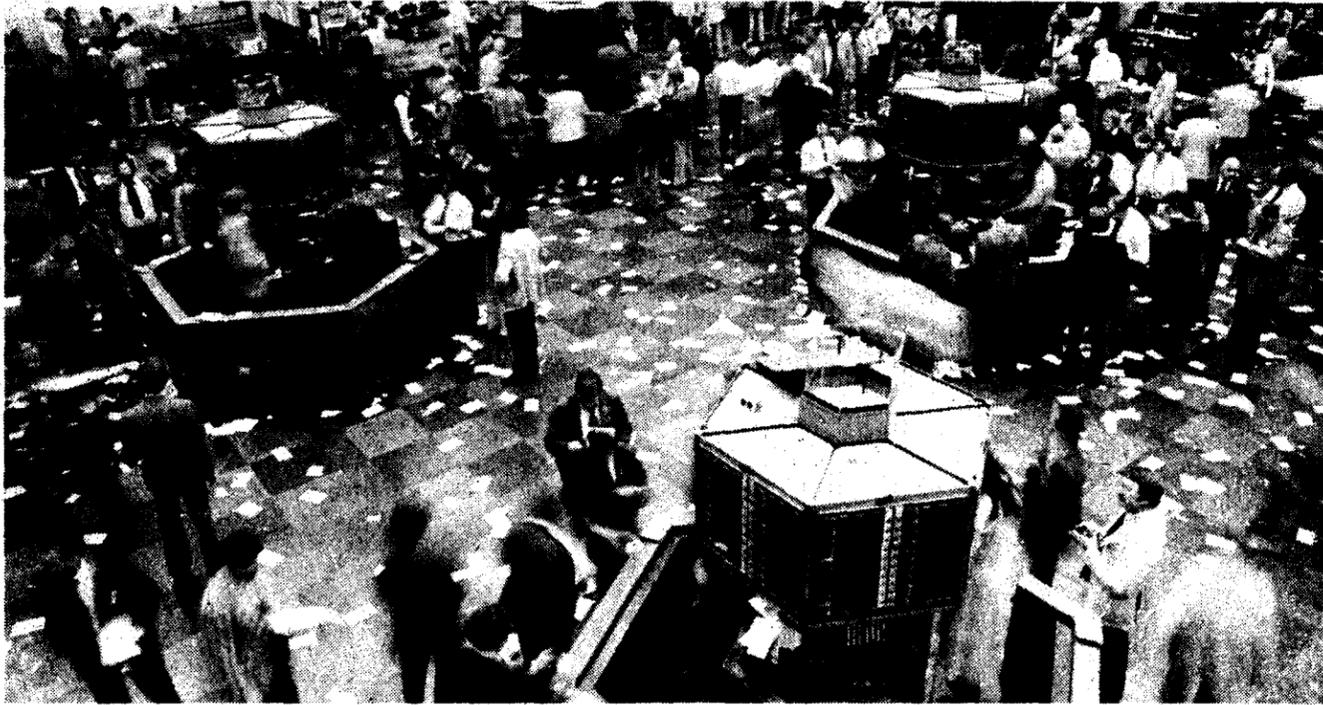


Capitalism Means Depression, War



by Cohen

Economy Goes to Hell

First it was gold speculation fever. Cops were called in to control the crowds as hundreds lined up every day at the banks, gold vendors and coin dealers. Then interest rates skyrocketed and inflation took off. Mortgages are coming due at almost double the interest rates. "For Sale" signs are going up as families are forced out of their homes, caught in the squeeze between high inflation and soaring interest rates. On March 27 the Toronto Stock Exchange crashed more than 95 points--wiping out six billion dollars in market value in one day! When silver prices tumbled an announcement came over the intercom at Bache's (one of North America's biggest stockbrokers) to reassure employees that the firm was not going to close down.

It is not just gold fever and the decline of the dollar, the stock market plunge and rising interest rates. What is causing the panic on Bay Street

and in the corporate boardrooms is the growing recognition that the inflation and recession cannot be stopped. The predictions of bank presidents, financiers, chairmen of the board and bigtime government economic wizards are grim. They all fear that the economy is on an irreversible course to imminent collapse: the Conference Board of Canada predicts zero economic growth; the Royal Bank expects the worst economic performance in 25 years; the Bank of Montreal forecasts double-digit inflation; and they're perpetual optimists!

In the face of spiraling prices and interest rates the financial page is fast overtaking the front page as the day's most interesting reading. Firestone closes its Whitby plant, throwing 650 workers out on the streets. Cars rust on the lots while hundreds of thousands of North American autoworkers are tossed on the scrapheap. Angry suburban homeowners
(continued on page 6)

BCGEU Oppositionists to Cops: Help Us Fight Bureaucrats

VANCOUVER--In a despicable violation of the elementary principles of trade unionism, an oppositional caucus in the B. C. Government Employees Union (BCGEU) called in the cops to have union staff members evicted from a caucus meeting on March 18. The BCGEU reform caucus had called the meeting to allow rank-and-file members to air their grievances and had specifically excluded all paid union staff members. When staffers and other supporters of the incumbent union bureaucrats turned up for the meeting the oppositionists went running for the bosses' armed thugs to enforce their program for "union democracy."

Supporters of the ex-Maoist In Struggle! (IS!) backed the call for the cops while supporters of the fake-Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) tried to duck the issue (see box). Although in this instance RWL supporter Bob Smith had some mealy-mouthed after-the-fact criticisms, the RWL is quite accustomed to alibiing similar betrayals. Reliance on the bosses' agencies never precluded its support to the U. S. Labor Department's man in the United Mine Workers of America, the hated and despised Arnold Miller, or his counterpart in the United Steelworkers of America, Ed Sadlowski.

At the BCGEU meeting an IS! supporter put forward a resolution demanding that if the cops were called, the bourgeois press should be too. When confronted by SC she opined that calling the cops "was not necessarily a mistake, though it wasn't a good thing." In the same muddled Mao double-talk she explained: "You have to consider what are the masses calling for? That's what the people wanted." In Struggle!'s newspaper (25 March) covered the meeting and reported, without comment, the cop intervention.

The BCGEU oppositionists are following in the footsteps of Miller, Sadlowski and other opportunist union "dissidents" and office-seekers who call in the cops, courts and government agencies to fight their battles with the entrenched union officialdom. A programmatically amorphous grouping which claims to be fighting for union democracy, the BCGEU opposition came together around an open letter to union members which cited a number of the most recent bureaucratic manipulations of the union by the leadership. To be sure, there is plenty to complain about. The BCGEU bureaucracy recently railroaded through a sellout three-year contract for a paltry eight percent a year. In the BCGEU it takes a two-thirds majority to authorize strike action and all shop stewards are subject to dismissal by the provincial executive.

Speaking for the caucus, Bob Smith told the

Which Side is Bob Smith On?

Stalin is reported to have said that paper will take anything that's written on it. The latest Socialist Voice (1 April) proves his point. Writing under the headline "BCGEU Militants Forget Which Side to Call On," BCGEU member and RWL supporter Bob Smith denounces the calling of the cops against BCGEU bureaucrats:

"Police are among the worst enemies of the trade union movement. . . . The many unionists killed and injured on picket lines have drawn a line of blood between workers and police.

"No worker who has been busted by police on a picket line. . . would have cheered the arrival of the police at the internal BCGEU meeting."

What shameless cynicism! Smith was present at the meeting but he ducked out precisely to avoid having to vote on whether or not to call the cops! When questioned by SC about the incident he responded: "I've never seen that [reliance on the police] as a principled question. I see it as a tactical blunder because the staffers could do a lot against us in terms of propaganda." The RWL's attempts to rewrite history will not hide the truth: among the "BCGEU militants" who "forget which side to call on" was Socialist Voice correspondent Bob Smith.

Vancouver Sun "We're extremely loyal to the union movement. We just want to build the union to a strong, militant union." But strong, militant unions will not be built by those who rely on the capitalist state or those who are too gutless to oppose such betrayals. It is precisely the government's control of the union movement that is the greatest threat to both union democracy and to the fight against the bosses. Unlike the RWL and IS! the Trotskyist League fights for the principle of unconditional independence of the labor movement from the state--the first condition for real workers democracy and a class-struggle labor movement.■

SPARTACIST CANADA

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UCASSH Fund Drive Launched

Labor Militant Fights

U.S. Secret Service Harassment

When the U. S. Secret Service invaded the Communications Workers of America (CWA) national convention last July 16, they didn't expect much of a fight in defense of the rights of labor. When they manhandled, handcuffed and dragged Jane Margolis, an elected delegate and executive board member of CWA Local 9410, San Francisco, off the floor, they thought these Gestapo tactics would go unprotested. When the Secret Service gagged Margolis and attempted to silence her criticisms of the anti-labor policies of U. S. president Jimmy Carter, they thought they would not have to answer for this egregious and unprecedented violation of fundamental democratic rights.

But the Secret Service was wrong. The incident immediately touched off a wave of protest from CWA members in her San Francisco local and from trade unionists across the country. Margolis has retained noted trial attorney Charles Garry to sue the Secret Service. Outraged at having their union and democratic rights trampled upon, members of CWA Locals 9410 and 9415 formed the Union Committee Against Secret Service Harassment (UCASSH) to support the suit.

UCASSH has received significant endorsements as well as much-needed donations from unions, civil-libertarian organizations and prominent individuals. Among the most recent endorsers are the Communist Party's vice-presidential candidate Angela Davis and Crystal Lee Sutton, a Carolina textile worker and unionist on whose experiences the film Norma Rae was based. The Secret Service's attempt to muzzle Margolis was such a blatant violation of free speech that the southern California American Civil Liberties Union has recently agreed to file an amicus brief on behalf of UCASSH's cause.

A growing list of union endorsements reflect a recognition that Margolis' fight is the fight of the



Jon P. Fishbeck

Carter's Secret Service seizes delegate Margolis at CWA convention, July 1979.

whole labor movement to defend its members and organizations from government harassment. In addition to the numerous endorsements of CWA locals and other unions in the U. S. the case has received the endorsement of the Letter Carriers Union of Canada, Local 1 in Toronto, which also sent a generous \$200 donation. In Hamilton the "Women Back Into Stelco Committee" voted to back the case. Ross Dowson, a former leader of Canadian Trotskyism who is presently involved in his own campaign against RCMP harassment, has endorsed the case.

This is no ordinary lawsuit: the independence of labor from coercive state control is at issue. If the government's secret police agencies can silence this union leader on the floor of her own convention, then no section of the labor movement is safe from suppression. Trade unionists in Canada have first hand experience with RCMP "dirty tricks" against the labor movement--harassment, phone bugging and mail tampering. During the 1978 Canadian Union of Postal Workers strike the RCMP launched Gestapo-like raids on union offices, and union president

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Trotskyism vs. Social Democracy on Afghanistan

Sioux Lookout, Ontario
Feb. 29, 1980

Dear Comrades,

It was somewhat disturbing to read your article in defense of Russian tanks "Hail the Red Army." While your arguments concerning the other so-called left groups opposing the Russian invasion and supporting the reactionary Afghan guerrillas are correct, I do not agree with your line on the Afghan situation.

There is no question that the situation in Afghanistan is different from Hungary or Czechoslovakia, but to thereby presuppose Russian troops directly propping up a nationalist-bourgeois government as legitimate is another question. Both in Angola and Vietnam, no Russian troops were engaged in fighting, while in Afghanistan Russian troops are directly involved. If the Russians simply provided, as any progressive country would, arms and technical support to the progressive forces, one could agree that the Russians were playing a progressive role.

The situation has transgressed far beyond the role that was played in Angola and Vietnam. You state that Trotskyists do not support every military venture by the Kremlin bureaucracy, and yet you support Russian tanks because of their support of the nationalist-bourgeoisie vs. Islam reactionaries. You ignore the ultimate goals of the Kremlin (namely OIL supplies). Not a word is mentioned as to how American, Chinese and Russian interests in that area relate directly to oil and the three super-powers' struggle to gain control over oil supplies is what dominates politics today.

Isn't it a fact, as the Soviet Union has admitted, that its production of OIL has dropped in the last two years and that it has been forced to both raise prices and cut down supplies to its Eastern Bloc. With its limiting oil supplies, the Soviet Union is trying to achieve control over outside oil supplies for its future needs.

It seems that you have ignored the long term goals and objectives of the Soviet Union and so by trying to restrict your analysis you have developed an incomplete line towards this situation. No question, the Americans and the Chinese, obviously aware of the struggle for oil are engaged in intervention in Afghanistan on the side of muslim reactionaries in order to maintain their strategic position re oil supplies. With three superpowers struggling over oil, wouldn't it be more complete to state a "Revolutionary defeatism" position which attacks all external interventions (such as American, Chinese & Russian) in Afghanistan and calls upon the people of Afghanistan to oppose both the reactionary muslim movement and foreign

interventions in order to carry out an indigenous revolutionary struggle for socialism in Afghanistan.

Yours,
Nick Ternette

P. S. How do you view the move by the USSR towards observing neutrality of Afghanistan?



Red Army in Afghanistan makes secular education possible—workers in Jalalabad learn to read

SC replies: The Soviet move into Afghanistan has placed people like Nick Ternette (a long-time NDP "leftist" in Manitoba) in what must be for them an excruciating dilemma. They don't want to back the Afghan reactionaries who treat women as chattel slaves and shoot teachers. But when the stodgy bureaucrats who run the Kremlin for once fight for a red cause, these leftists try to duck the central question: which side are you on, feudal reaction or the Red Army? This is the only possible explanation for Ternette's patently absurd contention that "if the Russians simply provided . . . arms and technical support" instead of troops, all would be OK. But what good are a sophisticated Mig 23 or a T-72 tank if there's no one trained to use them? Imagine a group of striking workers saying: you can send us money, letters of support and maybe even a lead pipe or two for the education of scabs, but please, please, please don't send us any pickets!

With his vacuous appeals for "progressive" neutrality, Ternette attempts to rise above the class struggle. He studiously ignores the conflict that shapes global politics today and has ever since the destruction of capitalism in Russia in 1917--the attempts by the imperialists to destroy what re-

mains of the gains of the October Revolution and reclaim that one-sixth of the globe ripped from their hands. To speak of "progressive" countries and forces or of "superpowers" says nothing about the class forces involved.

The Soviet Union is a degenerated workers state. The driving force of the Soviet economy is not the necessity for a constantly expanding share of the capitalist world markets and resources--a competition which ultimately results in inter-imperialist wars to redivide the world. The USSR's moves abroad are based on political considerations and do not grow out of the internal dynamic of its centrally planned (although bureaucratically deformed) economy. The 572 nuclear missiles Carter is putting in Europe aimed at the Soviet heartland, the five percent real increase in U. S. military spending despite almost 20 percent inflation and Brzezinski's warmongering at the Khyber Pass have nothing to do with Mideast oil, deep water ports or "Great Russian expansionism." Only Carter, his Georgia mafia, the Maoists and the gullible dupes of the capitalist gutter press believe this stuff. While Ternette worries about "superpowers struggling over oil" the U. S. is trying to gear up for an imperialist holy war against the USSR--and Ternette is conspicuously silent on the real question: the defense of the USSR against capitalist attack.

Ternette's call for an "indigenous revolutionary struggle for socialism" and his question about a "neutral" Afghanistan are inextricably linked. For us, a Soviet pull-out leaving behind a capitalist Afghanistan would be a criminal betrayal. The gains of the October Revolution must be extended to the Afghan peoples! As Leon Trotsky wrote in his 1929 polemic "Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition":

"Against revolutionary 'intervention' Louzon [a syndicalist] quite inappropriately advances the old and uncontested principle: 'The emancipation of the working class can be achieved only by the workers themselves.' On a national scale? Only within the framework of a single country?"

And Trotsky raised some examples that might also be of interest to our correspondent:

"At one time the Red Army invaded Menshevik Georgia and helped the Georgian workers overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie. To this day, the Second International has not forgiven us for it. Georgia is inhabited by Georgians. The Red Army was composed mainly of Russians. With whom does Louzon side in this old conflict? "And what about the march on Warsaw in the summer of 1920? ... Had the conditions been more favorable it would have been our direct duty to lend armed assistance to the revolution in Poland, as well as everywhere else. Yet it was precisely at that time that Lloyd George, Bonar Law and others accused us for the first time of red imperialism...."

The Soviet Army of today is certainly (and unfortunately) not the revolutionary instrument of

RWL on Afghanistan

"Though Cowards Flinch..."

In a statement expressing "alarm at the way foreign policy issues are being discussed" something called the February 16 Committee has been nice enough to provide an up-to-date list of Canada's "third camp"--leftists who capitulate to the pressure of imperialist anti-Sovietism. The Globe and Mail advertisement (16 February) entitled "Canadian Foreign Policy: A Declaration of Dissent" is explicit: "We do not condone the recent military action of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan."

Huddled together in the swamp of those who refuse to support the Red Army against anti-woman, anti-literacy, feudalist reaction are an assortment of professors, NDP hacks (including their camp followers in the Forward group), the Body Politic Collective, Canadian Dimension's Cy Gonick, Peter Rosenthal of the Canadian Party of Labour and various ex-members of the Communist Party.

But that's not all. Joining this unsavory alliance of petty-bourgeois liberals, social democrats, renegades and cowards are four members of the ostensibly Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers League (RWL). The RWL allegedly supports the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, but no one seems to have told Wally Seccombe, Michael Kaufman, Harold Lavender or Gary Kinsman. Despite their public repudiation of the RWL's current line on Afghanistan the dissidents remain members in good standing in the organization. And why shouldn't they? The RWL's international mentors in the United Secretariat have repeatedly downplayed the importance of the Russian question and actively wooed third campists of the ilk of Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party in Britain.

For our part we agree with James P. Cannon's observation that:

"The attitude taken toward the Soviet Union throughout all these years has been the decisive criterion separating the genuine revolutionary tendency from all shades and degrees of waverers, backsliders and capitulators to the pressure of the bourgeois world...."

60 years ago. The Russian Stalinist bureaucracy seeks not extension of the revolution internationally, but accommodation with "realistic, peace-loving" elements of the imperialist bourgeoisie in order to build "socialism in one country." But despite this, in Afghanistan they are on the right side. Hail Red Army! ■

Attempted Murder of German Spartacist

We Will Not Be Silenced!



Militants mobilize to defend TLD at Frankfurt University

Kommunistische Korrespondenz

On January 25 German Trotskyist Fred Zierenberg came within inches of death after he was knifed in the back at a Frankfurt University teach-in on Afghanistan. Zierenberg was wounded during a vicious attack on the Trotzistische Liga Deutschlands (TLD --German section of the international Spartacist tendency) by a gang of Afghan reactionaries and assorted foreign Maoists (Turks, Iranians, Irish and American volunteer soldiers). In addition to the near-fatal stabbing of Zierenberg, one comrade received a knife wound in the abdomen and another was beaten unconscious in the premeditated attack which was intended to maim and kill.

Refusing to be silenced, the TLD comrades fought their way out of the hall chanting "Down with NATO! Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" Several days later the TLD went ahead with a public forum on Afghanistan despite repeated threats of attack. A substantial defense squad composed of iSt members and members of other left groups ensured that order would be maintained at the forum and that the au-

thentic voice of Trotskyism would be heard.

A statement condemning the criminal attack "despite political differences we may have with the TLD" has been endorsed by hundreds of signers, among them public employee and teacher union officials, the Iranian Student Association (CISNU--Vanguard), the national conference of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (German section of the United Secretariat), the Spartacusbund and many others. The West Berlin *Wahrheit*, organ of the East German Socialist Unity Party, reported that "thugs had attacked counter-demonstrators who came out for the Afghan revolution," referring to "a statement by the Trotskyist League."

The would-be assassins must be punished. We call on all those committed to defense of democratic rights and the workers movement to send protest statements to: Postfach 1 67 47, 6000 Frankfurt/M 1, West Germany, and contributions earmarked "Fred Z." to: Postscheckkonto, Frankfurt/M, 937 74-605 (Wolfgang Hohmann), West Germany. ■

Economy...

(continued from page 1)

demand that Gerald Bouey, governor of the Bank of Canada, be jailed for extortion. Interest rates jump every week. In Vancouver, where the vacancy rate is below zero, families are doubling up because accommodation is impossible to find. With ever-rising interest rates houses are not being built for the simple reason that they can't be sold. Meanwhile the Bank of Canada is talking about letting the dollar go. The purchasing power of all Canadian workers has already been considerably undermined by the 83 cent dollar.

As prices double and the dollar shrinks, gasoline, beef and housing are well on their way to becoming luxury items. To buy even the basic necessities people are borrowing like crazy. Now even this avenue is being restricted as the govern-

ment is forcing the banks to clamp down on credit. Monthly payments on credit cards are being upped in tandem with monthly interest rates.

Last December the Tory government of Joe Clark was brought down over its budget which proposed that gas be jacked up by 18 cents a gallon. Now the resurrected Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau has announced that a gallon of gas will go up 16 cents. All sections of the capitalist class agree on one thing: the working people and poor must suffer more austerity. Social services, unemployment insurance and wages are under the axe as the budget is "balanced."

Meanwhile the union piecards, like Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) president Dennis McDermott do nothing. Against the austerity budget of the Conservative government the CLC's strategy was to fight through the "ballot box." Canadian workers were told to vote NDP for a real change. But for the social-chauvinists of the NDP the solution to

TL Afghanistan Forums HAIL RED ARMY!

In the past two months the Trotskyist League has met head on the Cold War propaganda churned out by the bourgeois press over the Soviet move into Afghanistan. More than 250 people in three cities heard TL speakers hail the Red Army and expose the real enemy of working people, the imperialist warmongers in Washington and their junior partners in Ottawa. In Toronto, Peterborough and Vancouver the TL's unflinching defense of the USSR often provoked lively discussion as students, workers and independent leftists grappled with this central question for revolutionists.

Joseph Seymour of the Spartacist League/U. S. Central Committee kicked off the TL tour at the University of Toronto on January 27. Noting that "the president of the United States is talking like he's about to go to war over Afghanistan... one of the most backward, nothing countries on earth," comrade Seymour pointed out "that the recent events in Afghanistan can in a relatively short period of time lead to a nuclear war and the destruction of mankind. And there's only one way that can be prevented. And that's to throw out that crazy man in the White House and the class he stands for."

Just after International Women's Day TL spokesman Allan Phillips illustrated at a Toronto forum the quality of life of some of the people in the pre-feudal areas of Central Asia:

"There was an Austrian adventurer who sneaked into Soviet Central Asia in the late 1920s. There was this tribe escaping from the Red Army who went into the mountains where they couldn't be reached easily. And so he spent the winter with them. After he's there a couple of weeks he's given these two servant girls, but he doesn't want to take them as 'wives.' So the tribal chieftain comes to him and says, 'What's wrong? These girls are very sad, they don't understand this.' And he says, 'I've taken a vow of chastity since I've left my land, and you wouldn't want



Joseph Seymour speaks in Toronto, January 27

SC Photo

me to break a vow.' And the old man sort of understands vows, so he goes away and is happy, right.

"But the guy [has some comment] in his memoirs: 'Well look, the real reason I didn't want to sleep with these two girls is because a) VD is rife among the Central Asian tribes.' (You've got to remember these people don't have doctors.) 'And b) I found it hard to find these girls appealing because every day they'd sit out in the sun and pick the lice out of each other's hair and eat them.'"

While in Vancouver a woman who had travelled in Afghanistan confirmed Phillips' description of the enslavement of women there, the fake-lefts who supported muslim reaction in Iran against the bloody shah were noticeably absent from the TL's forums. The only exception was the Canadian Party of Labour which felt compelled to leaflet the 100-strong crowd that heard the TL at York University on March 19. The craven anti-Soviet Khomeini-lovers of CPL skulked on the fringes of the crowd, but said nothing from the floor--even when challenged by the TL. ■

what ails Canadian capitalism is economic protectionism. Such poisonous economic nationalism is the stuff that inter-imperialist wars are made of.

Capitalism means depression and war. U. S. president Jimmy Carter has already kicked off the war drive. In the midst of the budget-slashing rage that is sweeping Washington one area of government spending has been exempted--defense. An additional \$100 billion-plus is going to fund the U. S. arms build-up. Trudeau's government has pledged itself to follow suit--beginning with a multi-billion dollar program for acquisition of new jet fighters.

As the economy goes down the tubes the irra-

tionalties and anarchy of capitalism are brought home with a stark clarity. Workers must not pay for the bankruptcy of the bosses' system. But what stands in the way of mobilizing the working class against the continual attacks on its living and working standards is the present misleadership of the labor movement. The way out of the seemingly never-ending cycle of inflation, recession, depression lies through forging a revolutionary leadership of the labor movement that will lead the struggle to sweep away the destructive, irrational capitalist system and establish a rationally-planned socialist economy. ■

Reply to Intercontinental Press

Libby On the Road to Canossa

The 25 February and 3 March issues of Intercontinental Press, journal of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), treated its readers to a vitriolic two-part polemic against the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) by one Libby Schaefer. Schaefer, a former editor of Spartacist Canada, and her companion were expelled from the iSt in the summer of 1976. She has recently joined the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL), Canadian satellite of the SWP.

Schaefer's opus has very much a "God that Failed" quality and one is reminded a bit of Angelica Balabanov. Formerly Mussolini's mistress, Balabanov later became disillusioned with Lenin, too. It was not "god" that failed, though, but Balabanov.

Schaefer is not the first person who has left our tendency and ended up with the reformist SWP (although for every individual who has left the iSt for the United Secretariat [USec], there has been at least a dozen coming the other way). The first known SWP recruit from the Spartacist League/U.S. (SL), had been expelled for stealing money from our New York office. He turned up in the SWP's youth group about a month later. But Jack Barnes & Co. will have a lot more trouble absorbing Libby Schaefer and her companion.

It is of course entirely possible for members of a Marxist party to undergo an organic political evolution to the right and find that they are no longer politically at home in the ranks of the revolutionary vanguard. One such case was ex-SLer (now ex-SWPer) Bob Pearlman, an alternate member of the SL Central Committee and briefly organizer of

the Boston local. In the course of the 1974-75 struggle to defend busing in Boston, Pearlman moved to the right, arguing that the SL was making a "sectarian" error in refusing to do the donkey work for the clique of black Democratic Party political hacks. Pearlman generalized his critique of Trotskyism (especially over Angola) in the direction of the Mandelite USec majority and for a period of a year or more fought for it within the SL. Finding no support among the ranks he quit and eventually joined the SWP.

Bob Pearlman's polemic for reformism appeared in Intercontinental Press on 6 and 13 July 1977. It had the merit, as we noted in Workers Vanguard (Nos. 168, 170, 29 July and 26 August 1977), of accurately reflecting the political differences he had fought for inside the SL. Not so the Schaefer diatribe. As the Trotskyist League of Canada (TL) noted in its 20 July 1976 letter refusing to accept Schaefer's resignation:

"We must heavily discount your sometimes proclaimed, sometimes denied 'political differences' (your organizational abusiveness to 'inferiors' has been far more immediately serious). Such political departures as showed themselves gave every evidence of flowing from your personal/organizational situation...."

Thus Schaefer's attack on the iSt, unlike Pearlman's, is basically a fabrication, not only in its heavy reliance on the most repulsive slanders, but in its attempt to present Schaefer's separation from the iSt as some form of "political struggle." Her arti-



Khomeini's Persian chauvinist militiamen bring the 'Islamic Revolution' to Kurdistan. Schaefer claims Iran's 'Oppressed nationalities have gained ground in the struggle for their rights.'

cle is living proof of why there have to be historians. Schaefer presents herself as having always been at least an unconscious rightist ripe for the SWP/RWL. In fact, in the SL Schaefer manifested large ultra-leftist proclivities. While there was some alteration in her political physiognomy near the end, there was never any change in her basic mode of functioning: intense petty-bourgeois subjectivity, invidious cliquism and bureaucratic viciousness. Thus, she was a failure in the iSt, and for exactly opposite reasons to what she states in her article.

Poor Libby

Part I of Schaefer's polemic begins with the June 1976 Canadian Air Traffic Controllers strike and proceeds to the requisite "exposé" of "Spartacist chauvinism" on the national question along the lines of Intercontinental Press, 20 November 1978. (For a substantive response to that article, whose arguments Schaefer uninspiredly rehashes, see WV No. 221, 15 December 1978.) Only in Part II will she get to talk about what really matters to herself: wounded egotism and paranoia.

Schaefer describes her "resignation" document in an attempt to give the impression that embracing the SWP's anti-internationalism prompted her defection from the SL:

"In my resignation letter (August 17, 1976) I noted that the SL documents on Ireland and the Middle East did '... little more than introduce abstract definitions in the negative of the right to self-determination in the imperialist epoch...' [Here she quotes virtually the only paragraph in her 23-page document that dealt at all with the national question.] I noted that the term 'intermingled peoples' was not a Leninist category... I was forced to conclude that the Spartacists' position reflected the influence of American and English-language chauvinism on a group long isolated in the strongest imperialist power in the world today."

One looks in vain for any such "conclusion" in Schaefer's document, for it is in fact not about the national question. The only reference to the Air Controllers strike appears in a parenthesis on page 14. What the document is about, is of course, poor Libby (e.g., from page 1: "I had constant stomach pains and was severely depressed, succumbing to uncontrollable crying jags 5-6 times a day") and her comrades (the "creepy Catholic," "the icy youth," "this teenager with personal problems," the "slimy sycophants," and so forth).

The Language Question in Quebec

Schaefer's present polemic about the 1976 Air Controllers strike (in which the Quebec controllers scabbed on a work action aimed at upholding English as the international "language of the air") comes out in support of Bill 101 for unilingualism in Quebec, pushed by the nationalists as a means of defending their national culture. It should go without saying that no member of the TL, including Schaefer, defended such a line in the democratic debates

Murray Smith's letter to ICP

Vancouver, B. C.

March 20, 1980

Intercontinental Press

To the Editor:

In Part II of her frenzied and dishonest hatchet job on the international Spartacist tendency ("Case History of National Chauvinism, Bureaucratic Methods," ICP, March 3, 1980), Libby Schaefer cites my September 1978 resignation from the Trotskyist League of Canada as one indication of the "Decline of the Spartacists." Schaefer links my resignation with those of a number of other iSt members whose departures were fundamentally unrelated in any substantive political sense. Her statement that "these resignations and purges have been accompanied by internal documents or oral reports that attempt... to gut the political content of their differences" is not only untrue as it pertains to some of the other resignations with which I'm familiar; in my own case, it is completely meaningless. It is a matter of public record that I left the iSt for personal, not political, reasons (see Spartacist Canada, Oct. 1978). Precisely because I didn't wish to see my resignation exploited by such unworthy opponents of the iSt as Libby Schaefer and the United Secretariat, I welcomed the publication of my resignation statement in Spartacist Canada. Nothing that has happened since would cause me to alter a word of that statement in which I expressed my continuing respect for the iSt.

In defense of Trotskyism,
Murray Smith
cc. Spartacist Canada

on the Air Controllers strike which took place in the iSt at the time. The question was whether safety was a real issue in the strike or simply a cover for Anglo chauvinism. In the debates in Toronto, Vancouver and the U. S., most of the comrades were easily convinced that the resolution of the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations expressing "shock and dismay" at the Canadian government's creation of "a non-standard, bilingual air traffic control system... that represents an ominous step backward in air safety" could not be explained away by references to anti-Québécois sentiments. English is the lingua franca of air travel, just as for years German was the lingua franca of organic chemistry.

The present polemic, which charges "Spartacist chauvinism" against the Québécois, never once makes any effort to show that the line advanced by the iSt on Quebec unilingualism in any way cut against the real interests of the Québécois working masses. To the SWP/RWL it is axiomatic that any demand which is unpopular among members of an oppressed minority is not to be raised. Considera-

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Reply to ICP...

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tion of what is really in the interests of the oppressed is beside the point; simply figure out what the masses want and demand it so they will think you are on their side.

Our methodology is rather different. As Marxists we have always fought for multilingual education in Canada, in keeping with the Leninist principle of opposing "privileges for any one language or any one nation." We fight for the right of instruction in their native language for Francophones in English Canada. Here our program intersects that of the nationalists and hence that of the SWP/RWL. But our opposition to Quebec unilingualism flows not merely from a defense of the same democratic rights for the "English" in Quebec (including the sizable immigrant population), though it is indeed our adamant opposition to the nationalist line that the working masses of the oppressor nations have no rights which evokes from the SWP the charges of "Spartacist chauvinism." It is also a defense of the real interests of the oppressed Québécois:

"The Quebec nationalists' demands for French unilingualism in Quebec demonstrates their willingness to sacrifice the fight against oppression of French-speakers throughout Canada in exchange for the 'right' to impose French in one province. This position has profoundly reactionary consequences, in effect linguistically ghettoising Quebec and depriving French-speakers in the province of any access to English, the dominant language of the North American political economy."

--Workers Vanguard No. 119, 23 July 1976

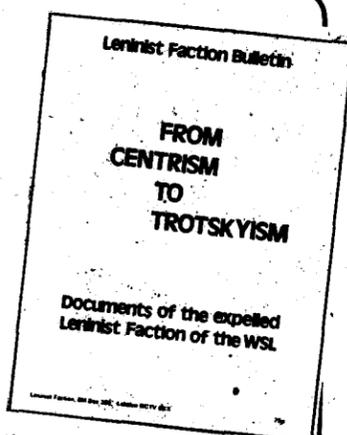
By demands that perpetuate the second-class status of the French-speakers by restricting their mobility in an English-dominated job market, the nationalists and their "left" tails seek to assure the weak Quebec bourgeoisie of a reserve labor pool. This is

Documents of the expelled Leninist Faction of the WSL

"The members of the LT had come into opposition on a path that was to lead them to agreement with political positions of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) which they had hitherto not only rejected but fought bitterly."

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hardly in the interests of the working people of Quebec.

The Quebec language question illustrates the impossibility of imposing what Lenin called "national-cultural autonomy" short of the formation of a separate national state. Only with the state power to enforce a closed national economy can the unquestioned domination of the French language be established in Quebec. Lenin was insistent that revolutionists must defend the right to self-determination even if the spokesmen of the oppressed minority are demanding only the illusion of "cultural autonomy." This is precisely what the USec refuses to do when it suits them, as for instance over Iran, where they cite the Kurdish leaders' failure to demand a separate state as an excuse to refuse to support self-determination for the Kurds. The USec's insensitivity to national oppression in Iran reflects its capitulation to the clerical-reactionary Persian-chauvinist Khomeini regime. Here is what Schaefer has to say about Khomeini's massacres of the Kurdish people: "Oppressed nationalities have gained ground in the struggle for their rights."

Nailing Some Slanders

Schaefer slanders as "capitulation to racism" a recognition that where two "interpenetrated peoples" have a claim to the same piece of land (e.g., Cyprus, Israel, Northern Ireland), there is no possibility of equitable resolution of the right of both populations to self-determination within the framework of capitalism. Schaefer and the SWP embrace the nationalism of supposedly more "progressive" peoples, thereby effectively advocating the reversal of the terms of oppression, as has actually happened several times in Cyprus. She charges the SL with an overly "negative definition" of the right of self-determination, claiming she sought "to explain in general how Lenin's definition in the positive might apply." But Lenin was categorical about the communists' task in the fight against national oppression:

"This task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the 'positive' activity of the bourgeoisie striving to fortify nationalism."

--Critical Remarks on the National Question

Using slander to fortify her case, Schaefer suggests the iSt would recognize the "national rights" of the reactionary white color-caste in South Africa and the Anglo minority in Quebec. This is simply a smear. The iSt unconditionally defends the right of the Québécois to self-determination, regardless of the wishes of the Anglo minority, and fights for the smashing of white supremacy in South Africa through black-centred workers revolution--as Schaefer well knows.

To give her stale rehash of SWP slanders some "I was there" immediacy, Schaefer tells her readers about her sojourn as an iSt militant in Israel:

"In retrospect, my experience as a member of the iSt's Spartacist Nucleus of Israel (SNI) in

IMG Fink "Socialist" Debates Cops

In the midst of Britain's bitter 150,000-strong steel strike this winter, when cops were running amok attacking picket lines, what labor militant, much less socialist, would have been caught dead debating the police over whether they have been "unnecessarily brutal in enforcing the law"? Scandalously, Tariq Ali of the International Marxist Group, section of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat, agreed to debate the chairman of the West Midlands Police Federation, Gordon Meredith, at the Birmingham University Student Union on February 29.

Meredith represents the cops who recently ransacked the Birmingham Labour Club, being used as local strike headquarters, and beat unconscious a striking worker outside British Leylands Castle Bromwich. Protesting this disgusting "debate," members of the Spartacist League/Britain picketed outside the Student Union, chanting "No debate with the Labour Club



raiders!" But Ali traipsed across the picket line, exchanged pleasantries with cop Meredith over dinner inside, participated in the oh-so-polite "debate" and afterwards shook hands with his worthy opponent. Militants who know how Meredith's cops "debate"--with boots, batons and bashings--have some less polite words to describe what the fink "socialist" Ali has done.

--from Workers Vanguard

1974-75 confirms the analysis I have since arrived at... Spartacist politics were just too out of touch with reality and insensitive to Arab oppression to recruit even a handful...

"I talked at length with many Arab students in Israel about the need to 'support the right of self-determination for the Palestinians and the Hebrew-speaking people' (a Spartacist slogan), but I could not get any of them to see the wisdom in the second half of that slogan."

Clearly, a chauvinist organization reaping the fruits of an insensitive line, right? Then how does it happen that on 24 January 1975 Schaefer wrote to the iSt international secretariat that "...we enjoy more support among Arab students at the present than any other Israeli left organization, outside of Rakah, of course"? Tell us, Libby, which of the two statements is a lie?

"Decline of the Spartacists"

The above is an excerpt from a correspondence which did contain its share of lies on Schaefer's part. It dealt with the liquidation of the Israeli nucleus, which Schaefer makes much of in Part II of her polemic, "Decline of the Spartacists." This part of the polemic inhabits a world of self-fulfilling fantasy, into which some statistics--some of them quite bizarre--are introduced to add verisimilitude. Schaefer delights in listing a few defections and setbacks for the iSt since 1975. But in the last year alone the USec has lost between 30 and 40 percent of its membership--how many pages of Intercontinental Press would it take to merely list the names of these people?

Schaefer's litany on the "decline of the Spartacists" consists of the resignation of "the principle leader of the German section" and "the leading figure of the original nucleus of the Canadian section, Murray Smith" (see box); the loss of our Chilean émigré group; the expulsion of William Logan, a former iSt leader in Australia and England; and "the groups in Israel, Italy, and Austria have ceased to exist." The unwary reader is supposed to conclude that the iSt is a "made in USA" fiction which boasts about its successes while light-mindedly liquidating its sections without acknowledging defeats.

The iSt is a politically homogeneous, democratic-centralist international tendency which is increasingly

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Reply to ICP...

(continued from page 11)

becoming a significant factor internationally. It has registered substantial progress during its supposed "decline," which accounts for the steady press coverage in the pages of the U.S. press. There have also been setbacks; thus the main resolution of the recent iSt conference noted:

"The Anglo-American-centeredness of the iSt was further accentuated by the personally tragic but almost inevitable demise of the Chilean Organización Trotskista Revolucionaria (OTR) under the pressures of exile and a lack of cadre resources for the tasks of a tiny propaganda group."
--Spartacist No. 27-28, Winter 1979-80

The Italian nucleus "ceased to exist" when its leader left the iSt over his political differences, taking one other comrade with him. The Austrians, however, are still with us.

Israel: Schaefer Cuts and Runs

The liquidation of the Israeli nucleus is quite a different story. Only a few months after having been removed from youth work (where her bureaucratic nastiness was a constant problem) and transferred to Israel in the hopes that the tiny Israeli nucleus would benefit from any help they could get, Libby Schaefer developed a full-fledged paranoia and began to agitate the international secretariat to liquidate the fledgling section. (Subsequently the paranoia transferred its object, from fear of war and repression by the Zionist state to fear of the iSt.) Even the paranoia gives the lie to Schaefer's current claim that iSt work in Israel was insensitive to Arab oppression; it was not indignant Arabs that gave Schaefer the willies, but the spectre of being eaten alive by the Israeli police.

In the two weeks between 24 December 1974 and 7 January 1975 Schaefer and her companion addressed no less than eight letters to the international center pleading for repatriation. In one of these she said she hoped nobody would charge that "the iSt is not really internationalist because it liquidated Israel"--very prophetic, as it turns out.

In its 20 January 1975 reply, the international secretariat noted:

"Comrades were both upset and extremely angry over [Schaefer's] letters. They demonstrate will-

full subjectivism, special pleading, individualistic desires to 'come back to the womb' of New York and a 'business as usual' attitude toward the liquidation of a good beginning of an important national section. The one consideration which seems to be lacking... is any sort of concern about the iSt... The fact of the matter is that if we liquidate Israel, not only will it be a severe defeat for the iSt (a fact which has clearly not played a significant role for you) but also that for years to come we will be saddled with having 'cut and run'....

"One does not move from one country to another the way one moves from one city to another...."

The letter characterized as "subjective cliquism" the failure of Schaefer and her companion even to inform the other cadre of the group of the liquidation proposal. The operational conclusion was:

"We do not propose to let you 'sink or swim', although the possibility was raised.

"If, after reflecting on the political implications of liquidating an entire section, you still feel you have to leave, we will try to salvage what is left, although we are not optimistic about the political future of [Schaefer and her companion]. You should understand that you will be leaving Israel severely discredited within the tendency...."

--International Discussion Bulletin No. 4, April 1975

Schaefer and her companion never accepted this critique, but they accepted as their due that, in response to a frantic phone call claiming Schaefer's companion was feeling suicidal, the SL/U.S. national chairman, Jim Robertson, caught the next plane to Jerusalem. And they accepted the money that got them out of Israel--an estimated \$11,000 in expenses to liquidate the section, including of course the other comrades (and families) whose welfare Schaefer never considered.

That Schaefer and her companion ended up in Canada was again not our decision, but was similarly brought about by paranoia. They arrived in Canada as damaged goods. From this fact derives the slander-mongering which characterized Schaefer's tenure in the TL and which she repeats now in Intercontinental Press--accusing the iSt of cop-baiting and of refusing to protect its members against the bourgeois state. Schaefer's companion himself gave the lie to these charges when he acknowledged:

"The IS [international secretariat] could have used tricks--I am so familiar with them from other organizations--which could have caused my falling into the hands of the Canadian state, but did not do so. The opposite is the case."
--TL Internal Discussion Bulletin No. 4, July 1976

Schaefer's slanders are the outpourings of wounded pride, the rankling resentments of one who failed as a communist and sought to blame the party for it. Such slanders are particularly obscene coming

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No to the Veil! Down with the Bride Price!

Chanting "Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack Ma Bell" 2,000 people showed their support for striking Bell Canada operators and cafeteria workers on this year's International Women's Day march in Toronto, March 8. The Trotskyist League organized a spirited contingent which called for victory to the strike and also emphasized the international character of this

proletarian holiday. Raising the issue of women's liberation in the East, the TL and supporters chanted: "No to the Veil, No to the Bride Price, Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" CBC television picked up on the pro-Soviet slogan and included the contingent in its coverage of the march.

The slogan offended the sensibilities of some fake-leftists, particularly the miserable social



SCPhoto

democrats of the disintegrating International Socialists (IS). At one point several members of IS's ragtag contingent counterposed Zbigniew Brzezinski's slogan: "Smash Red Army." Taking their counterrevolutionary position on the Russian question to its conclusion these ISers openly side with the darkest reaction--the U. S. State Department and the mullahs--against human progress and the emancipation of women!

from the SWP/USec. Whereas the iSt has an unblemished reputation for anti-sectarian defense of the left, the SWP in 1974 fingered its expelled pro-guerrillaist oppositionists as "terrorists" to the American government to demonstrate its own "respectability." Nor has the SWP ever denied the charge that last summer SWP leader Peter Camejo collaborated in turning the leftist Simon Bolívar Brigade over to the Nicaraguan government. In 1977 the Australian SWP refused to expel an admitted police informer. And needless to say, Schaefer's "security" worries don't extend to the iSt; her articles contain rather more detail about individual iSt members in far away places than could possibly be considered necessary to her case.

Strange Bedfellows

Schaefer also goes to bat for another purported iSt victim, William Logan, expelled last summer for what she calls "moral turpitude." Of course, in the RWL or the SWP such a charge would undoubtedly be simply a pretext. But in the Leninist movement, "one can expel someone...because he is totally corrupted," as Trotsky noted in his 1932 letter on Field and Weisbord. Logan was expelled with a motion stating, "His crimes are against communist morality and its substrate elementary human decency.... [H]e cannot be and should never have been a member of a working-class organization...." Schaefer, beating the bushes for disgruntled ex-

Spartacists, ignores this warning at her own risk.

Most interesting is Schaefer's defense of the "cloned youth," a thin layer which once inhabited the Spartacus Youth League, youth section of the SL/U. S. Apparently some vestiges of political instincts survive in Schaefer, for in her own tenure as a Spartacist youth leader she showed precisely those characteristics which were condemned in our "cloned youth" fight: bureaucratic arrogance and defensive abuse of comrades. This self-conscious petty-bourgeois layer fled our movement in terror when it was proposed they get industrial jobs and learn a bit about real life. We wonder what Schaefer, waxing indignant over the fate of these poor fellows, thinks of that ruthless tyrant Trotsky, who proposed exactly the same fate for SWP youth:

"No matter how talented and devoted to socialism an emigrant from the bourgeois milieu may be, before becoming a teacher, he must first go to school in the working class. Young intellectuals must not be placed at the head of the intellectual youth but sent out into the provinces for a few years, into the purely proletarian centers, for hard practical work."

--In Defense of Marxism

At least Schaefer was kind enough to refer her readers to the May 1979 issue of Young Spartacus.

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SC Photo

TL marches in Ontario Federation of Students anti-tuition hike demonstration, Toronto, March 27. Demonstration drew 3,000 students from across province.

Reply to ICP...

(continued from page 13)

whose forthright account of the "cloned youth" fight evidently provided her with her information.

Schaefer's vigorous defense of the right of petty-bourgeois youth not to get their hands dirty is particularly interesting in light of the RWL's present "turn to the proletariat." In the words of a recent RWL internal bulletin (Vol. 3, No. 7): "It is a one-sided turn in the sense that we hold that comrades without exception should go into industry...." Perhaps Schaefer, who is among other things an amateur poet of no particular merit, has figured out some angle to make sure she is an "exception." If not, she may find the editors of *Intercontinental Press* less cooperative in defending her right to stay out of the factory than they are in defending the Spartacists' "clones."

Libby Schaefer was a member of the iSt for eight years (actually seven, since she quit for a year, presumably to write poetry). In our movement she did some competent work, particularly as an edi-

tor of *Young Spartacus* and later *Spartacist Canada*, but her intense subjectivity and cliquist proclivities frequently evoked harsh criticism from her comrades. After her companion was suspended for threatening to kill members of the TL leadership, she took a leave of absence to "consider what role a person with my particular psychology" could play in the communist movement, and never really returned. After her expulsion, she admitted that she and her companion had intended to resign for a month but put off doing so in order to continue to enjoy the legal arrangements made for them by the iSt to facilitate their relocation in Canada. Schaefer just got tired of failing the SL test, which is that the leadership is to behave in a decent manner; perhaps she will be happier in the RWL/SWP, where the leadership behaves in a pernicious, vindictive and bureaucratic manner. In Schaefer's case we can only say: purges strengthen the party. ■

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El Salvador!...

(continued from page 16)

of unions, peasant groups and students, each linked to a hard core of guerrilla militants, launched a campaign of demonstrations, factory takeovers, land occupations and armed actions. In turn, the junta declared martial law and reneged on promises to release political prisoners. Since that time a restructured junta including right-wing Christian Democrats has precariously presided over a military regime for which repression against the left has increasingly displaced even phony promises of reforms as the order of the day.

Imperialist liberals hope that a combination of refined repression and judicious reform can prevent a left-wing revolution in El Salvador. Such hopes are illusory. The key reforms which the junta has attempted to carry out--bank nationalizations and land distribution--while abhorrent to the large landowners, are completely fraudulent. The bank nationalization is merely a means to prevent excessive flight of capital to Miami. The expropriated lands have been distributed to agents of ORDEN ("order") the network of informers and thugs created by General Romero.

Unfortunately, the Salvadoran workers and peasants, who have heroically defied both the Romero regime and its "progressive" successor, have no genuinely revolutionary leadership. The leftist guerrillas and their allies in the Revolutionary People's Bloc, the Unified People's Action and the 28th of February People's League--who have all now united in a "National Revolutionary Coordinating Committee" with the Communist Party--explicitly disavow any intention of creating a "socialist" regime of any kind. Instead they are trying to win the weak urban bourgeoisie, the Catholic hierarchy and even part of Romero's bloodsoaked officer caste to their side. In the midst of a pre-revolutionary crisis, in which the impossibility of liberal com-

promise has been clearly demonstrated, the popular-frontist guerrillas continue to call for a grand alliance of the exploited and oppressed masses with the "democratic" class enemies and military butchers.

The Salvadoran guerrillas, like the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, are attempting to follow the illusion of a "third road" between proletarian revolution and banana republic neo-colonialism. Already the petty-bourgeois Sandinistas are repressing the working class and far left in hopes of achieving stability and placating the domestic capitalists and the imperialists. But as they simultaneously attempt to preserve their anti-imperialist credentials the U. S. will not tolerate, much less supply aid to, a regime which abstains on UN votes condemning the Soviet role in Afghanistan.

Central America is Yankee imperialism's backyard. All Washington's maneuvers in El Salvador have one aim: no more Nicaraguas. Especially running against Reagan, Carter is more than capable of giving the gorillas the green light for a bloodbath or in the last extremity sending in the marines. The revolutionary workers and peasants of Central America may become the first victims of the Carter Doctrine.

Communist revolutionaries demand that all military aid to the Salvadoran junta be stopped and the U. S. imperialists keep their bloody hands off Central America! The only road forward to victory for the workers and peasants of Central America lies in an uncompromising struggle against all the exploiters, their military, political and "spiritual" representatives, not just the oligarchy and imperialists but the capitalist class. This road, the road of permanent revolution, requires the construction of a revolutionary Trotskyist vanguard to lead the struggle for workers and peasants governments throughout the isthmus and a United Socialist States of Latin America. ■

(Adapted from Workers Vanguard, 21 March 1980)

UCASSH...

(continued from page 3)

Jean-Claude Parrot was later thrown in jail.

Winning this case will be a victory for Jane Margolis, for the labor movement and for all who defend democratic rights. But a victory against the government with its arsenal of courts and unlimited resources won't be won without money. Of the \$25,000 that UCASSH estimated would be needed to finance this legal battle in its first year, \$12,000 has already been raised. Close to \$1,000 has been raised for UCASSH in Canada.

But UCASSH may well have to fight a drawn-out battle. So far the Secret Service has refused to even answer the UCASSH complaint, asking that the case be dismissed. Leaning on a recent Supreme Court decision, the government is trying to get the case thrown out on the basis that UCASSH has not named the individual Secret Service thugs who manhandled Margolis. What an outrage! These guys

didn't crash the CWA convention with calling cards. They grabbed Margolis without warning and detained her without even telling her what she was charged with. When UCASSH demands that the government provide the names of these agents, the Secret Service just stonewalls it!

UCASSH needs and deserves your support! Spartacist Canada urges readers to send their contributions to: Union Committee Against Secret Service Harassment, UCASSH, P.O. Box 12324, San Francisco, California 94112, USA. ■

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Smash White Terror in El Salvador!

APRIL 3--The escalating confrontation between the guerrillas and the right-wing junta in El Salvador could erupt into open civil war at any moment. The latest round of terror was unleashed by the junta when liberal Catholic archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who recently withdrew his support to the junta and began preaching the "legitimate right to revolutionary violence" (*Globe and Mail*, 27 March), was assassinated as he celebrated mass on March 24. His funeral March 30 became the scene of the second rightist massacre this year as a bomb exploded in the crowd of 100,000 outside the Metropolitan Cathedral and marksmen opened fire from windows of the national palace. Forty people died and at least 250 were wounded, many of them trampled by the stampede as the mourners tried to flee to safety. The junta and the right-wing gutter press attempted to blame armed leftists in the crowd for the violence, but witnesses reported that they simply returned the fire of the government forces.

Despite the brutal white terror that has claimed more than 750 lives so far this year, the workers and peasants have not been cowed. Instead, their burning desire to finish once and for all with the rapacious ruling class and the bloody generals has pushed El Salvador to the brink of all-out civil war. The grisly statistics of dead and wounded are symptoms of the terminal illness of an isolated and hated army regime faced with a growing challenge from the left. Rather than succeeding in quelling opposition the repression now only increases the hatred of the masses toward the junta and brings more and more sections of the population in conflict with it.

El Salvador is about as close as one comes these days to a nineteenth century "oligarchy"--the legendary (but very real) 14 families have ruled the country uninterrupted since the days of Spanish colonialism. Even now "order" is maintained in the agricultural districts primarily by a force of private rural police paid by the landholders. Now, as a tide of mass protests mounts, the hacendados are preparing to stage a last-ditch defense of what they view as their god-given right to exploit. And they are not the types to flee to Miami at the first



Victims of white terror in El Salvador

Alain Kater/Bygones

shot: a tremendous bloodletting is being prepared. In 1932 the oligarchy massacred three percent of the country's entire population to prevent a revolutionary victory.

As Washington grew worried about spreading revolutionary ferment in Central America following the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua last summer they tried to get the then-president General Carlos Humberto Romero to institute at least minimal reform. But Romero rejected any compromise, so amid rumors of coups by even more intransigent officers, the U. S. State Department cued its boys to remove the obstinate general and install a junta including a businessman and two reformist professors. Although initially pledged to carry out a series of reforms the junta was quickly challenged on the right by the military ultras and on the left by the mass-based guerrillas. The army quickly resorted to bloody repression exceeding in ferocity even that of Romero's final months.

With the initial exception of the obsequiously reformist Moscow-loyal Communist Party, which was bought off with a cabinet portfolio, the left declared war on the junta. The three main coalitions

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