

Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

50¢

Hail Rosa Luxemburg!

**Against Solidarność
Counterrevolution—
For a Trotskyist
Vanguard Party
in Poland!**



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Toni Randell

8 November 1943—12 February 1982



Our comrade Toni Randell died February 12 of cancer. A cadre of the Spartacist League for more than ten years, comrade Toni had been a member of the New York and Bay Area SL branches, a member of the Central Control Commission and a candidate member of the SL Central Committee. She was tragically only 38 years old at the time of her death.

We publish below the tribute read at comrade Toni's funeral. The poem is adapted from Bertolt Brecht. The paragraphs

from Trotsky are from his "Testament" dated 27 February 1940 (*Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]*).

An obituary will appear in *Workers Vanguard* following the memorial meetings which will be held Saturday, February 27.

* * * * *

I need no gravestone, but
If you need one for me
I wish the inscription would
read:
She made suggestions.

We
Have acted on them.
Such an epitaph would
Honor us all.

We have come here today to honor Toni. Each of us will miss Toni in his own way, each will remember her in his own way. She was mother, daughter, wife, friend and comrade. Toni determined that she would spend her life as a communist. She lived and died a hard communist.

For me, her strength, perseverance, kindness and very special sense of humor have been an inspiration during the years I have known her.

Our memories of Toni will continue to be an inspiration to us all, and especially to [Toni's daughter] Jessica, whom she loved so dearly.

In closing, I would like to read a testament written by Leon Trotsky during an illness in 1940. I know that Toni read these words often and in them found much comfort.

"For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.

"Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue beautiful sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence and enjoy it to the full."

Reagan's War on Women

The Equal Rights Amendment, the last battle-cry of the remnants of the women's movement, is headed for failure on June 30. This minimal statement of women's equality would if passed have been only a token victory for women's rights; but in defeat it is a telling index of the general social backlash which brought us Ronald Reagan.

The liberals wring their hands and look for "progressive" bourgeois politicians to support against Reagan. This is a shell game, as it always has been, aimed at refurbishing the discredited Democrats. The Democrats will just bring us more of the same. All wings of the ruling class are committed to the provocative anti-Soviet nuclear military buildup and the ambition to restore America to unchallenged imperialist hegemony.

What this program means for the working masses of the world is the unspeakable barbarism of "free world" El Salvador or South Africa; it means mullah-led Afghan "freedom fighters" fighting against the Red Army to reestablish their "right" to keep women veiled and illiterate. What it means here at home is the present "one-sided class war" against the workers and an increase in general social beastliness that transcends the narrowly economic (how many MX missiles will the school lunch cutback buy?—as if ghettoization, semi-literacy and unemployment weren't enough for black youth, now they can have more malnutrition).

In every sphere the bourgeois order arrogantly affirms its right to oppress. In the month of December alone, American coal mine disasters claimed 28 lives; meanwhile Reagan slashes into official safety agencies as "over-regulation." "Unfit mothers"—women the state decides have the wrong politics or a lover of the wrong race or sex—have their children taken away by the courts.

In the 1960s, the bourgeoisie was full of promises. And the rad/lib milieu generally accepted that steady social progress of the oppressed toward equality was assured. In the black movement, for example, the debate between liberals and "militants" was most often posed as one of pace. Now, after the cruel betrayal of the hopes of millions by the liberal civil rights movement and the rightward shift of bourgeois politics, black people find themselves poorer, more unemployed, more segregated. To add insult to injury, the blows against formal Jim Crow which were won in the reformist mass struggles are now under concerted attack and the most significant partial gains (like busing) are a dead letter. On the extra-legal front an emboldened Klan knows which way the wind is blowing.

No wing of the bourgeois political spectrum is even promising anything except "austerity," racist budget cuts and union busting. Even if they were, the desperate condition of the oppressed is not just a matter of budgetary "priorities." A capitalist economy is structured so that a serious economic crisis like the present

one must hit minority group workers disproportionately. Today more than ever, rotting capitalism has nothing to offer the working people except the intensification of brutal racial oppression alongside wage cuts and unemployment, social irrationality on every front, and imperialist war sooner rather than later.

The wraps are off; both parties have basically the same message: this is capitalism, like it or not. Most people don't much like it, and plenty of people have very poignant reasons to hate it: blacks, "reds," strikers (remember PATCO?), those who offend the Moral Majority in particular. But the so-called "leaders" of the working class want us to believe there's no way to fight back except supporting the Democrats.

This defeatism is an alibi. The AFL-CIO fat cats gripe about the "giveback" contracts and blubber about the loss of social welfare programs, but they must acquiesce to Reagan's program because they share his aims. Squeezing the working class in an effort to restore U.S. industry to a competitive position, rearming to gear up for new imperialist military adventures aimed against the deformed workers states—the union bureaucrats, like their friends the Democrats, couldn't agree more. Over Poland, they provide a "trade union" cover for a counterrevolutionary drive to restore capitalist exploitation braintrusting by the CIA and spearheaded by the reactionary Catholic church.

There can be no effective opposition to Reaganism which does not recognize and militantly oppose the anti-Soviet war drive, the basic political program of both capitalist parties which dictates Reagan's war against the workers and oppressed. The working class of this country, leading all those targeted by Reagan reaction, has the power to bring Reagan down through labor struggle. What it lacks is consciousness of its class interests and confidence in its power—in other words, a leadership with the program and will to reshape society. ■

Women and Revolution

Journal of the Spartacist League Central Committee
Commission for Work Among Women

EDITORIAL BOARD: Helen Cantor (editor), Helene Brosius, Liz Gordon, Elizabeth Kendall, D.L. Reissner, Nancy Rossi, Gene Schubert
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Linda Jarreau

Published by the Spartacist Publishing Company, Box 1377, GPO, New York, New York 10116. Telephone: 732-7860.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The Revolutionary Heritage of Rosa Luxemburg

The present situation in Poland cries out for a revolutionary proletarian leadership to cut through the disastrous polarization between a particularly vile and utterly discredited Stalinist bureaucracy and the counterrevolutionary nationalist/clericalist *Solidarność* "trade union" which lines up with U.S. imperialism's bloodthirsty drive to "roll back Communism" throughout the world. The Trotskyist vanguard which must be forged to defend and extend socialized property in Poland will build on the strong traditions of Polish socialism—the party Proletariat, the SDKPiL, the early Polish Communist Party, ruthlessly purged and finally dissolved by Stalin, and above all the revolutionary heritage of Rosa Luxemburg.

It is striking that all sides in the Polish crisis are united in their silence on Rosa Luxemburg, the greatest proletarian revolutionist in Polish history. Certainly the Stalinist usurpers cannot claim Luxemburg; they have had to obscure and slander her revolutionary example for decades.

Still less will Luxemburg, a woman, a Jew and a communist, find defenders among the fans of *Solidarność*, a "movement" which embraces virulent anti-Semites and ultra-reactionaries. *Solidarność*'s program is openly counterrevolutionary—for private ownership of the land, a bourgeois parliament, a dominant role for the Catholic church in government, for turning the nationalized Polish economy over to the International Monetary Fund, the bankers cartel that starves the Chilean masses. That *Solidarność*, which openly spurns even the word "socialist," disdains Luxemburg and all she stands for, is fully appropriate.

The social-democratic "left" outside Poland embraces *Solidarność* and wants therefore to separate itself from Luxemburg. At a February 7 forum in Boston, a Socialist Workers Party (SWP) spokesman solidarized with Polish "dissident" Marta Petrusiewicz when the latter stated, "The problem with Rosa Luxemburg in Polish minds was that Rosa Luxemburg considered... that the existence of the Polish national being was not an important problem for Polish workers."

It is true that Luxemburg incorrectly opposed the right of Poland to national self-determination, for which Lenin took her to task, pointing out that socialists

must support this basic democratic right in order to take it off the agenda and expose the underlying class conflicts which national oppression masks. Her error in his eyes lay in not taking the national question sufficiently into account, thereby rendering more difficult the exposure of nationalism as a mortal enemy of the proletariat. Needless to say it is the height of hypocrisy for the SWP and kindred anti-communists to manipulate Lenin's criticisms of Luxemburg in order to make common cause with the deadly enemies of Leninism, the Pilsudskiite reactionaries who hate everything that Lenin and Luxemburg stood for.

Despite errors on the national question (and other questions), Luxemburg was a communist and in Lenin's phrase "an eagle." Leon Trotsky summed up her historic role with these words:

"We can, with full justification, place our work for the Fourth International under the sign of the 'three L's,' that is, not only under the sign of Lenin, but also of Luxemburg and Liebknecht."

—"Luxemburg and the Fourth International,"
New International, August 1935

The Polish proletariat must recover its revolutionary heritage, the socialist heritage of Rosa Luxemburg, hated by the counterrevolutionaries (and feared by the Stalinists) as a revolutionary leader and martyr. We are reprinting below excerpts from some of Luxemburg's works, which with every word breathe a spirit of militant proletarian internationalism. The first selection, from "The Crisis of Social Democracy" (better known as the "Junius Pamphlet," from her penname), written in prison and published in 1916, indeed "saved the honor of the German proletariat" by condemning the German Social Democratic Party's (SPD) historic betrayal in supporting its "own" bourgeoisie in the first imperialist World War. We reprint also an excerpt from Luxemburg's "Socialism and the Churches" (first published in Cracow in 1905 under the penname "Jozef Chmura") because of its almost eerily appropriate condemnation of attempts by the Catholic church to mislead the workers.

We include the last part of her final work, "Order Reigns in Berlin," written when she and Liebknecht were already in hiding during the bloody suppression

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of the 1919 Spartakus uprising by the Social Democratic hangmen of the German revolution, Scheidemann and Noske. Luxemburg had opposed the uprising as premature; nonetheless she and Liebknecht took their place in the struggle alongside the best of the German proletariat. Finally, we include as well Karl Liebknecht's final rallying cry, "Trotz Alledem" (In Spite of All). The latter two items are taken from J.P. Nettl's biography *Rosa Luxemburg*, the former two from *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, Pathfinder Press, 1970.

* * * * *

—from the "Junius Pamphlet" (1916)

In refuting the existence of the class struggle, the social democracy has denied the very basis of its own existence. What is the very breath of its body, if not the class struggle? What role could it expect to play in the war, once having sacrificed the class struggle, the fundamental principle of its existence? The social democracy has destroyed its mission.... Its only mission now is to play the role of the gendarme over the working class under a state of military rule.... The leaders of the social democracy are convinced that democratic liberties for the working class will come as a reward for its allegiance to the fatherland. But never in the history of the world has an oppressed class received political rights as a reward for service rendered to the ruling classes....

The war has smashed the Second International. Its inadequacy has been demonstrated by its incapacity to place an effective obstacle in the way of the segmentation of its forces behind national boundaries in time of war, and to carry through a common tactic and action by the proletariat in all countries.

In view of the betrayal, by the official representatives of the socialist parties in the principal countries, of the aims and interests of the working class; in view of their passage from the camp of the working-class International to the political camp of the imperialist bourgeoisie; it is vitally necessary for socialism to build a new workers' International, which will take into its own hands the leadership and coordination of the revolutionary class struggle against world imperialism.

To accomplish its historic mission, socialism must be guided by the following principles:

The class struggle against the ruling classes within the boundaries of the bourgeois states, and international solidarity of the workers of all countries, are the two rules of life, inherent in the working class in struggle and of world-historic importance to it for its emancipation. There is no socialism without international proletarian solidarity, and there is no socialism without class struggle. The renunciation by the socialist proletariat, in time of peace as in time of war, of the class struggle and of international solidarity, is equivalent to suicide....

The immediate mission of socialism is the spiritual liberation of the proletariat from the tutelage of the bourgeoisie, which expresses itself through the influence of nationalist ideology. The national sections must agitate in the parliaments and the press, denouncing the empty wordiness of nationalism as an instrument of bourgeois domination. The sole defense of all real national independence is at present the revolutionary class struggle against imperialism. The workers' fatherland, to the defense of which all else must be subordinated, is the socialist International.

* * * * *

—from "Socialism and the Churches" (1905)

The clergy has at its disposal two means to fight social democracy. Where the working-class movement is beginning to win recognition, as is the case in our country (Poland), where the possessing classes still hope to crush it, the clergy fights the socialists by threatening sermons, slandering them and condemning the "covetousness" of the workers. But in the countries where political liberties are established and the workers' party is powerful, as for example in Germany, France, and Holland, there the clergy seeks other means. It hides its real purpose and does not face the workers any more as an open enemy, but as a false friend. Thus you will see the priests organizing the workers and founding "Christian" trade unions. In this way they try to catch the fish in their net, to attract the workers into the trap of these false trade unions, where they teach humility, unlike the organizations of the social democracy which have in view struggle and defense against maltreatment.

When the czarist government finally falls under the blows of the revolutionary proletariat of Poland and Russia, and when political liberty exists in our country, then we shall see the same Archbishop Popiel and the same ecclesiastics who today thunder against the militants, suddenly beginning to organize the workers into "Christian" and "national" associations in order to mislead them. Already we are at the beginning of this underground activity of the "national democracy" which assures the future collaboration with the priests and today helps them to slander the social democrats.

The workers must, therefore, be warned of the danger so that they will not let themselves be taken in, on the morrow of the victory of the revolution, by the honeyed words of those who today from the height of

continued on next page

the pulpit, dare to defend the czarist government, which kills the workers, and the repressive apparatus of capital, which is the principal cause of the poverty of the proletariat.

In order to defend themselves against the antagonism of the clergy at the present time, during the revolution, and against their false friendship tomorrow, after the revolution, it is necessary for the workers to organize themselves in the Social Democratic Party.

And here is the answer to all the attacks of the clergy: The social democracy in no way fights against religious beliefs. On the contrary, it demands complete freedom of conscience for every individual and the widest possible toleration for every faith and every opinion. But, from the moment when the priests use the pulpit as a means of political struggle against the working class, the workers must fight against the enemies of their rights and their liberation. For he who defends the exploiters and who helps to prolong this present regime of misery is the mortal enemy of the proletariat, whether he be in a cassock or in the uniform of the police.

* * * * *

—from “Order Reigns in Berlin” (1919)

It was a *matter of honour* for the revolution to ward off this attack with all its energy, if the counter-revolution was not to be encouraged to further efforts.... The revolutions so far have brought us nothing but defeat, but these inevitable defeats are themselves one stepping-stone on top of another to the final victory....

But the leadership has failed. None the less, the leadership can and must be rebuilt by the masses out of the masses.... The masses were up to the mark, they have forged this defeat into the chain of those historical battles which are themselves the strength and pride of international Socialism. And that is why a future victory will blossom from this “defeat.”

“Order rules in Berlin.” You stupid lackeys! Your “order” is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will rear ahead once more and announce to your horror

Solidarność...

(continued from page 24)

Roclaw factory which is three-quarters women, only six out of 66 candidates for Solidarność’ plant delegation were women.

Abortion on medical and social grounds was legalised in Poland in 1947. The Family Rights Act of 1949 gave women the right for the first time to divorce and to take a job without their husbands’ consent. Inevitably the Catholic church bitterly attacked these gains and the Stalinist bureaucracy undermined them by capitulating to reaction with the old crap about “the socialist family,” a vital prop of “socialism in one country.” But these gains still exist and must be defended against Solidarność’ programme of “Kinder, Kuche, Kirche.” Only socialised property relations can lay the basis for women’s liberation and a proletarian political revolution would stand four-square on defending and extending those gains into the full social and political liberation of women that Stalinism prevents. Solidarność, behind the banners of the Black Virgin of Czestochowa, the crowned eagle of Pilsudski and with the blessing of the pope, has set its face on reversing them. ■

amid the brass of trumpets: “I was, I am, I always will be!”

* * * * *

—from Karl Liebknecht’s “Trotz Alledem” (1919)

Hold hard. We have not fled. We are not beaten... for *Spartakus*—that means fire and spirit, heart and soul, will and deed of the proletarian revolution. For *Spartakus*—that stands for all the longing for achievement, all the embattled resolution of the class-conscious proletariat... whether or not we shall survive when all is achieved, our programme will live; it will dominate the world of liberated peoples. In spite of all. ■

International Spartacist Tendency Directory

Correspondence for:

Address to:

Ligue Trotskyste de France Le Bolchévik, BP 135-10
75463 Paris Cédex 10,
France

Spartacist League/Britain Spartacist Publications
PO Box 185
London, WC1H 8JE
England

**Trotzkistische Liga
Deutschlands** Verlag Avantgarde
Postfach 1 67 47
6000 Frankfurt/Main 1
West Germany

Lega Trotskista d'Italia Walter Fidacaro
C.P. 1591
20100 Milano, Italy

Spartacist League/Lanka Spartacist League
33 Canal Row
Colombo 01
Sri Lanka

Spartacist League/U.S. Spartacist League
Box 1377, GPO
New York, NY 10116
USA

Spartacist Stockholm Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 4508
102 65 Stockholm
Sweden

**Trotskyist League
of Canada** Trotskyist League
Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5W 1X8

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

Jane Alpert's Growing Up Underground: Confessions of an FBI Fink

Poor Jane Alpert, just a Trilby to the Svengalis of the New Left. But she sang for the FBI too, which is what most leftists remember. Her autobiography, *Growing Up Underground* (William Morrow, 1981), which appeared just in time to reap the publicity around the Nyack Brinks job in which several Weathermen, including Kathy Boudin, were picked up, is a lengthy exercise in blame-shifting and vindictiveness against her former comrades. Yes, it's true, she admits, she *did* bomb the Federal Building in New York City on 18 September 1969, traveling downtown via bus "wearing a white A-line dress, kid gloves... and a touch of makeup.... I felt as I imagined I would on my wedding day." And yes, she did write "I will mourn the death of 42 male supremacists no longer" following Rockefeller's bloody 1971 Attica prison massacre which left her former lover Sam Melville among the dead. And, yes, she *did* talk to the FBI, Alpert admits, in 1974 when she turned herself in after four years underground on bombing charges, in hopes of getting a lighter sentence.

But nothing, you see, is ever really Jane Alpert's fault. She says now Melville bombed buildings only out of sexual frustration and she went along because she was his love-slave. Alpert says now it was feminist Robin Morgan's evil influence that led her into man-hating excess and even—this delicately insinuated—perhaps into finking to the FBI as well. "Robin and I stayed up all night discussing the best way to handle the crisis" (of FBI pressure), Alpert recalls. Morgan thought up the scenario Alpert followed, she says, of talking to the FBI but "making up" some parts to hide certain details. "This was perhaps the most deluded strategy on which Robin and I had ever collaborated," she writes, but—as usual—she did it, "naively confident in her wisdom." And after her first fink session, Alpert in panic realized she had probably given enough details to trap fellow-radical Pat Swinton, also sought on bombing charges. So she called Swinton and told her to disappear again. "She told me she would never leave Brattleboro," Alpert self-righteously recalls—so we're supposed to think it was just Swinton's own fault she got picked up seven weeks later.

Alpert's book is really kind of embarrassing, not because the details of 1960s Lower East Side sex life are particularly painful (at least, no more than anybody else's), or because "underground" life is revealed as the pathetically aimless scrounging it no doubt was for many. It is this nasty, blatant evasion of responsibility which evokes disgust. Hegel's aphorism, "To his valet no man is a world hero, not because he is not a world hero, but because his valet is a valet," is appropriate to Alpert's love-slave outlook.

What is most irritating—and most dangerous—about this book is Alpert's vicious trivializing of the radical

wing of the New Left as simply a bunch of psychotic sexually hung-up creeps. A most useful myth for Alpert, no doubt, but that doesn't make it true. It's easy enough today, in the era of Reagan reaction, to shrug it all off as youthful mistakes, "Oh, we must have been crazy then—to think we could stop American imperialism." But the New Left wasn't crazy. The best of the 1960s radicals—and militants like the Black Panther Party, relentlessly gunned down—hated this society and its bitter oppression with a deep and fundamentally just hatred. Their means of fighting back, their strategy and analysis, were flawed—we Marxists argued *at the time* against the commonly held New Left belief that a few guerrilla fighters "picking up the gun" could alone inspire a revolution. We fought instead to win young radicals to the socialist perspective of working-class revolution leading all the oppressed.

As we predicted, the "Days of Rage" was a disaster. But we defended these young radicals against the ensuing vindictive state repression. Bitter enough was the brutal smashing of the Panthers, the rounding up of the Weather Underground, the punishing court sentences, the fact that the capitalist state is more powerful than the heroic individuals of the black radical movement and New Left thought. Better it were not.

Unfortunately a facile writer, Alpert is now making hay out of a movement she obviously didn't understand at the time and today is interested only in slandering to her own greater glory. It is true that among the thousands of idealistic young people, inspired by the civil rights struggles in the South, disgusted by the brutal resistance of the state to elementary justice, then impelled toward radicalism by the ever-escalating dirty Vietnam War, there were a few adventurers. The impatient spirit of petty-bourgeois radicalism often burned out, particularly given the dead weight upon the antiwar movement of the "respectable" liberal peace crawls, the cringing appeals to the president and Democratic Party. But the best of the New Leftists found their way to Marxism, found a way to deepen and continue their resistance to a hateful system of exploitation and oppression. Many cadres of the Spartacist League came from the New Left, from SDS, from the early women's and civil rights movements. And a lot of New Leftists, whether they found their way to proletarian socialism or not, at least had the decency not to fink on their former comrades-in-arms when things got tough. We salute heroic individuals like Susan Saxe and Wendy Yoshimura.

As for Alpert, today she's busy fighting the demon porn, right in tune with the times—the Moral Majority Reagan reaction times, that is. We wonder though, if this petty-bourgeois feminist fad mercifully dies out, will Alpert say Susan Brownmiller made her do it? ■

Interview with the Militant Action Caucus: Fighting Ma Bell

Working conditions in the phone company are barbaric. Workers are treated like inmates of a reform school, while the union, the Communications Workers of America (CWA), tries to look the other way. During "Operator Appreciation Week" in 1980, the company and CWA teamed up with a little gift for the operators, a key chain with the Bell emblem on one side and the CWA logo on the other. To most workers this summed it up: two sides to the same coin.

But there is a group of union militants which believes you can fight Ma Bell—and win. The Militant Action Caucus (MAC) of the CWA has a 12-year history of fighting for the workers' interests in the union. The Spartacist League has often covered the MAC's work in our press, as a model of the kind of workers' struggles, directed against the capitalist class, necessary in the fight to build a workers party and a workers government. While defending the workers' day-to-day interests, the MAC also fights around broader social questions. The caucus helped bring a large CWA contingent to the Spartacist-initiated mass protest against the Nazis' threat to "celebrate" Hitler's birthday on 19 April 1980 in San Francisco and earlier fought against former mayor Alioto's racist "Operation Zebra" round-up of blacks. It has fought for years in the union to break the CWA's ties to the bloody CIA labor front in South America, the American Institute for Free Labor Development. It calls for military victory to the El Salvadoran leftist guerrillas, opposing Reagan's Cold War attacks against Cuba and the Soviet Union. Most recently the MAC has come out with a fighting program against the AT&T "reorganization" anti-trust settle-

ment, which, as a recent MAC leaflet puts it, is "the capitalists' blueprint for busting what little union protection phone workers have while simultaneously fleecing phone users more than ever."

This January *Women and Revolution* interviewed Militant Action Caucus member Kathy Ikegami, elected to the Executive Board of San Francisco CWA Local 9410 this past November. Ikegami, 30, was hired by the phone company in 1974. A single parent, she was forced to work two jobs because of the extremely low wages paid to the primarily female clericals and operators. Initially a feminist and member of NOW, Ikegami was won away from feminism as she became more active in the union. She became a steward in 1978; she joined the Militant Action Caucus early in 1979.

* * * * *

W&R: You were a feminist when you started working for the phone company in 1974. How did you become active in the union?

Ikegami: Right after I left my husband in the early 1970s I joined a women's group at San Jose State. Being in a women's group was supportive, but none of us had any idea of how to change any aspect of women's oppression. We mainly cried on each other's shoulders. Later on I joined San Francisco NOW briefly, but quit in disgust when they expelled their lesbian members.

I was trying to support my child on welfare, which is impossible, and to go to school to learn something more than clerical skills. When it became unbearable on welfare, where doctors and store owners spit on



Workers Vanguard

19 April 1980: The Militant Action Caucus built a large CWA contingent in the 1,200-strong labor-socialist mobilization that kept the Nazis off San Francisco's streets.

“I Won’t Fink for Ma Bell!”

Mindy Sankel Gianninoto, a technician for AT&T in Manhattan and a CWA militant, was fired, arrested and paraded in front of workers in handcuffs by the cops because she refused to fink on her fellow workers. Her arrest on February 2 was the result of a continuing battle in which the phone company has been trying to force workers to act as snitches in the shop. Mindy has consistently refused to “flag mistakes” for the supervisors on her fellow workers’ job tickets—last September she was suspended and escorted out of the building by the New York police for refusing this fink job, but she refused to back down under intimidation. Following a union directive, Mindy refused to discuss the issue with management—so they had her arrested.

“This is a basic union principle,” Gianninoto told *Workers Vanguard*, “You never cross a picket line and you don’t have finks in the union. But the CWA has let the company force union members to do this kind of work. The union has to put a stop to this! If the CWA allows finking, it comes down to whether we’re going to have a union or not.” The company, the very day after Gianninoto’s firing, used the kind of information she refused to provide to fire another worker for “unsatisfactory performance.”

Phone militants in New York City, outraged by Gianninoto’s firing, circulated petitions to force a special union meeting, which was held February 18. Over 120 CWAers came to uphold her courageous stand for the union, and a motion in her defense was passed overwhelmingly. The meeting resolved: “That Local 1150 reaffirms that fink work is in clear violation of union principles and practice. That Local 1150 will not let the company assign work to union members that can lead to disciplinary action of other union members.... That Local 1150 will take all necessary action and use all resources to reinstate



February 2: AT&T has phone militant arrested by cops.

Mindy with full back pay and seniority and will defend any member victimized for refusing to inform on fellow union members.”

Ma Bell has already dropped the charges of “criminal trespass” against Gianninoto. Although the union meeting fell just short of a quorum, it showed that militant phone workers support Gianninoto’s stand against Ma Bell’s virtual slave plantation system, connived at by the CWA International. The fight must continue: For an immediate CWA ban on fink work! Mindy Gianninoto must be reinstated with full back pay and all disciplinary measures removed from her file!

you, I got a job at the phone company—a clerical job, which was not represented by the union. There are thousands of phone company workers like that who need to be organized, but the CWA brass won’t defend jobs in our industry, and they’ve turned their organizing efforts outside to increase their dues base. So instead of joining the union, I joined PTEWAA (Pacific Telephone Employees for Women’s Affirmative Action). As a feminist, I thought my interests were with other women trying to find a better place in the phone company. Most of the women in the group were low-level managers who wanted to get women, particularly themselves, into higher management jobs. After a few months, I got an affirmative action upgrade over a lot of people with more seniority, into a top craft job. I left the PTEWAA when it became clear to me that they had no interest in non-management women. But I carried my feminist program into my new job, and it didn’t work very well.

I still felt management was my ally and the male

workers weren’t. The manager would come up to me and tell me he was doing everything to make the job easier for me, and it was just those men causing the problem. In fact this manager was going behind my back to them and telling them that if I didn’t make it on the job, there wouldn’t be any more women following behind me. The guys felt their jobs were threatened by me. After a while the company started going after me, on production and attendance—and I found out the only recourse I had was to go to the union. I broke down a lot of barriers with the guys when I approached them and asked how to get in touch with the union. They told me how the boss harassed them all on a daily basis too. So I joined the union.

A couple of years later I became a union steward in response to the company’s disgusting treatment of my fellow craft workers and of women clericals I knew. I discovered that some of the most vicious managers were women. One grievance meeting that stands out

continued on next page



Women and Revolution

Kathy Ikegami at Bay Area El Salvador protest demonstration, January 23.

was with a woman manager who was a member of PTEWAA. I was defending male workers she was harassing, and she kept trying to appeal to me as a feminist, that her harassment of these workers was justified to keep her job as a boss. This helped break my last ties to feminism. I still didn't have a class perspective, but I was certain that this kind of feminism, where women bosses clawed their way to the top, wasn't for me.

W&R: Before you joined the MAC, you endorsed Jim Imerzel for president in the local union election in 1978. Why?

Ikegami: First, I didn't know the MAC at the time. Although I had won some grievances, I was still frustrated by how weak the union was, like lots of others. Imerzel, who went to law school but never passed the bar, and Marie Malliett, who was a fellow traveler of the Communist Party, cashed in on this sentiment. Their "Time for a Change" slate said if you're tired of forced overtime, absence control and force freezes (where no worker can transfer to a new job except at company discretion) you should vote for their ticket. I figured he'd at least be a change from the in-bureaucrats. I was in for a rude shock after Imerzel took office. First he brought charges against some of his bureaucratic opponents for "improper" handling of the elections, since *his* slate had lost some seats. He went to the U.S. government, to the Labor Department, to force new elections—and this was right after the government had tried to break the coal miners' strike with Taft-Hartley injunctions. A MAC member was on the Exec Board then, and she proposed that union stewards should be elected by the membership, not appointed by the local president—Imerzel ruled that out of order, saying such elections would only be a "popularity contest"!

When the Greensboro murders happened in November 1979, Imerzel got up at the union meeting and said the murdered CWP [Communist Workers Party] members provoked their own deaths and deserved what they got! In contrast, the MAC mobilized 75

phone workers to join with 1,200 anti-fascist demonstrators who successfully stopped the Nazis from celebrating Hitler's birthday in 1980. By that time I had joined the MAC, and was proud to have helped with that effort.

Under Imerzel's leadership, company harassment, speed-up, downgrades, all that has gotten worse and worse. He hangs out with a crowd of left-talking Bay Area union bureaucrats, and is secretary of BATUCC [Bay Area Trade Union Committee for Chile]. Imerzel and Malliett were part of the Sandinistas' hand-picked trade-union delegation that toured Nicaragua. They came back with glowing reports of the regime, completely whitewashing the Sandinistas' strike-breaking and arrests of trade unionists.

W&R: How did you find out about the Militant Action Caucus?

Ikegami: Around the 1978 election, a MAC member was transferred to my crew. I was getting increasingly frustrated as a union steward, and it was a tremendous relief to meet the MAC. For the first time I started to develop a class perspective. I began to see why our union was weak, why I was butting my head against the wall—it was because of the union bureaucrats' open collaboration with the company. They are unwilling to take any effective action against the company, like striking over working conditions. The bureaucracy will do anything to prevent militant struggle against the company because they really believe Bell and AT&T have the right to make their huge profits. AT&T in particular has working conditions like a non-union shop. The CWA leadership has never taken on these conditions. They never fought to get protection against absence control, under which our members get fired for being out sick more than 6 days a year. The CWA has never beaten the company in a national strike. MAC said that what this union needs is a good strike where we make them respect the union. They said that the union leadership suppresses the militancy of the ranks to maintain the bureaucrats' alliance with the company and its capitalist government, especially the Democratic Party, so they could beg them for crumbs. At the time I didn't really understand the point about the Democratic Party. But I thought the caucus wanted to fight and knew how to do it, so I joined.

W&R: What won you over on the need for the union to break from the Democrats and fight for a workers party and a workers government?

Ikegami: It was the national CWA convention in Detroit in 1979. A MAC member, Jane Margolis, was an elected delegate. President Jimmy Carter was invited to speak, right after his TV speech where he said workers are to blame for the state of the economy. Our delegate was going to protest this in a speech against Carter—and to stop her the Secret Service grabbed her, and dragged her off the convention floor. So Jane and her supporters in UCASSH [Union Committee Against Secret Service Harassment] sued the Secret Service, and they were forced to apologize in writing, and gave her a \$3,500 check, which she contributed to the union defense fund. It outraged me that the government came into our union convention where they had no

MAC supporters joined other militant unionists on PATCO picket line at Oakland Airport, 25 September 1981. The MAC called for "Labor: Shut Down the Airports!"



Workers Vanguard

place and dragged an elected delegate off the floor. For the first time I really understood what the alliance between the union bureaucracy and the capitalists means.

W&R: What were some of the issues in the successful MAC campaign for Exec Board?

Ikegami: We say, workers have the right to fight for their own class interests. The bureaucracy believes in protecting the interests of the company. They defend capitalism. A major point of our program is stop union collaboration with the company, which goes on at every level of the union. People understand this very concretely, not only because some stewards are notorious finks, but because a large percentage of them are actually signed up on a list—the "Ready Now" list—to go into management. When we were campaigning we ran into a group of people who had not voted in past union elections, some never even joined the union, because their steward was such a fink. We stand on our full caucus program, which includes strike action to stop company harassment, union action to stop racial and sexual oppression, and to stop the KKK and Nazis, like we did on April 19th [1980]. We say, picket lines mean don't cross, and we're for labor action against Reagan and his union busting. The unions and working people need their own party, a class-struggle workers party, that can take the kind of action needed to bring down Reagan. That would also smash the Democratic and Republican war drive against the Soviet Union. [CWA International president] Glenn Watts and Imerzel say the way to stop Reagan is to get the Democrats back in. This won't wash with many workers anymore.

W&R: What about the PATCO strike?

Ikegami: It was a real eye opener for most workers that an entire union like the air controllers could be fired for going on strike. Reagan's mass firing and jailing of PATCO members made clear where this guy really stands. The criminal part of it is that not one labor leader used their union's power to defend PATCO, to help them win that strike. No union leader flew home to bring their members out on strike to defend PATCO. Imerzel even said PATCO got what they deserved, because their union endorsed Reagan! But if the

unions like the IAM or Teamsters had pulled their members out, the airports would have been shut down tight, and PATCO's strike would have been won. But the labor movement would have had to take on the government, and not one of them was willing to do that. The CWA International did give \$100,000 to their strike fund, which was good but not enough. In fact, there were some anti-union types in the local who even petitioned against giving the money. We were successful in combatting a lot of that sentiment. We explained we need strong unions and real union solidarity, which means standing and fighting together against our common enemy, the companies and their government.

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Der Spiegel

"Reform by Death":
El Salvador junta has
slaughtered more than
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We passed out a leaflet, "Labor: Shut Down the Airports!"; which sparked a lot of interest.

W&R: What about the caucus call for "Down with the anti-Soviet war drive"?

Ikegami: Well, this really isn't the 1950s. Workers look at our program, which explains how the anti-Soviet war drive ties in with Reagan's attacks on the unions, on blacks, on Social Security, and they're curious. We say these attacks are part of his scheme to finance this war drive and set the political climate for war. It's not that much of a big leap for workers to see in whose class interests Reagan's government is operating. In our election brochure we say "U.S. capitalists and their political parties hate the Soviets for the same reason they hate the unions—both stand in the way of corporate profits." Workers may not all agree with us that Solidarity in Poland is fronting for international big business interests, but when they see Reagan supporting this fake "union" and then firing PATCO, they're willing to listen.

W&R: The CWA is notorious around the world for its ties to the CIA through the American Institute for Free Labor Development [AIFLD]. Can you tell us about the work the MAC has done to expose this and to break your union's connection with this dirty work?

Ikegami: The CWA was actually the founder of the AIFLD, which is not only a kind of company union, but a well-known CIA front that promotes American business interests abroad, especially in Central and South America. The AIFLD's idea of "free trade unions" is setting up pro-company, pro-American unions counterposed to the existing, more militant unions, which are led by leftists. It's a bloody business, and for 10 years the MAC has been fighting it.

The AIFLD was very active in Chile, where the junta rewarded them for their help in the coup by establishing AIFLD-affiliated "unions" as the only legal labor federation. In El Salvador, operating under the cover of the AIFLD's "land reform," the CIA transplanted the Phoenix pacification program from Vietnam to Central America. The peasants call it "reform by death." In all

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these countries the AIFLD is responsible for the arrest, torture and death of many thousands of workers and unionists.

Another CIA front in the labor movement is the PTTI [Post, Telegraph and Telephone International]. Watts of the CWA is the vice president of PTTI. To give you an idea what this outfit is like, at a recent CWA convention greetings from the PTTI were given by the so-called "Cuban Telephone Workers in Exile." I suppose their goal is to help prepare smooth communications for the next Bay of Pigs invasion! In September 1981 the PTTI held an International Convention, at which three representatives from Solidarność showed up, according to the CWA News. This shows the reactionary nature of Solidarność, that they show up at a conference on how to bust left-led unions. We have repeatedly called for breaking all ties and associations with the AIFLD and for opening its records to publicly expose it for what it is—a murderous front for the CIA.

W&R: In the context of Reagan's reactionary offensive, how do you account for this election victory for yourself and the MAC?

Ikegami: I think union members are quite capable of seeing the handwriting on the wall. This country is basically going down the tubes. Reagan has systematically attacked every oppressed group. He declared war on the labor movement by firing PATCO, and he's gearing up for war against the Soviet Union. You can look at our union leadership and see the sellouts: speedup and harassment, with massive downgrades and layoffs already happening. Glenn Watts said in the June 1981 union newspaper, "We're so many telephone people today, and we anticipate in the future there won't be that many telephone people—maybe half or something of that sort." So workers who may not agree with all the points in our program yet, know the union has to *fight*, and that is not what the union brass stands for. They know the MAC are the only people who stand for a fighting union. That's why we were so successful in this election.

W&R: What will be the impact of the recent AT&T "anti-trust" settlement?

Ikegami: The scam of reorganization/divestment is clearly AT&T and the government's idea. For the company it's an opportunity to go after what little union protection we have left, and to fleece phone users worse than ever. Phone workers are pretty nervous about these schemes, which allow the phone company to better compete with the mostly non-union communications industry. It's going to mean more speedup, more pressure to sell phones or else you'll lose your job. This is openly threatened by management. On top of it, automation is eliminating thousands more jobs. Our union has got to fight, or we could face the death of any union at all. Glenn Watts has no intention of fighting AT&T. He's heading up a new committee to reforge the Democratic Party through the old labor-black alliance. Watts and the national CWA leadership "continue to believe that the Congress... must have the final word on the shape of the telecommunications industry..." (this is from their press release of January 13). Congress and the courts lined up right behind Reagan's smashing of PATCO. No branch of the capitalist government is going to give workers any guarantees that would interfere with corporate profits. It isn't our job to advise the capitalists how best to run their businesses. The working class has its own solution: nationalize AT&T with no compensation.

The issues raised in the reorganization certainly aren't settled yet. They will be resolved only on the battle lines of the class struggle, on picket lines and elsewhere, not in the halls of Congress. The 500,000 members of CWA must not take these attacks lying down. What is needed is labor action to bring down the labor-haters Reagan and the AT&T bosses. We've got to dump this sellout Watts leadership and break all union ties to the capitalist Democratic Party. Only a workers party that fights for a workers government and a planned economy can put an end to the economic ruin, unemployment, racism and threat of thermonuclear war that this government promises. Our caucus is fighting to build that kind of leadership in our union—it's the only answer that will work. ■

Strange Things Under Harvard's Rocks

Issue No. 97
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The Russian Avant-Garde: Art and the Bolshevik Revolution

by Vladimir Zelinski

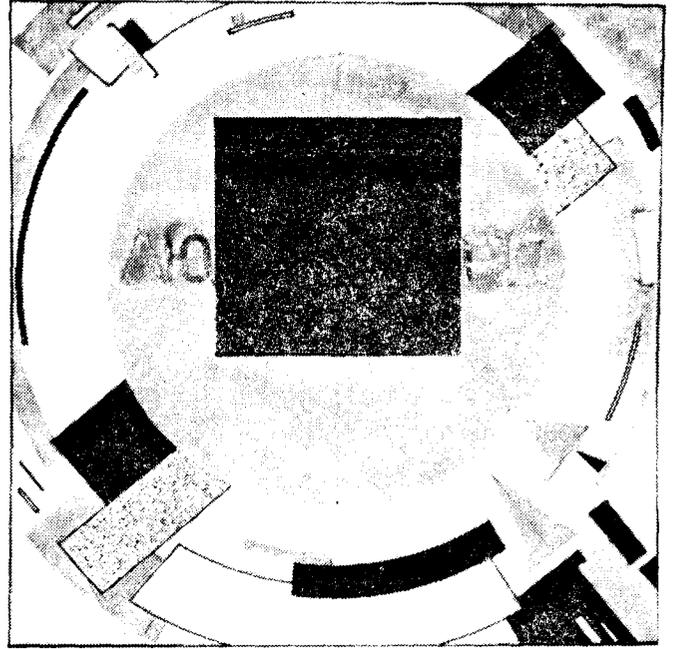
Two recent American exhibitions—"The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930—New Perspectives" 1980 national tour, and this winter's Guggenheim Museum show in New York City, part of the George Costakis collection—reveal an incredibly vital and heterogeneous movement. In the period from roughly 1916-17 to 1924, the paintings, constructions and industrial designs of a host of talented artists placed Russian art, before (and thereafter) a derivative and provincial backwater, at the leading edge of 20th century creativity in the arts. The whole Bauhaus school, in particular, is incomprehensible without the influence of the Russian Constructivists and "production artists," transmitted by such figures as Kandinsky and El Lissitzky.

This movement was largely ignored in the West for almost half a century until its first major Western exhibit in London in 1971. Today such exhibits are promoted and armed with a mendacious anti-Communist "message": the bourgeois media disappear the social relation of this art to the October Revolution and pretend that it was repressed in revolutionary Russia under Lenin and Trotsky. In fact the avant-garde was literally disappeared—but only under triumphant Stalinism. During the consolidation of Stalinist bureaucratic rule, the revolutionary artists were transformed into non-persons and then plucked from obscurity and subjected to frenzied attacks on their supposed degenerate "bourgeois formalism" by Stalin's culture boss Zhdanov.

The reason is simple: though art is not "political" in a direct sense, this art in its own way is political dynamite. It gives the lie to the equation of Leninism with Stalinism, connived at by capitalist ideologues and Stalinist hacks alike ever since the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky was smashed. Time has not defused the political impact of these fine works. Their exhibition in the USSR today would reveal the stunning mediocrity of "official art" (as well as the sorry state of "dissident" and "non-conformist" artistic production). It would also inevitably raise deeply embarrassing and (for the usurping bureaucrats) unanswerable questions. What happened to these artists? Why was genuinely great art possible in Russia in the early '20s, in the midst of incredible backwardness and massive poverty, but not now, under conditions of relative material plenty and technological progress?

Art and Society

Since bourgeois patrons were obviously lacking, clearly the government and cultural institutions of the infant Soviet workers state had to play a central role in supporting this art, an art whose abstractness and aura of airiness and radiant optimism place it at far remove from the dogmas and products of Stalinist "socialist realism."



El Lissitzky, 1919-1920. The words "Rosa Luxemburg," faintly visible across the square, indicate this may have been intended for a competition to honor Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, murdered in January 1919.

Russian "revolutionary" art did not, of course, spring from the head of Lenin. The bourgeois media would like to suggest that there is little if any relationship between the Bolsheviks' successful October Revolution and the cultural explosion of 1917-25. But there are in fact numerous ties, going back all the way to the 1850s artistic revolt against the hitherto dominant neo-classical tradition. This is not to say that Russian painters and writers were necessarily Marxist. Rather they inevitably mirrored the travail of a society groaning beneath the yoke of a tsarist autocracy incapable of effecting Russia's passage into the mainstream of bourgeois economic, political and cultural development.

The author of the main work leading to the founding of the Russian realist school, *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality*, was Nikolai Chernyshevsky, better known among revolutionaries for his seminal novel *What Is To Be Done?*, which so profoundly moved and influenced a generation of Russian revolutionaries, Lenin among them. Chernyshevsky's belief that it was necessary to forestall "the accusation that art is an empty diversion" through imbuing it with social content was characteristic of the radical intelligentsia.

Thus the "Wanderers" grouping of artists founded under Chernyshevsky's influence in 1870 grew along lines strikingly similar to those of overtly political groupings. Many of its members, like the Populists,

“went to the people” and elevated the Russian peasant, mired in his immemorial priest-ridden backwardness, as hero of the new art. Wealthy Slavophile merchants supported artistic colonies (Abramtsevo and Talashkino) whose residents sought inspiration in a William Morris-ish arts-and-craftsy revival of moribund Byzantine tradition or the primitive folk art of *lubok* (chapbook) woodcuts.

Around the turn of the century a symbolist school arose influenced by the fin-du-siècle “decadents” of the West. Although reflecting the increasing cultural sophistication of their patrons, such artists as Viktor Borisov-Mussatov succeeded only in producing yet paler copies of the already effete Puvis de Chavannes, elegiac paintings of abandoned country mansions and empty-gazed demoiselles—works which with hindsight one is tempted to assert expressed (like much of Chekhov) the consciousness of a merchant/landholding gentry lacking an historic future. And art-for-art’s-sake withdrawal from social concerns also arose, partly reflecting Russian artists’ sense of futility at the intelligentsia’s failure to transform society by literary means. This “World of Art,” centered around the multi-talented Aleksandr Benois, nonetheless laid the foundations for future developments, mounting a series of exhibitions that introduced contemporary European art to Russian painters and young Russian artists to a wider public.

The Great Experiment

The first expressions of the coming breakthrough appeared between 1905-1917, with the rise of a gifted and innovative younger generation of painters. Their openness to experimentation, derived partly from the German expressionists and French cubists, arose also from the sudden sense of release generated even in defeat by the great proletarian upsurge of the 1905 Revolution. (See “Before ‘Socialist Realism’ in the Soviet Union,” *W&R* No. 13, Winter 1976-77, for a discussion of this burst of creativity in other artistic areas, notably dance and theater.)

This feeling that the whole anachronistic edifice of tsarism was crumbling inspired in these artists a will to radically reshape art and its relation to society. Seeking through scientific inquiry into the interaction of planes, volumes, color, overall structuring of the canvas and their effects on the viewer to discover laws inherent to art, they rejected the naturalistic tradition (in which even cubism remained based). This was the program that, despite factional differences, united the Russian avant-garde right down to their repression by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Hence the rationalism of this art, its tendency toward a radical geometricizing simplification.

The art of the Russian avant-garde thus to an extent anticipated the revolution to whose ideals it lent expression: a fundamental faith in man’s capacity to rationally reshape society, doing away with the material and intellectual compulsion springing from the anarchy and inequality of capitalist class rule. Nor is this so strange as it might seem: tsarism had only gotten away by the skin of its teeth. And successful revolutions, just because they are so deeply rooted in the needs of



UPI

Propaganda trains, brightly decorated by Agitprop artists, brought the Bolsheviks’ message of liberation to the farthest reaches of the Soviet Union.

society, tend to cast their shadow before them. Thus that severe archetype of French revolutionary art, David’s *Oath of the Horatii* with its celebration of stoic bourgeois civic morality, was painted in 1784-85, a period in which a whole crop of masterpieces in fact appeared.

New York Times art critic Hilton Kramer commented on the Guggenheim show (*New York Times Magazine*, 11 October 1981):

“In Popova’s oeuvre, as in that of many other members of the Russian avant-garde, we first encounter a Cubist vocabulary that looks more or less familiar. . . . But then something happens. A vision—mystical or political or, as was more often the case, some combination of the two—intervenes to alter the inherited vocabulary and set it on a new course, and we are suddenly confronted with forms, textures, ideas that owe little or nothing to the styles that set them on their way.”

Unlike the anti-communist Kramer, whose puzzlement results from ideological blinders, we Trotskyists know what the “something” was that seemingly just “happened.” It was the October Revolution. Kramer cannot admit its profoundly liberating effect upon society from top to bottom, because to do so would dispel the assiduously cultivated bourgeois myth that the proletarian triumph of 1917 was a Bolshevik putsch from above. But indeed this cultural explosion affected not just Popova but a host of young artists, all of whom just “happened” to make their creative breakthroughs

continued on next page

in the crucial years 1917-18. One must look to the great bourgeois upheavals—the Italian Renaissance, the French Revolution—for a parallel to this sort of artistic and societal self-confidence.

The Guggenheim Exhibition

One came away from the powerful Guggenheim exhibit convinced of the viability of modernist “abstract” art. What is it about these paintings that produces so marked an effect? First there is the overwhelming vitality. This was a cultural explosion in the making, with an incredible variety of styles and techniques. *Times* critic Kramer has difficulty reining in his incredulity in the face of these artists’ prescience: “Her [Olga Rozanova’s] untitled abstract painting of a vertical green stripe, dating from 1917, was produced more than 30 years before the American painter Barnett Newman began work on the paintings of a very similar design that won him a place of renown.... Ivan Kliun... vividly anticipated more recent developments—in this case, the kind of Minimal Art... that enjoyed a great vogue in the 1960s.”

The problems being confronted here are those which non-objectivist painters have faced right up to the present, while the solutions advanced by the Russians are both elegant and convincing. These paintings really work. They convey a sense of life and vitality, the result of a concern for painterly texture and the most subtle color gradations. Virtually all these artists cultivated a bright palette that, along with the sheer elegance of their works, their clarity and subtlety

of structure, the sense of artistic problems being met and solved, makes them the tangible conveyors across 60 years of the vigor, hope and optimism of revolutionary Russia.

The large number of women artists in the Guggenheim exhibit is itself a powerful index. Kramer comments:

“The Russian avant-garde was the only art movement of its kind in which the achievements of women were unquestionably equal to those of their male colleagues, a circumstance that appears to owe more to the enlightened attitudes of the pre-Revolutionary liberal intelligentsia than to any measures initiated by the Soviet regime after the Revolution.”

Kramer’s liberal banalities beg the question. But the fact remains: the only artistic movement in which women were, in Kramer’s words, “unquestionably equal” was associated with the only proletarian revolution in history. In the atmosphere of the triumphant Revolution women, many of whom might have remained Sunday painters, their art an ornament on their role as dutiful mothers, had the confidence to devote themselves wholly to art. For every Natalia Goncharova, well-known before the Revolution, there are a half dozen who were unknown at its outset and who would, without its liberating effect, in all likelihood have remained so.

The Bolsheviks and Art

What the Bolsheviks did after 1917 was basically to provide the material/organizational framework and then leave artists and writers to work out artistic

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Kasimir Malevich's program cover for the first Petrograd conference on peasant poverty, 1918. By the '30s, under Stalinist intimidation he was reduced to producing cloying genre scenes (right).



problems on their own. In the face of decades of bourgeois propaganda to the contrary, it cannot be sufficiently stressed that this was the standpoint of literally *all* authoritative Party leaders. Trotsky's "Communist Policy Toward Art" thus simply voices the standard attitude:

"Art must make its own way and by its own means. The Marxian methods are not the same as the artistic. The party leads the proletariat but not the historic processes of history. There are domains in which the party leads, directly and imperatively. There are domains in which it only cooperates. There are, finally, domains in which it only orients itself. The domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help it, but it can lead it only indirectly. . . ."

Anatoly Lunacharsky, head of Narkompros, the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment, and thus directly in charge of cultural affairs, held identical views: "Of course the state does not have the intention of imposing revolutionary ideas and tastes upon artists. Such compulsion could result only in fake-revolutionary art, since the prime requisite of genuine art is the honesty/sincerity of the artist" ("Revolution and Art," October 1920).

Lunacharsky sought to prevent the dominance of any one artistic clique, which meant above all in post-1919 Russia combatting the influence of the "Proletkult," led by one-time God-seeker and now arch-workerist Bogdanov. Against the Proletkult insistence that art be immediately relevant and comprehensible to Russia's incredibly backward masses (a movement which fed straight into Stalinist "socialist realism"), Lunacharsky insisted "... we cannot adapt our literature to the low cultural level of the broad masses of peasants or even to that of the workers themselves. This would be a mammoth error." Like Trotsky, he refused to accede to

the workerists' obscurantist rejection of all past art as simply "bourgeois," insisting that "new proletarian and socialist art can be built only on the foundation of all our acquisitions from the past." This debate mirrored the crucial battle being waged by Lenin and Trotsky, in war-ravaged and starving Russia, for the need to learn to develop and wield the techniques of advanced capitalist production, as against the primitive and utopian sloganeering of groups like the "Workers Opposition."

Of course, for many members of the Russian avant-garde, such was the attractive power of the Bolshevik-led transformation of society that pure art was not enough. Many became Agitprop artists, creators of revolutionary posters and decorators of the brightly-painted propaganda trains that brought the message of liberation to the farthest reaches of the Soviet Union. Essentially these artists' task was *political* propaganda, attempting first of all to raise the political, and not primarily the artistic, consciousness of their viewers. Another group of artists, at the Institute of Artistic Culture founded by Kandinsky sought to create an overall environment in which the most everyday objects (the ubiquitous Russian tea service, textiles, chairs, clothing, Popova's elegant designs for cigar and cigarette cases) would have worked along with a new architecture and constructivist theater to educate and raise the taste and perceptiveness of Russia's culturally deprived masses. The intention was not a debased "proletarian" art à la Proletkult, but to create the conditions for a *classless* art, as the workers overcame their decades of material and cultural want, and the achievement of plenty allowed the attainment of socialism.

Still many avant-garde artists in post-Revolution
continued on next page

Russia eschewed any effort at direct political relevance. In the scant decade from the October Revolution to the consolidation of Stalinist bureaucratic rule in the late '20s, many Russian artists felt themselves, for the only time in their history, free to devote themselves to art pure and simple, without the imperative need to voice an overt social message. Yet in the manner that great art captures the social matrix from which it springs, the works of these artists are imbued with optimism and are animated by the hopes of an entire society.

Stalinist Degeneration

What happened instead was the bitter disappointment of those hopes: Stalinist degeneration, the result of the conjuncture of Russian backwardness with the devastation first of World War I and then the civil war, plus—critically—the failure to extend the revolution to advanced Europe, as in Germany in 1923. The work of the avant-garde artists began to disappear from public view, just as the Bolshevik opposition to Stalin disappeared from view. The artists were fortunate even to survive.

That supreme genius of abstraction, Kasimir Malevich, was reduced in the '30s to painting saccharine landscapes and insipid portraits of smiling village maidens. One can imagine the despair and self-loathing with which this artist must have had to contend. Such surviving members of the Russian avant-garde as Costakis was able to meet in the late '40s and '50s were then either bitter or demoralized. This is not the least of the crimes of the Stalinists: the deliberate destruction of a whole generation of outstanding painters and writers, the transformation of "socialist" (as in "socialist realism") into a term of opprobrium among artists.

Under tsarism Russian art and literature had suffered profoundly from the compulsion to make social, not artistic, concerns central. Today, in the deformed and degenerated workers states under the rule of a parasitic bureaucratic caste, any work of art or literature that does not confront this central problem—the need to oust the usurping bureaucracy—is felt to be inherently mendacious. It lies by omission, the artist knows this, and it shows in his work. For literature this has meant that virtually the sole genre open to serious Soviet

writers is satire, for which the opportunities certainly are legion. But even here the works, with a few exceptions like Voinovich, tend to be heavy-handed and obvious, like Aleksandr Zinoviev's aptly named *The Yawning Heights*. They too are massively deformed, presenting a black-and-white view of society profoundly at odds with the multivalent complexity of great art: socialist realism with the plus and minus signs reversed.

Polish film director Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Iron*, currently being shown in the U.S., is a striking case in point. As a piece of hack propaganda for the clerical-reactionary *Solidarność*, *Man of Iron* necessarily lies at its heart. It falsely portrays the movement which led to *Solidarność* as the continuation of previous working-class struggles against the Stalinist regime and celebrates the marriage of the workers and intellectuals as presided over by the Catholic church. Unlike the talented director's *Man of Marble*, a serious work of art probing the contradictions of post-war Polish society, *Man of Iron* expresses simply the anti-Communist lies of *Solidarność*—and not surprisingly, this has also severely hurt Wajda's art. As we said in *Workers Vanguard*: "Wajda rejected what Stalinism has done to truth and art, but *Man of Iron* embraces the lies of anti-Communism and of the church. Of Polish youth, he has said, 'People who are 20 today need to know, and to understand, why their parents are lying.' That is so. They also need to know why one of their leading artists cannot tell the truth" ("*Man of Iron: The Gospel According to Solidarność*," WV No. 297, 22 January).

The Struggle for Socialism

It is essential to understand that something precious remains of the social gains, the great inspiring goals, which made the explosive, if brief, flowering of art in the Soviet Union possible. Despite its Stalinist degeneration and the line drawn in blood of revolutionaries and workers that separates it from the Soviet Union of Lenin, the USSR today still rests on the foundations of socialized property established by the working class when it took state power. That these foundations are in every sphere massively undermined by the Stalinist usurpers only heightens the urgency of the international working class taking up the defense and extension of this historic victory. To truly defend the socialized property forms of the USSR, and to drive the liberating force of authentic communism forward, it is necessary to forge an international vanguard party of the proletariat to overthrow capitalism worldwide through socialist revolution and oust the Stalinist bureaucracies of the deformed workers states through political revolution.

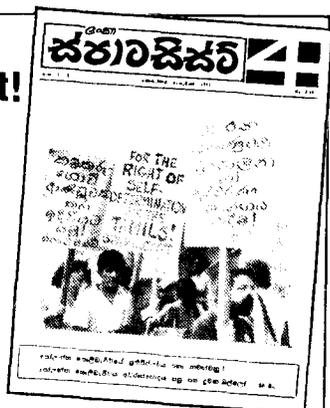
It is of course impossible to say what forms art would take in a genuinely socialist society, one freed of bureaucratic misrule and building on the foundations of technological plenty, not the generalized want of Russia in the '20s—and not in a few countries surrounded by hostile imperialism, but in a world socialist order. Nonetheless it seems safe to predict that whatever its form, the art of a triumphant socialism will partake of the radiance and optimism so triumphantly captured by the Russian avant-garde in the short time granted it. ■

Greetings to Lanka Spartacist!

No. 1-2
November-
December 1981
(in Sinhala)

Order from:
Spartacist League/Lanka
33 Canal Row
Colombo 01 Sri Lanka

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



3.50 Rs \$1.00

Seduced and Abandoned: The Politics of Opportunism Gays and the SWP

"Tinkerbell Meets Trotsky: The Revolution Betrayed": With this smirking title as a come-on, Boston's *Gay Community News* (19 September 1981) reviewed two collections of Socialist Workers Party (SWP) internal documents on gay liberation recently published by gay activists to scandalize the SWP. The document collections, *Gay Liberation and Socialism* (published by David Thorstad) and *No Apologies* (published by Scott Forgione and Kurt Hill, with an introduction by Thorstad), cover the SWP's gyrations on the gay question from 1970 to 1979. Thorstad, Forgione and Hill are all ex-SWP members who want to expose the SWP's "betrayal" of gay lifestyle politics. In this they certainly succeed. They and the *Gay Community News* reviewer, Scott Tucker, an anarchist/gay liberationist, use the sorry story of SWP hypocrisy to denounce Trotskyism as an enemy of freedom for homosexuals.

But the SWP has not had anything in common with Trotskyism for a long time! The authentic Trotskyist tendency in this country, the Spartacist League, has never wavered in its commitment to opposing anti-gay backwardness and the brutal enforcement of sexual puritanism by the capitalist state. From our very inception as an organization and long before the advent of a "gay liberation movement" (and at a time when the SWP was still forcing gay members to resign!), the Spartacist League has fought against all victimization and persecution of homosexuals. But Thorstad & Co. would prefer not to acknowledge our record because their aim is to show that only those who see themselves as gay activists first and foremost can be relied on to defend the democratic rights of homosexuals.

Our commitment to gay rights has never meant patronizing acceptance of gay activists' lifestyle illusions. The Spartacist League has always argued against the dangerously utopian belief that in this violent, class-divided society "only gays can liberate themselves." On the contrary, only socialist revolution can lay the basis for finally uprooting sick prejudices against "sexual deviance," through providing social alternatives to the stifling monogamous family, the main social institution oppressing women, children and homosexuals. Our aim is not a sectoralist "gay movement" but a revolutionary party based on the working class to lead the struggles of all the oppressed—and in which the best fighters from all sectors of the oppressed will be, not narrow representatives of "their people," but communist revolutionaries.

Lenin's exhortation in *What Is To Be Done?* (1903) guides our work:

"The Social-Democrat's ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but the *tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what



Militant

Here today, gone tomorrow: SWP and lifestyle liberationist David Thorstad (above) briefly reunited in 1977 gay rights coalition. But when the marches against Anita Bryant died down, the SWP dumped its "gay rights" rhetoric again.

stratum or class of the people it affects... who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat."

Our principled approach to these questions has attracted to the Spartacist League some of the best elements of the New Left-derived gay liberation milieu, most notably the Los Angeles-based Red Flag Union (formerly Lavender & Red Union), with whom we fused in 1977 (see *W&R* No. 16, Winter 1977-78, which discusses the key political issues—defense of the Soviet Union, rejection of lifestyle—which laid the programmatic basis for the fusion).

By contrast, the SWP documents published by Thorstad, Forgione and Hill are a testament to the proposition that opportunism doesn't pay. The value of the SWP documents is not, as Thorstad maintains, that they are "the most important such debates ever to occur inside any left-wing group" or that they will prove "essential" to resolving the question of the relationship between the fight against homosexual oppression and the fight for socialism. They are, however, useful for the light they shed on the grotesque zig-zags and utter cynicism of the reformist SWP. That today the SWP now dismisses Thorstad and his "North American Man/Boy Love Association"—currently being victimized by a state witchhunt—as virtual child molesters, as part of the current SWP policy of benign neglect of gay rights, is not merely evidence of their adaptation to homophobia. The method

continued on next page

behind this history of flirtation with and abandonment of this specially oppressed sector is the same tailist approach the SWP brought to what they called the "autonomous mass movements" of feminists, black nationalists, Chicano nationalists, etc. With the proliferation of "do-it-yourself liberation" currents in the late 1960s/early 1970s, the SWP with consummate cynicism authored the proposition that "consistent" anythingism equals socialism and jumped on the gay bandwagon. When the lifestyle radical mood receded the SWP backed away from the gay question. Ultimately, the SWP rediscovered the working class and with predictable opportunist logic decided to "turn" to the unions by pandering to some of the most backward attitudes prevalent among workers, as for example through Barnes & Co.'s despicable defense of anti-homosexual "age of consent" laws.

If we can share the disgust of Thorstad et al. with the SWP's wretched politics, it is for very different reasons. There is a political chasm dividing the petty-bourgeois politics of gay community lifestylism from Marxism. Thorstad at least, has drawn the conclusion from his experiences in and out of the SWP that Marxism has nothing to say to homosexuals: "For years, gay socialists have been trying to develop a synthesis between homosexuality and socialism.... After a decade of effort, I am ready to draw the conclusion that the left has failed to meet the challenge of gay liberation." He concludes his introduction to *No Apologies* by quoting an earlier gay liberationist, Kurt Hiller, "The liberation of homosexuals can only be the work of homosexuals themselves."

Hill and Forgione (now, respectively, a supporter of the social-democratic Workers Power group and a staff member of *Gay Community News*) still present themselves as Marxists—of a sort. Littering their own documents with dozens of cutesy-poo illustrations (a cartoon of Lenin, Brezhnev and Trotsky in a gay bath), they conclude their foreword to *No Apologies* with the

slogans "For an understanding of Michael Mouse-Lennonism too!" and "In defense of campy socialists as well as the socialist camp!" Is this the sort of treatment they think will serve "to further a Marxist perspective" on the gay question?

Tucker is an unabashed anti-Marxist, an anarchist whose sense of political reality is best illustrated by his comment, "The SWP leadership has no sense of proportion if it really believes that transvestism is so much more exotic and eccentric to the masses than Trotskyism itself!" The entire point of his lengthy review is to use the SWP in order to write off "all 57 varieties of Marxism-Leninism" as "unfit for human consumption." There is, however, a revolutionary alternative to Tucker's anarcho-lifestylism, Thorstad's advocacy of an autonomous gay movement, and Forgione/Hill's Mickey-Mouse "Marxism." To develop this theme, it is necessary to delve a little deeper into the SWP's slimy record and into the politics of gay liberationism.

The SWP in the '60s: "Gay is Good" ... Maybe

As part of the SWP's political degeneration in the 1960s the organization adopted an unofficial policy of excluding homosexuals. As SWP honcho Jack Barnes admitted in a report to the Political Committee (the SWP top leadership) in November 1970, "Since the early 1960s the party and YSA [Young Socialist Alliance] have been moving toward a policy which proscribes homosexuals from membership" (quoted in *Gay Liberation and Socialism*, p. 5).

In its earlier revolutionary days the SWP leadership, in particular founding leader James P. Cannon, had a far different attitude. In his contribution to the commemorative book *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him*, long-time SWP leader Sam Gordon recalled the case of "a young leader of the organization... [who] had fallen afoul of the New York homosexual laws, and was

Workers Vanguard



**Spartacist League/
Spartacus Youth
League contingent in
Los Angeles march
against anti-
homosexual Briggs
Initiative, July 1978.**

clapped into jail one day early in the thirties." Cannon, Gordon recalled, got the comrade out. "The case was finally quashed. Our comrade continued to be a leading member...." But in the 1960s the SWP was sloughing off simple decency, as well as revolutionary principles, in its pursuit of success on the cheap.

The hallmark of that New Left era was the SWP's vigorous attempt to mimic and adapt to black nationalism, feminism, Chicano nationalism (the mythical land of "Aztlan") and virtually every other "mass movement"—most importantly the liberal-bourgeois anti-war movement. As Barnes said, "The consistent and irreconcilable liberation struggle of an oppressed nationality is *our* struggle. If it is irreconcilable and consistent, then it will point toward socialism..." (speech to 1970 SWP convention). As applied to feminism et al. this became "consistent (fill in the blank) will lead to socialism." It was only a matter of time until Barnes & Co. discovered gay liberation. And if "Black is Beautiful" and "Sisterhood is Powerful" became, in the SWP's eyes, "socialist" slogans—then why not "Gay is Good"? Tucker indignantly raises this very point, and indeed, by the SWP's own logic, there's no reason they shouldn't have adopted this equally meaningless slogan as well.

However, there was a layer of SWP "old guard" conservatives, trade-union oriented and socially conservative, who, while they dared not challenge feminism and black nationalism so openly, found the gay movement hard to swallow. By the time the SWP got geared up to drop its ban on homosexual members and mount an intervention into the gay movement, that movement itself was already showing signs of dying down. Spring 1971 was the height of the SWP's brief infatuation with gay liberation: they mobilized heavily for gay marches and for a gay contingent in the April antiwar peace crawl in Washington. *The Militant* ran gay-oriented articles (many authored by Thorstad) in virtually every issue.

But as Thorstad later recalled, "The party's involvement had hardly begun when the brakes began to be applied" (*Gay Liberator*, December 1974-January 1975). In May 1971 the SWP announced a "probe" into the gay liberation movement that, in hindsight, was really the beginning of a withdrawal from it. The following year saw a lengthy literary discussion in the SWP's internal bulletin, which forms the bulk of the documents in Thorstad's collection. This concluded with the 1973 SWP convention where a "Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement" outlined the Barnes gang's intention to drop gay lib politics.

Without rejecting the sectoralist method which had led the SWP to briefly tail the gay movement, the Memo basically concluded that there was not enough of a movement to tail. This reality was covered with some orthodox Marxist phrases about taking no position on whether gay was better, worse, or just as good as straight. The gay question, the Memo said, was simply a question of democratic rights, not (as gay activists would have it) a broader struggle to liberate everyone's sexual nature. And in a revealing aside on just how far lifestylist counter-culturalism had been allowed to flower inside the SWP, the Memo authors felt obliged

to note that male comrades should not wear dresses and that "sexual activities... have no place at party socials."

The Memo, although it praised the gay liberation movement (with the exception of its "ultraleft" [sic] sector), naturally enough was seen as a gross betrayal by the gay liberationists recruited during the SWP's Spring fling, and especially by chief gay spokesman David Thorstad. A wave of quits predictably followed. As Thorstad explained in his December 1973 resignation statement: "It [the Memo] has made it impossible for gays to reconcile their commitment to gay liberation with party membership" (*Gay Liberation and Socialism*, p. 127).

Anita Bryant and "The Turn"

The SWP dumped the gay movement in '73 mainly because there didn't seem to be a lot of recruits to gain. There was also an element of concession to conservative SWP leaders like Tom Kerry and Nat Weinstein. So it was not unexpected that when, in 1977, Anita Bryant's hate campaign against homosexuals provoked a brief spate of massive demonstrations in U.S. cities, it also provoked a renewed interest in the gay movement in the SWP. SWP leader Doug Jenness authored a "clarification" on the '73 Memo, writing that "... we solidarize with the sentiment of the gay liberation movement that 'gay is good'" interpreting this not as advocacy of homosexuality (which of course it was!) but as a statement that "gay people are just as good as heterosexual people" (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No. 5, 11 June 1977). An SWP gay oppositionist wrote that "since the June 7 Miami referendum, differences over the party's tactical orientation to the gay movement have been completely superceded by dramatic events... The party has responded in a revolutionary fashion to the latest upsurge of the gay movement" (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No. 11, 9 July 1977).

But no sooner had the mass marches ceased than SWP interest in the gay movement ceased. Simultaneously, having watched the black nationalist, feminist, antiwar and other New Left movements die off in the 1970s, the SWP suddenly discovered the working class. That is to say, Barnes & Co. found something new to tail: the liberal wing of the trade-union bureaucracy. The very same people who had been the architects of what they now called the "long detour" from the working class into the various "independent mass movements" of the oppressed now began declaiming the elementary Marxist concept that the working class alone has the social weight to make socialist revolution and serve as the liberator of all the oppressed. Cynical? Certainly. Dishonest? By all means. This "turn" meant not only the end of the SWP's dabbling with gay lifestylist politics, but an adaptation to the most backward attitudes, not just among the working class, but increasingly to new moods of conservatism being enforced by a reactionary bourgeois backlash against the "permissive" 1960s.

In part in a drive to ingratiate themselves with liberal union reformers like Ed Sadlowski of the Steelworkers and Arnold Miller of the Mine Workers, the Barnes leadership sought to purge the SWP of its more

continued on next page

Drop the Charges Against NAMBLA!

18 February 1982

NAMBLA
Box 174, Midtown Station
New York, New York 10018

Dear NAMBLA:

The Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League protests and denounces the vicious state witchhunt unleashed against your organization this past summer by FBI and Nassau County, New York, officials. As we pointed out in both *Young Spartacus* (October 1981) and *Women and Revolution* (Winter 1981-82), in this period of Reagan reaction:

"This poisonous climate of 'decency' has led to an increase in censorship and outright persecution of so-called 'deviants,' particularly homosexuals. On July 11, two members of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) were arrested in Long Island, charged with sodomy and sexual abuse. Others have been arrested in New York, New Jersey and New Hampshire—more have been 'questioned.' NAMBLA supports the sexual rights of gays and children but in Reagan's America that's a crime: in a vicious state witchhunt, the cops accuse NAMBLA of operating a 'sex ring.' Government out of the bedrooms! Drop the charges against NAMBLA!"

We cannot, however, sign your petition (dated January 29, 1982). Signers of the petition are being asked to support not just NAMBLA's basic rights, but a series of political demands. The most serious—and

deadly dangerous, in fact—of these is: "We demand that the vast amounts of money used for this purpose [to harass and prosecute NAMBLA] be used instead to investigate and prosecute the hundreds of thousands of unsolved murders and violent assaults on children, women, people of color and lesbians and gay men." As socialists we do not advise the cops, the armed thugs of capitalism, how to spend their money, nor do we call on them to launch such "investigations." Such demands on the part of the "gay community" for increased "police protection" reflect in part reformist illusions that the cops can actually be pressured into protecting homosexuals, blacks or other specially oppressed sectors of the population. Your own experience ought to indicate otherwise.

We consider the continuing state assault on NAMBLA most serious. The arrest January 19 of NAMBLA spokesman Tom Reeves in Boston, and recent conviction of NAMBLA member Bill Bliss in New Hampshire (sentenced to two years probation and a \$2,400 fine) on various "sex charges," indicate a pattern of nationwide harassment and intimidation. The Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League demands an end to this witchhunt against NAMBLA, and that the charges against NAMBLA be dropped!

Yours truly,
Helen Cantor
for the Spartacist League/U.S.

flagrantly non-"proletarian" elements. Flamboyant gay liberationists were on the top of the list. It only remained to find a reasonable excuse to publicly ditch the gay orientation. In February 1979 an excuse was found—age-of-consent laws and the turn of part of the gay movement (Thorstad in particular) to the explosive issue of "cross-generational" sex and rights for gay youth.

At a Philadelphia conference to plan for a national gay march on Washington, SWPers took an active part. One of the demands raised was "full rights for gay youth, including revision of age-of-consent laws" (later watered down to "protection for lesbian and gay youth ..."). Little more than a month later the *Militant* (13 April 1979) ran a major article, "The Class-Struggle Road to Winning Gay Rights," in order to reject the march on Washington and blast the very existence of a "so-called gay movement defined by sexuality." The most vicious thrust was a direct attack on Thorstad for having "foisted" the issue of "man-boy love" on the gay movement.

"The repeal of age-of-consent laws is a reactionary demand..." proclaimed the SWP; "saying that children have the 'right' to 'consent' to sex with adults is exactly like saying children should be able to 'consent' to work in a garment factory twelve hours a day." The

Militant even rejected "'non-abusive consensual' sex by adults with children": "Laws designed to protect children from sexual and economic exploitation by adults are historic acquisitions of the working class and should be enforced." The SWP refused to mobilize for the Washington march they had helped to plan. Forgione and Hill fought a losing battle against the new direction internally while Michael Maggi, a former co-thinker of Thorstad's who had seen the light in 1973 and become a loyal Barnesite, termed Thorstad a "baby-fucker" and ordered gay literature in the SWP's New York City bookstore thrown out, according to *No Apologies*.

The issue of age-of-consent laws (or rather, the frightening, still socially taboo issue of childhood sexuality) is inflammatory. Nonetheless, opposition to such laws must be elementary for defenders of democratic rights for youth, whatever their sexual orientation. As *Young Spartacus* (Summer 1979) put it:

"Revolutionaries, unlike the social-democratic SWP, oppose any and all legal restrictions by the capitalist state on effectively consensual sexual activity. Get the cops out of the bedrooms! We know that such measures are not designed to protect children but to enforce the sexual morality of the nuclear family, which is at the root of the oppression of women, youth and homosexuals...."

"Those who, like the SWP, join the reactionary chorus calling for the capitalist state to enforce the sexual codes based on the morality of the bourgeois family only help to prop up a key bastion of child abuse and one of the strongest pillars of capitalist oppression."

"Gay Liberation" and Marxism

While Forgione and Hill were making their last stand for gay lifestyle in the SWP, they attempted to claim that the Barnes leadership was going the way of the "sectarian" Spartacist League. As Hill wrote:

"The party leadership appears to have capitulated to the sectarian-workerist traits which we used to blast in our opponents. We ridiculed the 'class struggle' formalism of the sectarians such as the Spartacist League who charged that our attitude toward struggles such as women's liberation and Black liberation was 'petty-bourgeois.' We encouraged the developments of these and other mass movements for social change."

—SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 36, No. 22, 12 July 1979

In some ways Forgione and Hill were simply the most consistent defenders of the SWP's course throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. "Key terms used in the past," they wrote, "such as 'best builders' of the 'independent mass struggles,' are giving way to the 'worker-Bolsheviks' of 'labor's strategic line of march'.... the party is beginning to drift away from the theoretical acquisitions of the past 20 years" (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 36, No. 22).

Quite so. But what Forgione and Hill cannot comprehend is that what they term "theoretical acquisitions" had been simply opportunist rationales for tailing petty-bourgeois, self-boosting, mutually-conflicting "mass movements" and that Barnes' "turn" was not toward genuine Trotskyism but toward tailing a new "mass movement"—labor reformism.

What unites all the somewhat disparate elements in the "gay community" is a common commitment to the politics of the gay lifestyle. To the gay liberationist, at bottom simply *being* openly homosexual is in itself a political act. To the "socialist" gay liberationist, it is even revolutionary. As Forgione put it: "It has been through this struggle for self-affirmation as an equal human being ('coming out') that has led increasing numbers of lesbians and gay men... to become quite convinced that this society is sick and has to be either radically changed or replaced" (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 36, No. 17, 9 July 1979).

"Coming out" is obviously a personal decision—and one which, given the realities of life in this society, has potentially serious consequences. But for the New Left and its various spin-offs, the personal *is* political. Quoting anarchist Gustav Landauer in his review, Scott Tucker is quite explicit that the revolution is accomplished by living a revolutionary lifestyle: "The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently."

Would that it were so easy to create a new society! The state happens to enforce its morality and its exploitative form of production, with cops, courts, prisons—internationally with MX missiles and armies—and those who go against it are going to get attacked.

The best proof that gay liberation is a petty-bourgeois ideology is that an openly gay lifestyle in a "gay community" is only possible in severely restricted and largely middle-class "gay ghettos"—West Hollywood, Castro Street, the West Village. What about gay men and lesbians who do not or cannot move to one of these gay islands in a sea of "patriarchal capitalism"? Gay liberation has no answer.

In fact, Forgione and Hill revealed their own petty-bourgeois biases by their violent resistance to the SWP's "turn" to the working class. They took offense when SWP leaders implied that gays were a petty-bourgeois species, and insisted that there are gay workers too. But when it came time to reach out to their "brothers" in the steel and auto plants, Forgione and Hill seemed strangely reluctant. This is not to give any credence to the Barnes gang's "proletarian" credentials, but Forgione and Hill seem to assume that the only role for homosexual socialists is doing "gay work" in the "gay community."

Can homosexuals, as Thorstad insists, liberate themselves? Here the question of "social weight," referred to *ad nauseum* in the SWP documents, rears its head. For all that the Socialist Workers Party used this concept simply cynically, nonetheless they have a point—and one on which the Spartacist League insisted while Barnes & Co. were hopping on and off the gay liberation bandwagon. We are for "the sexual liberation of everybody"—however, we certainly do not intend to legislate the sexual behavior of future generations by putting our "seal of approval" on any particular sexual mode in this necessarily deforming society—gay, straight, mixed, whatever. That is why we pose our demands in the sexual-personal area negatively: *against* moralistic state legislation of sexuality. But more immediately, changing this society means a *struggle for power*—which means creating a powerful mass party rooted in the working class, which alone has the cohesiveness and social weight, because it produces this society's wealth, to make a socialist revolution. To eliminate the oppression of homosexuals, rooted in the sexual morality of the bourgeois family, it will ultimately be necessary to replace the family with other cooperative institutions in a socialist society. The immediate aftermath of socialist revolution will wipe out all discriminatory laws and criminal sanctions against "deviant" sexual behavior. But a more fundamental transformation is required to change deeply-rooted, ancient attitudes toward sex roles and sexuality. We don't think this is an easy, or simply resolved, question by any means. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal of Marxism has always been the creation of a society in which every individual can develop his potential to the utmost, freed of economic compulsion and attendant psychological miseries.

The job of revolutionaries is to forge a revolutionary vanguard party which can, as Lenin said, serve as a "tribune of the people," fighting *all* forms of oppression as part of the necessary education of the proletariat in assuming its leading role in the creation of a new society. In the end the "best builders" of rights and freedom for homosexuals will be those who, whatever their sexual orientation, are builders of such a party. ■

Solidarność: A Man's World

"I don't strike for the madonna of Czestochowa." This was the response of many Italian workers, refusing to join the "Solidarity with Solidarność" protests organized by reformist, pro-imperialist Italian CP leader Enrico Berlinguer. Quite right, too—we warned that Solidarność, firmly committed to a religious-reactionary nationalist course, was on a counterrevolutionary drive for power (see "Power Bid Spiked," *Workers Vanguard* No. 295, 18 December 1981). Now that the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy has cracked down in a virtual counter coup, predictably every Cold War liberal and reformist has joined Ronald Reagan's anti-Soviet campaign in a chorus of bitter weeping for these failed reactionaries—portrayed, of course, as the great liberators of Polish society.

But what about Polish women? Walesa likes to boast a madonna lapel pin, symbolic of Solidarność's close ties to the Catholic church. The historic role of that institution in keeping women tied to the family hearth, Polish pope Wojtyla's aggressive campaign against abortion, the strong pro-family attitudes of Solidarność—can these forces be the liberators of Polish women? Never! Recently some feminists and liberals noticed a small "flaw" in Solidarność—its lack of women leaders or concern for "women's issues," while of course denying any "lack of sympathy" for Solidarność. But this "little detail" is symptomatic of Solidarność's reactionary program.

We don't think the Stalinist bureaucracy is going to liberate women either, however. More likely it is liable, to the extent it makes concessions to clerical-reactionary forces, to attack precisely those gains women have made in the Polish deformed workers state, such as the right to abortion. The urgent task in Poland today is to crystallize a revolutionary communist vanguard out of the Polish proletariat, which will defend the collectivized property forms of Poland against imperialist-sponsored counterrevolution, and fight for political revolution against the usurping bureaucracy. As the following article, reprinted from *Spartacist Britain* (No. 37, November 1981) states, the fight for women's liberation will be an integral part of forging that vanguard.

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A CGT [General Confederation of Labor] woman worker asks Lech Walesa in Paris why he tells women to stay at home and not struggle for their rights. Walesa



Laski

Walesa and Pope Wojtyla's program for Polish women: "Kinder, Küche, Kirche."

replies that he has been misinterpreted—he was only speaking for *Polish* women!

Heaven help the Polish women Walesa speaks for. Since the time of the utopian socialist Fourier, socialists have accepted as an axiom that the status of women in society is a determining measure of how progressive that society is. And the attitude to women of the reactionary Catholic-nationalists who run Solidarność provides a good measure of what sort of "democracy" they have in mind. A recent article in the [London] *Times* (21 October) by Rachel Cullen—who expresses general sympathy with the counterrevolutionary Solidarność—is quite revealing on that count.

Entitled "Solidarity: what a pity it does not include the women of Poland," the article points out that the top leadership of Solidarność consists of one president, two deputy presidents, a presidium of ten and a council of 100—and not one woman is to be found among them. Anna Walentynowicz, the Gdansk welder whose sacking sparked the August 1980 strike was once a leading member of the council. Then a union-convened court accused her of being "too radical." Walentynowicz was certainly a rabidly anti-communist Catholic nationalist, but that hardly distinguished her from the rest of the Solidarność leadership. What did distinguish her was that she was a woman. "She was still to be found working for the union," writes Cullen, "though now in the kitchens. . . . The story is the same in other sections of the union: women who had been active in the underground movements began with a voice in the new union but almost all have now lost their positions of power." The only woman in a position of power in Solidarność is the Black Virgin of Czestochowa!

Even at the base sexual chauvinism is endemic. In one

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