-war hysteria which escalated immediately after the intervention. In fairness, it should be pointed out that the Spartacist League did warn of the possibility of a Soviet betrayal at the time it first advanced the slogan. While the supposed Moscow-loyalists of the Communist Party were wincing and looking for places to hide, the SL advanced this deliberately angular formulation in the face of a wave of anti-Sovietism which was sweeping America. Commendable as this impulse may have been, there is no getting around the fact that taken literally and by itself, the slogan amounts to a blanket political endorsement of the Soviet role in Afghanistan.

As Trotsky wrote, "In order that these two varieties of 'defense of the USSR' [the Stalinists' and the Fourth International's] do not become confused in the consciousness of the masses it is necessary to know clearly and precisely how to for-

mulate slogans which correspond to the concrete situation" (*In Defense of Marxism*). The call for "Military Victory to the Soviet Army" corresponded to the concrete situation in Afghanistan because it placed us squarely on the Soviet side of the battle lines without assuming any responsibility for Stalinist betrayals.

Political Bandits and Soviet Defensism

The Bolshevik Tendency, many of whose members were driven out of the Spartacist League (SL) for the sin of *thinking* for themselves, has traced the SL's degeneration from a genuine democratic-centralist organization into the leader cult that it is today. In the Spartacist League, where democratic centralism has long been a dead letter, the political line is decreed from the top and even the mildest internal dissent is often taken as evidence of disloyalty to the regime of James Robertson, SL National Chairman and Peerless Leader. To deflect all criticism of his despotic internal regime, Robertson routinely asserts that his critics are secretly animated by sinister motives, the desire to abandon the defense of the Soviet Union not least among them. It was therefore perfectly predictable that the SL would seize upon our criticism of "Hail Red Army" as "evidence" that we were nothing but rotten anti-Soviet renegades from the beginning.

No sooner did we raise our criticisms of this slogan at a Trotskyist League of Canada (Canadian Robertsonites) forum in Toronto, than the SL rushed into print with an article entitled "BT Says Don't Hail Red Army in Afghanistan" (*Workers Vanguard* WV, 25 March). This article claims that our rejection of "Hail Red Army" is proof positive that we are about to abandon Soviet defensism in favor of Shachtmanism. WV attempts to support its claim that "the BT is preparing to set up its tent in the Third Camp" with a hodge-podge of assertions so fragmentary and disingenuous that attempting to refute them is like trying to pin down a glob of mercury. We are nevertheless obliged to try.

The article is predicated on a false dichotomy: *either* we ac-

cept the formulation, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" or we deny the contradictory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy and imply that it is "counterrevolutionary through and through":

"What the BT 'disappears' is the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The line of 'Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core,' a more concise and eloquent expression of the BT position, first appeared as a one-sided formulation during the Socialist Workers Party's 1952-53 internal struggle against the pro-Stalinist Cochran-Clarke liquidators....[The BT] prefer the image of soul-destroying, monolithic Stalinist totalitarianism."

This is known as argument by bald assertion. There is simply no basis for such a conclusion in anything we have said. It is rather the "Hail Red Army!" slogan *itself* that obliterates the contradictory possibilities inherent in Soviet Afghan policy from the outset. The 25 March *Workers Vanguard* admits that, unlike World War II in which the Soviet Union was determined to crush the Nazi invaders:

"... the Soviet bureaucracy never really tried to win in Afghanistan because it refused to implement a social revolution. One bourgeois commentator recently recognized that 'The Soviet Army has never committed itself fully in Afghanistan'"

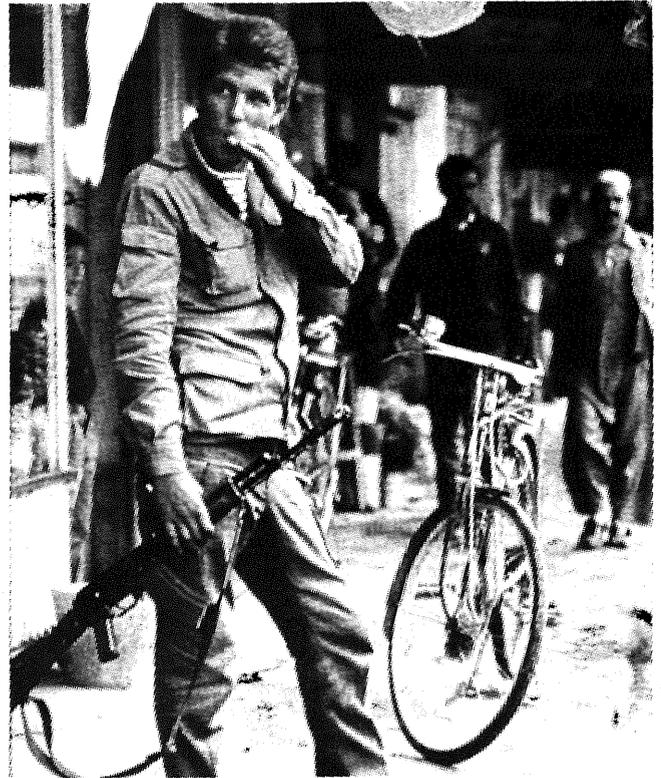
In this context, "Hail Red Army!" roughly translates as "Hurrah for the Army that is Not Smashing Islamic Reaction!" or "Hurrah for the Army that Does *NOT INTEND* to Smash Islamic Reaction!" "Evocative" perhaps, but what does it *evoke*?

The Contradictions of Stalinism

The Spartacist claim that our objection to "Hail Red Army!" amounts to a denial of Stalinism's contradictory character only makes sense on the basis of a very peculiar notion of those contradictions. Is the SL implying that the Soviet military somehow embodies the "progressive" side of the Stalinist bureaucracy as opposed to the civilian apparatus of the Communist Party, which represents its conservative side? On this premise alone can the slogan "Hail Red Army!" be seen as an attempt to exploit the "contradictions" of the Soviet ruling caste—by setting the bureaucracy's left wing (the military) against its right wing (the Politburo).

The Soviet officer corps and the CPSU Politburo are both integral parts of the Stalinist ruling caste, with the former subordinate to the latter. Within both groups, moreover, there are various political differences, including the perennial tensions between "moderates" and "hardliners" so dearly beloved of Western Kremlinologists. But the differences between these groupings are merely tactical and transient. At another political juncture, those holding out for more favorable terms in Afghanistan could become the most vocal advocates of surrender and *vice versa*. Trotskyists do not hand out blank checks of support to any wing of the bureaucracy.

The Soviet bureaucracy is not "monolithic" in any simple sense. There are within it all kinds of factions and shadings of opinion, as there are in any political formation. Individuals committed to genuine Bolshevism (such as Ignace Reiss) may occasionally surface from its ranks. Further, the bureaucracy is a brittle and unstable caste, and entire sections of it could go over to the side of the working class in the course of a political revolution in the degenerated/deformed workers states. This happened in Hungary in 1956. But as a whole, and in the ab-



Soviet soldier on guard in Kabul

P. Robert/Sygma

sence of a proletarian upsurge, the bureaucracy remains committed to the maintenance of its political power. The contradictions of Soviet society are obliquely reflected in the infighting among various factions of the bureaucracy, but such struggles occur within the framework of how best to preserve bureaucratic rule.

The fundamental contradiction of the deformed and degenerated workers states is between the social base of the collectivized economies and the Stalinists' paralyzing monopoly of political decision-making which introduces all kinds of distortions and irrationalities into the planning process, and thus constitutes a fetter on economic and social development. This contradiction cannot be resolved by the triumph of one bureaucratic faction over another, but only through the overthrow of the *entire* parasitic Stalinist caste by a workers political revolution.

The Spartacist League of course professes to agree with this and to uphold the Trotskyist program of political revolution in the degenerated/deformed workers states. However the logic of its polemic against us points in another direction. Could the implication of a left/right differentiation between the Soviet military and the rest of the ruling stratum suggest that the SL is giving up hope in the Soviet workers and banking on some bureaucratic faction to redeem the USSR instead? The SL leadership has not yet fully answered this question, perhaps not even for itself. But, to paraphrase a recent *WV* polemic, maybe a few of its cards have unintentionally been laid on the table.

Whither Jimstown?

The degeneration of a revolutionary organization does not take place overnight. It is only under the pressure of events and in sparring with other political tendencies that revisionist ap-

petites gradually emerge. At the outset of Reagan's anti-Soviet crusade, the Spartacist League correctly adopted a hard Soviet-defensist stance. But by this time the degeneration of the SL's internal regime was already at an advanced stage. It was only a matter of time before the SL, having lost confidence in its ability to lead the working class, began to look around for other forces to accomplish this task.

As the politically stagnant 1980's wore on, the SL began to show signs of sliding over from Soviet defensism into a certain affinity for Stalinist regimes. On the internal side this slippage did not take the form of clearcut political pronouncements, but was unmistakable nonetheless. Photographs of Wojciech Jaruzelski, Poland's military strongman, began to appear on the walls of the group's New York headquarters. This mood simultaneously found external political expression when the New York contingent in the SL's 1982 anti-Klan demonstration in Washington chose to call itself the "Yuri Andropov Brigade," after the Stalinist butcher of the Hungarian Revolution. When the SL mounted a series of international "emergency" demonstrations in 1983, calling for seating Kampuchea's Stalinist rulers at the United Nations, it carried signs hailing the pro-Vietnamese wing of the Kampuchea Stalinists as "Real Khymer Communists." On this occasion, the SL also carried placards "hailing" the Stalinists' reconstruction of the economy. Yet the Trotskyist call for political revolution to oust the Stalinist regimes in Kampuchea and Vietnam was deliberately omitted.

But incipient Stalinophilia is only one manifestation of the SL's political decline. There is also a growing fear of offending the U.S. bourgeoisie, especially at those critical moments when American lives are on the line. Hence the SL's extreme solicitude for the Reaganaut Star Warriors who took their last ride aboard the ill-fated Challenger, and its call to bring U.S. Marines home "alive" from Lebanon during the imperialist intervention in that country in 1983. In 1984, the SL offered in the pages of its public press to "defend" the Democratic National Convention against a hallucinated right-wing threat and went so far as to call on the labor movement to do likewise.

These curtsies in the direction of the American bourgeoisie might seem at first glance incompatible with the SL's recent admiration for Stalinist leaders. But, as the experience of the U.S. Communist Party attests, following the Stalinist lead abroad is by no means incompatible with class collaboration at home. Pessimism about the ability of the proletariat and its vanguard to transform the world is the common denominator. If an organization no longer believes in its own revolutionary capacities, why not play it safe domestically and entrust Marxism's revolutionary mission to someone else far away—like the "Red Army" in Afghanistan.

Although the Robertsonites' future trajectory is not completely clear, they are now in a political bind. They have been unable to construct a convincing rebuttal to the Bolshevik Tendency's critique of their external political flip-flops. As for



Afghan officers wave goodbye to Sovlet Army

Laski-Sipa for USN&WR

our extensive documentation of the degeneration of the SL's internal life, they remain silent, because our allegations are true and verifiable. The SL is therefore working overtime to find a political club to hit us with, and wishfully thinks it has found one in Afghanistan.

In this connection the SL has published a new document on the BT, which features extracts from the debate over "hailing" the Soviet army in Afghanistan and also includes selections from our polemical exchanges on a variety of questions, from the U.S. Marines in Lebanon to the destruction of Challenger. Those who are seriously interested in these debates should not be content with the portions selected by the SL. In *Trotskyist Bulletins* No. 1 and 2, we published the complete texts of our debates on the Yuri Andropov Brigade and saving the Marines in Lebanon. We also have copies available of the complete text of our polemics on the "Hail Red Army!" slogan.

While the Spartacist League apparently finds it necessary to invest considerable time and energy in a continuing series of polemics against our positions, their leadership has consistently refused to face us in open, public debate over any of the disputed issues. In our 8 April letter to *WV* we proposed to the SL:

"In view of your apparent interest in the implications of the correction in our formulation of Soviet defensism in Afghanistan, and your insistence that those who refuse to 'hail' the Stalinists are headed for the Third Camp, we propose a public debate on the question—in either New York or Toronto—at the earliest mutually convenient date."

We reiterated this offer in a 21 June letter. So far, the Robertsonites, well aware that discretion is the better part of valor, have declined. In the Spartacist League today, theory and program have become the handmaidens of a leader whose chief preoccupation is the maintenance his own personal supremacy. The fact is that the SL leaders are afraid to engage in public political debate with us because they know they cannot defend "hailing" the Soviet military, except by contradicting the theoretical and programmatic underpinnings of Trotskyism upon which their organization is supposedly based. ■

Jesse Jackson: Judas-Goat for the Bourgeoisie Democrats, Dixiecrats and Rainbows

"When you keep the Democrats in power, you're keeping the Dixiecrats in power."

—Malcolm X, 1964

Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination stirred the hopes of millions of blacks and working people. Most of those who supported Jackson did so as a protest *against* the fundamental injustice of the racist capitalist system. Yet, despite the illusions of his base, he ran as a candidate committed to preserving and maintaining the oppressive status quo. Jackson is not a leader of struggle *against* the bourgeois rulers—he is a Judas-goat *for* them. In the final analysis, "Jackson action" was a scam to fool those for whom the "American dream" is a cruel joke into getting out and voting Democrat.

In drawing the lessons of the revolution of 1848, Karl Marx insisted that the German workers "must do the utmost for their final victory by clarifying their minds as to what their class interests are, by taking up their position as an independent party as soon as possible and by not allowing themselves to be seduced for a single moment by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeois into refraining from the independent organization of the party of the proletariat." The necessity for the independent political organization of the working class has been an axiom of Marxism ever since.

Most of the fake Marxists in the U.S. have a tendency to forget this elementary lesson. Discouraged by their own relative social isolation and perceived irrelevance, many would-be socialists latch on to anything that moves, and inevitably find themselves adapting to the Democratic Party as the "left wing of the possible." The wholesale accommodation, either overt or implicit, to Jesse Jackson's campaign to carry the standard for the Democratic Party of racism and imperialist war, is the latest example of this opportunism and short-sighted "pragmatism," which has crippled the American left for generations.

Jackson and the Black Question In America

Jackson campaigned as a representative of the "left wing" of bipartisan bourgeois political consensus. He spoke to the dissatisfaction and desperation of large sections of the oppressed and exploited in American society. What really distinguished his campaign, however, was not his populist demagoguery so much as his color—Jackson is the first black to mount a serious campaign for the presidential nomination. His candidacy thus acted as an emotional magnet for millions of blacks, for whom presidential politics has always been an exclusively white man's game.

From the days of the slave trade, the history of American blacks has been one of brutal oppression and systematic dehumanization. Living in the citadel of "free enterprise,"

blacks in this country remain profoundly alienated from the flag-waving imperial patriotism of the Democrats and Republicans. Forcibly segregated at the bottom of this violent and deeply racist society, subjected to constant cop terror, scourged by chronic and worsening unemployment, life in America's rotting ghettos is now worse than ever. Ghetto schools, which don't teach anything, are more like prisons. The drastic cuts in welfare and social services carried out by the Reagan administration as part of their war on the poor, have translated into increased homelessness, malnutrition and infant mortality across America. At the same time, there has been a sharp rise in murderous racist attacks, from Forsyth County to Howard Beach, as the limited and largely cosmetic gains of the Civil Rights movement are increasingly eroded.

Jackson deliberately attempted to run a "color-blind" campaign, and pointedly refused to make an issue of the increasing tempo of racist atrocities. Yet while Jackson attempted to ignore the black question, the racist reality of American society nonetheless dogged his campaign. Jackson, the "life of the party," the man who made the Democratic primaries interesting and garnered seven million votes in the process, was guaranteed in advance that he could not win because of the color of his skin. His eventual rebuff by the Democratic power brokers once again reminded American blacks that they are nothing more than voting cattle in the eyes of the capitalist bigwigs who run the party.

Jackson's appeal was not limited to blacks. Also significant was the substantial number of unionized white workers who voted for him in several primaries, mainly in the unemployment-stricken "rust belt" of the Midwest. This demonstrates that despite the pervasive racism of American society, many white workers—after more than a decade of union-busting and givebacks—are prepared to support someone they perceive to be acting in their objective interests, regardless of their color.

Jackson In Atlanta

If Jackson's rhetoric and the issues he raised struck a chord among the many millions for whom life in Reagan's America is a nightmare, the finale in Atlanta—and the events leading up to it—once again underscored the futility of attempting to reform the Democratic Party. By choosing Lloyd Bentsen, a contra-loving oil baron, as his running mate, Dukakis proclaimed that his campaign strategy would be aimed at right-wing constituencies, especially Southern whites, who defected to Reagan in 1980. "Special interests" (labor, blacks, women, etc.—the majority of the population) could expect nothing from a Dukakis administration. Dukakis drove this point home with an extra measure of spite; he waited for Jackson to publicly express an interest in the vice-presidency...and then chose



Andy Levin/Black Star

Bentsen the next day. Dukakis didn't even bother to tell Jackson, who found out from reporters. This was not an oversight but a calculated insult; it was Dukakis' way of telling Jackson to forget about becoming a power broker and to stick to his appointed role of hustling black votes for rich white men. Jackson's initial reaction was bitter:

"It is too much to expect that I will go out in the field and be the champion vote picker and bale them up and bring them back to the big house and get a reward of thanks, while people who do not pick nearly as much voters, who don't carry the same amount of weight among the people, sit in the big house and make the decisions."

—*New York Times*, 15 July

By convention time, however, Jackson had once again resigned himself to the fieldhand's (or, more properly, the black field boss's) role. The promise of an evening in the Atlanta limelight and a campaign plane for himself and his staff were enough to persuade him that it was time for "lion and lamb to lie down together." But as Shakespeare's Henry VI observed, "When the lion fawns upon the lamb, The lamb will never cease to follow him."

On Jackson's instructions, a threatened floor fight over the election platform was abandoned in favor of a perfunctory

presentation of a few proposed planks (tax the rich, no first use of nuclear missiles, etc.), all of which were duly voted down. A deal was made to prevent the controversial issue of an independent Palestinian mini-state from even coming to a vote.

When some Jackson supporters, ignoring their leader's instructions, held up signs that read "Renounce Savimbi" and "No Contra Aid," and began chanting "No Contra Aid" during the speech nominating Bentsen and during his acceptance statement, they were pressured by state delegation leaders to cease these "disruptive" activities. "In the New York delegation 'we almost had a riot,' according to state Assemblyman and Rainbow Coalition chair Arthur Eve, when 'security guards came down and started inspecting credentials' of delegates holding signs" (*Guardian*, 3 August).

The most significant "gain" claimed by the Jacksonites at the convention was a vague promise to end support for "irregular forces" in Central America. Less than three weeks later, the Democrats pushed a \$27 million contra aid bill through the Senate!

Despite minor tactical differences, Jackson shares the bipartisan consensus on containing the Central American revolution. During the campaign he took an explicitly *pro-imperialist* position on Nicaragua in a nationally televised debate:

"Yes, we should negotiate bilaterally with Ortega. No foreign military advisors. No Soviet base. And if they, in their self-determination, choose to relate to the Soviets in that way, they must know the alternative. If they are with us, there are tremendous benefits. If they are not with us, there are tremendous consequences. If we are clear... the response will be clear."

—*In These Times*, 23 December 1987

Jackson's performance at the convention closely followed the script of his first presidential effort in 1984, as described by Mary Summers, his chief speechwriter for that campaign:

"In 1984 he called for a 20 percent cut in the military budget, for putting people in this country to work and for a new noninterventionist foreign policy. He was not afraid to emphasize how different his priorities were from Hart's and Mondale's. When he actually arrived with his delegates at the Democratic Convention, however, 'peace' became an elaborately choreographed accommodation with the party hierarchy. The 'jobs' he fought for placed a handful of friends in the Mondale campaign apparatus. 'Justice' was his chance to speak to a national prime-time television audience for forty-five minutes, an event in which he demonstrated his personal charisma to millions of people but did not attempt to involve them in an ongoing fight for 'a new direction'...."

—*The Nation*, 28 November 1987

The Jackson campaign, far from an "opening for the left," provided another example of how the capitalist two-party system succeeds in containing potential opposition. As Malcolm X once aptly commented, you cannot make a chicken lay a duck egg. The slavemaster's organization will *never* be the instrument for the liberation of the slaves.

The Function of Capitalist "Democracy"

In the bourgeois democracies, the capitalist class employs physical force on a mass scale only as a last resort. The electoral process is important to the bourgeoisie not only as a method of resolving differences among its various factions, but also of validating its class rule in the eyes of the masses. Whatever anti-popular measures politicians take once in office, they can always point to the fact that it was "the people" who put them there.

Electoral democracy is not without potential pitfalls for the bourgeoisie. The majority of the electorate is comprised of workers and other plebian and semi-plebian layers whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the capitalists. Bourgeois democracies have therefore evolved highly sophisticated electoral machines to deceive and politically paralyse the popular masses.

In countries where the majority of workers are organized into their own political parties, the bourgeoisie relies upon its ability to buy off and corrupt workers' leaders. The popular front—an electoral bloc between bourgeois and workers parties—is also an important means of subordinating the proletariat, through their misleaders, to their class enemies in situations of sharpening class struggle.

In the United States, where no workers party exists, the role of ensuring popular support for bourgeois class rule more commonly devolves upon various reformers, populist demagogues and black preachers, usually operating within the Democratic Party. Their game consists in first building a mass base by voicing popular discontents, and then using their base to support one of the candidates of the status quo when election time comes around. Alternatively, they may seek office themselves, in which case, if they are successful, they get to personally implement right-wing policies. The derailing and co-optation of the leadership of the Congress of Industrial Organizations during the 1930's and 40's; of the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 60's; and of the anti-Vietnam war movement, demonstrate that the Democratic Party is not a "springboard" but a graveyard for social movements.

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Jackson's voting base was overwhelmingly concentrated among poor and working blacks, but his active supporters were largely drawn from the black petty bourgeoisie with a leavening of white "radicals" and left-liberals. The Jackson machine, and the delegates it selected, could hardly be numbered among the wretched of the earth.

"To begin with, both Jackson and Dukakis delegates are far wealthier than the national average. Only nine percent of Jackson's backers (and four percent of Dukakis's) earned less than \$25,000 last year....

"On the other hand, sixty per cent of Dukakis's delegates—and forty percent of Jackson's—have family incomes of more than \$50,000 a year, more than double the national average.

"...fifty-eight percent of the Dukakis delegates, and forty-nine percent of Jackson's, are 'professionals' of one sort or another."

—Express, 5 August

Knowing that Jackson was willing to play ball, the other Democratic presidential contenders refused to join New York's racist mayor, Ed Koch, in his attempt to initiate a "stop Jackson" movement. The 13 June issue of America's leading financial publication, *The Wall Street Journal*, editorialized, "Mr. Jackson, despite his heady rhetoric and rapport with Third World thugs, has on net served as an integrating force in American society."

Jackson's "Socialist" Backers

While the Jackson campaign's role in defusing potential social explosions was apparent to leading spokesmen of the bourgeoisie, most of the ostensibly-socialist left did not display similar insight. Assorted social democrats, Stalinists and ex-New Leftists had been wandering too long in the wasteland of Reagan's America to resist the mirage of renewed influence conjured up by the "righteous reverend."

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), who have consistently acted as rank apologists for the Democrats regardless of the political conjuncture, were determined to jump on Jackson's coattails whatever the cost. Gerald Austin, Jackson's campaign manager, initially turned down DSA's endorsement for fear that association with "radicals" would tarnish the Jackson image. DSA honcho Michael Harrington understood this perfectly: "We raised the problem with Jackson that we want to support you but we don't want to support you in a way that would harm you" (*New York Times*, 5 December 1987). Jackson reversed Austin's decision the next day—after all, somebody had to do the donkey work! The whole flap was unnecessary. Had Austin been familiar with Harrington's yeoman service in red-baiting New Left radicals out of the League for Industrial Democracy twenty-five years ago, he would have known that America's premier social democrat has always kept his promises to the liberal bourgeoisie.

Where the social democrats tread, the Stalinists are never far behind. For the first time in decades, the Communist Party (CP) decided not to run even a token presidential candidate, in order to devote all its resources to the Jackson campaign. And if the pro-Moscow Stalinists of the CP were true to form in supporting yet another Democratic presidential hopeful in their perennial quest for an "anti-monopoly coalition," various Peking-loyal splinters like the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS—led by Amiri Baraka/Leroi Jones) were no more reluctant to look to the Rainbow. In the mid-1970's Baraka had numbered Jackson among "the most corrupt vacillating col-

laborators" of American imperialism (*Black Scholar*, January-February 1975). But Baraka's days as a left-posturer are long gone. The 18 July issue of the LRS's *Unity*, featured a special supplement entitled "A New Day," which included a 15 by 22 inch centerfold of Jackson. The LRS rhapsodized that Jackson's campaign "kindled hope in a new generation as it laid the foundation for a new electoral majority which can change the face of America."

For those who succumbed to the illusions generated by the Jackson campaign in the first place, there was little alternative but to put the best possible face on their standard-bearer's ignominious surrender to Dukakis in Atlanta. Just as it is Jackson's job to sell a rightward-moving Democratic Party to the masses, so his "socialist" camp followers willingly embrace the task of retailing a thoroughly compromised Jesse Jackson to the more critically-minded left-wing workers and activists.

Typical of the reaction of Jackson's leftist admirers is the following comment from *Frontline*, journal of Irwin Silber's Maoist-cum-Muscovite Line of March group:

"There was the elation of having been part of a historic moment and witness to a tremendous stride forward for Black empowerment and the broader progressive agenda. But there was also the sense of having been soiled in the gritty politics of compromise."

"...Jackson sent his supporters home from Atlanta both inspired by his example and charged with the specific and difficult task of working a transformation in the Democratic Party."

The "Rainbow" is a classic example of reformism without reforms. What Jackson "won" was access to a jet to campaign for Dukakis; a few jobs for his followers in the Dukakis campaign machinery; some procedural changes in the method of delegate selection; and a few seats on the Democratic Party's National Committee—one of which just happened to go to Jesse Jr. And of course Jesse Sr. got to deliver a unity pitch to the convention. In return Jackson pledged to do what he could to rope in the votes of the black masses for the Democrats, leaving the party free to pursue its "Southern strategy" of openly courting the racist vote.

Jackson's Fake-Trotskyist Admirers

For those pseudo-Marxists who pretend to uphold the historic legacy of Trotskyism, indulging their reformist appetites toward the Jackson campaign was slightly more awkward than it was for the social democrats or the Stalinists. Political independence from capitalist parties has always been a matter of principle for Trotskyists, and cannot be discarded without renouncing the explicit programmatic pronouncements of Trotsky himself. But the fake-Trotskyist reformists and centrists find it as difficult to resist the pull of any left-sound-



Jackson courts arch-racist George Wallace

UPI

ing "mass movement" as to resist the force of gravity. They were therefore obliged to come up with a formula which allowed them to maintain a figleaf of orthodoxy while sidling up to the Jackson camp. Calling upon Jackson to break with the Democrats and run independently fit this requirement to a "T."

Prominent among those trying to pressure Jackson to the left was the International Workers Party (IWP), American section of the Argentine-based International Workers League, which advised the Rainbow Coalition to run Jackson as an "independent." Unable to tell the simple truth about Jackson to the workers—that he is a fraud and that his Rainbow is simply a vehicle for the preservation of the entire social system which breeds racism, poverty and war—the IWP tricksters promote illusions in the "progressive" character of the Jackson Democrats with their call for this *bourgeois* formation to change its spots.

A similar "tactic" was taken by "Solidarity," an unprincipled amalgam of anti-Soviet third campists and supporters of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat. In a pamphlet entitled "Jesse Jackson, The Rainbow and the Democratic Party—New Politics or Old?" Solidarity laments Jackson's affiliation with the Democrats but emphasizes its "keen appreciation for what is *different* and *inspiring* about this candidacy and the Rainbow Coalition that supports it." Solidarity goes on to praise Jackson's "*generally progressive program* with a powerful appeal to the needs and interests of U.S. workers and farmers, as well as an inspirational message of hope for Black America under siege" and asserts, "*Our quarrel is not with the spirit and message of the Rainbow. It is with the Democratic Party*" (emphasis in original). Like the IWP, Solidarity's bottom line is that, "Jackson should be pressured to run as an independent in November; the often neglected Rainbow Coalition should be a key player in that pressure campaign."

The hope that Jackson will break with the Democrats is as farfetched as the expectation that he will succeed in reforming that party from within. Jackson has made it clear that he has no

intention of breaking with the organization in which he is vying to become a "somebody." Andrew Kopkind reported that during a bus ride on the campaign trail, Jackson and his supporters were discussing the future of the Rainbow Coalition:

"Should the campaign fold into the Democratic Party, remain a kind of external caucus ('a progressive adrenal gland on the sluggish Democratic kidney,' someone had said) or make a clean break and become a party in its own right? Jackson spoke up. He would be in favor of a third party—provided that his could be the Democratic one. Sam Nunn and that ilk could go off and have their own party if they wanted to. But the Democratic Party was too important and too powerful to leave to the enemies of progress."

—*The Nation*, 16 July

"Black Capitalism" and the "Talented Tenth"

Jackson's declaration of loyalty to the Democrats is completely consistent with his entire history, ideology and social base. As head of Operation PUSH in Chicago, Jackson is a longtime advocate of "black capitalism," and has made a career of accommodating to the racist establishment. Well known for negotiating "trade agreements" with Coca-Cola, Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken and various other giant corporations, Jackson has been willing to do business with anyone who could promote his political ambitions. In 1983, in a prelude to his first bid for the Democratic nomination, Jackson visited the Alabama State Legislature, where he lauded arch-Dixiecrat George Wallace as a man of "charisma, stature and grace." Standing near the spot where Jefferson Davis took the oath of office as the president of the Confederacy of slaveholders, Jackson commented, "This has been a marvelous place to speak, where Jeff Davis spoke..." (*Washington Post*, 25 May 1983).

On a tour of South Africa in 1979 he pushed for "operational unity" with Gatsha Buthelezi, the Zulu tribalist leader whose Inkatha thugs work closely with the apartheid regime in murderous attacks on black trade unionists and young militants in the townships. Jackson complimented Pieter Koornhof, apartheid minister for "black affairs" as a "'courageous man' for whom he had high regard"! For this he was denounced by a black militant in Soweto, Tom Manthata, as "'a diabolical Western agent' who was more interested in being elected to the United States Congress than in advancing 'the real interests of South African blacks'" (*New York Times*, 2 August 1979).

In the United States, a thin layer of black entrepreneurs, professionals and government bureaucrats have risen above the grinding poverty and hopelessness to which the vast majority of America's ghettoized black population is condemned. Like all petty-bourgeois strata, this black elite is driven by the desire to obtain its slice of the "American Dream," i.e., to become a legitimate and accepted part of the ruling capitalist establishment. Its quest for upward mobility is, however, severely limited both by the declining fortunes of U.S. capitalism and the pervasive racism of American society. As the "American Century" fades into a memory of things past, there is less and less room at the top for parvenus of plebian origin. This in turn reinforces the racial prejudice of the U.S. bourgeoisie, in whose eyes even the wealthiest of black men and women are still regarded as inferior because of their color.

The black petty bourgeoisie has no other means of exerting pressure for social acceptance on the nation's white rulers than

by periodically attempting to rally the impoverished black masses behind them. And it cannot do this except by appealing to the resentment that all blacks share as social outsiders. This appeal obtains its broadest scope when extended to other outsiders as well—for example unemployed blue-collar workers and working mothers, sectors that mainstream bourgeois



Wilson Goode S. Di Marco Jr.

politicians have long since written off. But these are sectors that the black petty bourgeoisie is also willing to abandon for the first crumbs tossed in its direction by the ruling class. And if late capitalism has no room within its contracting walls for the aspirations of the black masses or increasingly impoverished white workers, the crumbs capitalism can offer to the black petty bourgeoisie are still tempting enough to keep them in tow.

Today's American metropolitan centers—from Newark to Detroit, from Los Angeles to Philadelphia—are more than ever inhabited by blacks and other minorities, and hence cannot be effectively governed by old-line white machine bosses. For this job, slick black politicians are needed. If Philadelphia's white racist tough cop ex-mayor, Frank Rizzo, had bombed the MOVE commune in 1985, the black population of that city would have been up in arms. Only his black surrogate, Wilson Goode, could commit this unspeakable atrocity and survive politically.

For the black middle class, black elected officials (BEO's) represent the success of their striving for respectability. And these BEO's can only maintain their control of the urban Democratic machines by remaining in the good graces of the white ruling class. It was the endorsement of the BEO's that Jackson sought in 1984, and obtained in 1988. It is also to them, and the social stratum they represent, that Jackson is primarily responsible, and for them that he was all too willing to betray the hopes he had aroused among his larger black and white working-class constituency. Calling upon Jackson to break with the Democrats is enjoining him to bite the hand that feeds him—something bourgeois politicians, black or white, are notoriously unwilling to do.

Jackson's candidacy was not a great "historic event" but a temporary interlude in the twisted development of the American working class' struggle for independent political action. The job of revolutionaries is not to promote illusions, but to tell the truth. And the truth is that Jackson's "Rainbow" is not a step on the road to the emancipation of the workers and oppressed—it is a prop for the maintenance of the system of racism and exploitation.

The downtrodden and oppressed in this country desperately need hope for a brighter future, but not a sugary false hope. American workers and blacks need a party *separate* from their class enemies—a party to lead the struggle to expropriate the landlords, the bankers, and the bosses; a party committed to fight for a workers government. Such a party, based on the unions—the mass organizations of the proletariat—can only be forged through an uncompromising struggle against *all* wings of the twin parties of the bourgeoisie. ■

Nicaragua...

continued from page 2

described the results of the one-sided romance between the FSLN and the capitalists:

"According to a study by the Institute for Economic and Social Research (INIES), between 1979 and 1987, 75 percent of the total investment in Nicaragua was public. The private sector contributed 14.5 percent and small-scale production a little more than 10 percent.

"One sees an enormous discrepancy between the effort of the state to stimulate the development of the private sector, and the contribution of the latter in assuring the future development of the country," points out Amaru Barahona, who directed the study.

"INIES notes that producers have used part of the state credit to decapitalize the country, converting cordobas to dollars and speculating with products. They estimate that capital flight totalled US\$500 million in 1987, slightly less than export earnings that year.

"Credit was also used in speculative activities within the country...."

Last February, in an attempt to ease the desperate economic situation, the FSLN allowed retailers to charge what the market would bear, in effect legalizing the black market. The government also pledged to pay export producers in dollars, rather than in Nicaraguan currency. Italian journalist Lucia Annunziata, writing in the 2 April issue of *The Nation*, reports an interview with Jaime Wheelock, another "leftist" FSLN comandante, about this economic "liberalization":

"I have very often been criticized for having adopted this measure, which is seen as capitalist. But, really, how can I pay someone's work in cordobas, which are worthless? Yes, to pay in dollars is a way of letting people maintain some privileges, but it is also a way of defending their standard of living. I have received a lot of criticism about the liberalization of the price of basic foods, such as beans and corn. Now they cost more, it is true, but there is no longer a black market."

But despite all the FSLN's concessions, the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie has refused to cooperate. This year alone, industrial production reportedly fell by a *third* between February and June! On 14 June President Ortega announced the suspension of all wage and price controls and removed subsidies on virtually all staples, a move which further depressed real wages. These measures were met with only limited enthusiasm from the private sector. The *New York Times* (17 June) quoted Jaime Bengoechea, head of the Chamber of Industry: "In a free-market economy, these measures would be correct....But they are not going to revive the economy here because they are not accompanied by steps that would give confidence to investors." Chief among the "steps" to which Bengoechea refers is the removal of the FSLN regime.

Conditions for the workers and peasants who constitute the backbone of the revolution have become unbearable. This has led to a wave of strikes involving construction workers, dockers, mechanics and others against the government's austerity program. One worker told the *New York Times* (14 April) that with one day's wages (26 cordobas) he literally could not af-



Oscar Cantarero

ford to buy lunch: "It's a question of starving on strike or starving on the job... You absolutely cannot live on that salary." The FSLN routinely denounces the strikers as "counterrevolutionary" and in a number of cases has actively sought to break their unions.

In an interview in the 2 June issue of *Barricada Internacional*, comandante Victor Tirado, of the FSLN National Directorate, flatly stated that it "isn't true" that "the main contradiction here is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat." He complained that:

"The strikers' excuse has been that norms and work hours were increased, and that the salary is low. Yes, that's all true.

"It is the cost being paid by the entire workers movement. Or does the workers movement not want to pay a price?"

To the suggestion that, "up until now the workers have borne practically the entire burden of the economic crisis," and that perhaps it was time to consider redistributing it, Tirado replied:

"What is the thinking behind that proposal? That it is necessary to attack the bourgeoisie, those who are benefitting from some dollar incentives? That it is necessary to socialize everything?"



Textile workers in Managua

Ramón/Nueva Imagen

"The workers have to be clear about alliances, about the project of national unity, the strategic policy of a mixed economy.

"This is a revolution of workers and campesinos and obviously the burden—primarily the problems and hardships—will fall on them. We wouldn't expect that the bourgeoisie would take charge of this project."

In other words, Tirado suggests that because it is a *workers* revolution, it would not be fair to expect the capitalists to pay for it! This is the kind of Alice-in-Wonderland logic to which the FSLN comandantes must resort to justify their "strategic policy" of class-collaborationism.

Arias Plan: Neo-Colonial "Peace"

The FSLN's conciliatory attitude toward the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie is paralleled by its willingness to accept as good coin the pacific declarations of the duplicitous, neo-colonial rulers of the other Central American states. The "peace plan" put forward by Costa Rican president Oscar Arias and endorsed by the five Central American presidents in August 1987, was an attempt by Washington's regional clients to isolate and con-

tain the Nicaraguan revolution in order to stabilize their own rule.

Various fake-Marxists, including the followers of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat, trumpeted the Arias plan as a made-in-Central America "victory for peace." In fact the whole thing was put together in close cooperation with congressional Democrats who shared Arias' doubts about the wisdom of the Reaganites' confrontationism (see *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 66, No.3). Arias reckoned that if the FSLN agreed to "democratize" (i.e., to give the bourgeoisie a free hand politically as well as economically) then well and good; if, at some point, the FSLN were to balk, they could be branded as hypocrites, warmongers and enemies of peace. Thus the war-weariness of the Nicaraguan masses, who have lost 50,000 dead in Washington's mercenary war, was to be turned into a lever to pry concessions from the regime. The Arias initiative proved an asset for the imperialists from the outset. At the height of the debate over contra funding last February, the Democrats responded to Reagan's pleas for more money with the observation that, "Seven years of contra war have not achieved what the peace plan has achieved in six months" (*New York Times*, 3 February).

As part of the cease-fire signed with the contras at Sapoá in March, the Sandinistas promised a wholesale amnesty for 3,000 counterrevolutionary cutthroats and allowed the CIA-funded *La Prensa* and Radio Católica to reopen. The signing of the cease-fire was followed by a series of "political" negotiations with the contras on the future of the country. Key to the grotesque demands for "democratization" put forward by the imperialists and their Somocista hirelings is the separation of the army and the police from FSLN control. The "opposition" also proposes that elements of the contras—commanded by former members of Somoza's National Guard—should be integrated into the army.

On 30 May the *New York Times* reported that in the round of negotiations with the contras which had concluded two days earlier, the FSLN had finally accepted the contras' demand that, "an overhaul of the Sandinista political system was needed to reach a peace agreement." Paul Reichler, a liberal U.S. lawyer who acted as part of the FSLN negotiating team, was quoted as saying that, "The Government has... accepted every single point on the contras' list" (*New York Times*, 29 May). These reportedly included demands for an end to the draft, separation of the army from the Sandinista party, dissolution of the neighborhood Sandinista Defense Committees, return of all expropriated property and new elections. The July issue of *Socialist Action* reports that prior to the June negotiations, Reichler:

"had met secretly with contra leader Alfredo Cesar...to work out all the details of a final settlement.

"Reichler said that the political reforms and timetable put on the table at the June meetings by the Nicaraguan government had actually been drafted by Cesar and approved by three other members of the contra directorate.

"At the last minute, however, Cesar and the other contra negotiators raised new demands, and thus the talks broke down."

As soon as the talks "broke down" the contras were off to Washington demanding a resumption of military aid. Despite the conciliatory stance taken by the Sandinista Front, the Reaganites and their surrogates refuse to take yes for an answer, in favor of bleeding the regime economically and militarily. Meanwhile, Reagan's Democratic "opponents" on Capitol Hill, encouraged by the Sandinistas' desperation, are denounc-

ing Managua for sabotaging "peace" and are voting money for the contra murderers.

FSLN Slaps the Right

In July, after a year of fruitless concessions to the revolution's domestic and international enemies, the FSLN took a slap at its domestic opposition. On 11 July, in the wake of a violent counterrevolutionary demonstration in the town of Nandaime, the government closed down Radio Catolica, brief-

Moscow and Managua

The Pentagon and the CIA understand, even if many in the Nicaraguan "solidarity" milieu do not, that there is an intimate connection between the continued survival of the property relations established by the Bolshevik Revolution and the struggle against imperialist rule in Latin America. The Sandinistas are heavily dependent on Moscow to withstand Washington's economic, political, and surrogate military attacks. But this does not mean that the bureaucrats in the Kremlin have suddenly been transformed into agents of world revolution, as the Reaganites imagine. Soviet foreign policy in Central America, as everywhere else, is ultimately determined by the exigencies of the Stalinists' program of "socialism in one country" and the futile quest for permanent "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism.

The fact that the imperialists are not prepared to "coexist" with the degenerated product of a social revolution which removed one-sixth of the globe from their control gives Soviet foreign policy a sometimes contradictory character. Nicaragua is a case in point. The FSLN's bourgeois "friends" from Stockholm to Mexico City share a common interest in maintaining Latin America as a field for capitalist exploitation. The Soviets, however, have no economic reason to oppose the extension of nationalized property forms in the region. This is a significant distinction.

While refusing repeated Nicaraguan requests for the jet fighters necessary to interdict the CIA's contra supply runs, the USSR has doled out enough aid to keep the Nicaraguan regime afloat. The Soviet bloc provides most of Nicaragua's foreign credits; 95 percent of its oil and practically all of its military supplies. In all, Soviet bloc aid is estimated to constitute "around one-third of Nicaragua's gross annual income" (*Manchester Guardian Weekly* 31 July). This is not out of internationalist principles; Moscow calculates that an easy win for the White House in Nicaragua would only whet the imperialists' appetite for further "rollbacks" and damage Soviet credibility internationally.

Many of the FSLN's leftist sympathizers hope that the comandantes in Managua will eventually follow in the footsteps of the Cuban Fidelistas who, after 18 months of trying to reach a *modus vivendi* with imperialism, moved decisively against the bourgeoisie in the fall of 1960. The Sandinistas are not yet prepared to roll over and play dead, but the FSLN is in a very different position today than the



July 26 movement was at the time it began the wholesale expropriation of the Cuban capitalists.

In the first place, the FSLN directorate has undermined the initial revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses with its "strategy" of squeezing the workers and poor peasants in order to subsidize the domestic bourgeoisie's destruction of Nicaragua's national economy. The resulting economic collapse has vastly strengthened the counterrevolution. Secondly, the comandantes are caught between the intransigence of the U.S., and the refusal of the Soviets to permanently underwrite another Latin American dependency. As Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega put it in a speech he delivered on 14 June: "For geopolitical reasons, we have not taken profound steps like those taken in Cuba, where private property has been abolished.... We cannot think of abolishing private property." Whereas Khrushchev backed Castro at every step against Eisenhower and Dulles, Gorbachev and his predecessors have pressured the FSLN to avoid acting as a "destabilizing" factor in the region and to make peace with U.S. imperialism.

At the December 1987 summit with Reagan in Washington, Gorbachev proposed to include Nicaragua on the list of regional conflicts to be "resolved." Thus the Soviet leader signalled the Kremlin's willingness to bury the Nicaraguan revolution in pursuit of the chimera of global "detente." But like his predecessors, Gorbachev has thus far been unwilling to trade the Sandinistas for nothing—which is all the Reaganites have offered.



D'Escoto laments intransigence of bourgeoisie

R. Reinhard

ly suspended the CIA-funded *La Prensa* and jailed thirty-odd counterrevolutionaries, including four prominent bourgeois politicians. This was followed by the expulsion of seven American "diplomats"—actually hand-picked apostles of Reagan's fanatical anti-communist Latin American expert, Elliot Abrams—for their role in orchestrating the provocation.

Noting the intimate connection between the Nicaraguan opposition and the U.S. embassy, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, lamented, "It is sad and unfortunate that these lackeys, these morally weak people, have lent themselves to the interests of the United States" (*New York Times*, 13 July). Like the rest of the FSLN leadership, Father d'Escoto is disappointed that the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie chooses to act in its own class interest. The capitalists of this poor Third World country align themselves with the U.S. not, as this Sandinista priest imagines, out of moral weakness, but because their fundamental interests coincide with those of their imperialist patron. The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie has its own morality—the "morality" of the exploiters. As Lenin noted, "The capitalists have always used the term 'freedom' to mean freedom for the rich to get richer and for the workers to starve to death."

On 14 July the FSLN expropriated the 7,200-acre San Antonio sugar plantation, the country's largest privately-owned enterprise. Jaime Wheelock, Sandinista Minister of Agriculture, explained that the seizure was due to the deliberate refusal of the owners to invest. Naturally the Democratic Coordinator, the legal umbrella group of bourgeois counterrevolution, cited this as evidence of the FSLN's hostility to free enterprise. But according to *Barricada Internacional* (28 July): "The government emphasized that the measure was an unusual one, based on technical and economic considerations that will not change the country's policy of a mixed economy."

Taking over a single enterprise won't make much difference to Nicaragua's shattered economy. The significance of the

seizure of the San Antonio operation is political, not economic. "Basically, we're in a position of signaling that this government is not going to be hounded out of office.... There's no reason why the Sandinista Front has to swallow a political defeat," said Alejandro Bendana, head of Nicaragua's Foreign Ministry (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 7 August). The comandantes of the FSLN directorate are telling the Reaganites that, if pushed to the wall, they are prepared to resort to massive expropriations of the capitalists. But it is a hollow threat, particularly in view of the fact that the FSLN was aware for over a year that the owners had been collaborating with the contras and had *done nothing about it!*

"President Daniel Ortega said that if the expropriation had been political in nature, it would have happened last year when it was revealed that the bank the mill's owners had in the U.S. was being used by the Reagan administration to channel funds to the contras.

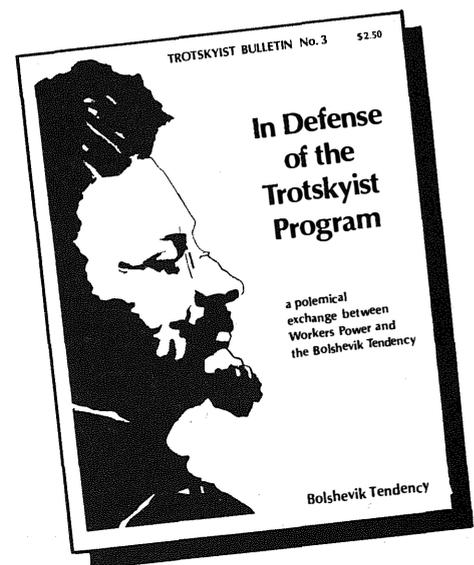
"At that time the owners came to Managua to explain the situation and nothing more came of it."

—*Barricada Internacional*, 28 July

For Workers Control! For a National Network of Workers Councils!

The FSLN's moves against the counterrevolution are a timid and defensive response to the surge of popular support for the U.S.-orchestrated "democratic" opposition. The economic col-

In Defense of the Trotskyist Program



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Daniel Ortega chauffeurs Costa Rican President Arias

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lapse—a product of bourgeois sabotage and the drain of Washington's contra war—has created fertile ground for anti-revolutionary subversion. As Ramiro Gurdian, head of the Democratic Coordinator, explained to the *New York Times* (29 July), "The leader of the Nicaraguan opposition is called hunger. People are hungry now, and when people don't see any solution, economic discontent becomes political discontent."

The economic desperation of the masses, which Gurdian plans to use as a battering ram to undo the results of the 1979 insurrection and return Nicaragua to American neo-colony status, must be turned against the counterrevolution. The answer to the widespread economic sabotage by the capitalists is to wrest decision-making power out of their hands through imposing workers control at the point of production to check capitalist sabotage. But this means a political struggle against the debilitating illusions of the FSLN.

To be effective, a movement for workers control must not be restricted to individual factories and farms but must necessarily establish local and regional coordinating bodies to link workers in the various enterprises both locally and nationally. This in turn could lead to the creation of workers councils—potential organs of workers power—within which revolutionaries could fight for the political leadership of the class.

Nicaragua and the Latin American Revolution

The survival of the Nicaraguan revolution depends on its extension to the tens of millions of oppressed workers and poor peasants in the rest of Latin America. Nicaragua is simply too small, too underdeveloped and too poor to last long as an isolated mini-workers state. But this is not a reason to limit the scope of the revolution as the FSLN leadership claims—for a workers state in Nicaragua which expropriated the national oligarchy and repudiated the national debt to Wall Street, would set an example that could detonate a vast revolutionary conflagration throughout the region. Recognition of this fact, as well as the fear of social upheaval in the imperialist heartland, has stayed the hand of the Reagan White House and

sent the Democrats and their friends like Oscar Arias scrambling for a "peaceful" method to isolate and contain the revolution.

The Latin American bourgeoisies have an acute sense that they are on the edge of a volcano. During the past decade every economy south of the Rio Grande has been racked with high inflation, capital shortages and declining living standards. Output per capita in Latin America has not increased in a decade. In 1987 inflation averaged 185 percent. Payments on foreign debt (now estimated to be \$410 billion for the region as a whole) consumed thirty percent of export earnings in 1987.

From 1982 to 1987, according to an article in the *Washington Post* (reprinted in the *Toronto Star*, 18 April), the imperialists drained a net \$145 billion from Latin America. In Mexico, a country with a powerful industrial proletariat and a strategically important national extension into the U.S., real wages have fallen by *half* since 1982 (*New York Times*, 16 December 1987). Millions of Mexican workers have been thrown out of work as the economy continues to contract under savage, IMF-ordered "austerity." The potential for a social explosion is immense, and the implications of such an event for the rest of Latin America are incalculable.

In several countries in the region sizeable guerrilla insurgencies are underway. The semi-Pol Potist Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path") in Peru has thus far defied all attempts by the populist social-democratic regime of Alan Garcia Perez to contain it. In El Salvador, the U.S.'s lavishly-funded regime of cancer-riddled Napoleon Duarte is fracturing as the leftist rebels begin to gain ground again. There is a rising tide of anti-American (and anti-contra) sentiment even in Honduras, traditionally the most loyal Yankee puppet government in the region.

The Russian Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky saw their revolution as the first link in a chain of proletarian victories. They sought to use the international impact of the Russian Revolution to organize a movement capable of leading the workers of other countries to power. The Nicaraguan revolution inspired hundreds of thousands of the oppressed and downtrodden in Latin America, and created powerful reverberations all the way from the Rio Grande to Tierra Del Fuego. But the FSLN's narrow nationalist vision of harmonious class collaboration within the artificial borders of the Nicaraguan mini-state, and its illusions in the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the viciously repressive regimes of the region, is both short-sighted and profoundly anti-revolutionary.

The petty-bourgeois bonapartists of the FSLN place their faith in the goodwill of the bourgeois regimes of Latin America, not in the capacity for struggle of the masses. This philistine pragmatism was graphically illustrated by Borge when he described a meeting with representatives of the Venezuelan left where he derided their factionalism:

"I said as much to the Venezuelan revolutionaries when I was there, and they became very angry with me. In fact, they still bear me some resentment because I had a meeting with the Democratic Alliance Party and with the Christian Democrats—



Hondurans demonstrate against U.S. intervention

Inney-J.B. Pictures

the two parties which dominate the Right—before I met the Left. No fewer than thirty-five Left parties showed up, and I said to myself: 'What am I going to tell these people?' In the end all I said to them was: 'There's no victory without unity—goodbye.'"

—*New Left Review*, July/August 1987

Nicaraguan Masses Need Trotskyist Leadership!

In Nicaragua, as in Venezuela, "unity"-mongering is no substitute for a revolutionary program. The line of demarcation between revolutionaries and pseudo-leftists on Nicaragua has been the advocacy of a *break* with the bourgeoisie and the expropriation of the capitalists. Such a perspective necessarily entails *spreading* the revolution throughout the region—a prospect which terrifies the other rulers of Central America. The deforming influence of the imperialist world order which plunders the economies of its neo-colonies can only be eliminated by uprooting the whole network of capitalist social relations within which Nicaragua is held captive. The creation of a rational economic order south of the Rio Grande requires a program which extends beyond the borders of a single neo-colonial mini-state.

For some years now, the FSLN and its international apologists have argued that, while abstractly they favor the socialist road, unfortunately Nicaragua lacks the necessary prerequisites and therefore must undergo a period of capitalist development in which private interests dominate—a "mixed economy." The Bolsheviks answered similar Menshevik objections by asserting that the seizure of power by the proletariat was not the final act in the establishment of a socialized economy, but rather a necessary *first step*. The construction of a new egalitarian economic and social order could only proceed at a rate corresponding to the material conditions which existed. But these conditions could be decisively shifted in favor of the working class by the impact of the Russian Revolution on the political consciousness of the workers of the rest of Europe.

The FSLN is not a blank sheet of paper; it has its own history from which it cannot be easily detached, and while it could conceivably be forced to veer further to the left than it intends, it will not be transformed into a conscious Marxist leadership. Proletarian property forms do not exist in Nicaragua and it seems increasingly unlikely that the FSLN will ever try to establish them. If, in the face of bourgeois intransigence or im-

perialist aggression, the comandantes were suddenly to expropriate the owners of the Nicaraguan economy, Marxists would side with them militarily, without for a moment voting political confidence in the FSLN. The best possible outcome of such a development would be the creation of a deformed workers state, not qualitatively different from Cuba, Albania or Vietnam.

The FSLN's attempts to conciliate the counterrevolution must be repudiated. The contras must be smashed and their domestic capitalist backers expropriated. The revolution must be spread beyond the boundaries of Nicaragua to the desperately exploited workers throughout the region. The Nicaraguan workers and poor peasants need a Trotskyist party based

on the lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution, irrevocably committed to a program of internationalist class struggle and a definitive political break with the bankrupt, nationalist class-collaborationism of the FSLN.

The spectacular failure of "Sandinismo" to find a "third road" between capitalism and socialism, i.e., to reconcile the exploiters and their victims, stands as a negative confirmation of the Trotskyist theory of Permanent Revolution. Only by expropriating the bourgeoisie and large landowners, and establishing a planned economy—thus severing the domination of the imperialist world market—can the dispossessed masses in the Third World break free of the desperate poverty and debt slavery to which the imperialist world system consigns them. ■

Sandinistas inaugurate a new battalion

Urraca-SYGMA



From the USec to Trotskyism

Last May, Ernest Mandel's English-Canadian followers in the Alliance for Socialist Action (ASA) held a fusion conference with their Quebec counterparts in Gauche Socialiste (GS) to launch Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste (SC/GS), Canadian sympathizing section of the United Secretariat (USec). This amalgamation stands squarely in the tradition of USec fusions: lowest-common-denominator politics, and an agreement to disagree...pending the next split.

As part of the price of "fusion," the GS, the larger of the two groupings, is guaranteed a veto over all matters relating to Quebec. Lenin's Bolshevik Party was built on the explicit rejection of such bundist practices, as anyone familiar with the famous 1903 split with the Mensheviks knows.

The most significant political event in an otherwise predictable convention was the injection of some Trotskyist criticism by left-dissident Neil Henderson, a former executive member of the ASA's flagship Toronto branch. Henderson's participation at the conference was the culmination of a political fight which began in November 1987 when a loose left wing developed in opposition to the pro-imperialist Esquipulas II accords in Central America. The GS, by contrast, headlined the autumn 1987 issue of their journal, *Gauche Socialiste*, "Victory for Peace in Central America."

While the leftist current in Toronto ultimately proved unable to crystalize into a tendency, several members began to question the USec's tailism toward the radical-nationalist Sandinistas. In late January, this amorphous left wing briefly won a majority of the branch to a position of outright rejection of the pro-imperialist Central American "peace" plan. While this was taking place, the ASA was working with the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) to organize a 2 February united-front demonstration against contra funding.

At the demonstration, both ASA and BT speakers spoke out against the Nicaraguan government's signing of the Esquipulas II accords, although the ASA did so in a very tentative fashion; but even this was enough to offend the sensibilities of the liberal "solidarity" types. The displeasure of this amorphous milieu was sufficient to propel the bulk of the ASAers to the right once again, and to ensure passage of a motion repudiating all criticisms of the Sandinistas' signing of the "peace plan."

By the time of the fusion convention, only Henderson remained firmly opposed to the USec's political capitulation to the Sandinistas. Livio Maitan, who attended the fusion as the official representative of the European USec leadership, twice took the floor to intervene against positions advanced by Henderson. When the main political resolution came up for approval, Henderson was the only one to vote against it.

While the internal fight was raging over Esquipulas II, Henderson began to develop a left critique of the ASA's intervention in various social movements, as well as its political adaptation to Quebecois nationalism and English-Canadian social democracy. He had also begun to grapple with the whole tailist methodology of the USec manifested in its positions on the key issues in the international class struggle over the past decade—from Khomeini's reactionary "mass movement" in Iran to the capitalist-restorationists of Polish Solidarnosc.

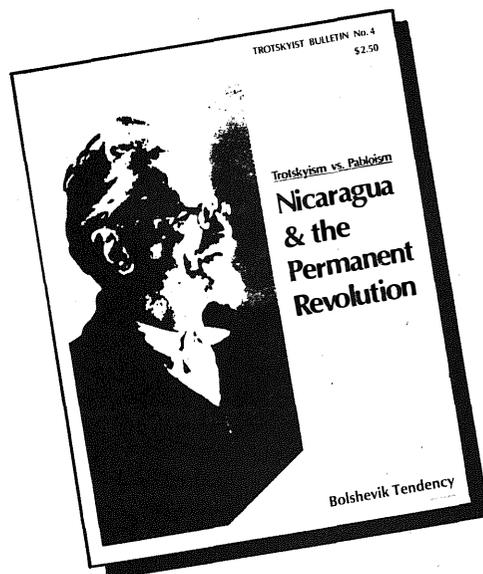
A few weeks after the convention which launched the SC/GS, Henderson resigned. He distributed his resignation statement in the form of an "open letter" which denounced the political bankruptcy of the USec:

"Rather than the program of Marxism, the [USec] appetite is for an objective dynamic. This revisionist current reflects at base a deep pessimism about the prospect of world revolution and is based on a rejection of the necessity of building Marxist-Leninist (i.e., Trotskyist) parties throughout the world in favor of settling for the next best thing—be it Sandinista guerrillas or Vietnamese Stalinists. While it is possible, and even likely, that the building of a truly democratic-centralist revolutionary International will involve large numbers of USFI [USec] cadre, it is clear that as it presently stands, the USFI is a major obstacle to such a development."

In his resignation, Henderson stated, "In leaving SCI do not leave the Trotskyist movement." Following several weeks of intensive political discussion, and after carefully investigating the substance of the differences between the BT and the Spartacist tendency, he joined the BT. ■

Just Out!

Nicaragua & the Permanent Revolution



Trotskyist Bulletin No. 4: documents from the political struggle within Socialist Challenge/Alliance for Socialist Action \$2.50

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Polemic with USec Supporter Revolutionary Program vs. 'Historical Process'

We print below a polemical exchange with Roy R., a supporter of the Fourth International Tendency (FIT) in New York. Roy's broadside was occasioned by Neil Henderson's "open letter" announcing his resignation from Socialist Challenge, the FIT's sister group in English-Canada (see accompanying article). Socialist Challenge, like the FIT, looks to Ernest Mandel, leader of the European-based "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec) as their ideological mentor. Henderson's "open letter," which we have not included here for reasons of space, is not essential to an understanding of the following exchange. (It is reprinted, with other materials documenting his fight for Trotskyist politics within SC, in Trotskyist Bulletin No. 4.)

Roy R. was not always an adherent of Mandel. While a student at New York's Queens College in the late 1970's, he was a well-known sympathizer of the Spartacist League (SL). In 1982 he was briefly a candidate member of the SL. Roy was politically inactive for the next four years. He re-entered left politics as a sympathizer of the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) in New York in early 1987.

It soon became apparent, however, that Roy had more in common politically with Mandel and the USec than with the Bolshevik Tendency. He quickly drifted into the orbit of the FIT, one of three American groups associated with the USec. Roy currently writes for the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, the FIT's monthly magazine.

Letter to the Bolshevik Tendency

"You yourself have experienced in your own person the opposition between the movement of a sect and the movement of a class. The sect sees the justification for its existence and its 'point of honor' not in what it has in common with the class movement but in the particular shibboleth which distinguishes it from it."

Karl Marx to J. B. Schweitzer, 13 October 1868, *The Selected Correspondence of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, (emphasis in original)

Considering the movement undertaken by Neil Henderson, he himself has yet to experience in his own person that taken by a sect. However, that will undoubtedly change now that he has thrown in his lot with that of the Bolshevik Tendency (BT). For the BT's politics are based on those of the Spartacist League (SL), politics which are squarely rooted in that group's very nature as a sect, which under any and every condition must seek to justify its separate existence as such. Driven by such a motive, its perspective inevitably becomes divorced from any objective analysis or connection with reality and entirely subordinated to its own self-justification. *The degradation of*

theory to legitimize the sect's existence; that is the real meaning of the SL's "defending and deepening the program of the subjective factor." For if the reformist's credo is "the movement is everything, the goal nothing," then that of the sectarian should be (and in reality is) "the movement and the goal both are nothing, the 'program' or 'organization' (i.e., the sect) is everything." In both cases, building a revolutionary mass party and achieving the socialist goal are struck off the agenda, for they render both the ultra-right and the ultra-left, comfortably ensconced in their own little niches within capitalist society, null and void as far as their proletarian pretensions go. Indeed, reformism and sectarianism are two sides of the same coin for the interests of both are bound up with the preservation of the bourgeois order.

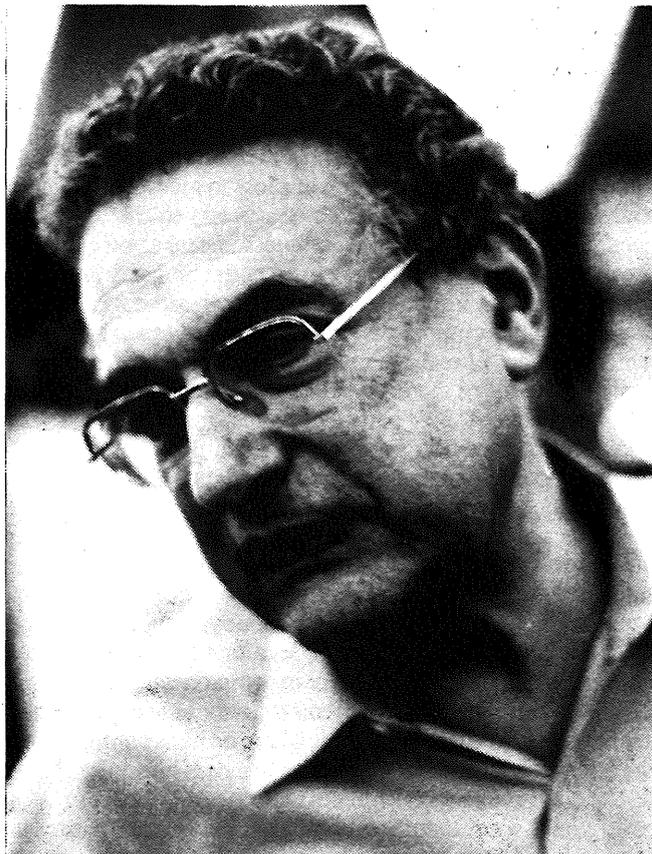
Having lost all touch with reality, the sectarian must either deny reality altogether or "change" the reality to suit his "program" (the preferred shibboleth of Spartacism). To do otherwise is to engage in "programmatic liquidation;" in other words, question the sect's understanding of the world and its relation to it. Worst of all is to raise the question of whether or not the class struggle might be able to proceed (and the working class triumph) without the sect's divine intervention in the process.

Thus, the whole lot of "IC (International Committee) organizations" who were caught off guard by the changes in the post-WWII world and could not cope with the victories of the proletarian revolution in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba have sought to either ignore that reality (Gerry Healy) or distort it (James Robertson) because of their fear of being rendered historically irrelevant by it. The sterile "orthodoxy" that Neil Henderson and his new-found friends in the BT champion means undialectically standing still in the face of an ever-changing world reality. This may be suitable for the "orthodox" followers of the Mosaic faith but it is certainly not the case for revolutionary Marxists, who seek to understand society in order to change it. *This "program" deserves to be buried for it provides no answers to any crises, least of all that of leadership of the proletariat.*

Carried to its "logical conclusion," this line of thought leads to *cultism*, a phenomenon finely personified by both Gerry Healy and James Robertson. After all, if within the multi-millioned movement of the working class, only a handful of "orthodox" high priests are capable of interpreting the holy scriptures, it must follow that within that priesthood only the infallible god-king (or national secretary) has a direct hotline with the deities themselves. Such a perspective leads the sect, just as Marx pointed out, to *counterpose* its movement to that of [the] masses, and in the case of the SL, to *oppose* the movement if it fails to meet the strict standards of programmatic purity laid down by James Robertson. Neil Henderson and the

BT may respond that they no longer swear allegiance to Robertson (after having done so for years), yet all their sectarian points of honor, or "acid tests" in BT-talk, are one and the same as those of Spartacism. For a Spart by any other name is still a Spart!

Having counterposed its own movement to that of the masses, the sectarian has little trouble in contemptuously and con-



Ernest Mandel—USec theoretician

1917 Photo

descendingly dismissing the masses and their movements as nothing more than the playthings of particular leaders. This view of the working class may in fact reflect the internal life of the SL and the relationship between Robertson and his dwindling band of acolytes, but it bears little resemblance to the strategy and tactics that revolutionaries from Marx to Lenin to Trotsky have employed to win communist hegemony amongst the ranks of the working class. How many times did Lenin write of the necessity to "patiently explain things to the workers." Certainly not enough for the Sparts, as anyone who has had the unfortunate experience of encountering one knows all too well.

It is only through common experiences in common struggles that the masses of workers will be won over to revolutionary Marxism and break from the yoke of the reformists; for it [is] necessary for the former to demonstrate the superiority of their program in *practice*, not on paper. Sectararians have been denouncing reformism for years and have yet to exorcise that demon from the ranks of the proletariat. Nor will they ever and odds are they haven't the slightest desire to do so anyway for the existence of one provides an excuse for the existence of the other. To the sectarian, of course, any common action with anyone other than those who are in full agreement with their given points of honor constitutes... "programmatically liquidationism."

Trotsky, however, had this to say about those who prefer not to act at all rather than risk exposing their hollow pretensions and bring into question their self-proclaimed role as "workers vanguard":

"It is possible to see in this policy [the united front] a rapprochement with the reformists only from the standpoint of a journalist who believes that he rids himself of reformism by ritualistically criticizing it without ever leaving his editorial office but who is fearful of clashing with the reformists before the eyes of the working masses and giving the latter an opportunity to appraise the Communist and the reformist on the equal plane of the mass struggle. Behind this seemingly revolutionary fear of 'rapprochement' there really lurks a political passivity which seeks to perpetuate an order of things wherein the Communists and reformists each retain their own rigidly demarcated spheres of influence, their own audiences at meetings, their own press, and all this together creates an illusion of serious political struggle."

—Leon Trotsky, "On the United Front," 1922

Such are the "organizational consequences" that the sectarian's programmatic *fetishism* leads to. And such a program, based on isolation and irrelevance, isn't worth the paper it's printed on, even if that paper is *WV* [*Workers Vanguard*]!

The curtain thus raised we can see that the sect's obsession with its particular shibboleth is what's behind its analysis of important events in the class struggle internationally. Rather than concern themselves with objectively analyzing the given events in a particular country, and using that analysis as a guide to action in order to better be able to intervene in them, the sect seeks above all else to set itself up outside and often against the movement of the masses. In order to justify this it is necessary to resort to slander and accusations of "treason." Thus Henderson, perhaps in order to show his BT buddies how well he has progressed in the Spartacist school of sectarianism, boldly states that, "the USFI (United Secretariat of the Fourth International) has repeatedly demonstrated its tendency to come down on the wrong side in the international class struggle."

Pretty strong stuff! One would assume that "com[ing] down on the wrong side..." means supporting the capitalist class against the working class, the stuff that reformists are made of. Yet Henderson and Co. would be hard pressed to name one situation in which the FI [USec] actually "came down" on the side of the bourgeoisie. That is, unless by the term "international class struggle," Henderson really has in mind the "global class war" of Sam Marcy, whose Stalinophilic politics the SL-BT have come to resemble. Marcy broke with Trotskyism in order to side with the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and since then has had a line practically undistinguishable from that of the CP. For the SL-BT the key question in the world today is the "Russian question" and the "acid test for Trotskyists" is support for General Jaruzelski. Far from being traitors to the ranks of the working class, the FI [USec] has dared to go up against Spartacism's sectarian shibboleth, that "defence of the USSR" begins everywhere from Belize to Benin to Burma to Burbank. Today as Gorbachev and Reagan bargain over how to best thwart revolution around the world, the sectarians will be as hard-pressed to get revolutionary-minded workers to take their "acid test" as the bosses will be to get union militants to go along with their own urine tests.

Henderson's catalog of crimes allegedly committed by the FI [USec] around the world in itself is deserving of little more

than ridicule. To do otherwise is to dignify what is nothing more than a Spartacist characterization of the positions actually taken by the FI [Usec] in the countries concerned. For the Spartacists, obscuring an opponent's position is far easier than confronting it (as the BT itself has come to find out). However, they typify the methodology of the sectarians when confronted by the actuality of a revolutionary situation and the utter bankruptcy of their programmatic "orthodoxy" as any kind of guide to action for the working class.

Thus, in Iran, we are told that the FI [Usec] "criminally tailed Khomeini..." and was "unable or unwilling to grasp, that the bourgeoisie, much less feudal reactionaries, [had] no progressive role to play." Yet if we examine "Perspectives and Problems of the Iranian Revolution," part of the "The World Political Situation and the Tasks of the FI" resolution adopted at the 1979 World Congress, we read that "(t)here can be no 'stage' of capitalist development in Iran independent from imperialism (and that) neither can the Iranian bourgeoisie carry through the democratic tasks...." In the very next paragraph we are told that "the Shi'ite hierarchy headed by Khomeini.... is the key card the ruling class in Iran is playing in its attempt to restore a stable state apparatus and a new bourgeois political leadership in order to crush the revolutionary process and relaunch a process of 'rationalized' capitalist development..." Sounds like real "criminal tailing" indeed.

Henderson lets the cat out of the bag when he quotes Ernest Mandel to the effect that "it was correct to support the uprising against the Shah even though it was *led* by the clergy" (my emphasis). What he doesn't quote is the very next sentence where Mandel states that, "in all conflicts between the new regime and... the masses... we stand 100% on the side of the masses and against the regime." Or the end of the section on Iran in *Revolutionary Marxism Today*, where Mandel states that, "to identify revolution with religious obscurantism is an act of ideological treason... detrimental to the cause of Iranian and world socialism." Besides what were revolutionary Marxists supposed to do? Call for a "military bloc" with the Shah against the "feudal reactionaries"? As the sectarian can only see the leaders and not the masses of workers and peasants actually making the revolution, he can leisurely write off the whole affair with the sleight of hand, pox on both your houses, which needless to say offers no possible or practical avenues to winning the masses over to communist politics and actually breaking with the reactionary leaders of the Khomeini stripe.

The same holds true for Poland, the sectarian point of honor par excellence for the SL-BT. Trotskyists are not going to win over many Polish workers to their politics by forming "military blocs" with the Stalinist bureaucracy. Fortunately, there were no Sparts in Poland to discredit Trotskyism there the way they have wherever and whenever they have made their presence felt. Henderson apparently attributes "the growing strength of the sinister anti-Semitic KPN or the plan to dismantle the planned economy" to the Polish proletariat when it was, and remains, his bloc partners in the Stalinist bureaucracy, that have fostered and strengthened such tendencies. It's no accident that Jaruzelski is amongst the biggest boosters of Gorbachev's anti-working class economic reforms today.

No doubt the sectarians will reply in unison that the bureaucracy's power and privileges are based upon "working-class property forms" which means that they have a material interest in preserving the dictatorship of the proletariat. And what about the proletariat itself? According to the SL-BT, the

masses of Polish workers either have no material interests themselves in maintaining their dictatorship, or else are deemed too "stupid" to realize where their real interests lie, unlike Robertson and his kith and kin in the bureaucracy whom he rightly relates to so well. Thus the SL has taken the elitist logic inherent in its sectarianism to its ultimate conclusion by making common cause with the bureaucracy against the working class. Talk about "abandonments of Trotskyism;" shades of "Pabloism"!

As for Nicaragua "unraveling" the FI [Usec]'s "pretensions to Trotskyism," what more need one say about a tendency (the SL-BT lineage) that actually claims that there is *no* state in Nicaragua almost after ten years of revolution and FSLN rule. Small wonder that Henderson is at a loss to give a class characterization (either proletarian or bourgeois) to the "bonapartism" of the Sandinistas. That is, unless one takes seriously the timeworn "orthodox" catchall cliché of dubbing any and every grouping outside of one's ranks as "petty bourgeois." Indeed, the SL-BT's pretensions to Trotskyism, and historical materialism in general, are unraveled by Robertson's "unique" position that all of the post-WW II socialist revolutions have been carried out by "petty-bourgeois" parties rather than bureaucratized working class ones. According to the SL-BT, the petty bourgeoisie, a property-owning class if ever there was one, can be 'pressured' by imperialism into breaking with its own material interests and carrying through the process of permanent revolution to its conclusion, the creation of a workers state. Better to accord such a lofty role to another class than to another tendency within the workers movement regardless of what it means to Marxist theory, let alone the reality that it is based upon! Such a line has more in common with that of Tony Cliff than with that of Leon Trotsky, only at least the former has been honest enough to admit where he parts company with the latter, whereas Robertson still considers himself to be the last "orthodox" Trotskyist in the world.

It would seem that those who claim to praise Trotsky the most (Henderson manages to invoke the name of Trotsky eleven times in four pages), in fact bury him, or rather the brand of revolutionary politics associated with his name, under a mound of dogmatism and sectarianism. For if there has been any "abandonment" of the basic postulates of revolutionary Marxism, in general or in particular, it has been on the part of the sectarian cultists of "Jimstown" (the SL, as appropriately dubbed by the BT), both past and present. The essence of Spartacism is total separation of theory from practice, thought from action, and party (or rather, sect) from class, along with the wholesale debasing of theory to legitimize all of the above. *That is the real basis behind Robertson's credo that "program generates theory"!*

For revolutionary Marxists, "program" consists of a dialectically interrelated and constantly interacting totality of what an organization does as well as what they say. Genuine Marxist theory, being both a living science and an instrument for changing society can only play its proper role as a guide for action, not as an excuse for inaction, if it is used to analyze an ever-changing reality on an objective level. Otherwise, it stagnates into sterile dogma, totally divorced from all reality except, perhaps, that of the sect...seen through sectarian blinders that is.

Having spent most of their active political lives within the realm of Spartadom, the BTers find themselves psychological prisoners of their pasts, unable and unwilling to turn their backs

on their alma mater. Obsessed with proving themselves to be more Robertsonite than Robertson himself, the BT's each and every act is defined by the parameters of Spartacism. Neil Henderson may have been attracted by the seemingly-revolutionary rhetoric associated with all of this, but in the end, he along with the rest of the BT will be choked by the Spartacist umbilical chord, cut off from any and all contact with the working class and doomed to isolation and irrelevancy even more so than the real Sparts.

No doubt the high level of personal and political integrity, honesty, and dedication to the cause of the working class that undoubtedly characterizes the vast majority of BTers will prevent them from falling victim to the cultism that is today the calling card of Spartacism. Yet there is no escaping from the overall evolution of all sects as long as their underlying basis is still tenaciously clung to. For there is no opening on the left for Spartacism with a human face. No one is looking for a few good Robertsonites. Because the BT is so caught up in the methodology of Spartacism with its programmatic fetishism, it fails to see just what the aura of Spartacism really is. In spite of, or rather, precisely because their entire political past consisted of serving time in Spartadom, they are incapable of seeing just what the stuff of Spartacism really is.

Psychosis, neurosis and a severely guilt-ridden state of mind that yearns for an authority figure to subordinate itself to; this is what attracts individuals to Robertson's "obedience cult," not the latter's r-r-r-revolutionary program. Those now in the BT were and are the exception to the rule that in fact proves the rule.

So if Neil Henderson prefers the movement of the sect to the movement of masses so be it. In time he himself certainly will experience it in his own person. As for myself, I prefer the former to the latter and would rather engage in building just such a movement with the FI [Usec], even if it means making mistakes (as most human beings outside of James Robertson are prone to do) and getting one's hands dirty in the process. Better to be on the left fringe of the "Mandelites" and "Pabloites" than on the lunatic fringe with the Sparts!

For revolutionary Marxism; against Spartacism/sectarianism.
Roy [R.]

Bolshevik Tendency Reply

Despite the bombastic tone and intellectual opacity of Roy R.'s denunciation of Leninist "sectarianism," his critique of our politics clearly poses the all-important question of program vs. "process" as the central axis of socialist politics. Roy begins by decrying our adherence to outworn shibboleths inherited from the Spartacist League which, he claims, causes us to deny or distort reality in order to justify our own sectarian existence. Of course, he cannot be bothered to spell out precisely what these doctrinal "points of honor" are. It is abundantly clear from the balance of his letter, however, just which "shibboleths" are under attack.

Shibboleth No.1: The only class in modern society with the material interest and the social power to carry out a socialist revolution is the proletariat.

Shibboleth No.2: In order for the proletariat to accomplish its revolutionary mission, it must be led by a vanguard party

that embodies its most advanced elements and highest consciousness.

Shibboleth No.3: The degenerated workers state that rests upon the social foundations created by the October Revolution, as well as the deformed workers states that exhibit an essentially identical social structure, must be defended against both imperialist aggression and all domestic attempts to restore capitalism.

The first of these "shibboleths" is the principal tenet of the revolutionary theory of Karl Marx. The second embodies the main contribution to that theory made by Lenin, which guided the Bolshevik Party in carrying out the world's first and thus far the *only* successful workers revolution. The third encapsulates Trotsky's position on the Russian question, and its extension to the deformed workers states created since World War II. These three "shibboleths," taken together, constitute the essence of the program that Trotsky fought for until he was murdered by a Stalinist agent in 1940, and remained the political basis of the organization he founded—the Fourth International.

Post-War Stalinism and the Split In the Fourth International

Roy is correct in saying that the anti-capitalist social transformations following World War II caught the Fourth International off guard. More significantly, they led to a split in its ranks. If, as Roy implies, these transformations were simply proletarian revolutions with a few minor unforeseen wrinkles, he will be hard-pressed to explain what the Fourth International became so exercised about. Rather, the dilemma facing Trotsky's followers consisted precisely in the fact that these revolutions were carried out by *Stalinists*, whom Trotsky had deemed incapable of any revolutionary leadership, and whom he had in fact characterized as *counterrevolutionary* in their international role.

In those countries where they consolidated power, the new post-war Stalinist regimes not only failed to mobilize the proletariat, but remained implacably hostile to any attempt by the working class to organize itself independently. The Soviet bureaucracy created a constellation of nationalized economies throughout most of Eastern Europe. In Yugoslavia, China and Vietnam, Stalinist parties, at the head of peasant-based guerrilla armies, seized power. In none of these cases were the expropriation of the capitalists and the nationalization of the means of production accompanied by the establishment of the *political* rule of the working class. Instead these societies were presided over by materially privileged and nationally insular state bureaucracies politically identical to the caste that coalesced around Stalin after the death of Lenin.

In response to these unanticipated developments, there emerged within the Fourth International two fundamentally divergent currents. On the one hand, there were those—in the International Committee (IC)—who resisted any attempt to revise the basic Trotskyist appraisal of Stalinism or the Fourth International's program for world revolution. They by and large acknowledged that Stalinist parties, under the pressure of war and foreign occupation, had been compelled to go a lot farther along the anti-capitalist road than Trotsky had foreseen; they agreed that the new collectivized economies represented a partial gain for the working class and should therefore, like



Mao talks to peasants in north China during struggle against Japanese invasion, 1937-45

nationalized property in Soviet Union itself, be defended from all attempts to reimpose capitalism.

But they also insisted that the newly created Stalinist regimes—mired in material backwardness and top-heavy with bureaucracies that stifled the masses—were politically deformed from the outset. They pointed out that in the revolutionary crises that had convulsed the world since the 1920's, Stalinism had betrayed the working class far more consistently than it had encroached on imperialism, and therefore remained fundamentally an obstacle to proletarian power rather than an instrument for its realization. Thus, despite postwar events which they understood only imperfectly, the "orthodox" IC current, led by the American Socialist Workers Party, reaffirmed the historic necessity for Trotskyist parties, rooted in the working class, to complete the work begun by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917. It is this legacy that the Bolshevik Tendency defends.

Ranged at the opposite pole in the postwar controversy were the followers of Michel Pablo, head of the International Secretariat (IS) at the time of the split. Pablo's wing claimed that the Stalinists' postwar successes ushered in a "new world reality" which rendered "the old Trotskyism" obsolete. In terms of their long-range perspective this meant that the world proletariat could no longer look forward to socialism, but rather to "centuries of deformed workers states." The Pabloites conceded to the Stalinists not only the present, but the future as well. According to Pablo, Stalinist parties had proven by their victories in Eastern Europe and Asia that they were essentially adequate (if "blunted") instruments for socialist revolution. He therefore urged a tactic of "deep entry" whereby the national sections of the Fourth International would dissolve into the Stalinist parties. There, they would act as left-wing pressure groups on the various CP leaderships, helping to sharpen the "blunted instruments." It is with this tradition, represented today by the United Secretariat (USec) led by Pablo's former lieutenant, Ernest Mandel, that Roy R. has chosen to cast his lot.

Since the split in the Fourth International, the Pabloites have proven that their defining characteristic is not a commitment to working within Stalinist parties, but rather an inclination to accommodate themselves to whatever ideological current is in vogue on the left. This, in the parlance of V. I. Lenin and other "sectarians," is known as *opportunism*. The same opportunist instincts that originally propelled Pablo in the direction of Stalinism, today drive Mandel and his followers toward social democracy and even the avowed anti-communism of Poland's Solidarnosc.

It is not possible in the space available to recount the entire history of the USec's accommodationist meanderings; but neither is it necessary. Roy R.'s letter represents the thinking of his mentors accurately enough, if rather more crudely. It provides a catalogue of opportunist dodges and distortions sufficiently

extensive to illustrate our point.

Insurrectionary Peasant-Based Stalinism

Roy claims, without offering any supporting arguments, that the revolutions in Yugoslavia, China, Cuba and Vietnam were *proletarian* in character. But the countries left off his list are perhaps as significant as the ones he includes. What of Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Czechoslovakia and East Germany? Were these states, after 1949, different in social structure or political form from the ones in the first-mentioned group? If there is no qualitative difference in the end results, for example between Vietnam and Bulgaria, then the difference must lie in the formative process.

The difference is certainly not in the role played by the proletariat. Was Ho Chi Minh, who butchered Trotskyist-led workers occupying factories in Hanoi in 1945, any less hostile to the proletariat than Bulgaria's Georgi Dimitrov? The main difference between the countries of Eastern Europe and the ones named by Roy was that the former became workers states as a result of military conquest by the Soviet Union, while the latter were transformed after the accession to power of indigenous mass movements. But what precisely was the *class character* of these movements? To answer this question one must inquire as to the class character of the peasantry, for it was at the head of peasant armies that the Stalinists—in each of the countries Roy lists—marched to power. Elsewhere in his letter, Roy ridicules the notion that the petty bourgeoisie ("a property-owning class if ever there was one") can create workers states. But Roy cannot deny that the entire Marxist tradition, from Marx to Trotsky, characterized the peasantry as a petty-bourgeois layer. By what mysterious alchemy has the peasantry been transmuted into the proletariat?

Roy's mentor Ernest Mandel "solves" this thorny theoretical problem by asserting that *only* proletarian parties could uproot bourgeois property. In a December 1982 polemic with Doug Jenness of the Socialist Workers Party, who used the fact



Castro proclaims victory, 1 January 1959

that Stalinist-led peasant movements had on several occasions overturned capitalist property as an argument for reviving the Menshevik two-stage theory, Mandel asserted:

“the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, not to mention the Chinese Communist Party, which have been the historical instruments of the destruction of capitalist property and peasant property, can only be considered a ‘peasant’ army or party by emptying Marxist class analysis of all its substance.”

Mandel’s argument for the “proletarian” character of the PLA is pure tautology. He asserts that the peasantry as a class can only be:

“centralized either under bourgeois leadership—in which case the revolution heads for certain defeat—or under proletarian leadership (even though it may be extremely bureaucratized, as in China) and in that case, and that case only, the victory of the revolution is possible.”

In fact the outcome of the Chinese revolution, and the other peasant-based insurrections which overthrew capitalist property since World War II demonstrate that, in certain specific historical situations, private property in the means of production can be ended by *non-proletarian* social movements.

Cuba and Marxist Theory

We are glad that Roy has chosen to include Cuba in his list of proletarian revolutions. For in the other three instances (China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam) the nature of these revolutions is partly obscured by the fact that the parties leading them

retained the *title* of “Communist” and had at one time been worker-based. Cuba, on the other hand, provides a clarifying case precisely because the July 26th Movement (M-26) that brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959 had no historic connection with the Communist International or the workers movement. Not only were its cadres drawn almost exclusively from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia; its base consisted of perhaps a thousand peasants recruited in the Sierra Maestra. Its propaganda contained none of the familiar rhetoric of Stalinism. Most importantly, its program—far from aiming at socialism—did not even call for extensive land reform or the nationalization of industry, but was limited to the demand for the restoration of the pre-Batista “democratic” constitution of 1940. And yet, only twenty-one months after riding into Havana, Castro found himself at the head of a nationalized economy and a member of the “Soviet bloc.”

The particular episodes of this drama are well known. As a simple matter of self-preservation, Castro upon assuming power dismantled the repressive apparatus (army and police) of the pro-U.S. Batista regime he had just overthrown. This did not sit well with Washington, which suspected Castro of having been a crypto-communist all along. The increased hostility of U.S. imperialism left Castro with nowhere to turn but to the Cuban worker and peasant masses, whose hopes for social justice had been aroused by the ouster of the hated Batista dictatorship. To consolidate his power base, Castro issued a series of extensive land reform and rent-reduction decrees. These measures caused a split within the government that the July 26th Movement had initially installed. When Castro ousted the

bourgeois elements who resisted his land reforms, relations with Washington became strained to the breaking point and Castro began to turn to the Soviet Union, with which he signed a series of trade and military agreements. The climax came in the autumn of 1960 when Castro, in response to a total economic blockade imposed by the Eisenhower administration, announced the nationalization of the extensive U.S. holdings which, up to that point, had dominated the Cuban economy.

Thus a band of radical petty-bourgeois democrats was propelled by the dual pressure of imperialism and its own plebeian base, along a course that ended in a society qualitatively the same as those of Eastern Europe and China, i.e. a *deformed workers state*.

The forerunner of the Spartacist League (the Revolutionary Tendency [RT]) crystallized as a faction within the American Socialist Workers Party in opposition to the increasingly reformist drift of that party and its unbounded adulation of Castro. According to the RT, the Cuban revolution possessed a theoretical significance at least as great as its political impact: it provided the key to understanding the postwar revolutions that had so perplexed Trotsky's followers. The RT argued that, despite their proletarian origins and rhetoric, the Stalinist parties that seized power in Vietnam, Yugoslavia and China were far closer to Castro's M-26 than to the Bolshevik Party of 1917.

Tim Wohlforth, at that time a leading RT spokesman, explained this position so clearly that he bears quoting at length:

"The motive force for the transformation of the Eastern European countries (excluding Yugoslavia) into deformed workers states was the Soviet Army. The working class played essentially a dispersed, passive role in these events. The motive force behind the Chinese Revolution which deposited Mao and Co. in power was primarily the peasantry....The transformation of China into a deformed workers state was instituted, not by the working class of China nor primarily because of great pressure from the working class—it was carried through on top on the initiative of the Maoist bureaucracy itself as a defensive act against imperialism.

"Cuba makes this process all the more clear precisely because of the central *unique* feature of the Cuban Revolution—that the transformation into a deformed workers state occurred under the leadership of a party which was not even ostensibly 'working class,' by a non-Stalinist petty-bourgeois formation.

"Thus the Cuban experience not only illustrates the small role the working class plays in these transformations; it also suggests that the so-called 'working class' nature of the Stalinist parties in many of these colonial countries has been given too much emphasis as well. The fact that Castro's 26th of July Movement was able to carry through a social transformation in an almost identical manner as Mao's CCP reflects...the essential identity in nature of the CCP and the M-26. Both parties were essentially petty-bourgeois formations—petty-bourgeois in the class nature of their *leadership*, their *membership*, their *mass base*, and their *ideology*.

"While the ideology of the Stalinists contains certain socialist elements within it and in this respect is different from that of the M-26, it is questionable as to whether these elements essentially changed the nature of the movement. This is especially doubtful when one realizes that the Stalinist perversion of socialist ideology is precisely in the direction of petty-bourgeois nationalism. Thus these parties must be viewed... as essentially the instruments of the petty-bourgeois classes in society—not as even distorted instruments of the working class."

"Cuba and the Deformed Workers States," 20 July 1961

If workers have as little to do with running these societies as they did with creating them (which is indeed the case), by what historical or theoretical right do Trotskyists persist in calling them *workers states*, deformed or otherwise? Wohlforth answered as follows:

"Because of the extreme crisis of capitalism together with the crisis of leadership of the working class, these essentially intermediate social classes have been able to play an extremely radical role which the Marxist movement earlier had not foreseen—they were able to break with capitalism itself. However, their very radical actions proved the essential *weakness* of these social strata—while they were able to negatively smash the capitalist system they have been unable to positively substitute their own rule for the rule of the capitalists. Rather they are forced to lay the economic basis for the rule of another class—the working class—a class which they in reality distrust and despise. While on the one hand their very historical weakness as an intermediate social class forces them to create property for another class, the crisis of leadership of the working class allows them to consolidate a political rule inimical to the working class. Thus the development of a bureaucratic caste and the necessity of political revolution."

Implicit in Wohlforth's whole argument is the notion that collectivized property, although it can be brought into being by petty-bourgeois forces rather than the proletariat, cannot achieve its full breadth and scope without workers democracy and a further unfolding of international revolution. Because collectivized property requires workers rule to insure its future on this planet, it is a property form to which the working class retains the historical title. But where proletarian property forms were created by non-proletarian forces hostile to workers rule and world revolution, those petty-bourgeois forces, once in power, are inevitably compelled to replicate the function of the Stalinist ruling caste in the Soviet Union and erect bureaucratic obstacles to the revolution's further development.

The states which today embody workers' property forms (except the USSR, which was born in genuine proletarian revolution but which *degenerated*) may thus be said to be *deformed*, i.e., crippled from birth. To open the road to socialism they require a political revolution, in which the workers sweep away their respective bureaucracies and put in their place the genuine instruments of working-class democratic rule. In this way, the Revolutionary Tendency cut the knot of theoretical difficulties that had surrounded the postwar social transformations.

Roy asserts that the above theorization represents a distortion of reality in order to justify the Spartacist League's (and derivatively the BT's) sectarian existence. But the SL had not even come into being at the time this analysis was first formulated. The RT's conclusions from the events in Cuba were not only empirically well grounded, but also represented the *only* theorization of post-war revolutionary experience that upheld the program of Permanent Revolution.

Solidarnosc: A Mass Movement for Capitalist Restoration

For many years Ernest Mandel, the leading light of the USec, has specialized in inventing sophisticated "Marxist" theoretical reasons for tailing whatever political trends are in favor with the "broad left." Roy, who has absorbed the spirit of Mandel's opportunism, is less accomplished in the art of

theoretical embellishment. With a baldness that might embarrass his mentor, he proclaims his desire to be in step with the "multi-millioned movement of the masses" with no apparent regard for who is leading such a movement or what its aims are. Roy may question our particular criteria for deciding which "mass movements" to support and which to oppose. But can he seriously argue that no such criteria exist for Marxists and that anyone claiming otherwise is sectarian by definition?

Of all the positions the Bolshevik Tendency has retained from the Spartacist League, our opposition to Poland's Solidarnosc is by far the hardest pill for centrists to swallow. This is due not only to Solidarnosc's enormous popularity in the West, but also to the fact that this movement was organized and led principally by workers and commanded the support of the overwhelming majority of Poland's working class. The working class, according to Marxist theory, is supposed to be the agent of historical progress. That the Solidarnosc leadership was in fact reactionary, did aim at capitalist restoration and was indeed making a bid for state power in 1981 has been extensively documented in a separate BT pamphlet (*Solidarnosc: Acid Test for Trotskyists*). But is it conceivable, demand the centrists in union, that ten million Polish workers could have been deluded concerning their own interests, and is it ever permissible to side with the Stalinist bureaucracy against the workers? We answer both of these questions in the affirmative, and can perhaps make our position clearer by means of an analogy.

Trotsky likened the Stalinized USSR to a bureaucratized trade union: a workers organization dominated by a privileged officialdom that identifies more with the bourgeoisie than the proletariat. Let us now take this comparison one step further. Suppose workers in a given plant have been sold out so many times by the national union leadership that sentiment begins to grow among them to break with the union altogether, i.e., to decertify. In this plant a small minority of class-conscious workers tries, as Roy says, to "patiently explain to the workers" that, rotten as the union brass is, the union is the workers' last line of defense against the bosses and to decertify it would be a mistake. But there is also an organized right-wing caucus which is fanning the anti-union sentiment. These elements propose to run a slate of candidates in the upcoming local election pledged to organize an immediate decertification. As a sop to those workers who dislike paying dues money to a bunch of corrupt piccards in the national office, but who still think that some kind of collective bargaining is necessary, the right wingers promise to set up an employees' association *after* the decertification goes through. Management greets this development with enthusiasm and makes funds and facilities available for the dissidents. When the vote is taken the right wing caucus wins overwhelmingly, thus setting the stage for decertification. At this point the national office of the union moves to head off decertification by suspending the elected leadership at the plant and appointing an interim slate more to its liking.

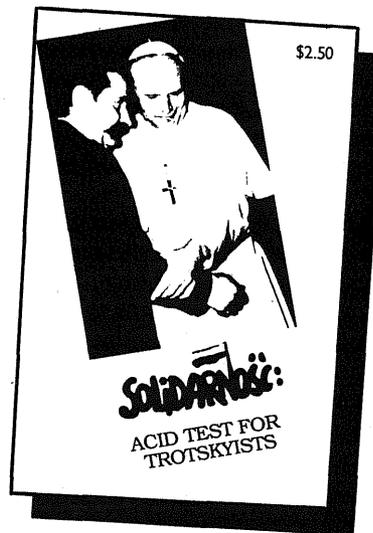
This situation, while hypothetical, is not at all inconceivable. Can there be any doubt that Trotskyists in such circumstances would consider the bureaucrats' removal of the democratically elected local leaders as a lesser evil? While not in any way absolving the bureaucracy of the countless betrayals that have caused the workers to turn against the union, the militants would be forced to acknowledge that *in this particular situation* the actions of the bureaucracy temporarily averted the union's total extinction. While not addressing the root of the problem, it at least gains some time for the class-conscious ele-

ments to turn the legitimate hostility of the ranks away from the union as an institution and toward the corrupt leadership.

The existence of the corrupt and bureaucratically-dominated trade unions of the AFL-CIO represent a historic gain for the working class; the collectivized economies of the degenerated and deformed workers states are an even greater gain, and are preferable from the vantage point of the workers' long-term interests to a "free market" economy. And when the workers living under a collectivized economy are driven by decades of Stalinist arrogance and ineptitude into the arms of a leadership that equates bureaucratic mismanagement with collectivized property as such, and tells them that they would be better off under capitalism, then it is the duty of Trotskyists to prevent such misleaders from seizing the reins of state power.

Does Roy doubt that Walesa and Co. intended to restore capitalism? No other conclusion can be drawn about an organization that hailed the election of Ronald Reagan, looked to the most reactionary pope in decades as its spiritual leader, invited a known CIA labor operative to its congress, deleted all mention of socialism from its program, invoked the memory of the White Guard Josef Pilsudski, and adopted an economic program calling for the dismantling of the state-owned economy? For Roy to compare this overtly restorationist movement with the heroic pro-socialist uprising of the Hungarian workers in 1956, is obscene. Recently it has come to light that

Solidarnosc: Acid Test for Trotskyists



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Toronto, Canada



Iran 1978-79: USec hailed Khomeini's revolution, Trotskyists said "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs!"

Solidarnosc has willingly accepted more than \$5 million in cash and supplies from the U.S. Congress and State Department over the past three years. If these facts are insufficient to convince Roy of Solidarnosc's counterrevolutionary intentions, we must conclude that nothing short of an actual capitalist restoration in Poland would change his mind.

Iran: USec Capitulates to Islamic Reaction

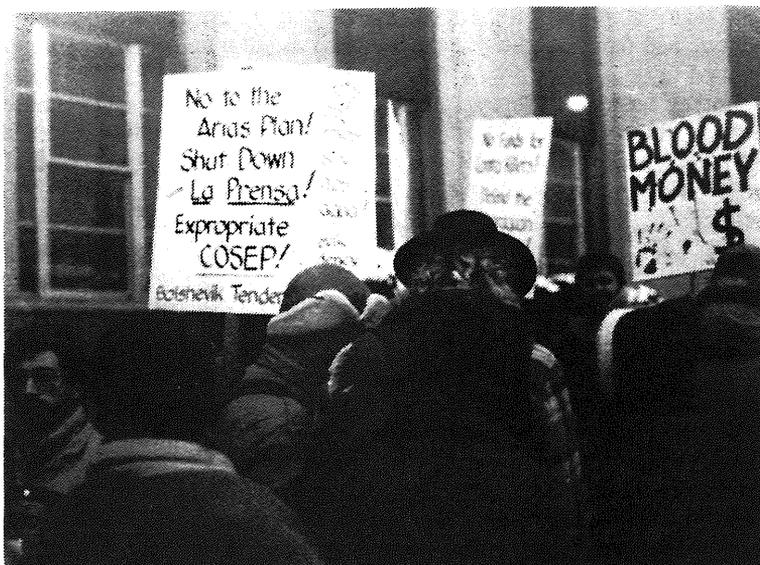
Roy's polemic at least has the virtue of consistency. He shrinks from nothing in embracing the record of the USec, even its most grotesque betrayals. It will be recalled that the Spartacist League responded to the 1979 Iranian upheaval with the slogan "Down with the Shah! Down with the Mullahs!" The rest of the left, including the USec, tailed Khomeini. Roy derides Neil Henderson's charge of Khomeini-tailing as a ludicrous Spartacist caricature of the USec position, and to prove his point quotes Mandel to the effect that Marxists should have supported the Iranian masses against the Shah *despite the fact that they were led by Islamic reactionaries*. But the Iranian masses were at that time supporting Khomeini's power bid. What, therefore, is the operational significance of the distinction between leadership and "masses" in this case? The distinction makes sense only if one assumes that the automatic workings of the "revolutionary process" can transcend reactionary leadership.

To support a mass movement and/or a "revolutionary process" *despite* the hegemony of leaders one admits are reactionary, presumes that the masses engaged in this political mobilization will spontaneously move in some direction dif-

ferent from that advocated by their leaders and produce some result other than the accession of those same leaders to power. Were the Iranian masses, without alternative leadership, capable of sidestepping Khomeini and guiding the 1979 insurrection toward some more progressive outcome? Was Khomeini's triumph the mere prelude to some further unfolding of a "revolutionary process" which would ultimately install the workers in power? The differences between the SL and the USec over Iran turned upon the answers to these questions.

Roy seems to forget that the answers no longer require *foresight*, but can be supplied with the advantage of nearly a decade's *hindsight*. Were Khomeini and his henchmen tossed aside by a leftward-surging mass movement? According to our latest information, the Imam is likely to die in office, and his designated successors are now moving to mend fences with U.S. imperialism. Did the "Iranian Revolution" result in any significant social gains for the masses? Ask the millions of Iranian women who cannot venture out of doors without donning the *chador*. Did the revolution at least create a democratic opening for the workers movement and the left, like the February Revolution that overthrew the Czar in 1917? Ask the fifteen militants of the now-outlawed Tudeh Party (Iranian CP) and People's Fedayeen who currently face execution at the hands of the Islamic Republic. Better still, Roy can consult the surviving comrades of the HKE and the HKS (the two Iranian USec affiliates), who have either been imprisoned or driven into exile. The fact that many of these militants to this day defend their support of Khomeini in 1979 simply attests to their refusal to learn the lessons of history, even when those lessons are written in their own blood.

But, retorts Roy, you sectarians won't even be able to talk to workers if you insist on counterposing your own dogmas to their mighty, multi-millioned movement! Now, we would be the last ones to argue against talking to workers. The question, however, is: what do you say to these workers once you have their ear? If you believe that the only way you will get them to listen is by repeating (perhaps with a few "Marxist" caveats and qualifications) what they already think, or rather what their misleaders have encouraged them to think, they will correctly conclude that you have little new to offer, and continue on the same course as before. The more astute among them might even observe that you are not attempting to persuade, but to *ingratiate yourself* and conclude that the Marxism to which you give lip service cannot be worth much. Anyone attempting to propound a new or unfamiliar way of thinking must at least temporarily endure a certain degree of unpopularity. Those who shrink from counterposing their program to the present political consciousness of the masses are not in the business of *leading* but of *following*.



February 1988: BT and ASA/SC co-sponsor demo against contras

On the United Front

One tactic employed by Trotskyists to win people to their program is the united front. The united front is defined in the Leninist tradition as cooperation between a revolutionary party and other organizations which do not share its program, in pursuit of supportable, limited and clearly defined objectives. As a condition of their participation, Leninists insist only that they be accorded full freedom to say and do anything that does not contradict the immediate demands of the united front—including the freedom to voice their differences with their non-revolutionary collaborators over broader political questions.

Roy accuses "sectarians" of refusing to participate in united-front actions for fear of compromising their doctrinal purity. And it is undeniable that the Spartacist League has in recent years shied away from even the most principled cooperation with other groups because of its dread that contact with anyone it does not control could undermine its members' faith in the absolute wisdom of their leadership. But, because Roy's broadside is directed against the Bolshevik Tendency as well, we can only assume that he is also charging us with such sectarian cowardice. For this charge, as for the others, no evidence is offered. The most cogent refutation of this charge is our political record.

In 1984, supporters of the External Tendency of the iSt (the BT's immediate precursor) initiated a labor boycott of South African cargo aboard the freighter *Nedlloyd Kimberley*—to our knowledge the only labor strike against apartheid in U.S. history. We are flattered by Roy's inference that we, by ourselves, were capable of idling this cargo for eleven days in San Francisco. In fact, the boycott was successful because the officers of Local 10 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) were forced by rank-and-file pressure to go along with it, and because longshore workers—including black nationalists, Communist Party supporters, and union members of no political affiliation—were determined to carry it out. We did not hesitate to cooperate with all groups and individuals in this boycott—or to expose the bureaucrats and the CP when they caved in to an injunction against it. We

can also point to the ongoing work of our Bay Area local in the Committee to Free Moses Mayekiso—a trade-union militant facing the death sentence in South Africa. Most significant of all for our current polemical purpose is our recent work with Roy's Canadian co-thinkers of Socialist Challenge (known before May as the Alliance for Socialist Action and referred to herein after as ASA/SC) in the Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition (TAIC). Here we can directly contrast our own actions with Mandel's Toronto co-thinkers to see who was the more consistent in upholding united-front principles.

The TAIC was formed as a reformist propaganda bloc devoted to opposing U.S. intervention in Central America. In November of last year, a fight broke out in the coalition when the Communist Party and the Canadian followers of Jack Barnes in the Revolutionary Workers League demanded a formal endorsement of the Esquipulas II accords, also known as the Arias plan. The accords, which the Sandinistas had just signed, bind them, among other things, to legalize the CIA-backed opposition in Nicaragua and to release thousands of Somoza's bloodthirsty former National Guardsmen from prison. Elements of the ASA/SC at that time held a position considerably to the left of the U.S. international leadership, which has hailed Ortega's acceptance of the Arias plan as a victory. At the TAIC convention, the ASA/SC voted against endorsing Esquipulas II. At this point the reformists walked out of the TAIC.

Several months later, after the TAIC had been reconstituted as a principled united front and the BT had joined, it was decided to call a demonstration against continued U.S. funding for the contra mercenaries. The demonstration was organized as a united front, and each organization that participated was granted speaking rights. In early February, a crowd of over three hundred demonstrators heard a BT speaker denounce the Arias plan, while firmly opposing all U.S. (and Canadian) intervention in Central America. The ASA/SC speaker also criticized this Sandinista retreat, although more equivocally. A representative of Canadian Action for Nicaragua reaffirmed their support for the Arias plan from the platform. While the mobilization was successful in terms of numbers, it also created a minor political furor in Toronto. The rad-lib Central

American "solidarity" milieu was scandalized by the fact that anyone had dared to criticize the Sandinistas at an anti-intervention rally.

In response to reformist pressure, ASA/SC executed an abrupt about-face. At a subsequent TAIC meeting the ASA/SC's leader proceeded to ram through a series of motions which blew apart the united front. He argued that to allow groups like the BT to speak at future rallies would "alienate" TAIC's liberal friends. When his motions passed, the BT resigned from TAIC. The ASA/SC subsequently proclaimed Esquipulas II as a "victory" and "a danger" to the Nicaraguan revolution (see *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 4). These events played a direct role in Neil Henderson's eventual decision to quit the ASA/SC and join the BT.

The ASA/SC's political zig-zags provide a textbook illustration of the *modus operandi* of fake-leftists. In *My Life*, his autobiography, Trotsky described this same phenomenon in the Russian workers movement:

"The leader of the Mensheviks, Martov, must be counted as one of the most tragic figures of the revolutionary movement. A gifted writer, an ingenious politician, a penetrating thinker, Martov stood far above the intellectual movement of which he became the leader. But his thought lacked courage; his insight was devoid of will....Martov's initial reaction to events always showed a revolutionary trend of thought. Immediately, however, his thought, which lacked the support of a live will, died down."

If our contemporary Mensheviks lack Martov's gifts and tragic pathos, they at least share the worst elements of his political psychology. On rare occasions their initial impulses might incline them to take a principled stand. When confronted, however, with the consequences of upholding such a position consistently, when subjected to the slightest pressure from the reformist milieu in which they thrive, they will invariably swallow their principles and side with the reformists against the revolutionary left.

In our work with the TAIC, the Bolshevik Tendency applied the united-front tactic in the Leninist spirit. We adhered to it so long as we were accorded full freedom of propaganda, and availed ourselves of the opportunity to win left-moving militants to our program when our partners wavered. In the "broad-based" coalitions initiated or joined by the USec, participants are expected to bury fundamental differences in the interests of larger unity. Any utterance not compatible with the sentiments of the coalition's most right-wing components is deemed "disruptive," and the left wing must therefore confine itself to repeating demands and slogans wholly in keeping with a liberal worldview. By agreeing to such conditions, the would-be Marxists allow the "united front" to become a vehicle of the reformists, while they are relegated to making posters and stuffing envelopes.

Why Did the SL Degenerate?

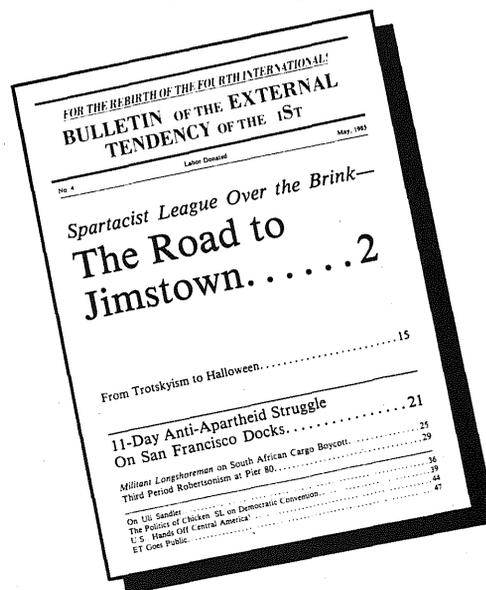
Except in periods of acute social and political crisis, revolutionaries in any society are seldom more than a minority. But even by the standard of "normal times," the political landscape of the United States during the Reagan years has been extraordinarily bleak. Of the tens of thousands of New Leftists, student radicals and black militants who twenty years ago espoused some brand of ostensibly revolutionary politics (however partial or confused), few today believe that revolu-

tion is possible, or even desirable. The handful who have maintained a political commitment have for the most part embraced social democracy as the only "realistic" alternative. Today, those who consider themselves to be revolutionary Marxists are a smaller minority of the leftist minority in American society than at any time since the McCarthy period of the 1950's.

There can be no doubt that political isolation was one cause of the degeneration of the Spartacist League, virtually the only organization that attempted to maintain a genuinely Trotskyist course amid the rightward drift of the late 1970's. This intransigence was not without organizational consequences. As the radical student base from which the SL had recruited throughout the previous decade dried up, and the anticipated radicalization of the working class failed to materialize, a crisis of disappointed expectations set in among the membership; new recruits became harder to find, and cadre began to quit in greater numbers.

These objective pressures, however, do not by themselves explain the destruction of the SL as a revolutionary organization any more than, on a much larger scale, the isolation of the Russian Revolution alone accounts for the Stalinist Thermidor. To the weight of difficult circumstances must also be added the conscious response of the particular individuals in the leadership. James Robertson, SL National Chairman, responded to the impasse of the late 1970's by devouring the organization that he, more than any other individual, had labored to create. As the ranks diminished, Robertson no doubt worried that the Marxist conviction of the membership was too weak and vacillating to sustain the SL through a reactionary period. He also feared that eventually the ranks' increasing sense of social

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isolation and irrelevance would result in a factional explosion that would shatter the SL's nucleus of cadres.

Robertson concluded that only unquestioning acceptance of his personal authority could insure the organization's survival. This led to a series of demoralizing purges, not only of those who ventured to disagree with the leader on secondary questions, but also of those deemed *capable* of opposition in the future. The lesson of these purges was not lost on the SL's remaining cadre, who became too intimidated to take initiatives and voice their own opinions. The final result was the lifeless, bizarre and nasty obedience cult that the Spartacist League has now become.

In Roy's view, however, the SL's degeneration is an *inevitable* consequence of its politics and program. With this sweeping assertion, Roy avoids the responsibility of analyzing the *concrete process* of its evolution. Was the SL a "sect" or a leader cult since its inception? If not, when and how did it become one? Roy does not even pose these questions let alone attempt to answer them because doing so would require an appraisal of the role played by political leadership in this process. And it is the denial of the importance of leadership, with both its positive and negative consequences, upon which the entire objectivist methodology of the USec is predicated. The same logic which allows Roy to minimize the significance of conscious Marxist intervention in the "revolutionary process" also leads him to regard the SL's degeneration as the automatic result of its program, thus absolving Robertson of responsibility for his specific crimes.

What then, according to Roy, are the political positions that led to the Spartacist League's isolation and consequent metamorphosis into a cult? When all Roy's ranting and empty generalizations about "sectarianism" are set aside, we are left with the proposition that the SL is now bankrupt because: 1) it did not regard the peasant-based Stalinist takeovers of the postwar period as proletarian revolutions; 2) it did not wish to follow Walesa and Solidarnosc on the road to capitalist restoration in Poland or the majority of the Iranian left to the slaughterhouse of the Islamic Republic; and 3) it refuses to participate in "broad-based" coalitions on terms dictated by the reformists. If principled opposition to Stalinism, religious reaction and reformism are the cardinal sins of Spartacism, we can only infer that Roy locates the cause of the SL's degeneration in revolutionary Trotskyism itself. In actual fact, Roy and his USec comrades have a lot more in common with Karl Kautsky and the German Social Democracy, whose fear of isolation prevented them from opposing another "mass movement"—the stampede of the working classes to the colors of their respective ruling classes at the beginning of World War I. But those who lack the courage to swim against the stream of popular opinion are also too spineless to acknowledge their real historical affinities.

The Necessity of Revolutionary Leadership

In our opinion, the Spartacist League during the first fifteen years of its existence represented the only authentically Trotskyist current in the entire international left. We regard its subsequent degeneration as a genuine misfortune for the workers movement. It is now necessary for us to fight for the Trotskyist program it once upheld under the banner of the Bolshevik Tendency.

The degeneration of the Spartacist League should not be viewed in isolation. The last ten years have been marked by a

Trotsky on 'Sectarianism'



"We are passing through a period of colossal reaction, following the revolutionary years (1917-23). On a new and higher historical stage, we, revolutionary Marxists, find ourselves thrown back into a position of a small and persecuted minority, almost as was the case at the beginning of the imperialist war. As all of history demonstrates, beginning, say, with the First International, such regressions are unavoidable. Our advantage over our predecessors lies in this, that the situation today is more mature and that we ourselves are more 'mature' for we stand on the shoulders of Marx, Lenin and many others. We shall capitalize on our advantage only if we are able to evince the greatest ideological irreconcilability, fiercer even than Lenin's irreconcilability at the outbreak of the war [of 1914-18]. Characterless impressionists like Radek will depart from us. They will invariably speak about our 'sectarianism.' We must not fear words....The greatest honor for a genuine revolutionist today is to remain a 'sectarian' of revolutionary Marxism in the eyes of Philistines, whimperers and superficial thinkers."

12 July 1929 (emphasis added)

massive right-wing offensive, both in the United States and internationally. Trade-union givebacks, continued racist atrocities, a gigantic arms buildup against the Soviet Union—these are the legacies of the Reagan years. The growth of reformism in the present period is evidence of the demoralization of many subjective leftists in the face of Reaganite attacks.

But the onslaught will not continue unopposed. It is only a matter of time before the festering resentments accumulated under the Reagan regime will explode. A renewed wave of class struggle will open real opportunities for the growth of a hard communist organization which does not shrink from telling the bitter truth to the masses. And when this eruption occurs, there can be no doubt that those who have stuck to their guns will be in a better position to intersect it than those who have thrown up a smoke screen of "Marxist" phraseology to cover their ignominious retreat.■

Palestine...

continued from page 40

take part in violent incidents....Whoever takes part must know that I am not worried by the increased number of casualties" (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, 28 September). The Israeli authorities have also detained some 10,000 Palestinians, of whom 2,000 languish in internment camps under "administrative detention" without charges or even the pretense of a trial. Dozens more have been arbitrarily and cruelly ripped away from their homes and families and deported to Lebanon.

The pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. likes to portray the racist Zionist state as an island of democracy in a sea of Arab despotism. But one of the first casualties of the Israeli attempts to crush the *intifada* has been the pretense of "democracy" in the Zionist fortress. Dozens of Arab journalists and even a handful of leftist Jewish writers have been imprisoned, and several newspapers have been closed down because they dared to print the ugly truth about the measures used against the protestors.

Hussein Suspends the "Jordanian Option"

The United States—patron and protector of the Zionist state since its creation—has been unable to do much more than wring its hands. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's hard-line policy has created anxiety in the U.S. State Department over the long-term effect of Israel's deteriorating public image in America. Therefore, Washington has objected in an unusually blunt fashion to the arrogant Zionist policy of deporting suspected Palestinian leaders to Lebanon, and has even voted for the occasional motion of condemnation in the United Nations Security Council. But the U.S. rulers know that Israel remains its most powerful anti-Soviet ally in the Middle East and an indispensable counterrevolutionary watchdog for the entire region.

Shamir, also cognizant of this fact, has felt free to ignore all U.S. complaints and give Reagan's Secretary of State, George Shultz, the cold shoulder during the latter's various "peace missions," to the Middle East. Shultz only undertook his diplomatic shuttles because he feared that Israel's naked repression of the Palestinians posed serious strategic problems for the maintenance of the Zionist garrison state. Bowing to the Israeli refusal to negotiate with the PLO, Shultz dutifully scoured the Middle East for Palestinian quislings willing to submit to Israel's diktat. He proposed to "settle" the Palestinian question by promising eventual Jordanian rule over some of the West Bank and Gaza—a position akin to that advocated by the Israeli "Labor" Party since the 1967 war. But Shultz found no takers among the Palestinians. The proposal was also rejected out of hand by Shamir, whose intransigence was rewarded with a new shipment of American warplanes.

The "Jordanian option" was foreclosed, at least for the time being, when King Hussein, Washington's "Royal Highness" of Jordan, announced on 31 July that he was giving up all "legal and administrative ties" to the West Bank. Hussein called for the formation of a PLO government-in-exile for the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories. The Hashemite monarch reiterated that "Jordan is not Palestine" and returned full-circle to the proposition that the PLO is "the sole legitimate repre-

sentative of the Palestinian people," thus repudiating his U.S.-anointed role as diplomatic proxy for the Palestinians in an imperialist-brokered "peace process." Ominously, Hussein's move coincided with heightened Israeli repression in the Occupied Territories, including a campaign by Israel's intelligence service, Shin Bet, to round up, torture and deport suspected members of the popular committees directing the *intifada*.

A *New York Times* editorial of 2 August sermonized that, "Either the P.L.O. will be able to bear the new burden he [Hussein] imposes by changing character, defining attainable goals and taking responsibility for governance of ordinary life. Or it will fail, prompting West Bank residents to clamor for the King to return." Of course, Israel is not asked to change *its* character. Zionist terrorist Shamir, a



Yasir Arafat

former leader of the Stern Gang, which carried out the massacre of 250 unarmed civilians at Deir Yassin in 1948, responded to Hussein's move with the announcement that: "Israel will prevent in the most determined way any attempt to carry out any idea—to the extent that there are madmen who raise it—of establishing a Palestinian government. Such people will be met with an iron fist that will leave no trace of their attempts." In line with this policy, Israeli officials decreed that the PLO will not be allowed to fund schools and health services that have lost Jordanian support.

Hussein's maneuver underscores the danger of Palestinian reliance on Arab diplomacy. Quite possibly Hussein expects that the PLO will be discredited by its inability to improve the lot of the Palestinians on the West Bank. In that case after exiting through the front door, Hussein could get a chance to reenter through the back—over the political corpse of the PLO leadership—and assume the role of Protector of Palestine.

But whatever plots are being hatched behind the scenes, Hussein's renunciation of any claim over Palestine reflects the will and determination of the popular insurrection in the Occupied Territories. The Palestinians had repudiated his sponsorship for years and Hussein's move must be seen, at least in part, as a recognition of this. Thus, while the PLO is busy drawing up plans for its bantustan on the West Bank and Gaza, the *intifada* has introduced a new element into the complex tangle of Middle East politics—one which could create an opening for independent working-class struggle against Zionism, imperialism and the Arab ruling classes.

Contradictions of the Israeli Occupation

While the "revolution of stones" cannot possibly triumph over the armed might of Israel, it *has* brought the contradictions at the heart of the Zionist behemoth into stark relief. Israel can neither live with the Occupied Territories nor without them. Enforcing the occupation further militarizes the entire



Tannenbaum-SYGMA

Peace Now demonstration brands Israel as Goliath

society, while simultaneously eroding the morale of the army. Twenty-four Israeli soldiers are currently imprisoned for refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories. A document published last March by the Israeli Socialist Left (Shasi) noted:

"The prestige of the IDF has suffered a serious blow. It is difficult to square the myths about bravery, efficiency, and resourcefulness with the reality of the brutal, ugly, and vicious actions against a civilian population. The pride about 'purity of arms' and 'the moral level' of the army lies buried under a hill of stones."

Professional armies are in general adversely affected by being assigned police functions against civilian populations. An article in the Summer 1988 issue of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* comments on this phenomenon with regard to the *intifada*:

"This need to use violence against unarmed civilians may create two kinds of reaction, say the psychologists. On the one end of the continuum a 'moral apathy' may develop, which may lead the subject to resort to violence without discrimination and often without functional justification. On the other end, it may lead to inner agonies such as depression, nightmares, and the propensity to disobey....Both extremes lead to an erosion of military discipline: moral apathy may lead to excessive use of violence even against military orders; the depressive reaction may lead to attempts at 'service dodging' and desertion."

The occupation also imposes an economic burden which can only be ameliorated by ever greater infusions of U.S. aid, which in 1985 was already running at a staggering \$1,250 per capita. The brutal suppression of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories has widened the already existing rift in American

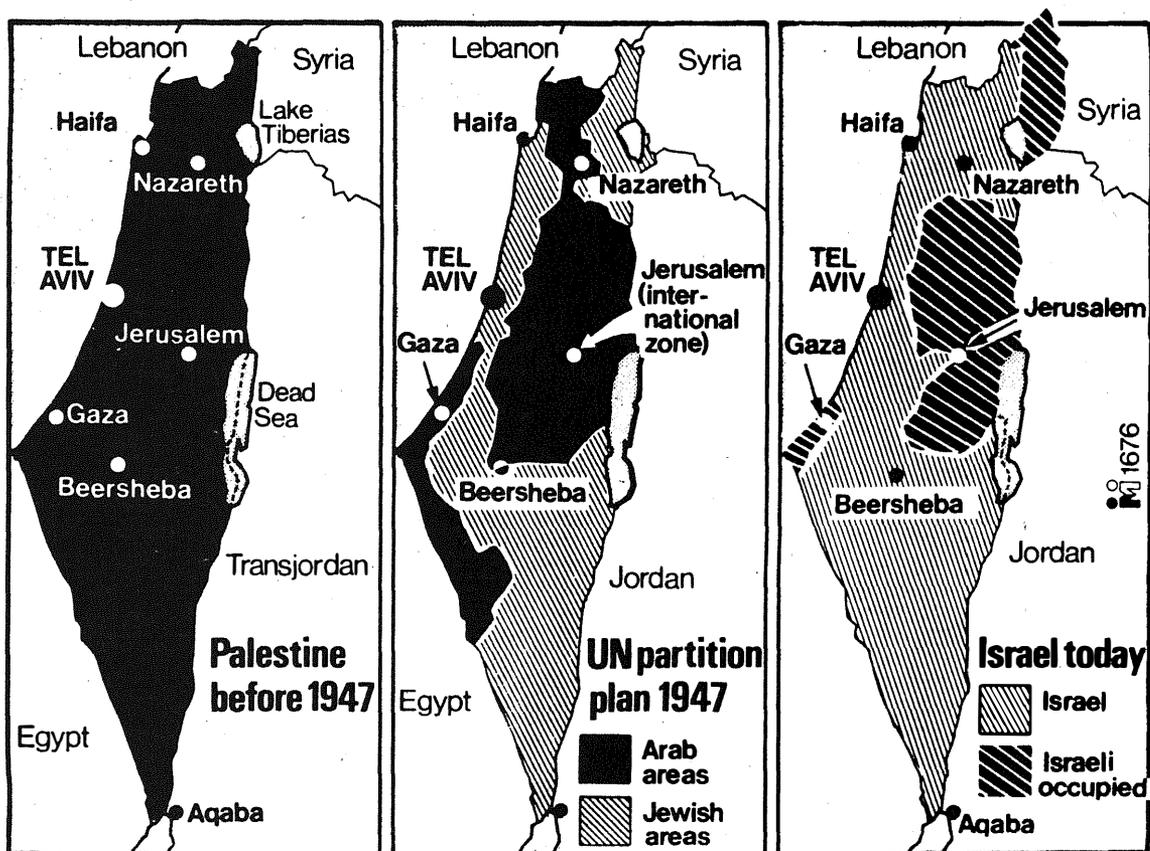
Jewish opinion, and although an overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews have rallied behind the government for the time being, the Zionist consensus within Israel could ultimately be endangered.

Yet the Occupied Territories cannot easily be given up. Zionist ideology holds that the annexation of "Eretz Israel" (Greater Israel, including "Judea" and "Samaria," the Old Testament names for the West Bank) represents the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. It was in the name of a god-given Jewish mandate that Palestine was colonized and the Palestinians driven from their homeland in 1948. Carrying this mandate to its logical conclusion is thus the overriding imperative of a Zionist state now more than ever in the grip of religious fanatics.

In the course of fulfilling its "destiny," Israel has also acquired important extra-theological reasons for maintaining the occupation: the income generated by a complex web of taxes, licenses, customs and excise revenues, as well as the lucrative captive market which the impoverished inhabitants provide for Israeli manufacturers and retailers. Equally important is the reservoir of cheap Arab labor supplied by the Occupied Territories. Discriminatory regulations designed by the occupation authorities to destroy Palestinian agriculture and manufacturing have further increased the supply of low-cost labor for Israeli entrepreneurs. Control of the West Bank has also given Israel access to two aquifers, which supply 35 percent of its water. Palestinians have been forbidden to drill new wells, while the government has seized or closed many of those previously operated by Arab farmers. The Zionist settlers have virtually unrestricted access to draw water. The result is that in the West Bank, 60,000 settlers consume more of this precious resource than the 850,000 Palestinian residents! (see Israel Shahak in the July-September issue of *Race & Class*.)

To date over a third of Gaza and 60 percent of the land of the West Bank have been seized and is being parcelled out to Israeli settlers and "developers." There have been numerous cases of Jewish settlers uprooting olive and almond trees, and even bulldozing topsoil on those lands which are still in the possession of the Palestinian inhabitants. Disputes over land titles are now handled by a military review board which has generally turned a blind eye to the "unorthodox" methods used by their countrymen. The government has pursued a policy of encouraging Jewish colonization (known as the "Judaization" of the territories) with lucrative subsidies. (For an illuminating discussion of the economic aspects of the Zionist occupation see "The Price of Peace" in the March-April issue of *This Magazine*.)

The complaints of Israeli employers that the *intifada* is interrupting the supply of cheap Arab labor from the Occupied Territories and seriously damaging their businesses, is evidence of the dependency of the Israeli economy on the super-exploitation of these workers. This is a fundamental contradiction for the Zionist ruling class—its attempts to create a "Greater Israel" have meant increased reliance upon Arab labor. The parallel with South Africa is unmistakable. A nationwide strike by Arab workers in Israel last December in solidarity with the uprising in the Occupied Territories demonstrated the growing importance of Arab labor within the Israeli economy, and revealed a weapon far more potent than firebombs or stones. This strike signaled to the Zionists that, should they continue with their "Iron Fist" policies, they risk an uprising by "their own" Arab population.



Manchester Guardian Weekly

It is often argued by Zionists and their apologists that peace would be possible in the Middle East if only the Arabs would accept the "right of Israel to exist." But acceptance of the Zionist state would mean condoning a political entity founded upon what a famous UN resolution correctly described as a form of racism.

All major political factions in Israel, from the fascistic Kach party to the "Peace Now" movement, share the racial-theocratic definition of the state central to Zionist ideology. Israel is legally held to be the exclusive "state of the Jewish people." Although some 750,000 Arabs are second-class Israeli citizens, first-class citizenship is reserved for those who qualify under traditional Jewish law, i.e., anyone born of a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism by a rabbi. Anyone in the world who meets either criterion automatically qualifies for citizenship under the Law of Return. Thus a Jewish American, who has never been to Israel in his life, has citizenship rights in Haifa, while a Haifa-born Palestinian refugee has no right to live in the land of his birth!

This definition of citizenship also underpins the continuing dispossession of the Palestinian population. As the late Moshe Dayan—the Zionist hero of the 1967 war—brutally admitted:

"We came here to a country that was populated by Arabs, and we are building here a Hebrew, Jewish state....Instead of the Arab villages Jewish villages were established. You even do not know the names of these villages....There is not a single settlement that was not established in the place of a former Arab village."

—Haaretz, 4 April 1969

The Jewish National Fund admits that confiscated Palestinian property amounts to 88 percent of the land of Israel (*Jewish Villages in Israel*, p.xxi, quoted in Lehn and Davis, *The*

Jewish National Fund). All of these properties were vested under the Absentee Property Law of 1950 with the Custodian of Absentee Property to be administered solely for the Jewish people. The fanatical gun-toting Gush Emunim "pioneers," who today rob the Arabs of their land in the Occupied Territories, are merely continuing the historic act of usurpation in which the state of Israel was conceived. It is precisely because these "settlers" are carrying out the original Zionist mandate that no major faction on the Israeli political spectrum is willing to defy them.

Zionism, which has always insisted that Jews cannot be assimilated into "gentile society," was a minority current among European Jews before the Nazi holocaust. It is one of history's most bitter ironies that Hitler, by inflicting genocide upon the Jews, has posthumously succeeded in converting many of his victims to the twisted logic of racism. The fascist extermination of six million European Jews was an unparalleled and ghastly crime. But it can only be invoked in justification of current Zionist terror by those who have abandoned all hope of overcoming racism through social struggle, and instead look for their salvation to the victory of their own exclusive racial, ethnic or religious grouping. If mutual hatred and slaughter among peoples and nations is an unalterable fact of human existence, the best that one can hope for is to be a victimizer rather than a victim. This is the suicidal reasoning with which the Zionists have led the Jews of Israel into their present cul-de-sac.

Zionist "Solutions" For Palestinians

The *intifada* has spurred discussion in Israel about possible "solutions" to the "Palestinian problem." An option favored by

many within Shamir's right-wing Likud coalition is annexation of the West Bank and Gaza with Palestinians formally excluded from citizenship rights. But within the framework of Zionism, population statistics provide the opposition Labor Party with the most cogent argument against this course. Nearly 1.5 million Palestinians now reside in the Occupied Territories, in addition to those within Israel itself. Annexation would therefore bring 2.25 million Palestinians under Israeli jurisdiction. With a birthrate much higher than that of Israel's 4 million Jews, Palestinians would one day "dilute" the Jewish majority, and hence pose a threat to Israel's exclusively Jewish character. Annexation would also impose the necessity of permanently repressing a huge and rebellious subject population.

Another proposal being discussed is that of the "resettlement" of the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. It should not be forgotten that talk of "resettlement" was the prologue to Hitler's "final solution" of the "Jewish problem" in Europe. Proposals of this nature, though commonly associated with Meir Kahane's fascist Kach party, are not the exclusive property of the Zionist ultra-right. Israeli "dove" Abba Eban, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, was among those who "proposed that all the [Palestinian] refugees be settled in Arab states, especially in Syria and Iraq" in the wake of the 1967 war (*Davar*, 19 February, quoted by Israel Shahak in *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, Summer 1988). Mass expulsion of the Palestinians from the Occupied Territories is now being openly discussed within the Zionist political establishment. No one imagines that such a massive population transfer could be accomplished by friendly persuasion; it would mean a bloodletting beside which the 1982 massacres of Sabra and Shatila would pale in comparison. The very fact that such an option can be seriously considered is an indication of the racist logic of Zionism.

The option considered most "realistic" by every one from Labor Party leader Shimon Perez to the Israeli "doves" of Peace Now, and endorsed by both Washington and Moscow, is "trading territory for peace." According to this scenario, Israel would relinquish the most densely populated portions of the West Bank and Gaza, which would then be constituted as an independent Palestinian mini-state.

Jerome Segal, the left-Zionist founder of the "Jewish Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Peace" revealed the logic behind the mini-state proposal when he wrote that, "It would win the support of the PLO and is the only likely basis on which the PLO would formally abandon the right to return to the land and villages lost in 1948." He pointed out that no military supplies could reach the state without passing through either Jordan or Israel. "The foreign policy of such a mini-state would be dominated by its links to the Israeli economy and by its national-security realities" (*Los Angeles Times*, 16 February).

Such a tiny "Palestinian state" carved out of the West Bank and Gaza (which taken together constitute less than a fifth of the area of pre-war Palestine) would be divided by Israeli territory, sandwiched between Jordan and Egypt, and possess scant economic resources. The notion that it could even physically accommodate 2.5 million diaspora Palestinians—let alone satisfy their national aspirations—is simply absurd. This would be comparable to the black South African masses accepting the phony independence of the bantustans as their share of South Africa. Indeed, even now the Gaza Strip with its 650,000 Palestinians packed into 100 square miles of desert is often compared to Soweto, since many of its workers use it only

as a dormitory for work inside Israel. This reality would hardly be eliminated by running up the PLO flag and issuing a new set of postage stamps.

The PLO and the Mini-State

The PLO is currently supporting the proposal for an international peace conference to resolve the Palestinian question. In a 13 September address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Arafat suggested that either the UN or a consortium of European imperialists could administer the West Bank and Gaza as a transitional step toward establishing a mini-state on those territories.

In 1971 the Palestinian National Congress was proclaiming its:

"Firm opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state on any part of the Palestinian Homeland on the basis that any attempt to establish such a state falls within the plans to liquidate the Palestinian question."

—*Free Palestine*, April 1971

By 1974 the PLO had changed its tune and proposed to establish a national authority on any territory it could obtain. This retreat was justified by PLO spokesman Abu Iyad by the need to:

"read history so as to extract lessons for ourselves. What were the mistakes of our previous leaders?...Their mistake was adhering to our people's historical rights without adopting stage-by-stage programs of struggle under the obtaining conditions."

—Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within*

The "obtaining conditions" Iyad referred to were the result of a series of defeats inflicted on the Palestinians by Zionism, U.S. imperialism and the Arab regimes. Arafat began his political career as a disciple of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian military strongman and self-appointed leader of the "Arab revolution." But in 1970, the very same Nasser abandoned his alliance with the Soviet Union in favor of a rapprochement with American imperialism and accepted the "peace plan" then being touted by William Rogers, U.S. Secretary of State.

The Rogers Plan called on Israel to give back the Occupied Territories to Egypt and Jordan in exchange for recognition of Israel. Nasser and Jordanian King Hussein thought that this deal would lead to the satisfaction of their territorial demands and considered the Palestinians expendable. The massive Palestinian presence in Jordan was a constant threat to Hussein's regime. Assured that Nasser would not intervene on their behalf, Hussein proceeded to massacre thousands of Palestinians in Jordan during the infamous 1970 "Black September" bloodbath. The Rogers Plan was never accepted by Israel or pursued by the United States.

In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon (where the PLO had been driven by Hussein) with the object of wiping out the Palestinian camps. In the wake of the Battle of Beirut, a U.S.-sponsored United Nations "peacekeeping force" intervened and persuaded the PLO to withdraw its armed units from Lebanon in exchange for assurances that the "peacekeepers" would protect the remaining Palestinian refugees. The value of these assurances was demonstrated when Israel took advantage of the PLO withdrawal to unleash the reactionary Lebanese Christian Phalange on the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.

The lesson to be drawn from these historic defeats is the folly of relying on imperialists or Arab potentates to protect the



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interests of the Palestinian people. But this is a lesson the petty-bourgeois PLO leadership is incapable of learning. Like even the most liberal and enlightened of his Zionist foes, Arafat simply cannot envision a political reality fundamentally different from the one that exists. He opposes the Middle Eastern status quo of imperialist spheres of influence, rapacious oil sheiks and murderous national hatreds only to the extent that there is no place in it for the Palestinians.

The experience of oppression does not automatically make revolutionaries of its victims. The Zionists argued that there could be no answer to the persecution of the Jews without the support of one or another imperialist power for the establishment of a "homeland." It is the same "pragmatism" that sends Arafat scurrying from one Arab capital to another, weaving intrigue upon Byzantine intrigue, in the vain hope that some new combination of circumstances and political alignments will remedy the historic crime against the Palestinian people.

The PLO's authority among the Palestinian masses derives not from its leadership of the uprising (which it did not initiate) but from its symbolic importance as the historic representative of Palestinian national aspirations. The Zionist ideologues, who deny the existence of a Palestinian nation, refuse to negotiate directly with an organization that claims to be its "sole legitimate representative." Thus, the more the PLO is anathematized by the Zionists, the more its banner is embraced by the Palestinians as a symbol of national identity. Yet the reality does not measure up to the image. While certainly worthy of defense against Zionist persecution, the PLO is in fact led by petty-bourgeois nationalists bereft of any coherent political or social outlook. Arafat himself is famous for his proclivity for changing political alliances and demands in accordance with the shifting sands of war and diplomacy in the Middle East.

Arafat cannot make himself more acceptable to the imperialists without continually giving ground to the Zionist state,

which is imperialism's most powerful regional ally. He has thus responded to each Palestinian defeat by further moderating the PLO's demands. Contrary to Zionist propaganda, Arafat has on numerous occasions indicated his willingness to accept UN Resolutions 242 and 338. This formula characterizes the Palestinians as "refugees" rather than a nationality, and calls for Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist on the condition that the Israelis withdraw from the Occupied Territories.

The PLO's current call for UN control of the territories is more maneuvering of the kind that paved the road to "Black September" and the Lebanese massacres. In time, weariness with Arafat's fruitless diplomatic shell game is bound to create a crisis of confidence in PLO leadership among the Palestinian masses. Far more sinister forces—Islamic fundamentalists inspired by the example of Khomeini's Iran—are already raising their heads in Gaza and the West Bank.

For a Trotskyist Party In Israel/Palestine!

The answer to Zionist terror does not consist in the harder Palestinian nationalist line advocated by Arafat's "rejectionist" opponents within the PLO. The road to Palestinian liberation lies through a common struggle of Arab and Hebrew workers against all capitalist oppressors in the region. Amid the burning national antagonisms of today's Middle East, such a prospect may appear "unrealistic." The alternative, however, is a continued cycle of desperate revolt and brutal repression.

The fact that the Israeli economy is already dependent upon a working class comprised of both Arab and Hebrew workers provides the objective basis for their joint struggle. However, such a struggle will not emerge spontaneously. It will require the presence of a consciously revolutionary force—a Trotskyist party—determined to take advantage of every opportunity to forge links between the workers of both nationalities. While siding unambiguously with the Pales-

tinians in their struggle against national oppression, a party aspiring to proletarian leadership in the Middle East must not adapt to the prevailing nationalist consciousness of the Arab workers, but base itself on a firm programmatic foundation of internationalist communism.

In the first place, there must be a clear understanding that no genuine solution to the Palestinian question is possible within the framework of U.S. imperialist hegemony, which is the main prop of reactionary forces around the globe. Israel is not the only regime closely allied with U.S. imperialism in the Middle East today. Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia are all heavily dependent on economic and/or military underwriting from their patron.

At the same time, while they are clients, none of these regimes can be regarded simply as U.S. puppets. Zionism contains an expansive dynamic of its own, the "excesses" of which are a source of embarrassment to Washington. In addition, the continued hostility between Israel and reactionary Arab regimes is a real obstacle to the American aim of cementing an anti-Soviet alliance in the Middle East. But U.S. imperialism, precisely because it is not all-powerful, must form alliances with regimes whose imperatives it does not necessarily share. Zionism will continue to act as an imperialist gendarme in the Middle East only so long as it is assured of U.S. backing for its own racist rule and territorial ambitions. This is the basis of the historic deal between Zionism and imperialism, and Washington realizes that to renege on it would endanger the entire structure of capitalist exploitation in the region.

The Trotskyist approach to the national question in the Middle East is profoundly different from that of petty-bourgeois nationalists and their leftist camp followers. Our program derives from the first four congresses of the Communist International, led by Lenin and Trotsky, and the further elaboration of this question by the international Spartacist tendency of the 1960's and 70's, when it was still a revolutionary organization.

Leninists solidarize with all oppressed peoples in the face of national persecution; hence we are on the side of Palestinian resistance to Zionist police-state terror. This includes support for the demand for immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. While we reject the various "mini-state" schemes as incapable of satisfying the legitimate national demands of the Palestinians, we nonetheless defend the right of the Palestinians to establish their own government in the Occupied Territories as a deformed and necessarily inadequate expression of their right to self-determination.

There is no such thing as an inherently "progressive" or "reactionary" people. Today's victims can easily become tomorrow's despots, as the history of Zionism attests. And it must be recognized that, within the present boundaries of Israel and the Occupied Territories, there are two distinctive nationalities, one of which speaks Hebrew.

The PLO standpoint is that Israel is merely a settler-colonial state, and the Jews within it are a religious grouping. From this it follows that Moslems, Jews and Christians should simply be merged into a single Palestinian nation. But by any objective historical or empirical standard, the Hebrew-speaking community in Israel is a nation, sharing a common language and a common territory—stolen though it was from the Arabs. One cannot simply *wish* a nation out of existence.

For Leninists, all nations, including the Jews in Israel, have a right to self-determination. That right, however, belongs to

the Jews who currently reside in Israel, and *not*, as the Zionists maintain, to every descendant of the original Twelve Tribes of Israel throughout the world. It is, in other words, a right of the Hebrew-speaking people of the Middle East, and not a "Jewish" right. Moreover, the state of Israel does *not* represent the legitimate self-determination of the Hebrew-speaking peoples because it is a living denial of the national rights of the oppressed Palestinians.

The Zionist fortress can and must be destroyed by unleashing the class struggle within it. But the Hebrew-speaking working class can never be broken from Zionism without the assurance that it will neither be "driven into the sea" or itself become part of a subject nationality. Like the Catholics and Protestants of Northern Ireland, the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews are two geographically interpenetrated peoples. Where different peoples occupy distinct regions, self-determination can be exercised by a simple political divorce, creating two different national entities, as Norway once seceded from Sweden. But where two peoples cohabit the same territory, the bourgeois nationalist aim of creating a separate nation-state can only be realized by mass expulsions of one or another of the populations. Israel was consolidated in exactly this way.

The only alternative to this kind of mutual slaughter of peoples is the subordination of national divisions to a common struggle aimed at ridding the region of all oppressors—imperialist, Zionist or Arab. In this context, the victory of the working class of one nationality must be a prelude to the triumph of the class as a whole—not as a victory for one people at the expense of another. The result of such a struggle would be a voluntary association of peoples encompassing the entire region—a *socialist federation of the Middle East*.

In answer to those practitioners of the "art of the possible" who dismiss such a solution as impractical, we refer them to a concrete example of the implementation of such a program, albeit in a partial and deformed way, in an area of the world that had long been a synonym for national hatred: the Balkans. During the Nazi occupation of this corner of Eastern Europe, Tito forged an army to fight the fascist invaders. In Tito's army, nationalities that had until a few years before been at each other's throats—Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Slovenes and Montenegrins—were welded together into a common fighting force.

It would be useless to speculate on what specific geographical or political form a socialist federation of the Middle East will take. The antagonisms that today divide the proletariat along national lines can never be overcome unless the right of all currently existing national groups to associate or disassociate from other nationalities is fully respected. The socialist federation slogan expresses our confidence that a proletariat aware of its class interests is fully capable of finding a formula that protects the rights of all.

The seemingly implacable national hostilities in Israel/Palestine can only be equitably resolved through the struggle for a bi-national Arab/Hebrew workers state as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East. Such a struggle requires the construction of a Trotskyist party, which upholds the right to national self-determination of the oppressed Palestinians, and is based on a program which links the democratic and economic demands of the proletariat of *both* nations to the historic necessity for the overthrow of the racist Zionist state and the reactionary Arab regimes of the region. ■

For a Socialist Federation of the Middle East!

Israel Out of the Occupied Territories!



For the past year the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza has been locked in a heroic and unequal struggle against Israeli occupation. Forty years after 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homeland by Zionist terrorism, the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) has focused world attention on the denial of their rights as a people. A new generation of youth, frustrated by the failure of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and big-power diplomacy to end the brutal occupation of their land, is rising to reassert its people's long-denied national rights. In the wake of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres, and countless terror bombings of Palestinian and other Arab populations, the *intifada* has stripped away the myth of Israel as a land of idealistic kibbutzniks making deserts bloom, revealing the brutal reality of the Zionist "Iron Fist."

Early on in the revolt, when the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) had trouble dispersing crowds of angry, stone-throwing youths with tear gas, soldiers began breaking demonstrators' hands. When nightly television newsclips of this cold-blooded brutality horrified public opinion around the world, the Zionists

emulated their South African allies and "solved" their public relations problem by banning the cameras.

The Israeli regime has tried everything short of a massive genocidal bloodletting to quell the revolt, and yet it shows no signs of abating. The beatings, jailings, mutilations, deportations, and demolitions have failed to break the resistance. Nor have the measures of "collective punishment;" the curfews and restrictions on food, fuel and electricity which are periodically imposed on Palestinian communities. Israeli military tribunals arbitrarily jail anyone suspected of participating in or abetting the *intifada*. The homes of suspects are routinely demolished, while the army "keeps the peace" by spraying crowds of rock-throwing schoolchildren with automatic weapons fire. To date hundreds of Palestinians have been murdered and thousands more have been wounded. Israeli soldiers have recently been issued with plastic bullets to fire at the demonstrators. Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin explained: "Our purpose is to increase the number (of people wounded) among those who

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