

Women and Revolution

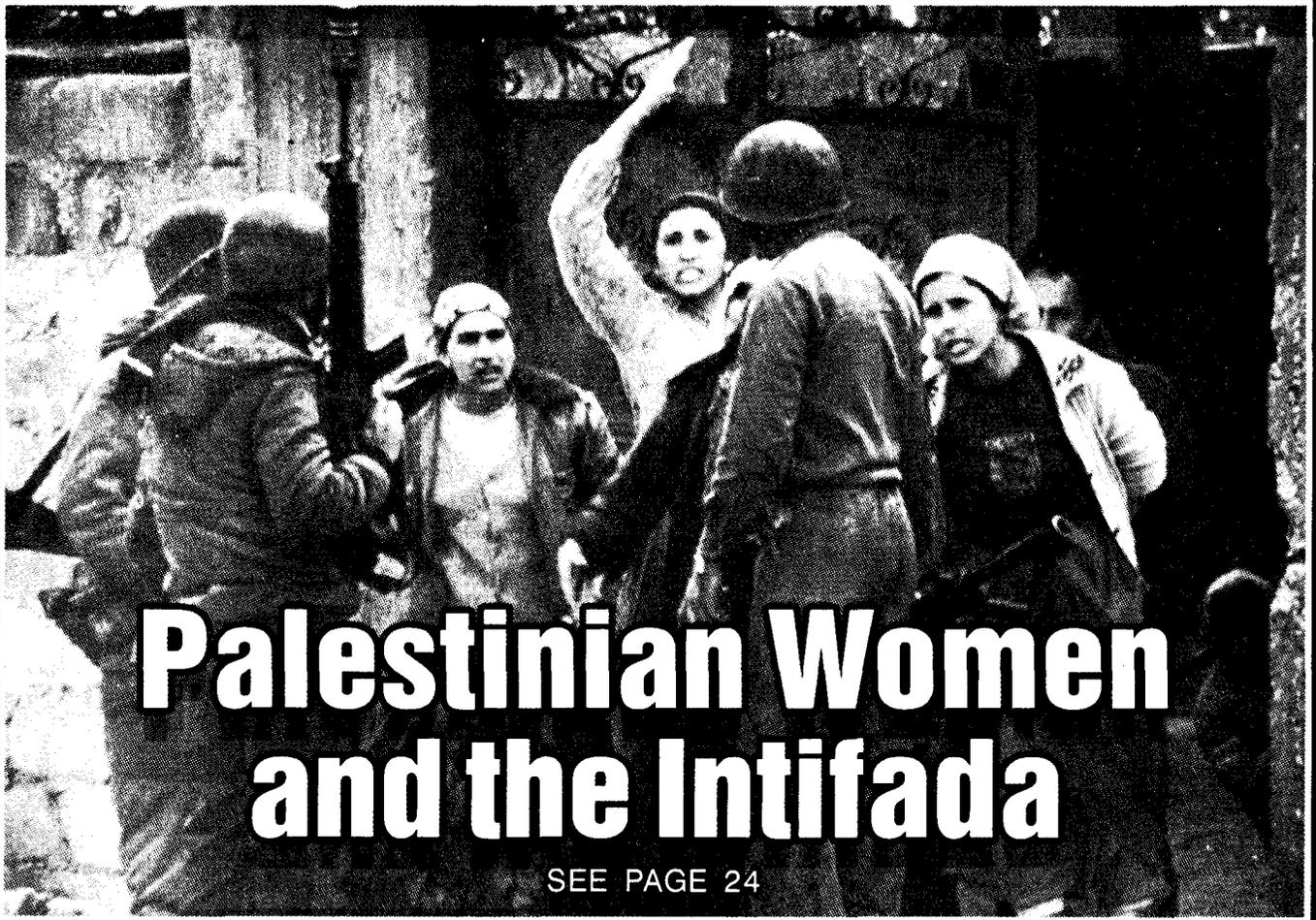


Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League



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National Liberation and the Permanent Revolution



Palestinian Women and the Intifada

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Letter

Vichy France and the Persecution of the Gypsies

In "Fourth Reich Racism Targets Immigrants: Stop Persecution of Gypsies!" (W&R No. 38, Winter 1990-91), we wrote about the deadly danger to the gypsies posed by Kohl's attempt to create a new German Fourth Reich and by the "all-sided murderous racism engulfing Eastern Europe with the collapse of the Stalinist regimes and the plunge into an uncontrolled market economy." The Spartakist Workers Party, German section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), has fought for an end to the persecution of Roma and Sinti (gypsies). As our German comrades wrote in a letter to Hamburg mayor Voscherau protesting evictions of gypsies, "The organized workers movement together with immigrant organizations has the power to defend

the democratic rights and the right to life of all the oppressed. This power can and must be mobilized to stop the deportation of Roma and Sinti! Full citizenship rights for immigrants!"

The article, written by the Spartakist Workers Party from Berlin, noted that gypsies have faced hatred and bigotry for centuries in every European country, from Britain to Switzerland. We print below a letter by Ted Crawford about the persecution of the French gypsies under the Vichy regime and a reply (edited for publication), written for *Women and Revolution* by a member of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France in answer to comrade Crawford's specific queries on the Montreuil-Bellay concentration camp.

25th December 1990

Dear comrades,

I was most interested to read your article on the persecution of the gypsies in *Women and Revolution* No. 38—a matter about which I know little.

May I add that it is not just Germans and Eastern Europeans who have been guilty here. This summer I was on a camping holiday with my family in France. We stayed then, as we had in 1989, in the camp site of a beautiful village called Montreuil-Bellay, just a few miles south of Saumur in the Loire valley. When hunting for fossils with my children in a quarry behind the village we came across a tiny memorial to the many thousands of gypsies of all ages who had died there in a concentration camp under the Vichy government during the war. The locals seemed rather evasive about this aspect of their history and there was no mention of this in any guidebook that I could see. It was far from having the pilgrimage status of an Auschwitz.

This episode seems to have been quite forgotten by many French people. Are there any sources which would tell me more about this dreadful event? Perhaps this could be taken up in France and, if the details are known, this information could be used to arm young comrades there in the anti-racist struggle.

Fraternally,
Ted Crawford

23 April 1991

Dear Ted:

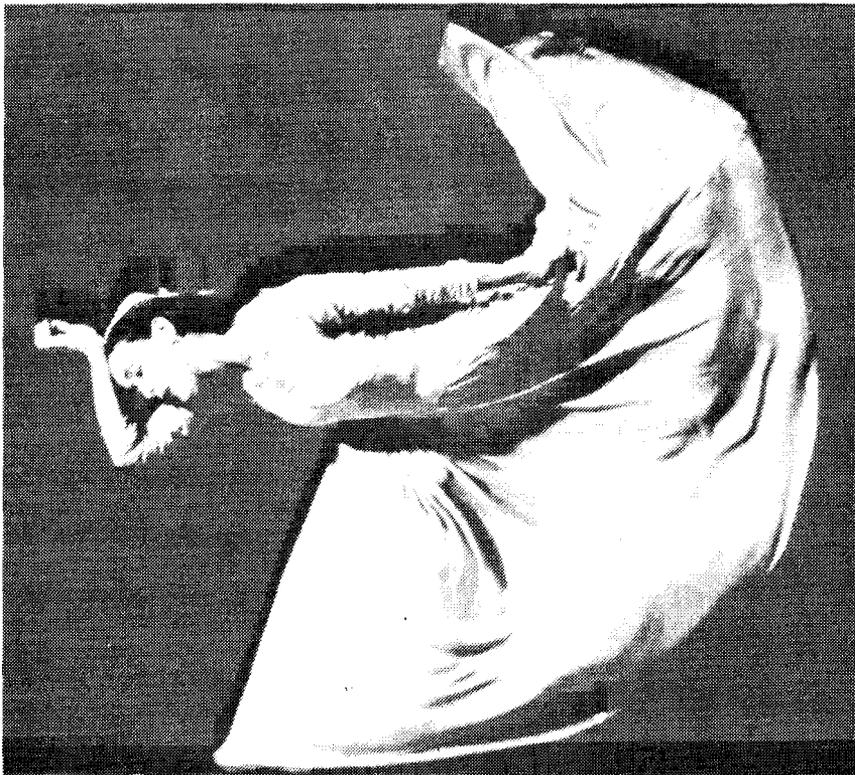
It is always a bit embarrassing to discover one's ignorance. While we were aware of the persecutions and discriminations directed historically and currently against the gypsies in France we didn't know of the existence of the Montreuil-Bellay concentration camp. Your letter induced me to do a bit of investigation which I had been intending to do for some time.

The Montreuil-Bellay camp was built originally (by

John Cole



Gypsy family near Bucharest today. Hitler's Nazis slaughtered half a million Roma and Sinti; today they face escalating persecution across Europe.



Barbara Morgan

Martha Graham

Martha Graham, who over the course of six decades radically extended the boundaries of dance, died on April 1. Building upon such pioneer modern dancers as Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, Graham developed one of the major new art forms of the twentieth century. Drawing heavily from Greek and other ancient mythologies, she sought to create an art which would have universal appeal and meaning. Graham's dances with their often stark sexual images and themes affronted philistines and bigots, and were once even denounced in the U.S. Congress as an "unfit cultural export" for the United States. Graham's work enriches the cultural heritage of humanity.

North African and black African laborers) in January 1940 to detain Spanish republican refugees. The victorious German army used it briefly as a *stalag* from June 1940 to February 1941. From November 1941 till September 1944 it became the biggest of the two main concentration camps for gypsies/nomadic people, the other being Saliers near Arles.

The administration of the camp was exclusively French and was in accordance with a 6 April 1940 decree (two months before the French capitulation to Hitler) on the "limitation of movement" of the nomadic populations on French territory. As usual the utterly racist French administration invented for the purpose a whole new category, the "nomadic race."

The gypsies and "nomadic" people were rounded up all over the country and ended up in numerous camps with Jews and other "undesirables," but the Montreuil-Bellay camp was designated in the occupation press as the "capital of the gypsies." Several thousand people went "through" the Montreuil-Bellay camp. The records show 258 people in November 1941 and 1,043 in October 1942. People "stayed" from "two weeks to two years" in the camp.

It does not seem that the Nazis were particularly interested in the fate of the interned French gypsies and never requested their mass deportation to death camps. However, the death rate in these camps was terrible, especially among the old and very young.

French state persecution against the gypsies is illustrated by the fate of the smaller Jargeau (Loiret) camp. The inmates were not freed until 24 December 1945!

If you happen to come back to this area, you could

talk with one of the "locals" who wrote a book on the camp: Jacques Sigot, who, according to the librarian of *Etudes Tsiganes*, is very accessible and willing to talk. There is also a bibliography on the subject provided by *Etudes Tsiganes* in Paris. There are two other references not listed: Arlette Dolo, *Historique du camp de nomades*, Memoire IUT, Rennes 1986; Guy Pierre Geneuil, *Le Narvalo*, JC Lattes, Paris 1987.

Fraternally,
William

Women and Revolution

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Editorial Notes

The Tender Trap

Trendy San Francisco was in the forefront of lifestyle legislation on Valentine's Day this year, as some 250 mainly gay couples got hitched at City Hall. It isn't quite the whole ball-and-chain deal, but San Francisco's new "Domestic Partnership" registration law, approved by voters last November, recognizes same-sex relationships with a nice-looking certificate, suitable for framing, issued by the county clerk's office. The Minneapolis City Council has also passed a "domestic partners" ordinance allowing lesbian and gay couples to register at City Hall. And a Midwestern newspaper has changed its "Weddings" masthead to "Celebrations" in order to cover announcements of same-sex liaisons.

We're for true love and celebrations as much as anybody, and of course gay and lesbian couples (why just "couples"? why not "triples"? or mixed ménages?) should be able to have all the legal benefits heterosexual couples derive from marriage. The SF legislation, however, is far from that: key questions of leases, inheritance, custody and adoption of children, health insurance and so on are still in legal limbo. The real point is that marital status ought to be genuinely irrelevant: every individual should have the same protections regarding health, home and children. A revolutionary workers state, for example, would make no legal distinction between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" children.

Most marriage benefits are designed for male, upper-class types with inheritable property; for the poor, often the only daily use for a marriage certificate is visitation rights in places you'd rather not visit, like hospitals and prisons. In fact, given the huge rise in violent attacks on gays and lesbians in the past year and increasing cop

brutality, hospitals and prisons may unfortunately be where some gay newlyweds end up, if the cops and their politician allies decide to raid the marriage registry for home addresses.

If "wedded bliss" is now to be part of the '90s gay/lesbian lifestyle, "wedded misery" is, not surprisingly, close behind. New York's *Outweek* (6 March), while cheering SF's "Gay Marriage Law," headlined in the same issue, "Battering Case Yields Legal Nod at Lesbian Couples." The article pointed out that in Boise, Idaho, a jury recently "gave Idaho the distinction of being the first state in the US to acquit a lesbian in a stabbing case under the 'battered spouse' defense."

To the extent early '70s "gay liberation" had a radical edge, it was in explicitly challenging "heterosexual" models, including monogamous marriage, not embracing them. The issue of monogamy was the final straw, said one of the former partners in the Idaho case. It often is. Marriage in this society is supposed to be about "forsaking all others." Thus all those old Puritan laws against adultery, aimed at jailing those who persist in the belief that the plural of "spouse" is "spice." As Frederick Engels wrote in his classic *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*:

"the sole exclusive aims of monogamous marriage were to make the man supreme in the family, and to propagate, as the future heirs to his wealth, children indisputably his own.... Monogamous marriage comes on the scene as the subjugation of the one sex by the other; it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous prehistoric period... together with slavery and private wealth, it opens the period that has lasted until today in which every step forward is also relatively a step backward, in which prosperity and development for some is won through the misery and frustration of others."

The "Outing" Outrage

"I have here in my hand a list of 24 known homosexuals in the State Department...." So goes the recent appalling practice known as "outing," or exposing the secret gay lives of powerful and famous people. Recently screaming posters have appeared on New York's Broadway targeting famous personalities under mammoth headlines like "ABSOLUTELY QUEER!" This garbage looks like fascist filth! The despicable and stupid practice, initiated by writers at New York's *Outweek* and other gay groups, really boils down to sheer vindictiveness. While rage at official neglect and hypocrisy in the face of the devastating AIDS epidemic is understandable, the frustrated reaction of some to "expose" the hypocrites by "outing" them can only backfire. "Outing" can't stop the AIDS epidemic, it can't win support for gay civil rights, and it certainly can't end anti-gay bigotry in this country.

One pro-"outer" claimed, "There's a reason we're the most despised minority on the planet. Too many people, of all ages, in all walks of life, still don't know of anyone who's gay" (*Outweek*, 16 May 1990). People know more and do more, in private, than *Outweek* gives them credit for—but that's their own business and nobody else's.

There's another damn good reason many want their private lives private: legitimate fear of this reactionary, violent society. The fundamental reason gay oppression exists is because the monogamous heterosexual married



Ben Thornberry

Greenwich Village, 1990: protest against escalating anti-gay violence.

family unit is sanctioned and *enforced* by capitalism and organized religion.

Outweek and the lifestyle "gay ghetto" culture supporting it ought to reflect on the '50s witchhunts, when homosexuals, like communists, were viciously hounded, driven out of jobs and housing, forced to leave the country. In those *Red Scare on Sunset* days gays dared

organize only under such stirring rubrics as "Bachelors for Wallace." For the past decade this nation's rulers have tried to start a new witchhunt; they've used social hysteria over AIDS, drugs, alcohol, even "fetal abuse," to try to create a nation of censorial snoops. To keep the government's forces of reaction out of our lives, we need to fight the snoops, not join them!

Fetus Fascists Lose One: The Daiquiri Decision

In a really outrageous case of "fetus fascism" this past March, two self-righteous "waitpersons" harassed a pregnant customer requesting a raspberry daiquiri at a Seattle Red Robin Restaurant. "I was a week overdue," said the customer, "I had been very careful throughout the whole pregnancy." She was repeatedly asked if she was "sure" she wanted the drink, then a waitress stuck a beer bottle "warning label" in front of her. "They tried to make me feel like a child abuser or something," said the woman, who gave birth to a healthy baby the next week, "and they were just plain rude" (*New York Times*, 30 March).

Restaurant owners tend to be among the more penny-pinching petty capitalists around, but in this case we can't dredge up too much sympathy for the "waitpersons" who got canned for this blatant abuse of a woman. The waitpersons are now on a campaign to get the state's liquor board to adopt rules to tell "restaurants and tavern servers whether they can refuse to serve alcohol to pregnant women," according to the *Times*. Why not just ban all women from drinking—and smoking too, for that matter—since you can't always tell whether one is pregnant or not? A woman doesn't always know herself at first.

A pregnant woman needs to be careful about what she ingests, especially in the earlier months. Probably anything other than an Old Stone Age diet will contain

substances that either endanger the fetus or deprive it of necessary nutrients. The health of pregnant women is of grave concern, but correct prenatal care is only partially known. There is a distinction between protecting against fetal damage and puritanical contemporary fads representing little more than moral oppression by a bunch of busybodies. In fact, the greatest abuse of pregnant women and their potential offspring came under the rubric of science: thalidomide, a mild sedative given to pregnant women in the late 1950s, was withdrawn a few years later when it was found to cause gross deformations in their children. DES has caused cancer and abnormalities of the sexual organs, leading to sterility, in untold thousands of women whose mothers were prescribed this "pregnancy support" drug from the late 1940s through the 1960s.

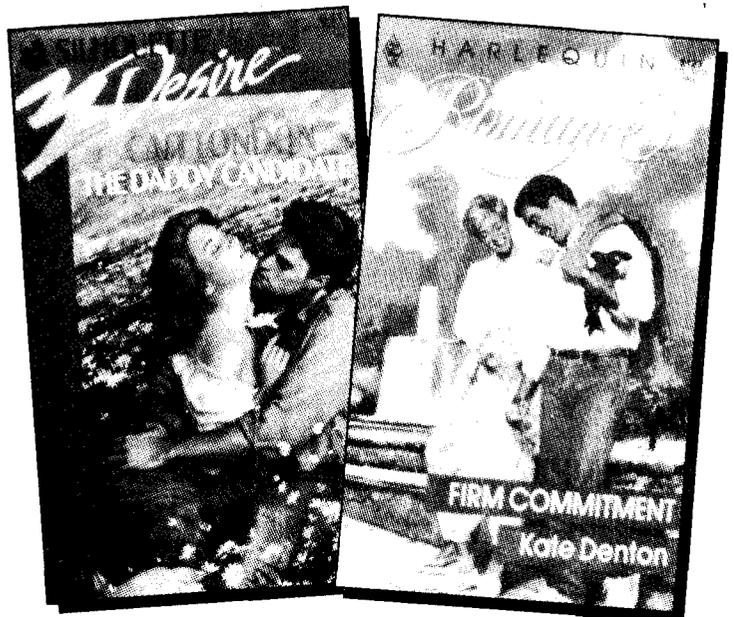
The social scapegoating of pregnant women who dare make their own decision on whether to have a drink or a smoke reflects a broader social hysteria over child abuse that's been going on for some time. The Reagan and Bush administrations have knowingly inflicted enormous damage on children through vicious budget cuts in programs that helped pregnant women and infants. Contagious diseases are spreading again among the poor, babies are dying of AIDS—and so they seek to mask this cruelty by witchhunting vendettas against individual women. This viciousness seems to have reached its ultimate bizarre logic in Utah: the legislature recently passed a law which, until "clarified" by a special amendment, made abortion a crime punishable with death by firing squad!

Sweet Savage Diapers

Meanwhile, as "Poor Are Rocked by Closing of Gynecological Clinics" (*New York Times*, 25 March), "Romance Novels Discover a Baby Boom" (*New York Times*, 3 April). This rash of "Sweet Savage Diapers" love triangles (a man, a woman and a fetus), published by Harlequin, Silhouette and other staples of the supermarket checkout lines, is another depressing sign of the times. "The hero who does not love children is not romance material," said one editor, "He's not only tall, dark and handsome, he's incredibly supportive, and takes loving attentive care of her during pregnancy. That is the new fantasy."

Maybe it's just that the kids of the baby-boomers are now starting to have kids that accounts for the fad. But it hardly seems coincidental in a society where over 1,000 gynecological care clinics have been forced to close in the past decade, depriving countless poor women of their only source of help during pregnancy, that the prospect of delivering a wanted, healthy, happy baby now seems like a fairy-tale fantasy.

We need a revolution. ■



And baby makes three: the new ménage à trois.

Fourth Reich Witchhunt Against East German Writer

Why They're Afraid of Christa Wolf

By Marianne Clemens and Amy Rath

Witchhunting culture vultures are waging an anti-communist vendetta against world-famous East German writer Christa Wolf. She has been at the eye of a storm of literary defamation and character assassination since her book *Was Bleibt* (*What Remains*) was published in June 1990. Wolf, whose works have been translated into 20 languages, bestowed with literary awards and prestigious prizes in country after country (including West Germany, where for years her works have been critically acclaimed and widely read), and considered Nobel Prize material by many, is suddenly "overrated" and of "no interest" artistically, according to the literary Kaisers of Helmut Kohl's Fourth Reich.

At bottom, this *Kulturkampf* has little to do with Wolf's worth as an artist. Because Christa Wolf is everything German imperialism reviles—an honored writer from a Stalinist country, a woman, a socialist, an anti-Nazi who writes about Germany's past—she has become a symbol to be torn down, like the hammer and compass (the DDR emblem) ripped from the buildings. The defamation of Christa Wolf and other pro-socialist DDR writers provides an important component of the ideological justification for a purge of Communists and former Communists throughout all social layers of the ex-DDR (East Ger-

many). She represents not only the DDR's cultural heritage but the layer of pro-socialist, anti-Honecker intellectuals who never defected to capitalist West Germany in person or in ideas.

Now German imperialism wants to snuff out the memory of these decent socialists, along with the memory of the Communists and anti-fascists who built the DDR on the cinders of Hitler's empire. It's part of Bonn's attempt to wipe out any vestige of the former German deformed workers state. The witchhunters cover their tracks with the sickening "revisionist" view of German history, which apologizes for Nazi genocide with the lie that "Stalin made Hitler." German capitalism incorporated the remnants of Hitler's Reich directly into the West German government structure—often including the very same "ex-Nazi" officials. But the ideological point men think they can shift the onus of the fascist past onto the ex-DDR by equating the anti-democratic abuses and bureaucratic corruption of the Stalinist state with Hitler's "Final Solution."

In fact, while no one has yet burned Christa Wolf's books in the town square, the witchhunt against her, her ideas and ex-DDR socialists in general has stirred up much fear in Germany, where no one has forgotten that the last big witchhunt against communists happened under Hitler. In the words of 19th-century poet Heinrich Heine, "Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht, bin ich



Der Spiegel

Porten vorst

Kohl's cops sealed off ex-Stalinist PDS offices in October 1990 Berlin night raid. In East Berlin 3 July 1990 protest, Spartakist Workers Party denounced SPD-led witchhunt, demanded "Hands Off PDS and FDJ!"



Spartakist

um den Schlaf gebracht" (When I think of Germany at night, I am robbed of my sleep). The defamation of Christa Wolf is a symbol of what's in store for many others—from prominent leftist writers like Günter Grass to Communist workers and officials. Thus it is linked to a far more decisive and historic question: the capitalists' drive to simply wipe out Communists in the unions and factories, where they are potential leaders of class struggle against German imperialism.

German Workers Fight Ravages of Reunification

Now that the German capitalists have gobbled up the DDR, they're dismantling its entire economy, society and culture. The Bonn government is closing down former state-owned enterprises, laying off hundreds of thousands, and wiping out the national system of childcare centers and paid maternity benefits which gave East German women considerable independence. And in every area of society—from the factories to the halls of academe—the first to lose their jobs are the hundreds of thousands of members (current or former) of the SED/PDS (the former ruling Stalinist party, called the Socialist Unity Party until it was renamed the Party of Democratic Socialism in 1990). As the capitalist *Anschluss* takes effect, the intoxication with the promise of prosperity to be brought by a "quick D-mark," the driving force in the March 1990 DDR elections which led to the victory of capitalist counterrevolution, has worn off. In April, as Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union dropped in the ratings, strikes rocked East Germany and demonstrations against mass unemployment seethed in the cities.

Side by side with growing disillusionment among the German workers—overwhelmingly in the East—the intelligentsia in the West is in a tremendous nationalist lather, vibrating over the "death of Communism." And in Germany this layer is predominantly under the wing of the Social Democrats (SPD): the liberal/social-democratic *Die Zeit* has been the Cold War, witchhunting and hawkish flagship of late, drumming up German support for U.S. imperialism's dirty war in the Persian Gulf. To the Social Democrats—the political grandchildren of Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske, the murderers of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg—German nationalism overrides any question of working-class rights. To them the historic advances of the DDR deformed workers state—free health care, affordable rents, the greater independence of women, free education, full employment under a nationalized economy—were nothing. We Trotskyists fought to defend the historic gains of the DDR, while fighting for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats.

In the aftermath of the capitalist reunification of Germany, the Social Democrats are indeed playing the role they promised when they spearheaded counterrevolution in the East as the Trojan Horse for capitalist reunification, masquerading as liberal "friends" of the working class. They are, with virtually no success, trying to build a base for themselves among the militant workers—and also trying, rather more successfully, to blacklist SED/PDS teachers from prestigious universities like Berlin's Humboldt and to purge Communist professionals from the civil service. The West's judicial system (which after World War II co-opted thousands of Nazi judges) has declared ex-DDR judges "unfit" for the bench, so thousands of

justices, legal secretaries and other court officials are on the dole. Schoolteachers, policemen, bus drivers, journalists and even opera stagehands are subject to minute inspection of their beliefs and their past in the hunt for Reds.

Art and Literature in East Germany

Germany's greatest writers of the century were forced to emigrate under Hitler, including (the conservative) Thomas and (leftist) Heinrich Mann, Arnold Zweig and



Der Spiegel

Christa Wolf speaking in Berlin's Alexanderplatz, 4 November 1989.

many more. Indeed, most of them could—and those like Stefan Heym (author of *Five Days in June*, a novel about the 17 June 1953 East German workers uprising) did—write volumes about the taste of Western "democracy" they received at the hands of Joseph McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover. Numerous exiled writers, including Bertolt Brecht, Anna Seghers and Stefan Heym, went back after World War II—to East Germany. Veterans of the Weimar Republic, like Brecht, harbored few illusions indeed about West German "democracy."

Despite the stultifying political conformity under Ulbricht/Honecker, the DDR enjoyed a lively cultural and intellectual life; the Stalinist regime heavily subsidized literature and the arts. State censorship was unable to prevent impressive artistic and literary expression along with interesting cultural debates—to be sure, side by side with brain-numbing Stalinist kitsch. Artists were a privileged social stratum, a source both of great pride and popular appreciation as well as resentment of their privileges. (World-famous athletes like the Olympic champion figure skater Katarina Witt were admired for their talent, embraced as a symbol of national pride and envied for their special status.)

Gloating with petty triumph, Fourth Reich "critics" now dismiss this entire generation's achievement as trash. And it hasn't stopped at mudslinging against "entartete Kunst" (degenerate art) in the pages of the literary supplements. Frightening many with memories of Nazi book-burning, in the first days of currency union in June 1990 East German garbage dumps were piled high with mountains of books. Record outlets smashed or burned virtually their entire stock of DDR recordings to make way for



Panorama

Katarina Witt, DDR's Olympic skating star, symbolized for many the achievements of East German society.

"superior" music on "free market" Western labels. State subsidies to even the circuses—where the absence of the deforming cruelty to animals so characteristic of capitalist circuses was striking—have been cut off, sending animal keepers out begging with their llamas, camels and Shetland ponies. Orchestras, museums, dance and theater troupes all over the DDR are closed down, except for a couple of showcases. The New York Philharmonic plucked Leipzig conductor Kurt Masur, but thousands of devoted musicians are unemployed.

The Furor Over *Was Bleibt*

In the context of the generalized witchhunting climate, Christa Wolf, one of East Germany's most famous living writers, a member of the SED for some 40 years, and the author of *Patterns of Childhood*, a brilliant novel about a young girl growing up in Hitler's Germany, has been the favorite target of the anti-DDR ideologues. They want to dismiss her achievements as the work of a *Mitläufer* (collaborator) of the corrupt Stalinist bureaucrats. It's a convenient excuse that her novella *Was Bleibt*—published just as the DDR disappeared into the currency union—was her first book to deal explicitly with her own experience of state censorship and intimidation. The substance of the critics' complaint? Wolf should have published the book in 1979—as an exposé of the corruption and abuses of the DDR government. "She would have been a hero," *Die Zeit* whines. But that she waited ten years to publish "proves" that she was "guilty," nothing but a *Staatsdichterin* (state poet), nothing but a careerist apologist for Honecker's crimes.

Like most of Wolf's work, *Was Bleibt* is autobiographical; it deals with events in her life after the Wolf Biermann affair in 1976. Biermann, a poet, songwriter and left-Stalinist critic of the East German government (which had held him under house arrest since the mid-1960s), was deprived of his DDR citizenship and denied re-entry to the country after he gave a public concert in West Germany. This bureaucratic atrocity was part of a generalized crackdown on dissent involving a cabinet reshuffle and the expulsion of Rainer Kunze from the East German writers union for publishing (in West Germany) a book of vignettes critical of the DDR. In the storm of protest against the expulsion of Biermann, Christa Wolf and eleven other writers—including Stefan Heym and Wolf's husband, Gerhard—took the lead and in an open letter called on the SED politburo to reconsider. For this Christa Wolf, facing charges of "disloyalty to the state," was officially reprimanded by the writers union, where she subsequently lost her place on the executive; her husband lost membership in both the writers union and the SED.

Wolf also found that she was under surveillance, conspicuous and with overt intent to intimidate, by the despised and dangerous Stasi, the pervasive Stalinist secret police. Her experience of this dark time, her fear and anger, are the subject of *Was Bleibt*:

"Slip on shoes, coat, double-lock the door. I would like to triple-lock it if I could, though I well knew how little good that would do, for at least once, probably twice in the previous summer those young gentlemen or their colleagues with a special training in door opening had visited the flat in my absence? One day the rubber sole of a man's shoe, size 41/42, had clearly imprinted itself on some door sills and on the dark floorboards in the middle room. And on another occasion the broken pieces of the bathroom wall mirror were lying in the sink, without there being any natural explanation for this circumstance. It seemed that the young gentlemen were not trying to conceal their visit to the flat at all."

The book ends with a chilling description of the author at a public reading: she realizes that the audience has been screened, and that her supporters—the readers who have so enthusiastically embraced her books—have been shoved and driven away by the police.

Was Bleibt reflects the mood within considerable sections of the population who regarded themselves as socialists but found the road forward blocked. Its theme is the one underlying so much of Wolf's work of the past 20 years: the increasing difficulties an individual faced in reconciling communist convictions with Stalinist reality. The "helpless rage" which the critics claim to find incomprehensible is the natural reaction of an isolated pro-socialist to a regime steering not toward socialism but coming to a dead halt.

A Woman's Place

As soon as the book hit the streets, the "critics" went to work. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Germany's "literary pope," gave the signal for the excommunication of Christa Wolf, and critic after critic churned out snarling, personalistic, woman-hating "reviews." The big literary guns of the influential liberal *Die Zeit* and the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine* leaped into the fray first, while much of the rest of the press, both left- and right-wing, jumped on the

The Solution

After the uprising of the 17th June
The Secretary of the Writers' Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
Stating that the people
Had forfeited the confidence of the government
And could win it back only
By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
and elect another?

—Bertolt Brecht, *Poems 1913-1956*

bandwagon. For months they have condemned her works without discussing them, regurgitating in unison unsubstantiated political accusations against the writer, the woman and her character.

The experience of women is one of Christa Wolf's major themes—and these eminent men of letters think nothing of descending to anti-woman bigotry in a nauseating *ad feminam* attack. The so-called leftist magazine *titanic* raves about "non-descript looks": "Do you think she would look much hotter in a mini-skirt and a see-through blouse?" *Die Zeit* ridicules: "The woman panics." "She 'cries'." "We are spared nothing." "With sweet melancholy she implores nature..., [she craves] undamaged life...or the bliss of a tasty breakfast...." *Der Spiegel's* headline (25 June 1990) is "Homemade Jam"; the article is a string of insults. *Stern* headlines "All-German Crybaby." Is this to be the judgment on anyone who thinks women should have more than "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" (children, kitchen, church)?

These pens for hire manage to rack up an impressive tangle of vindictive peevs, self-contradictions and lies: Her works are "overrated," "sentimental." She didn't go to the West, where she could have "found a place" as a writer. Her books were judged "politically," not "aesthetically." She and everybody else who stayed in the DDR were "guilty"—"all responsible" for "what happened."

Pro-Socialist Dissident in the DDR

As far as these literary louts are concerned, Christa Wolf had two choices: either to be Honecker's apologist or to prostitute herself to imperialism. (Perhaps they envision a German version of the obscurantist tsarist maniac, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: are they looking for a fascist romanticist of the true *Volk*, extolling that pure Aryan blood and those deep ties to the "blood and soil" of the new Reich?) According to the Social Democrats, there is no alternative to these despicable options. But in fact for years Christa Wolf functioned as a pro-socialist critic of the DDR regime, within the limits of her own liberal Stalinist worldview, and primarily through her art. Especially in her writing about women, the tragedy and wrenching pessimism in Wolf's work derive from the disparity between the communist ideals of true equality

and the reality of a Stalinist-ruled deformed workers state strangling in a sea of imperialism.

Because of the limits of her worldview, Wolf was unable politically to understand this disparity between the real and the ideal. Her politics—perhaps comparable to the program of the pre-1914 social democracy—basically held that collectivized property plus the emancipation of women was enough to "make things better." Since the class question was "solved" in the DDR, should not society simply progress to Marx's idea of the classless society, expressed in "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need"? But the class question cannot be "solved" in one small territory in an imperialist-dominated world. "Socialism in one country" (or, in the case of the DDR, in one-third of a country) and "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism are historical impossibilities. As was clearly articulated by Marx and Lenin, the material abundance providing the necessary basis for social emancipation and the international community of intellect can only exist within the framework of the struggle for the worldwide overthrow of the imperialist system, establishing a global division of labor.

As an artist Christa Wolf was caught in the same contradictions that she so expressively captured in her books: the will to defend socialism (which for her meant



Verlag Haus am Checkpoint Charlie
17 June 1953: East German workers march in workers' district of West Berlin. DDR workers said: "We're cleaning house in Pankow [East Berlin], you sweep out the crap in Bonn."

Is There Art After Germany?

Artists as well as writers from the former DDR have been subjected to a barrage of ill-tempered, intolerant and venomous assaults from West German capitalist *Kulturkämpfers* and even some artists. "There are no artists" in East Germany, claimed painter Georg Baselitz, "they all went away" (he left the DDR at age 19 after being expelled from an art academy). The director of Köln's prestigious modernist Ludwig Museum has vowed never to display art from the DDR. "The traditional impulse of the avant-garde is freedom of the artist in a free society. That never existed in East Germany," said director Siegfried Gohr, who refused to hang some 600 East German works accumulated by the museum's patron, Peter Ludwig. Following unification with the capitalist West, some museums in the East began liquidating their "tainted" books and prints, dumping catalogs at bargain-basement prices.

This assault is grotesque and sinister, an attempted "purge" of the past 40 years of East German culture. Of course the Stalinist regime in the DDR, under first Walter Ulbricht and then in somewhat less rigid form under Erich Honecker, continued the bureaucratic "socialist realism" perversion first imposed by Stalin in the USSR. Official exhortations to DDR artists consisted largely of appeals to bond with workers through painting in field and factory, orders to scientists and writers to make their work understandable to the masses and manifestos like the 1959 Bitterfeld Conference proclamation, "Seize Your Pen, Comrade! The Socialist National Culture Needs You!" Yet in the DDR to be a painter was recognized as an honorable profession worthy of subsidy by the state. It is this progressive aspect of the society that the Western propagandists would like to obliterate.

It is patently ridiculous to claim that all East German art has been simply sycophantic variations on Stalinist themes. A show organized by Harvard University of "Twelve Artists from the German Democratic Republic" toured the U.S. last year, revealing a sophisticated range of styles and techniques, from veteran painter Bernhard Heisig's suave Expressionism and the Oskar Kokoschka-like agitated realism of Willi Sitte (a former president of the Artists' Union of the DDR), to more

"abstract" and whimsical works by younger painters.

Art dealers and auction houses have begun moving into Berlin, on the lookout for profitable commodities. As the 65-year-old Heisig, who has sold widely in the West, dryly noted, "Baselitz may be taking revenge for what happened to him as a student and making a little advertising for himself at the same time."

History may conclude that the bulk of East German art over the past 40 years has not been totally vibrant: *Opencast Mining for Brown Coal* or *Chemical Worker at Control Panel*, say, may not live forever. On the other hand, how timelessly wonderful has West German art been in the same period? On the international art scene there have been some West German "superstars" like Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, and mystical performance artist Joseph Beuys with his dead rabbits and lumps of grey fat.

In the highly volatile Western art market, only a few become famous, at least for a few years, while thou-

sands of others can't make a living. A young DDR painter noted, "Only about 6 percent of the artists in western Germany live solely from the sale of their works, but that is my goal" (*New York Times*, 3 January). Under capitalism, art is reduced to another commodity, worth only what some rich patron or philistine will pay for it—this is now being touted as "freedom." In the "free world," for every celebrity like Andy Warhol (whose cookie jars alone brought thousands of bucks at auction), there are many more artists who create only in their "spare time," while working as word processors or waiters to make ends meet.

It's the height of hypocrisy for the inheritors of Hitler's Third Reich to talk about "freedom of art." Under Hitler all modern art was ridiculed as "de-

generate" and banned, while innovative artists fled or were forced into exile. But even during the supposedly swinging Weimar Republic in the 1920s, one of Germany's most famous and influential artists, George Grosz, was convicted of "obscenity" charges. Twenty-four of the plates in his *Ecce Homo* art book were confiscated and banned from publication under the truly shameless charge of "corrupting the inborn sense of shame and virtue innate in the German people."



Painting by East German artist Bernhard Heisig.

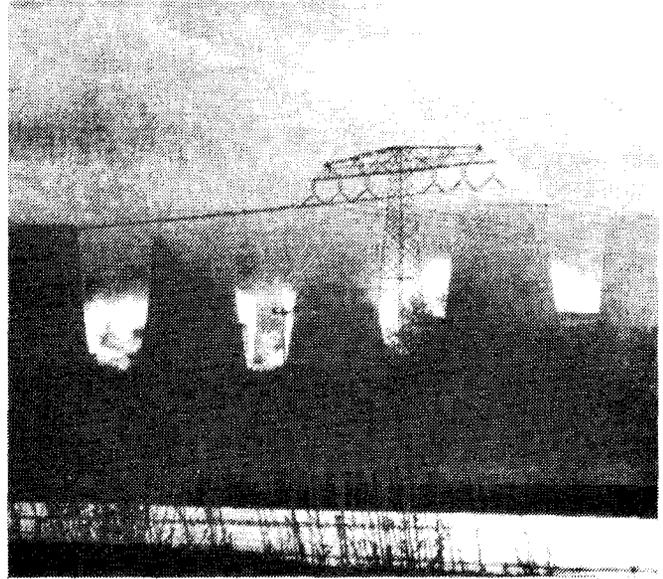
the defense of the DDR) and the knowledge that something was very wrong. She regarded it as a principle never to publish anything in the West that she could not publish in the DDR as well. She feared being used by anti-communists (especially amid the Cold War hysteria of the late 1970s and 1980s), and therefore saw only one option for herself: to work within the limited framework of the DDR. Unlike untold "dissidents" who sold out and prostituted themselves (Biermann is now singing the praises of the imperialist carnage in Iraq!), for Christa Wolf the most important thing was to maintain her ties to her pro-socialist DDR readership, those who would travel miles to find a copy of her newest book available "under the counter." As one of our comrades commented:

"Every DDR citizen who made a several hours' trip to get one of her books was always expecting literature relating to the DDR, written by a woman who knew exactly where she lived and exactly why she lived there, and to whom it would never occur even in a dream to deny this sovereign state. Despite all the quarrels and difficulties that were so typical for us here, she depicted our country again and again in such a sympathetic and endearing light that at least people didn't give up hope of improvement here."

Christa Wolf wrote and published for just those people who now feel an icy chill when they see that Western news programs are using the German names for Polish cities.

No Place on Earth: Christa Wolf's Art

Wolf's novels were not exactly what the Honecker regime wanted to hear. As she so succinctly says, "literature...expresses the tensions between the demands, needs, hopes and desires of individuals and those of their society. Completely contented people do not need art" (*The Fourth Dimension: Interviews with Christa Wolf*, translated by Hilary Pilkington). While she was an early proponent of "socialist realism," the Stalinist "theory" of



Der Spiegel

Brezhnev oil price hike in early 1980s forced DDR reliance on high-pollution brown coal, which ruins the atmosphere.

proletarian art, Wolf broke from it in a fairly spectacular way. In 1968 she published her first major novel, *The Quest for Christa T.*, a story of a dead woman as remembered by her friend and written in an evocative, emotional "stream of consciousness" style. It is a story of friendship, death and the crisis of expectations. The first edition of the book was pulled from circulation; Wolf's candidacy on the SED central committee was not renewed. Later—after Erich Honecker renounced "socialist realism" at the 1971 SED conference—the book was republished to great acclaim.

Politics is often a key factor in Wolf's initial motivation and conception in her fiction. Thus, if the anti-communist critics were sincerely interested in Wolf's writing, they would know that in 1977 she wrote a book "about" the Biermann affair: *No Place on Earth*, a vision of an imaginary meeting between two long-dead Romantic poets, the long-forgotten Karoline von Günderode and the celebrated dramatist Heinrich von Kleist. She wrote the book "to investigate what lay behind failure, and the connection between social despair and failure in literature.... I had a very strong feeling that my back was against the wall and that it was impossible to make any headway." And the novel captures the suffocating despair of two alienated people who feel that they will never succeed in their search for justice and individual freedom.

Wolf began work on *Cassandra* when, overwhelmed by the threat of nuclear Armageddon from the rabid Ronald Reagan in the early years of Star Wars, she became interested in studying the origins of war. *Cassandra* is a fascinating recasting of the story of the Trojan War, which Wolf reinterprets as the triumph of a patriarchal Greek society over a matriarchal Trojan one. During and after a visit to Greece, Wolf undertook intensive study of Greek mythology and the origins of women's oppression, including Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In the four essays accompanying the novel *Cassandra* she expresses a common feminist view of patriarchy as the wellspring of imperialist war, but this illusion does not spoil the novel's

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Similarly, *Accident*, a novella describing one day in which the narrator's brother undergoes delicate brain surgery and fallout from Chernobyl begins to rain down on East Germany, is replete with a sense of panic and of anti-technology utopianism amid the splendid prose and the lyrical emotion. In that sense it is a perfect candidate for the sort of Marxist analysis which Leon Trotsky described in *Literature and Revolution*. A Marxist critic does not:

"'incriminate' a poet with the thoughts and feelings which he expresses, but raises questions of a much more profound significance, namely, to which order of feelings does a given artistic work correspond in all its peculiarities? What are the social conditions of these thoughts and feelings? What place do they occupy in the historic development of a society and of a class?"

Because to Wolf the class question in East Germany was essentially settled, her indictment of the condition of women and her concern for the environment take place on a rather different plane than that of middle-class bourgeois feminists and eco-freaks in the capitalist West: Wolf takes for granted the superiority of the DDR's social provisions for working women, while despite her Cassandra-like view of the hazards of modern technology she accepts that industrial production, nuclear power plants and so on make it possible for society to provide commodities affordable to the vast masses of people. In *Accident* Wolf rather brilliantly captures the claustrophobic anxiety of the East German liberal Stalinist intelligentsia, "trapped" in one-third of a country, poisoned by either nuclear fallout or noxious fumes of burning lignite, living on the exact geographical spot determined to go up in mushroom clouds should the U.S. imperialists launch their first strike.

Patterns of Childhood

Christa Wolf's greatest book is *Patterns of Childhood* (published in the U.S. by Farrar Straus Giroux). It is also the most autobiographical, and was written in part as a

journey of self-discovery: "Now, in spite of all impossibility, the adult wishes to make the child's acquaintance."

Wolf was born in 1929 in a German-speaking town in East Prussia, now part of Poland. She grew up in Hitler's Third Reich—where she was an enthusiastic member of the BDM, the girls' version of the Hitler Youth—and saw as a 16-year-old refugee the defeat of fascism by the Soviet Red Army, the most traumatic event of her youth. In 1949, when the DDR was founded, at the age of 20 she began to study Marxism, one of the most important experiences of her life. But *Patterns of Childhood* stops short at 1947, before Wolf was recruited to Marxism; it does not proclaim any pat ideological "answers," but addresses the questions about life under the Nazis: "How was it possible, and what was it really like?" As Wolf said in a 1975 interview,

"It disturbs me a little that many of our books on this period end with heroes experiencing a kind of instant metamorphosis and, even under fascism, managing to arrive at important, correct ideas on both the political and human level. I don't want to dispute the personal experience of any author, but my own experience was very different. I found that it was a very long time before I gained even the first limited insights, and only later did more profound changes become possible."

Instead, Wolf shows the changes that history has brought about: the narrative of the past describing the life of "Nelly" (Wolf as a girl) is interwoven with the present, including the narrator's 14-year-old daughter, Lenka, whose consciousness is so different from Nelly's.

It is a book that demolishes the "collective guilt" lie with its vivid portrait of the "little people" in Nazi Germany: Nelly's parents are if anything anti-Hitler. As individuals they can't do much, but they try to maintain decency and humanity while preoccupied with earning a living, raising two children and finally saving their family. Reminiscent of the powerful book *The Last Jews in Berlin*, the novel shows more vividly than could any statement of the historical fact in analytical Marxist terms that "all Germans" were not fascists.

Bourgeois pundits rave about "German guilt," smearing



Der Spiegel

Nazi book-burning in Berlin, 1933. Today the capitalist heirs of Hitler's state want to expunge the last 40 years of East German culture.

Spartakist



East Berlin,
3 January 1990:
"Down with NATO!
Defend the
Soviet Union!" said
Trotskyists of the
TLD/International
Communist League
at Treptow Park
rally protesting
desecration of
war memorial to
Soviet soldiers.

"all Germans" as guilty for Hitler if they did not undertake heroic actions against the Nazis. But Marxists understand that there are crucial junctures in world history. In the economically prostrated Germany of the 1920s, stable bourgeois democracy was palpably not an option—society was rapidly polarizing between the powerful workers movement and the fascists who recruited heavily among unemployed ex-soldiers and the ruined petty bourgeoisie. After the defeat of attempted proletarian insurrections and the beheading of the revolutionary movement, decisive sections of the bourgeoisie—still terrified by the spectre of communism—threw their support behind Hitler's Nazis. *They are the ones responsible for Hitler's taking power!* Hitler was made Chancellor and the storm-trooping Nazi bullies were simply fused with the bourgeois state apparatus and armed forces.

The Stalinized German Communists refused to heed Trotsky's urgings of a united front with the Social Democrats to crush the Nazis while there was still time. They were among Hitler's first victims. After 1933 "ordinary people" had a choice between directly risking their lives to seek to save individual Jews and other targets of the Third Reich (which some did) or obeying the Nazis' laws. Wolf's book explores the lives of people who were not heroes and the ways they learned to think—and not think—as their price for staying alive under a regime that did unspeakable things to others.

Patterns of Childhood made many Germans squirm—those who accepted the racial slurs, the "euthanasia" programs, "Kristallnacht"; the Aryanizers, the several million Nazi sympathizers and overt Nazis who became born-again "anti-fascists" on 8 May 1945; all those who knew about the boxcars, the concentration camps, the mass extermination—those who for 40 years preferred the collective amnesia that dominated West Germany. They cannot bear the cutting truth in scenes like the one when Nelly's family meets up with a starved, half-dead concentration camp survivor. When he tells the family that he was imprisoned for being a Communist, Nelly's mother

replies, "But that wasn't reason enough to put you in a concentration camp":

"He said, as though to himself, without reproach, without special emphasis: Where on earth have you all been living?"

"Of course Nelly didn't forget his sentence, but only later, years later, did it become some kind of motto for her."

Patterns of Childhood is Wolf's answer to the concentration camp inmate. And only Christa Wolf could have written it—only an East German socialist (however partial her understanding of Marxism may be, under pressure of Stalinist deformations). Her pro-socialist convictions gave her the distance and the understanding to free her creative talent and imagination to write this book.

"Outgrowing" Auschwitz

The Fourth Reich critics dismiss this powerful novel in their noxious pretense of searching for "new aesthetics" purged of "moral" or (horrors) "political" judgments. This new "aesthetics" is rather like the emperor's new clothes—a highbrow cover for the vengeful abuse heaped on DDR writers and their defenders for their politics. Günter Grass, the PEN writers association, members of the former DDR writers union, West German professor Walter Jens and many others are described by the witchhunters as having a "puerile preoccupation" with Auschwitz, while they're accused of being "collectively guilty" for the crimes of Stalinism, "the second German catastrophe" of the century. After 45 years the historical revisionists think they can bury the horrors of the Holocaust in an anti-Communist frenzy against East German Stalinism:

"The struggle is over. Only now has the disaster that began in 1933 come to a real end...."

"These differences in comparison to Nazi rule, as essential as they are, seem insignificant from the perspective of the victims."

—*Die Zeit*, 27 July 1990

From this putrid nationalist rot, put forth by the windbags and apologists of the bourgeoisie of Auschwitz and



Yevgeni Khaldei

Soviet Army raises red flag over Berlin, 1945: The Red Army smashed Nazi fascism.

Babi Yar, it is a small step indeed to the fascists' railing about the "Auschwitz lie."

For a Red Germany in a Socialist Europe!

Partly because it was founded in the rooting out of the Nazi bourgeoisie after World War II, the DDR experienced a more thoroughgoing revolutionary change than other East European Stalinist countries. Since the 1948 abolition of capitalism in the East, Germany was a nation divided along class lines with the powerful German bourgeoisie always looming across the border dangling the fool's gold of capitalist "prosperity" and threatening the very existence of the deformed workers state. Thus the East German Stalinist party, unlike many of the parties of East Europe, was a party of hundreds of thousands of working people vigilant to the necessity of defending the DDR against West German reaction. In the rest of East Europe, such as Tito's Yugoslavia, "liberal" Stalinism's nationalist edge was expressed in the bureaucracy's appetite for greater independence through playing off Moscow and Washington. But this option did not exist in the DDR, where liberal Stalinism was permeated with pacifism and tended to be ideologically tied to the Ulbricht/Honecker regime through its illusions in "socialism in one country" and "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism.

Dissident intellectuals were prevalent in East Germany and deeply rooted in the SED and the DDR's cultural life. Thus when incipient political revolution erupted in October and November 1989, it was the intellectuals and artists who tended to articulate the growing disillusionment of the masses in Stalinism, while in the play of forces the workers themselves as an active, organized, class-conscious power were lacking.

Under Stalinism intellectuals, writers and artists figured large in political life and were among those who desperately tried to hold fast to their communist ideals. Veteran

Communist Markus Wolf (former chief of the DDR's political espionage whom Bonn would still love to put behind bars) is a case in point. His father was a Communist doctor who struggled heroically in the Weimar Republic for abortion rights. The family produced musicians, artists and authors; Markus' brother Konrad, a prominent producer, filmed two of Christa Wolf's novels. But in place of Marxism, many among the intelligentsia subscribed to a pasted-together, idealist theory (perhaps best articulated by Stefan Heym) that in the DDR, the writers and intellectuals had a new and decisive role to play in historical events because of their limited but real access to an avenue of critical expression.

Christa Wolf was one of many intellectuals who signed the 28 November 1989 statement, "For Our Country." It was a typical popular-frontist, DDR-nationalist fantasy, as though all "socialism in a third of a country" needed for success was fewer bureaucrats and more "human face." In this worldview there were no classes, only "the people" of the DDR and "influential economic and political circles" in West Germany. The intellectual initiative was widely embraced, but as passionately as they evoked a vision of socialism, this layer could offer no more than a variation of Gorbachevite "revolutionary renewal" and a vague "socialist alternative" to the capitalist West. Events rapidly swept past their limited political view.

The incipient political revolution swelled in a euphoric wave during the late winter of 1989. Propelled by the evident crumbling of the palsied bureaucracy no longer able to govern in the old way, the masses had completely lost confidence in their rulers. While there was a vacuum of leadership, the sheer determination and sense of social justice which prevailed at this time was shown by the outpouring of a quarter of a million people to protest the fascist desecration of the Soviet war memorial at Treptow Park in Berlin in early January.

At this point, rushing to fill the void and to derail the potentially revolutionary situation, Western imperialism, with the able assistance of its Social Democratic lackeys, launched a concerted campaign of D-mark propaganda, economic sabotage and panic-mongering. The 18 March 1990 vote for capitalist reunification signaled the consolidation of the counterrevolution.

In the absence of a *Leninist vanguard party*, fighting for a program of revolutionary internationalism, the nascent political revolution could not succeed: ultimately either the workers had to take power or capitalist counterrevolution would become ascendant. The choices were stark: either to found a Germany of workers councils and throw out the corrupt, nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, or to be eaten alive by the imperialists who intended terrible impoverishment and exploitation of the workers of East Germany and beyond. The decisive missing element in East Germany remained the vanguard role of the working class.

The International Communist League was the only tendency which did fight tooth and nail against the capitalist reunification of Germany. We warned against the torrent of imperialist lies and predicted mass unemployment, attacks on women and foreign workers and the growth of fascist forces. In the March 18 elections our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany

campaigned under the slogan "No to Capitalist Reunification—For a Germany of Workers Councils!" The Spartakists' election manifesto declared:

"Stalinism has wretchedly demonstrated its bankruptcy. But no one has the right to hand over to capital what millions have created! We must defend our social gains and our workers state. We have much to lose and everything to win!...Today a resolute struggle by workers in the DDR can be the spark for BRD workers to beat back the attacks of the bosses and open the way to real class struggle, for power: *social revolution* in the West."

Although the capitalist *Anschluss* was a bitter defeat for the world proletariat, the fight is not over in Germany. Class-struggle actions against the rapidly escalating mass unemployment could explode into instances where determined workers in a locale could counterpose their strength to the powers that be. But the decisive field of battle is the Soviet Union where economic chaos, nationalist strife and restorationist forces—abetted by the Gorbachevite bureaucracy with its plans to "solve" the economy's dire problems by the reinstatement of private property and capitalist exploitation—endanger the continued existence of this degenerated workers state.

For International Socialist Revolution!

Christa Wolf's art spoke to the deeply felt aspirations for socialism of the masses of the DDR, and the crisis of

expectations as these hopes receded into the future:

"But as the future was always thrust along in front of us, and as we saw that it was nothing but the extension of the time that moves with our own movement, and that one can't ever reach it—then we had to start asking: *How shall we be? What shall we have?*

"Time cannot stop, but one day there'll be no time, unless one stops now: are you really living now, in this very moment, really living?"

"When, if not now?"

—*The Quest for Christa T.*

Increasingly disgusted with the uncritical hacks of the regime who refused to be disturbed by the gulf between the promises for "the future" and the reality, Christa Wolf wanted her society to at least move toward realizing the promises. But "socialism in one country" is a Stalinist pipe dream in the framework of a world ultimately dominated by imperialism, with imperialist militarism and the capitalist world market exerting relentless pressure on these societies where bourgeois rule was overturned. Despite its tremendous achievements, the DDR was stalled in a halfway house between capitalist tyranny and socialism. When the working class has swept imperialism from this planet, the basis will be laid for a new socialist culture which will dwarf the artistic achievements of past societies and create wholly new relationships between people. It is that world which we in the International Communist League are dedicated to building. ■

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David Walberg

The Debate Over “Socialized Medicine”

Wealth Care USA

In 1948 that conservative bastion of wealth and prestige, the American Medical Association, smelled Armageddon in the air when Democrat Harry S. Truman won the presidential election. To the horror of organized medicine, prominent in Truman’s platform was a proposal for national health insurance. Outraged by this dire threat to doctors’ income and position, the AMA mounted what was at the time the most expensive lobbying effort in American history, running ads, publishing articles in the bourgeois press and sponsoring public meetings to stop this “creeping socialism.” One pamphlet demanded in a typical flight of reactionary hyperbole, “Would socialized medicine lead to socialization of other phases of American life?... Lenin thought so. He declared, ‘Socialized medicine is the keystone to the arch of the Socialist State.’” (According to Paul Starr, in *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, the Library of Congress could not locate this quotation in Lenin’s writings.)

Harry S. Truman, the imperialist commander in chief who dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the American Cold Warrior who presided over the Korean War, was undoubtedly mighty indignant at being tagged a Communist for a proposal to ensure that “our people would continue to get medical and hospital services just as they do now”—that is, subject to all the class, race and sex biases of this bigoted society. But in 1948 the AMA’s intransigent opposition to any organized health plan perceived as a threat to “fee for service” private practice was already legendary. Since 1920 the AMA had denounced all such plans as the insidious doom of quality health care and had in 1938 attempted to destroy the

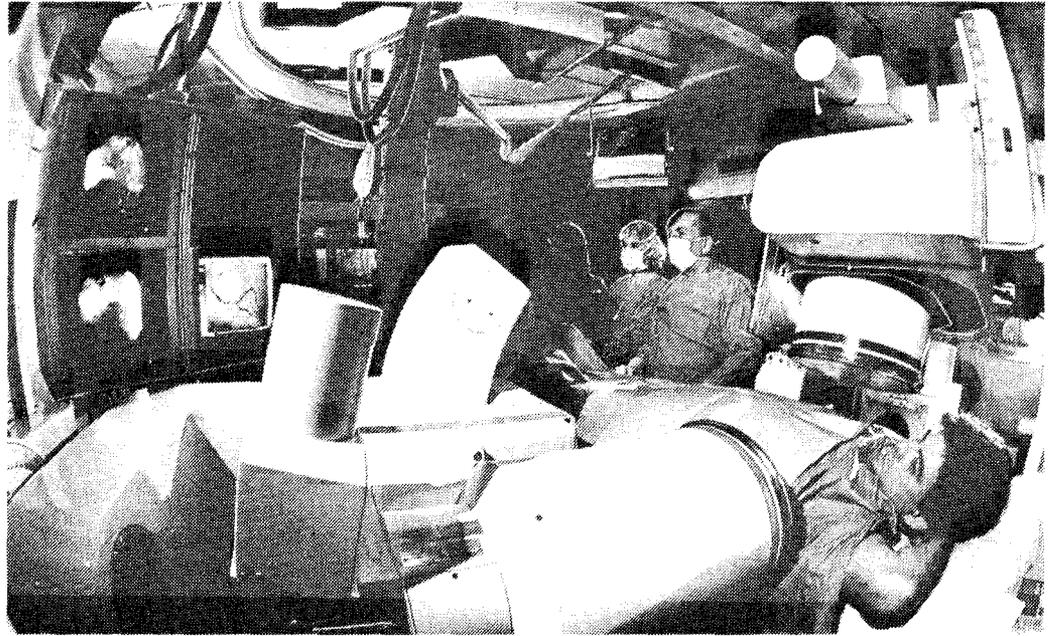
Washington-based Group Health Association, a nonprofit cooperative providing health care to employees of the Federal Home Loan Bank. For this last the federal government had even moved to prosecute the AMA under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, but the AMA remained intransigent.

Truman’s electoral promises soon foundered in the sweeping tide of anti-Communist McCarthyite witchhunting. Health insurance was “socialism” straight out of the Soviet constitution, according to Republican Robert Taft, who walked out of Senate hearings on Truman’s bill. In 1948 even simple public health measures like fluoridated water were “Communist plots” to the McCarthyites.

Yahoo fears to the contrary, such plans had existed for decades in Europe *without* threatening the capitalist status quo. Rather, European politicians knew that welfare plans could help defuse class struggle, win votes and cement an alliance with the pro-capitalist “leaders” of the workers movement. Truman, like Roosevelt before him, was a member of that liberal wing of the bourgeoisie that seeks to soften a bit of the jagged edges of exploitation in order to better reap profits and make war.

Access to health care should be a simple democratic right, a necessity just like education, a place to live, a job. Like every other basic right worth having, decent health care must be *fought for* in hard class struggle. It was no accident of history that Truman made his proposal amid a bitter series of strikes by the United Mine Workers for union-controlled health benefits, part of a massive postwar strike wave that swept millions of workers out of the factories and onto the picket lines. Working in the

Millions of poor people without medical insurance are forced to wait for hours in underfunded, understaffed clinics, like the Uptown Neighborhood Health Center in Chicago (left). America has the best medical technology in the world—for a price.



Sochurek/National Geographic

country's most dangerous trade, miners had been incapacitated by hideous rates of illness, crippled and killed by black lung disease. Notoriously corrupt company doctors had systematically whitewashed the severity of illness and injury. In 1946 Truman seized the mines when miners struck for a health and pension fund; in 1947 Congress passed the union-busting, slave-labor Taft-Hartley Law, which specifically forbade union-controlled, company-funded welfare plans. But the miners struck again and again, defying government threats, until they won an unprecedented "cradle to grave" union-controlled health plan. While McCarthyite reaction killed Truman's insurance proposal, the miners' historic victory opened the way for other unionized workers to win health benefits. But the miners paid a big price for their victory: UMW head John L. Lewis made a deal with the coal bosses not to protest the loss of thousands of mining jobs to mechanization.

Medicine for Profit in Capitalist America

Today the U.S. crisis in health care is so bad that liberal social critics point out with alarm that the United States and apartheid South Africa are the only two industrialized countries in the world without a national health system of some kind. In America the grotesque inequities in medical care are a symbol of the injustice, inequality and indignity of this society. If you have money, you can get the best health care in the world, right on the cutting edge of the most advanced medical technology; that's why Saudi princes come to New York for medical attention. But if the bucks aren't there, and you don't have really good private insurance, you can suffer lifelong debilitation from treatable diseases like asthma or you can die when treatment could have saved your life.

Health "care" in America means black children in Harlem die of measles and malnutrition, and workers suffer one of the highest rates of on-the-job accidents and industrial disease in the world. Hospitals specializing in the wallet biopsy just throw poor patients out; the paltry Medicaid fee doesn't pay enough. "Until DeTar [Hospital] pays my malpractice insurance, I will pick and choose

those patients that I want to treat," declared Michael Burditt, MD, when he rejected a seriously ill, pregnant Hispanic woman who had come to the emergency room; she ended up giving birth in an ambulance without a doctor's attention! But the millionairess Sunny von Bülow (whose story is told in the blood-chilling *Reversal of Fortune*), comatose for years and not expected to recover, gets a weekly coiffure and manicure in her hospital bed while space-age machines keep her breathing.

Our rulers know they're sitting on a bomb waiting to go off: for years now health care has been a major issue in strike after strike. Workers and their families are suffering and dying because they're denied care that touches on the most fundamental and the most intimate parts of life—sickness, birth and death. The health-care disaster is having a widening impact on *all* sections of American society, except for the very rich. Even well-paid people, once relatively secure in a network of employer-provided health insurance, private physicians and well-run private hospitals, are threatened as companies cut benefits, doctors and hospitals raise rates, unemployment results in loss of health insurance.

The current health crisis has its more immediate historic roots in the economic crisis of U.S. capitalism signaled by the 1971 devaluation of the dollar, followed shortly by the U.S.' humiliating defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese Revolution. Since then the American ruling class has sought to counter its decline by squeezing the population harder to restore profitability; domestically it's meant rampant union-busting and budget-cutting. Under Democrat Jimmy Carter the miners' historic "cradle to grave" health system was destroyed when the coal bosses and the government undermined union control in the bitter months-long Great Coal Strike of 1978. And Ronald Reagan opened a decade of union-busting attacks when he fired the PATCO air controllers for daring to strike against the federal government. That defeat signaled a broad capitalist assault on hard-won union benefit programs.

The bankrupt American empire thinks it can solve its economic crisis through military adventures like the



Acme



Workers Vanguard

Militant coal miners in 1948 thumbed their noses at slave-labor Taft-Hartley Act (above). Washington, D.C., 1981: 10,000 miners protested against Reagan's killer cuts. 4,000 miners a year still die of black lung disease.

bloody imperialist war in the Persian Gulf. While spending billions to bomb Iraq back to a pre-industrial age, our rulers decide this country can't afford health, education, housing, jobs for American workers and the poor. With the decline in American industry, they don't need a healthy, literate working class. But even on their own terms, where dollars count more than human lives, the bourgeoisie has a real problem: the anarchic medical system is out of control and costing too much money, so much so that even conservative holdouts like the National Association of Manufacturers are beginning to call for expansion of some government programs to cover the poor. Meanwhile, the U.S. government has announced plans to ration Medicare expenses, inevitably depriving the elderly of access to expensive new procedures.

Capitalist America: Class, Race, Sex Bigotry

Why does the United States have no national health system? Why is public health so feeble and preventive medicine nearly nonexistent? The answer is deeply rooted in this country's history. In the United States public health began late and remained weak. Until the Civil War destroyed the slaveholding system, the capitalist class, impeded by the slavocracy in its attempts to institute a federal road system and to create a national bank and a protective tariff for industry, was certainly not going to forge a national board of health. Post-Civil War efforts foundered on "states' rights," intransigent capitalist opposition to cleaning up working conditions and slum tenements, and "social Darwinist" blame-the-victim bigotry.

Further, the power of the American capitalist class, the race, ethnic and sex divisions in the working class, the vastness of the country with the accompanying regional divisions, the absence of explicit, formal class barriers as in Europe with its aristocratic vestiges—all of these factors have served to vitiate the development of class consciousness in American workers. The same powerful class and social forces stymied the emergence of a mass workers party in this country. In Europe, the development of such a party, like Britain's Labour Party or the German Social Democracy, went side by side with the institution of national health care.

From 1912 to 1920 a debate raged in the U.S. in reform-minded and medical circles over federal and state proposals for government-organized health insurance. While the American Medical Association was prominent in defeating these proposals, it was only one factor in a complex web incorporating hospitals, insurance companies, the giant pharmaceutical corporations and government officials. The web was spun from the deep-seated class and race divisions in this country. Capitalists seeking to lower wages and benefits, commercial insurance companies reaping cash from insecurity and fear, pharmaceutical companies hungering for profits: in the absence of a powerful, class-conscious labor movement able to fight for basic social needs, which could at least have provided a social counterweight to the money-grubbing in the health industry, these forces soon established an iron grip over health care in the United States. They used every weapon in the bourgeois arsenal of social reaction: anti-woman bigotry, religious and ethnic hatred, class bias, race prejudice, national chauvinism.

Race-hate, woman-hating, religious bigotry—that was

America in the early years of the 20th century. The post-Civil War South, where Jim Crow had crushed the freed slaves into poverty, illness and ignorance, was virtually an impoverished agricultural colony of Northern capital. In 1915 the KKK was reborn in the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish businessman framed up for the murder of a white woman. In the brutal Northern industrial slums, thousands of mothers and infants died at birth each year. Working conditions were appalling: in 1914, 35,000 workers died in on-the-job accidents; 700,000 suffered injuries like severed fingers and crushed limbs. In 1911, 147 young women, mostly Jewish and Italian immigrants, died horribly in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York City; dozens leaped to their deaths because the bosses had them locked in. Bosses bitterly fought any regulation of safety conditions and the paltry workmen's compensation plans which had just become law in some states; many of these plans were declared null and void by the courts.

The American robber barons only counted the dollars flowing in as their "divide and conquer" assault on the working people raked in Wall Street profits. By pitting workers against each other, by bringing in desperate blacks as scabs to break strikes, by fomenting chauvinist hatred of the millions of non-English-speaking immigrants on the job, the bosses had succeeded in crippling the workers movement. In the 1910s, less than 6 percent of American workers were members of the American Federation of Labor. The Gompersite labor lieutenants of the capitalist class organized their job-trusting unions *against* blacks, women, immigrants, feeding into antagonisms consciously fostered by the capitalists.

While the American Socialist Party endorsed health insurance in 1904, it was increasingly a party of middle-class, white "reformers," alienated from more militant sections of the working class, many of whom were non-English-speaking immigrants. And the militant, class-struggle Industrial Workers of the World renounced "politics" on principle. Their mass base among migrant workers in the West, where they were crushed by the bosses and their government, lacked the potential clout of the industrialized workers in the Eastern cities.

History of the Health Insurance Debate

While working people lived and labored in brutal squalor, medicine was making miracles. When in the last decades of the 19th century Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch began to identify the pathogens responsible for many killer diseases, they began a bacteriological revolution which soon enormously increased medicine's effectiveness. The discovery of anesthesia and asepsis opened up enormous potential both for the relief of human suffering and for profit in hospital surgery. The demand for doctors' services and hospital beds—and the expense of medical treatment—soared.

By 1914 many European countries had passed some form of national health insurance. Far from comprehensive and certainly not free—only a fraction of the population was covered and workers had to pay some part of the cost out of their wages—these plans represented a significant reform within the confines of the capitalist system and were won as a concession to the combativeness of the European workers movement. In 1883, shortly

after passing the Anti-Socialism Laws to squash the German Social Democratic Party, Bismarck instituted the first national sickness program:

"Chancellor Otto von Bismarck created the German system of social insurance as a dike to hold back the rising tide of socialism. As he told a visiting British observer, he wanted 'to bribe the working classes, or, if you like, to win them over to regard the State as a social institution existing for their sake and interested in their welfare'."

—Ronald L. Numbers, *Almost Persuaded: American Physicians and Compulsory Health Insurance, 1912-1920*

Insurance plans soon spread to Austria (1888), Hungary (1891), Luxembourg (1901), Norway (1909), Serbia (1910) and even backward tsarist Russia (1912). More influential in the United States was the British National Insurance Act, put forward in 1911 by Liberal Party chan-



Brown Brothers

The Triangle Shirtwaist fire of 1911: 147 young women died in a garment industry sweatshop because the bosses had them locked in.

cellor of the exchequer David Lloyd George, later British imperialist war leader. Consciously seeking to diminish class conflict by integrating the working class into a welfare system and to win workers' votes to the Liberal Party, Lloyd George summed up his hopes for health insurance with the comment, "You can not maintain an A-1 empire with a C-3 population" (quoted in Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*). When the British Medical Association threatened a boycott, the government succeeded in buying the doctors off with promises of physician control of local health committees and guaranteed remuneration.

Social reformers in the U.S. expected health insurance to sweep the U.S. as it had Europe. It was in tune with the spirit of Progressivism popular in liberal bourgeois circles before World War I. Seeking to "clean up" the worst abuses of capitalist exploitation (but blind to the hideous oppression of black sharecroppers in the Jim Crow South), Progressives argued for woman suffrage and for legislation to protect child and female labor. And they certainly realized that the illnesses of the poor were

communicable to the rich; disease was rampant in the fetid working-class slums of the big cities, where tuberculosis, the "captain of death," spread in dusty sweatshops and filthy tenements without sunlight or fresh air. In motivating health insurance the American Association for Labor Legislation (AALL) emphasized that sickness was the leading immediate cause of "charity cases"; thus social relief enabling a sick person to keep his job would "reduce illness itself, lengthen life, abate poverty, improve working power, raise the wage level, and diminish the causes of industrial discontent." But despite such appeals to capitalism's "best interests," by 1920 health insurance was a dead issue.

Enter the Doctors

In 1847 a small group of physicians had founded the American Medical Association primarily as a means to combat "sectarians," that is, nontraditional physicians such as homeopaths, who were seen as a threat to the wealth and social position of the medical profession. (The AMA even denounced the Surgeon General of the U.S. for cooperating with a homeopathic physician to save the life of Secretary of State William Seward, when he was shot the night of Lincoln's assassination!) As a classic petty-bourgeois professional layer primarily engaged in private practice, doctors have no strategic social power in capitalist society. Their economic motive is simple: to charge as exorbitant a fee as they can squeeze out of patients. Their social outlook is to avoid what has befallen teachers: proletarianization, the worst fear of a petty-bourgeois professional. In the key years 1890 to 1920—culminating in the victory of the bourgeois right wing—the AMA consolidated as a conservative force championing "fee for service" and opposed to any "third party" intervention in the "doctor-patient relationship."

Organized medicine boosted its prestige by becoming rich, white, WASP, native-born and male. Through "reform" of medical education, the AMA succeeded in cutting the number of medical schools from 131 to 95 in 1915 and reducing overall admissions to eliminate a "surplus" of doctors. Only two black medical schools, Howard and Meharry, remained out of an earlier seven. Deliberate policies of discrimination kept immigrants, Jews, blacks and women out of medical schools. By 1920 blacks and foreign-born doctors were almost completely unrepresented on hospital staffs. Ethnic, race and religious discrimination against both doctors and patients was a leading factor in the establishment of religious and ethnic hospitals like Mount Sinai in New York City.

Both North and South, hospitals were strictly segregated against blacks. The AMA itself was almost lily-white. While blacks could join on a national level, most doctors were members through a local medical association. Black doctors in the South were effectively barred; in 1895 blacks had established their own organization, the National Medical Association, which, reflecting the desperate needs of black patients, had a longstanding position in support of national health insurance. In 1950 the AMA finally moved to put token pressure on Southern locals to admit black doctors. But as Edward H. Beardsley wrote in *A History of Neglect: Health Care for Blacks and Mill Workers in the Twentieth-Century South*, "there was feeling among some blacks that the AMA was only hoping to strike a deal with the NMA over national health insur-



T. Anthony Caruso

The first women medical students at Bellevue Hospital, circa 1888. As the medical profession gained prestige, women, Jews, immigrants and blacks were driven out.

ance. Earlier, AMA leaders had approached their black counterparts with a vague offer of recognizing black medical societies as AMA affiliates if the NMA would join against Truman's 'socialized medicine' scheme."

Public Health in America: Stillborn

As Harvard medical historian Paul Starr documents, doctors viewed public health as a threat and defended a "vigilantly guarded border" between private medical practice and public health's shrinking mandate. "Doctors fought against public treatment of the sick, requirements for reporting cases of tuberculosis and venereal disease, and attempts by public health authorities to establish health centers to coordinate preventive and curative medical services." Crying "parasitism" and "abuse," doctors were instrumental in banishing urban dispensaries, "medical soup kitchens" where the poor could be treated for free. Similarly, in April 1902 over 1,000 doctors and druggists denounced New York City's internationally renowned Department of Health for "unfair competition" and "municipal socialism" because it sold its overstock of diphtheria antitoxin at cost. The department was forced to stop all sale of the antitoxin for this hideous disease, one of the 19th century's biggest killers of children.

Thus, by 1912 when the Progressivist American Association for Labor Legislation first set forth its proposals for health insurance on the state and national level, the AMA had some experience with getting its way. Interestingly, at first the AMA endorsed the insurance proposal as "inevitable." But soon doctors learned that its defeat was possible. According to Ronald L. Numbers:

"During this period nothing seems to have played a greater role in molding opinion than money. In the early

days of the debate, when poorly paid American physicians believed that they, like their British brethren, might benefit financially from compulsory health insurance, it seemed like an attractive idea.... [But] the incomes of physicians were increasing without insurance. The average income of taxed physicians in Wisconsin, for example, rose 41 percent between 1916 and 1919. Wartime inflation was responsible for much of this, but an unprecedented decline in the total number of physicians undoubtedly had some effect."

But more important than the position of the AMA was the clout of big business. Organizations like the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Civic Federation opposed compulsory insurance plans. An especially powerful enemy was the burgeoning commercial insurance business. The enormous profits of the Prudential Insurance Co. (founded in 1875) and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. sprang from selling "industrial" life insurance policies to working-class families. These grisly policies of death paid costs for terminal illnesses and funerals *only*. A huge army of insurance agents visited families weekly, immediately after payday, to collect the 15 or 25 cents premium, a very high percentage of a workman's pitiful wages. The fear of a pauper's burial was so great that in 1911 individual Americans spent \$183 million on these burial policies—about as much as Germany spent on its entire social insurance program!

The AALL program's inclusion of death benefits directly threatened the life insurance giants, who proved its most bitter opponents. The chief spokesman for the insurance industry was Frederick L. Hoffman, Prudential actuary and vice president, who churned out pages of propaganda smearing compulsory health insurance as unnecessary, fraudulent and un-American. The insurance industry also financed the opposition of the Christian Science faith healers.

Faced with such powerful enemies, compulsory insurance needed powerful friends. But while some state union federations supported it, AFL head Samuel Gompers denounced it. When in 1916 Socialist Party Congressman Meyer London introduced a bill for compulsory health insurance into the House of Representatives, Gompers was the only witness to testify against it. In a hypocritical diatribe against government paternalism, Gompers claimed that compulsory insurance would stand in the way of the workers' attempts "to strive and struggle for their own emancipation through their own efforts." Of course the labor-traitor Gompers (who also opposed legislation for the eight-hour day, the minimum wage and unemployment insurance) did *nothing* to organize "striving and struggling" for the vast majority of workers, who were still unorganized. The job-trusting, Jim Crow AFL leadership was a criminal *obstacle* to workers power. The key element of organized class struggle, which both Bismarck and Lloyd George had sought to buy off with their social insurance schemes, was crippled in the United States. When the capitalists looked at the health care equation, they saw only that their bucks would go to premiums and to sick pay which they believed would only encourage "malingering."

The final blow to the Progressives' reform plan was the entry of the United States into World War I in 1917. True, when hundreds of thousands of young Americans failed their army physicals, health reformers used military

necessity to bolster their arguments for health insurance. But this appeal to chauvinism was swamped in imperialist war hysteria targeting radicals, antiwar militants, women's rights activists, socialists, unionists—any challenge to the U.S. war drive. Chauvinist reaction killed dead any chances for health care reform, while health insurance opponents reveled in its German connection. (In his 1918 address, the AMA's president called on AMA members to turn in German doctors to the cops.) The powerful witchhunting Creel Committee on Public Information commissioned a series of articles by Frederick Hoffman "exposing" German sickness insurance as a "fraud."

The California League for the Conservation of Public Health (an Orwellian name indeed) propagandized in a pamphlet entitled "What Is Compulsory Social Health Insurance?": "It is a dangerous device, invented in Germany, announced by the German Emperor from the throne the same year he started plotting and preparing to conquer the world." A front group for California commercial insurers, the Research Society of Social Economics, passed out thousands of copies of a pamphlet displaying a picture of the Kaiser over the caption: "Made in Germany. Do you want it in California?" This disgusting chauvinist barrage turned Californian voters against insurance, which was defeated in a statewide referendum.

The 1917 Russian Revolution, greeted by the working-class masses as a beacon of hope amid imperialist slaughter and exploitation, gave the enemies of health insurance yet another inflammatory theme which only intensified in the postwar upsurge of anti-communist reaction. In 1919 a prominent New York physician-lawyer, John O'Reilly, screamed that health insurance advocates were "Paid Professional Philanthropists, and busy-body Social Workers... Supporters, Defenders, Associates of the Forces of unrest known as the I.W.W. and Bolsheviks; the disciples of Lenin and Trotzky whose Gospel is the Destruction of those things worth while for which men and women have given their lives." Others attacked insurance advocates using nasty anti-Semitic slurs and claims of "sexual license" and "religious hatred." Thus organized medicine played its small but dirty part to whip up the bloody crackdown on labor struggle after



Lentz/NY Times

Lima, Peru, April 1991: victims of cholera epidemic. Imperialist enforced poverty means over 1,000 already dead of this preventable disease.

the war. Capitalist reaction spawned the union-busting, the anti-communist Palmer Raids, the mass deportations of foreign-born workers and the vicious race riots of the postwar years.

Bitter Fruits of "Wealth Care"

While the rise of the militant CIO in the 1930s paved the way for the establishment of union benefit plans like the UMW's, American medicine for profit, born in capitalist reaction, remains locked in to anarchic, limitless greed. When AIDS hit the U.S. in the 1980s, the response of the ruling class and the medical establishment was to be predicted: criminal neglect, outright gloating over a disease that targeted homosexuals as well as increasing numbers of drug users and the poor. Medicine has become not only a source of enormous profit, but a sort of moral priesthood of the arrogant privileged sermonizing against the "guilty" who are sick for their sins; "public health" has turned into a criminal manhunt. In a truly vicious and twisted victimization of a young black woman, recently a Florida appeals court upheld the conviction of Jennifer Clarise Johnson under a law designed to punish drug dealers giving drugs to children: she supposedly delivered cocaine to her baby through the umbilical cord before it was cut after birth!

Today, about 34 million Americans have no health insurance at all—and that's not counting the tens of millions who have pitifully inadequate coverage like Medicare and Medicaid. Medicaid fees are so low that many doctors simply turn patients away—for a visit to a doctor in New York Medicaid paid \$11 in 1989! For years death rates and infant mortality rates for black people have been worsening as poverty lashes them with malnutrition, wretched housing, lack of medical care. Ghettos are devastated by epidemics of diseases supposedly conquered by modern medicine: tuberculosis once

again spreading; measles, easily prevented by vaccine, rampant because vaccinations for common childhood diseases, once free, now cost several hundred dollars. In contrast to every other industrialized country on the globe, in the United States sexually transmitted diseases are increasing: syphilis, once almost eradicated, now the cause of thousands of babies born with a terrible, crippling congenital condition; gonorrhea, now spreading in drug-resistant forms.

Just over a year ago in "Excess Mortality in Harlem," published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (18 January 1990), doctors reported that life expectancy for black men in Harlem was lower than for men in Bangladesh, one of the world's most impoverished countries. The two authors of the report concluded, "A major political and financial commitment will be needed to eradicate the root causes of this high mortality: vicious poverty and inadequate access to the basic health care that is the right of all Americans." But it has only gotten worse. Harlem Hospital, virtually the only health facility for the 125,000 inhabitants of Harlem (where private physicians are practically nonexistent), is faced with loss of accreditation and withdrawal of federal Medicaid and Medicare funding.

Conditions on the job have deteriorated too as the bankrupt American empire has intensified the exploitation of labor. Some 4,000 coal miners die every year from black lung disease, and 10,000 of the 160,000 miners on the job show evidence of the disease already. In February 1989 the so-called "Labor" Department of the U.S. government discovered widespread and massive cheating by mining companies in testing mine air for coal dust, the cause of the illness. After stalling for months while miners continue to get sick, the government finally announced fines as low as \$1,000 per violation, a meaningless slap on the wrist!

The health care "system" in the U.S. shows again and



Harlem protesters fighting the closing of Sydenham Hospital in 1980 were brutally assaulted by Democratic mayor Ed Koch's cops.



Workers Vanguard

New York City, April 17—8,000 home care workers in one-day strike were joined by CUNY students protesting cutbacks, tuition increases.

again that the capitalists don't want to let human life get in the way of their profits. Understandably outraged, ACT UP activists, through militant stunts like blockading Wall Street and protesting at Catholic masses, try to pressure government into putting more money into AIDS care and AIDS research. But only intransigent class struggle has won even the little piece of the "miracle of modern medicine" that workers and the poor now have. And as the miners' long years of struggle show, even those gains can be reversed by renewed capitalist attack.

Medicine for profit is too locked in for the American capitalists to implement a universal government-provided health system like the one in Canada or Britain. But even if it were possible, it's no answer either. In Britain, nobody who can afford a private physician's fees ever goes to National Health, and the already inadequate care is fast disappearing as the government slashes services. While the Canadian system provides better general health care to the population as a whole, many people can't get access to expensive procedures requiring high-tech medical equipment because there isn't enough money in the tight budget.

The struggle for decent health care exposes the gaping holes in all the pathetic patchwork reform schemes advocated by liberal social workers, social democrats and officials of the twin capitalist parties. The treacherous U.S. labor bureaucrats, the grandsons of Samuel Gompers, today pass motions calling for a national health system and argue about it at their fancy poolside confabs in Bal Harbour. But such schemes are just band-aids for cancer, more halfway measures guaranteed to ration medical care by class, race and sex. The AFL-CIO executive board couldn't even pass a motion to support women's right to abortion, let alone fight for equal rights for blacks, women and gays. The working class must oust the trade-union bureaucrats, the labor lieutenants of the Democratic Party—the party of Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter—and build a revolutionary, class-struggle workers party which

will take up all the struggles of the exploited and oppressed, and fight for a workers government.

Free, Quality Health Care for All in a Socialist World!

The crisis of medical care cries out for a socialist revolution which will lay the basis for a society which will end all exploitation and social oppression. Health means much more than shots and pills and surgical knives: it is a decent place to live; plenty of good food to eat; knowledge of human biology; air clean of pollution; safe, decent working conditions; the principles of public health rigorously applied. Medicine can't save lives ruined by poverty and malnutrition. Right now a deadly epidemic of cholera is spreading rapidly throughout South America, the first since 1895. Its genesis is quite simply the collapse of the sewage system. Groaning under millions of dollars of debt to imperialist banks, Third World countries can't maintain even a basic social infrastructure.

In this complex industrial society, it will take *worldwide* planning based on scientific knowledge to establish both public health and the best care for the individual. The AIDS pandemic only underlines the urgency of this truth. What we need is *free, quality health care for all—communist medicine*, where the wealth of resources on our planet go to the service of the people, not to production for profits.

When we have thrown out the vicious capitalist system which sells human life for dollars, we will be able to build a new socialist society where human life, human worth and human dignity count. Doctors will be servants of the people; hospitals will be havens to heal the sick; research on vaccinations, new medical techniques and improved drugs will be internationally coordinated and to the benefit of all. When the workers of the world are in charge of this planet, the only limits of human health will be scientific—and these will be constantly enlarged by thoughtful, energetic research. ■

National Liberation and the Permanent Revolution

Palestinian Women and the *Intifada*

Mariam, secretary-general of the Palestinian Women's Committee in the Bethlehem area, was 27 years old when Israeli troops stopped her at a roadblock. On the way to the infamous Moscobiya detention center for Palestinian women in Jerusalem, she was handcuffed, blindfolded, kicked. Then the Shin Bet secret police took over. For a week she was "interrogated"—while tied to a pole with a sack over her head and drenched with water, or chained inside a "coffin" filled with feces. After five weeks of interrogation and torture, she was sentenced to an additional six months in prison, charged with "suspicion" of leafletting and raising the Palestinian flag.

A 16-year-old schoolgirl walking down a Jerusalem street was jumped by four armed men and thrown into a police van. On the way to Moscobiya she was beaten with a club between the legs. When she refused to sign a "confession" in Hebrew she could not read, she was

threatened with gang rape and other sexual tortures. She was imprisoned for a year, charged with throwing stones at a bus.

Gezina Schultz was a 25-year-old German volunteer working at an orphanage in al-Azariyeh in the West Bank. Two soldiers stopped her on the street and demanded she remove a bracelet bearing the Palestinian colors. They pulled a gun on her, threw her into a jeep and tossed her into a tiny cell at Moscobiya with 14 other women. When she demanded to know her rights when under arrest, one of the cops "slapped my face and told me that here there are no rights and no democracy."

For the Palestinian people under the grip of Zionist state terror, there are indeed no rights and no democracy. Since 1967, the 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank have been subjected to a military occupation which in its brutality and racism evokes the treatment of the Jews in the early years of Nazi Germany; the



Bakshandaq/Rapno

Heroic Palestinian women fighters in forefront of the *Intifada*, a revolt born of defiance and despair in the face of brutal Zionist state terror.

condition of the 700,000 Palestinians living inside the "Green Line" (Israel's pre-1967 borders), nominally as Israeli citizens, is little better.

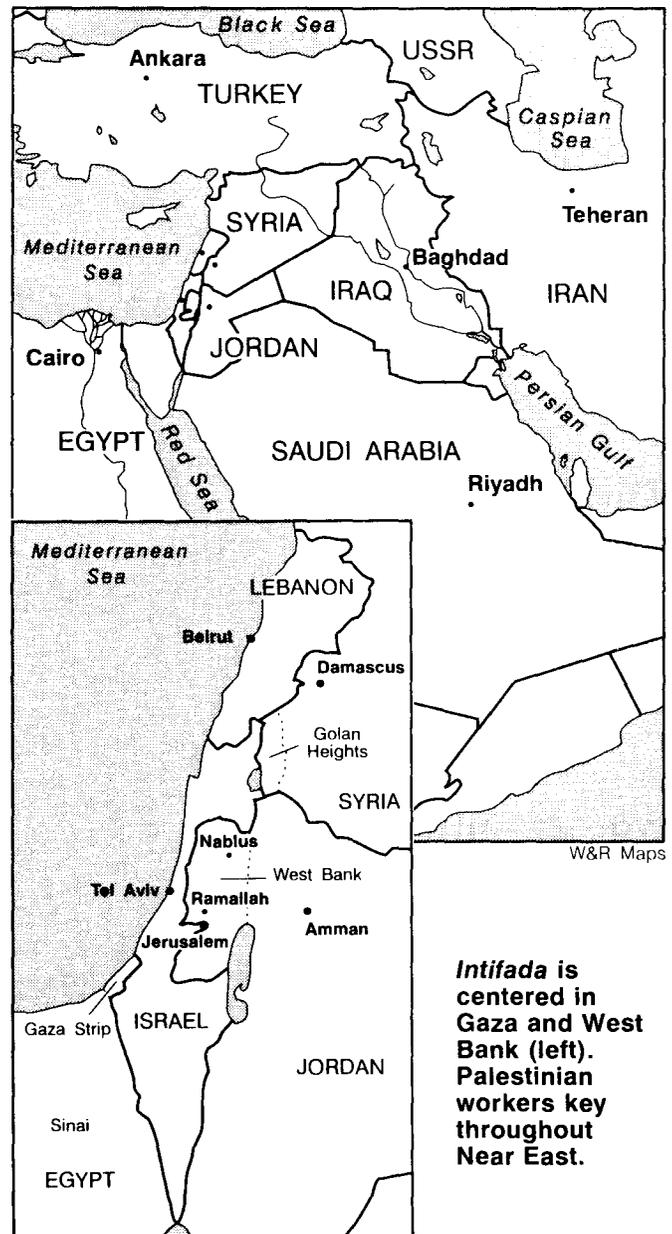
After 20 years of occupation, in December 1987 the West Bank and Gaza exploded in outrage. Since then, over 1,000 Palestinians have been gunned down, tens of thousands more wounded, thousands more thrown into concentration camps and torture chambers without trial. There is scarcely a family in the Occupied Territories which has not lost a son or daughter to an Israeli bullet or prison. And the *Intifada* (uprising), a revolt born of despair and defiance, refuses to be stilled.

At the forefront of the uprising are many Palestinian women. From schoolgirls to grandmothers, they have courageously defied the Zionist butchers, organizing food collectives to thwart the Israeli rulers' deliberate attempts to starve the population into submission, setting up clandestine classrooms to replace the schools shut down by the military, taking their places in the popular committees which have sprung up in every village and town in the course of the *Intifada*. Two days after the *Intifada* first erupted in Gaza on 9 December 1987, it was the women of Ramallah who spread the uprising to the West Bank, as they took to the streets shouting, "Where are you men of Ramallah!"

In their fight for national rights for their people, Palestinian women confront not only the blows and bullets of the Israeli occupiers but also the centuries-old chains of oppression within their own society. Demanding that women subordinate their emancipation to the national struggle, the petty-bourgeois nationalist Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has itself subordinated the national struggle to reliance on Arab kings, sheiks and colonels, leading the Palestinian people only from one massacre to another. As PLO "strategy" for national liberation seems endlessly to revolve around futile appeals to the United Nations, dissatisfaction among the oppressed Palestinians has fed the growth of fundamentalist religious moods. Muslim fundamentalist groups like Hamas, seeking to reimpose the old ways, play a large role in the *Intifada*. And the PLO, paying lip service to the equality of women while in practice accepting the retrograde traditions which have enslaved women, has been extremely reluctant to struggle against attacks on women's rights from Muslim reactionaries.

After U.S. "Desert Storm": Palestinians Victimized Again

Today the Palestinian people face greater dangers than ever before in their beleaguered history. In the "Desert Storm" military adventure, the American imperialists deliberately bombed Iraq back to a pre-industrial condition, massacring at least 100,000 and perhaps as many as 200,000 Iraqis, carpetbombing Baghdad and other ancient urban centers into rubble. It was a war to reassert America's "cops of the world" ambitions by winning control of the spigot of world oil supplies. Thus at bottom the war was aimed also at the U.S.' main imperialist rivals, Germany and Japan, whose dynamic economies have been fast gaining ground over the bankrupt U.S. empire. We of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) raised the banner, "Defeat U.S.



***Intifada* is centered in Gaza and West Bank (left). Palestinian workers key throughout Near East.**

Imperialism! Defend Iraq!" as an elementary position of revolutionary opposition to imperialist war.

Millions of "stateless" workers and ethnic groupings in the Near East—Sri Lankan and Philippine workers, Kurdish families dying in the bitter mountain passes, Palestinians—are the victims yet again of this latest imperialist invasion. During the U.S. war against Iraq, the entire Palestinian population of the Occupied Territories was placed under house arrest, reduced to near starvation, pointedly denied the gas masks distributed to the Israeli population. Some 30,000 Palestinians working inside the Green Line have been fired from their jobs as a result of the "curfew." In the U.S. and West Europe, anti-Arab racism accompanied Washington's dirty neocolonial war against the Iraqi people, targeting Palestinians for attacks and deportations.

Today "liberated" Kuwait has declared war on its Palestinian population. Under the eyes of the U.S. military the arrogant, oil-bloated slavemasters seek vengeance for their



AP

In wake of U.S. "Desert Storm," thousands of Palestinians and Iraqis have been rounded up, many murdered or tortured by Kuwaiti soldiers under U.S. supervision.

transient humiliation at the hands of Saddam Hussein by lashing out at the workers whose labor created Kuwait's enormous wealth. Kuwait City's mainly Palestinian Hawali district was invaded by Kuwaiti soldiers and lynch mobs who rounded up hundreds and indiscriminately shot scores of people, while U.S. officers kept journalists away. Barely half of the 400,000 Palestinians who lived and worked in Kuwait before the Gulf War remain there, now victims of executions, rampant torture and the threat of mass expulsion.

While the *Intifada* has challenged Israel's capacity to maintain stable military rule in the Occupied Territories, it has also undercut the reliance of Israeli capitalists on Palestinian labor. This growing isolation of the Palestinian people eases the way for a "Final Solution." The current Israeli regime of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, whose formative years were as an outright fascist in the terrorist Stern Gang in the 1940s, is the most right-wing government in the country's history. The Israeli rulers are intent on carrying out a genocidal mass expulsion of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories in order to create *Lebensraum* ("living space") for the huge influx of Soviet Jews. When Shamir recently invited the Molodet party into his cabinet, it was a formal seal of approval by the government for the Molodet's program of "transfer"—forcible expulsion of all Palestinians from the Occupied Territories.

Never has it been clearer that the only road to the national and social emancipation of the Palestinian working people lies through proletarian revolution against all the murderous capitalist regimes of the Near East and their imperialist overlords. The question of women's emancipation is inextricably bound up with this struggle. It will be as part of a revolutionary internationalist working-class vanguard that heroic Palestinian women fighters can achieve their freedom as well as liberation for their people.

Hamouleh and "Honor"

As elsewhere, the oppression of Palestinian women is rooted in the institution of the family. Prior to the cre-

ation of the state of Israel in 1948, Palestinian society was essentially feudal-peasant in character. A central institution based on this mode of production was the *hamouleh*, or clan, a series of related extended families which held and worked the land in common. Particularly as a result of changes in the Land Law imposed during the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, by the turn of the century a handful of wealthy landowning families—most of whom lived in the cities and towns—lorded it over the vast majority of peasants (*fellahin*), who held barely enough land to eke out a meager existence, while many others were completely landless. These large landowning families placed themselves at the head of anti-Zionist mobilizations beginning in the 1920s while secretly selling large tracts of land they had extorted from the peasants to the Zionist colonizers.

Women's principal role in the *hamouleh* was to produce sons to inherit the family property. Families of up to 13 children were quite common. Once married (often at the age of puberty or earlier), a woman lost even her identity, becoming known traditionally by the name of her first-born son, e.g., *Umm Faisal* (Mother of Faisal). Marriages were arranged, and a high bride price (*mahr*)—which could be as much as three years' savings for an agricultural worker—acted to enforce patriarchal control. The standing of a *hamouleh* was based on a rigid code of honor, which was measured by the degree to which men kept the women imprisoned in "purity" through complete seclusion from men (*pardah*) and head-to-toe covering when they appeared in public.

Violation of this code of women's oppression called for the most severe punishment, including death, especially among peasant and working-class families. The fact that this punishment was less common among members of the upper class shows that these institutions were aimed at class as well as sexual control. The poorest layers, forced outside these constraints (such as poor peasant women, who generally did not have their faces covered at all as they engaged in backbreaking labor in the fields), were considered thereby to be of more degraded status.

These land-based institutions necessarily received a

blow when the land was stolen from the Palestinians. The creation of the Zionist state drove hundreds of thousands of Palestinians off their land through mass terror and bloody pogroms such as at Deir Yassin. In her book *Land Before Honour* (1990), Kitty Warnock observes:

"One function of the ideology of honour was to support the internal structure of the family; to be precise, to idealise men's control over women.... The supremacy of this demand over other aspects of honour was demonstrated in 1948, when many of the Palestinian families who fled their homes did so primarily out of fear that their women would be raped by Zionist soldiers.... This Achilles' heel of national resistance was subsequently acknowledged and condemned in a reversal of the old saying: 'Al-ard qabil al-'ard'—'Land before Honour'."

Proletarianization and Education

Various economic and social factors changed the status of Palestinian women from their traditional exclusion from public life in the peasant-based old society to today's mass participation in the *Intifada*. Particularly significant were the decline in farming, the increasing proletarianization of women, and the recognition of the importance of education for all Palestinians, women as well as men.

After the catastrophe of 1948, large numbers of Palestinian families became permanent refugees living in make-shift camps. This was compounded after the 1967 war, as the Israelis began confiscating ever larger swaths of Arab land in the Occupied Territories—more than 50 percent by the mid-1980s—for colonization by fascist Jewish "settlers." The Israeli ruling class sought "to preserve the traditional *hamoulah* structure of village society, in order to make it easier to keep the Palestinians under control. But on the other hand, by expropriating the Palestinians' lands, it has destroyed the economic basis of the very traditional structure that Zionism has sought to preserve" (*From the Journal Khamsin—Forbidden Agendas*, 1984).

Even in families which had not lost their homes, many

men sought jobs in the oil-rich Gulf states. After the 1967 occupation, Palestinian men increasingly became day laborers in Israeli industries. While earning far less than Jewish workers, their pay was a much more significant source of income than farming, which was left to their wives.

Particularly after 1967, women also began to enter the workforce. Heading into the *Intifada*, over a third of the 320,000 workers in the West Bank were women, 10 percent of whom worked in Israel. These women were forced either to pay a share of their wages to an employment agent (and another share to the Histadrut, the Zionist corporatist "labor" federation, from which they get no benefits) or to hire themselves out as casual labor on a daily basis at the local "slave market." Many women who work in the Occupied Territories do so in small workshops, mainly in the garment industry, and are paid half of the men's wages. Only recently did a local union at a sweets factory in Ramallah finally win a precedent-setting decision of equal pay for the 70 women working there. Despite their brutal exploitation, women's participation in the workforce is a key precondition for their emancipation, giving them for the first time the economic basis for an independent existence and for organized social power as part of the proletariat.

Alongside these developments, education was seen both as a way out of extreme poverty and as a weapon in the Palestinian struggle. A common Palestinian view is, "We lost our country in 1948 because the Zionists were educated and we were not." Today, more than one in ten Palestinians in diaspora either attends or has graduated from college. And while families devote more resources to educating their sons, women are well represented at all levels of schooling, particularly at local universities like Bir Zeit in the West Bank.

The Zionist occupation forces have particularly targeted the future generation of potential Palestinian leaders. Even before the *Intifada*, Bir Zeit was frequently shut down by the military for "political activity." Since then

Library of Congress



Delegation of Palestinian women in 1929 in Jerusalem protest harsh British measures against Palestinians. Women in hats are Christian. Veiled Muslim women are from the city; rural women wear no veils.



Der Spiegel
Today's "friend" of PLO, King Hussein of Jordan, carried out infamous Black September massacre of Palestinians in 1970: embattled Palestinian fedayeen fire at King Hussein's troops.

UPI

all schools for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have been closed much of the time. The army has particularly singled out youth—including children five or six years old—for terror and murder. In the first three years of the *Intifada*, some 160 children under the age of 16 were gunned down in cold blood, and over 50,000 more wounded.

The Development of Women Fighters

Initially, Palestinian women's participation in social and political life was restricted to a handful of upper-class women whose involvement in charity work did not challenge women's traditional role in society. A conference of the Palestinian Women's Union took place as early as 1919. Ten years later a nationwide women's meeting was organized to protest the British colonialists' harsh suppression of protests against Jewish immigration. During the anti-colonialist uprising of 1936-39, humanitarian societies trained women as nurses and held literacy classes. After 1948, women worked in the refugee camps to provide shelter, run kitchens and improvise hospitals.

With the formation of the PLO in 1964, women—still largely from the upper classes—began to play a more explicitly political role. A year later the General Union of Palestinian Women was formed in Jerusalem, not to further the struggle for women's rights but "to organize and represent Palestinian women in all facets of the PLO." Shortly after Israel's seizure of the West Bank, in February 1968 hundreds of women demonstrated in East Jerusalem against land confiscation and deportations.

Some Palestinian women joined the various *fedayeen* (guerrilla) groups set up by the nationalists. But whether through small-scale guerrilla actions against the Israeli

army or indefensible terror like airline hijackings and the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre of Israeli athletes, the futility of the guerrillaist strategy became clear as it came up against the more formidable and unrelenting state terror of the Israeli murder machine. By the early 1970s, the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) in particular began arguing that the PLO should scale down its demands to the call for a "mini-state" in the Occupied Territories. At the same time, the PCP began organizing West Bank workers into the General Federation of Trade Unions and setting up Working Women's Committees.

Left nationalists like Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which had focused almost exclusively on guerrilla activity, also began setting up "mass organizations" in the Occupied Territories. The DFLP had its Women's Work Committee and the PFLP the Palestinian Women's Committee. Even Yasir Arafat's Fatah, the most conservative of the nationalist groups, established a Women's Committee for Social Work. Paralleling moves toward increasing unity under the Fatah-dominated PLO, in the early '80s these women's groups formed the Higher Women's Council, one of the leadership bodies of the *Intifada* under the pro-PLO Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU).

Women's heroic role in the *Intifada* was foreshadowed by earlier struggles. In 1983, Palestinian women in Neve Tirza prison staged a nine-month-long strike to demand that they be treated as political prisoners. When they refused to clean and cook for the guards, their family visits were suspended, they were confined to their cells and cut off from library facilities. This was seen as the severest punishment, and the women spirited books into

their cells. Five months into the strike, the guards seized the books. Amneh, a strike leader, recalled:

"We started to bang on our doors shouting, 'Bring back our books!' Ten minutes later the section was full of soldiers wearing gas masks, spraying tear-gas at us. We went on with our chanting, and started singing Palestinian songs."

The tear gas attack was so heavy that the guards wore gas masks for a week afterward, but the strike continued four more months:

"We began our hunger strike on March 7th. On the 8th, the warden sent for me and another woman who were the spokeswomen for the rest, and said, 'You are not obliged to work for the guards.' So our nine months of struggle was over, on International Women's Day."

Women in the *Intifada*

During the *Intifada*, women have emerged not only as fighters but as leaders. Warnock notes: "As the uprising gained momentum, teenagers and women emerged as important actors. To participate fully they had to override traditional authority structures and customs which restricted their mobility and autonomy." Combined with the collapse of the economy of the Occupied Territories, this has meant that family control over marriages has been substantially loosened and the bride price has dropped from an average of 8,000 Jordanian dinars to 500. Also the youthful popular committees have been replacing the traditional authorities in the task of *sulha*, or arbitration of divorces and other family disputes.

But the family remains firmly rooted in social and economic life. As Rita Giacaman and Penny Johnson wrote in *Palestinian Women: Building Barricades and Breaking Barriers*:

"Women and particularly those not already organizationally identified with a political movement or group, have enlarged or extended their traditional role rather than adopting a completely new role. Many of their forms of political participation are based on aspects of this role, particularly defense of the family, nurturing and assisting family members, and mutual aid between kins."

Elsewhere, Johnson positively gushes with vicarious Third Worldism as she hails "the emerging female heroine of the *intifada*—the mother tenaciously defending her family and community against all odds" (*Middle East Report*, May-August 1990). Likewise, Warnock claims that: "In saying 'My duty is to bear the sons who will fight,' they find a meaning for their political and social oppression."

Militant Palestinian women are far less sanguine about their condition than these Western apologists for PLO nationalism. One woman activist points out, "our position in the political struggle has changed, but our position in social life has not." Another adds, "Men are still making the decisions...we won't automatically get our rights as women when we get our state."

Hamas Fundamentalists Terrorize Women

Capitalizing on widespread frustration with the PLO's cringing and futile appeals to the imperialists to squeeze some concessions out of Israel, seemingly more militant Islamic fundamentalist groups have grown dramatically in recent years, particularly among the refugee camps in Gaza. Hamas, the most prominent, has a shady history of support by the Zionist authorities, who backed



Levison/Reuters

Tel Aviv, 1988: Arabs and Jews in antiwar march. Zionist garrison state is a deathtrap for Jews!

it with the aim of diminishing the influence of the PLO. Hamas is descended from the clerical-fascistic Muslim Brotherhood, which became particularly prominent in Egypt in the late 1940s. Under the slogan "communism = atheism = liberation of women," the Muslim Brotherhood mobilized a terror campaign against Communists and other secular forces.

Over the past decade, Hamas established a base in the Gaza Strip, which is little more than one vast impoverished concentration camp for the Palestinians living there. But as one resident put it: "Their main activities in Gaza are to keep demonstrators away from mosques and to make sure women are covering their heads." Hamas launched an intimidation campaign to make women wear the *hijab* (Islamic headscarf) again, as well as long plain overcoats known as *shari'a* dress, which were not traditionally worn by Palestinian women. But, as Rema Hammami reports in "Women, the Hijab and the *Intifada*" (*Middle East Report*, May-August 1990), with the start of the *Intifada*, "this social pressure transformed into an active campaign to impose the *hijab* on all women. By December 1988, one year after the *intifada* erupted, it was almost impossible for women to walk around Gaza without wearing some form of headcover."

Secular women who refused to conform were chased down the streets by gangs of young thugs shouting "*tahajjibi*" (veil yourself!), showered with stones and accused of being "collaborators." Classrooms were broken into and schoolgirls attacked for not covering their heads. Graffiti appeared all over Gaza demanding, "Daughter of Islam, abide by *shari'a* dress!" The attacks escalated and broadened as the *hijab* was promoted not only as a symbol of religious piety but also of "women's political commitment, as women, to the *intifada*." In fact, the most committed activists were the most threatened, as those secular women who resisted the *hijab* were made more visible targets for the occupation forces. One woman



San Francisco, January 26: Spartacist League contingent called for working-class action against America's dirty imperialist war in the Persian Gulf.

from Gaza City summed up what was at stake: "I don't wear the *hijab* because I don't want to live in an Islamic state."

For 18 months the PLO/UNLU remained silent on this terror against the women of Gaza. Finally, when "hijabization" spread to the West Bank in the summer of 1989, the UNLU took up the matter in "A Call for Unity," a *bayan* (communiqué) which condemned "the attacks by radical groups on Palestinian women in Jerusalem, Hebron and Gaza." An appendix to the *bayan* decreed, "Nobody has the right to accost women and girls in the street on the basis of their dress or the absence of a headscarf." But it added with Solomonic evenhandedness, "We are against excessive vanity in personal dress and use of cosmetics during these times. This is applied to the same degree for men and women." Addressing the "issue of women and their role," the *bayan* paternalistically conceded: "Woman as we perceive her, besides being a mother, daughter, sister or wife, is an effective human being and full citizen with all rights and responsibilities."

While the attacks were temporarily halted, many secular women were bitter. As one said, "If they had done it months ago we wouldn't be where we are now.... Once you put the *hijab* on, it's very difficult to take it off." Within months, the attacks were renewed with greater ferocity. The UNLU's lame response to the terror campaign was generally attributed to Fatah's desire to forge an alliance with the fundamentalists. When women in Fatah raise the question of women's rights, they are told: "Have you come here to liberate Palestine or women?"

In fact, all wings of the PLO popular front conciliate Islamic reaction. PFLP leader George Habash, while intoning that the "involvement of Palestinian women in the struggle is one of the most important... aspects of the *intifada*," insists that " Hamas should become a part of the UNLU." The PCP Central Committee issued a statement in 1988 which denounced as Zionist forgeries leaflets

attacking "the religious trends which participate in the uprising" and promised that "wherever this current participates, there is cooperation between its elements and our comrades."

The Declaration of Independence issued by the PLO at the 1988 Palestinian National Council had only a perfunctory reference to "nondiscrimination in public rights on grounds of race, religion, color, or sex," while explicitly promoting the role of woman as mother: "We render special tribute to that brave Palestinian woman, guardian of sustenance and life, keeper of our people's perennial flame." And despite the PLO's secular pretensions—indeed much of the leadership is secular, many of Christian origin—the declaration was replete with Islamic appeals to "God, the Compassionate, the Merciful."

For Permanent Revolution!

Many apologists claim that left-talking Arab regimes like the former Egyptian regime of left-nationalist Nasser are "socialist." When the Algerian FLN took power in 1962 after a bitter, hard-fought struggle against French colonialism, it was hailed by Ernest Mandel and numerous other fake-Trotskyists as a great revolutionary movement, despite the FLN's hostility to the working class and to the emancipation of women. The FLN proclaimed in a characteristic display of woman-hating: "Our socialism rests on the pillars of Islam and not on the emancipation of women with their make-up, hairdressers and cosmetics, from which arise unchained passions harmful to humanity."

The petty-bourgeois nationalist PLO is incapable of fighting for women's emancipation. This is not only because its strategy is premised on tailing the reactionary Arab bourgeois regimes—including (until the Gulf War) the most backward, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who keep their women wrapped in veils. More fundamentally, the PLO aims to create its own bourgeois regime which would be in the image of the neighboring states. At

bottom, these bourgeois nationalists are hostile to women's emancipation because it can only be achieved through a thoroughgoing working-class revolution, shattering bourgeois property relations and all associated social institutions. The victory of the proletariat fighting for its own class interests will break the old bonds of oppression and lay the basis to revolutionize daily life. This is flatly counterposed to the program of "national unity."

The role of the Palestine Communist Party is particularly criminal. The Communist Party is probably the most significant organized political force in the West Bank. The PCP-led General Federation of Labor Unions, with 35,000 members in 1980, was by far the largest trade-union organization in the West Bank, and the PCP Central Committee statement claims that "the mass organizations that have been set up and led by the party over the last 20 years...have constituted the solid basis" of the *Intifada*. And the Israeli Communist Party overwhelmingly gets its support from Palestinian Arab Israeli citizens. Yet instead of fighting for joint Hebrew-Arab class struggle, the Stalinists have turned their Palestinian working-class base into cannon fodder for petty-bourgeois nationalism.

Taking the Stalinist dogma of "two-stage revolution" to its logical conclusion, the PCP has forsworn virtually all talk of socialism in order to assert its unflinching loyalty to the PLO as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." Fundamentally, the PLO represents the aspirations of the displaced Palestinian bourgeoisie, the Hussainis and Nashashibis, the landowning families

who garnered their wealth through the exploitation of Palestinian workers and peasants and who want to be restored to a position of power.

If two-stage revolution, with its postponement of socialist revolution to a distant future that never comes, is a lie everywhere it is a particularly cruel one for the Palestinian people. Here, even the first "democratic" stage is a lie. In the context of interpenetrated peoples, of the Hebrew-speaking nation and the Palestinian nation both laying claim to the same land, there can be no equitable and just resolution of the national question within the framework of capitalism. For years the PLO, at the initiative of the Communist Party, has begged for the right to establish an Israeli-dominated bantustan in the Occupied Territories, only to be flatly rejected by the Zionists. While Marxists would defend even this as a minimalist expression of the Palestinian right to self-determination against the Zionist state, genuine self-determination for the Palestinian people can be achieved only through shattering the Zionist garrison state from within, along with the neighboring Arab regimes.

Not Jew Against Arab, But Class Against Class!

It is vitally necessary for the Palestinian workers to reach out to their Hebrew-speaking class brothers and sisters, despite the enormous obstacles. Prior to the Zionists' terrorist consolidation of power, there was an important tradition of common Arab and Jewish class struggle, especially on the Haifa docks and in oil refineries. Today

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(Fourth Internationalist)**

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the Hebrew-speaking proletariat is under the sway of Zionist reaction. But Israeli society is a cauldron of seething class contradictions which could explode in any direction, toward outright fascism but also toward revolutionary class struggle. The majority of the Jewish population consists of Near Eastern Sephardic Jews who are kept barely a step above Israeli Palestinians. The massive influx of Soviet immigrants is placing unprecedented strains on the already bankrupt Israeli economy, which relies for its existence on handouts from the U.S. government and American Jews.

As for the condition of Israeli women, American-born Israeli feminist Marcia Freedman characterized the theocratic Zionist state (hailed by the Western press as a bastion of democracy in the Near East) as "a country where the liberation of women was seen as a threat to national security." The Orthodox fundamentalist parties, part of the Israeli cabinet for years, are proponents of a Jewish version of Khomeinism. Their stand toward women can be gauged by this citation from the *Halacha*, Jewish religious law: "a man should not walk between either two women or two dogs or two pigs" (the two lowest forms of animals to Orthodox Jews)! When a Jerusalem bus company hired a woman driver in the early 1980s, the religious quarters of the city exploded in frenzy. The religious parties are also campaigning to eliminate abortion rights for Israeli women. This is echoed by the mainstream Zionists, who proclaim the bearing of Jewish children as women's "demographic duty to the nation." At the time of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, an adviser to the minister of health railed that "abortions have resulted in the loss of twenty divisions since the creation of the state."

The *Intifada* poses pointblank to the Hebrew-speaking workers that their future lies in either becoming the tools of the Nazis of the Near East or turning against their Zionist rulers. Some sections of Israeli Jews are painfully aware of the choice posed to them by the deathtrap of Zionism. As long as Zionist expansionism continues on its bloody course, 4 million Israeli Jews will continue to be a target of hatred and outrage by the more than 100 million Arabs who surround them.

Prominent Israeli civil libertarian Israel Shahak, a survivor of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, has for years courageously exposed and protested the "Nazi-like" policies of the Israeli rulers. A young soldier whose company was ordered to break into Arab houses, and beat and drag villagers out in the dead of night, later said, "I swear, that night I saw the Nazis again."

Among those courageous Israelis who openly defend the national rights of the Palestinian people are Women in Black and Women Organized to Support Women Political Prisoners. Shortly after the start of the *Intifada*, a delegation of 50 Israeli women visited the West Bank town of Nablus to express their solidarity with the Palestinians. They were enthusiastically welcomed, but quickly spirited down alleys and side streets to avoid being seen by the army, which would have declared the crowd an "illegal demonstration" and started firing tear gas and bullets. They were told by the people of Nablus: "You should know that your army is like a nazi army—we're treated like you were in Europe."

With their arsenal of more than 200 nuclear weapons, the Zionist madmen could well irradiate the whole region

in a future war with the Arab regimes. But the massive contradictions of Israeli society must inevitably crack, and there is a socialist alternative to Armageddon: the Israeli garrison state must be shattered from within, through *joint Jewish-Arab class struggle*. The key is breaking at least a section of the Hebrew-speaking proletariat from all wings of Zionist chauvinism, whether Shamir's reactionary Likud or the equally racist and no less bourgeois "Labor" Zionists who control the Histadrut.

Palestinian workers have a decisive role to play in determining a revolutionary outcome for the region. Dispersed throughout the Near East and much of the world, the Palestinian people have become among the most cosmopolitan and educated populations in the world, and certainly in the region. They are a majority in King Hussein's Jordan, a substantial minority in Lebanon, and still a strategic sector of the labor force in the Persian Gulf oil fields. In many ways, they are analogous to an earlier "stateless" people, the Jewish population of East Europe around the turn of the century, from which sprang several generations of proletarian revolutionary fighters. "The usual Palestinian is more revolutionary, liberalized and modernized," noted a PLO spokesman. "In some societies they don't like that."

Yet it is these reactionary Arab regimes that the PLO relies on, from current would-be "savior" King Hussein of Jordan, who in 1970 perpetrated the infamous Black September massacre, to the oil-bloated Kuwaiti emirate, which only yesterday was a chief backer of the PLO and today is waging a reign of terror against the Palestinians. The Palestinian Arab people have been sacrificed by every nationalist demagogue and sheik, every "progressive" colonel and feudalist mullah in the Near East. Their own petty-bourgeois leaders, who will be no less corrupt if their aspirations to be a ruling class are realized, will oppress them as readily as the Zionists do today.

Meanwhile, the PLO cynically squanders the militancy—and lives—of a generation of Palestinian youth in a seemingly hopeless attempt to pressure the imperialists into sponsoring the creation of a bantustan "mini-state" in the Occupied Territories. But the sprawling squalor of the Gaza Strip and the impoverished agricultural economy of the West Bank cannot provide genuine national emancipation for the Palestinian Arab people. Nowhere is the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution more sharply posed: only by sweeping away all the capitalist oppressors and the imperialist chains that keep the region permanently engulfed in war and poverty can the Palestinians achieve national liberation. Only through the revolutionary uprooting of all the reactionary feudal-derived institutions which capitalism promotes can there be emancipation for Palestinian women, those most oppressed of the oppressed. As we wrote in "Palestinian Uprising—A Year of Defiance" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 466, 2 December 1988):

"The struggle for the democratic rights of all the peoples of the Near East and for the survival and emancipation of the Palestinians must necessarily sweep away the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the bloody Ba'athist regime in Syria, bring down the rotten medieval structure in Lebanon and shatter the Zionist garrison state. This struggle must place the revolutionary proletariat with its vanguard party at the head of the exploited and oppressed, and can only find its fulfillment in a socialist federation of the Near East." ■

After the Election of Mary Robinson Clerical Reaction Targets Irish Women

The following article is adapted from *Workers Hammer* No. 118 (November/December 1990) and No. 122 (April 1991), newspaper of the *Spartacist League/Britain*.

In November 1990 Mary Robinson, a constitutional lawyer with a civil libertarian, "modernising" reputation, was voted in as the first woman president of the Republic of Ireland. Although she made it clear that she is "not a socialist" and declared "I'm against abortion," her election has been hailed by a vast spectrum of commentators—including by many self-styled socialists and "revolutionaries"—as a victory for progress.

One enthusiast called Robinson "a kind of equivalent secular miracle." William Rees-Mogg, former editor of the *London Times*, greeted Robinson's election with the headline "The gates open to an enlightened Ireland." The U.S. feminist newspaper *Sojourner* declared, "The voice has been heard. Anything is possible now!"

The Robinson campaign pulled together a veritable Irish "rainbow coalition" in opposition to the governing capitalist party, Fianna Fáil. Backed by the reformist Labour and Workers parties, as well as the Green Party ecologists, Robinson drew the official support of the bourgeois opposition Fine Gael in addition to Fianna Fáil's right-wing coalition partners.

Mary Robinson's electoral win is indeed a symptom of the disgruntlement of wide sections of Irish society with the ossified conservatism symbolised by the notoriously corrupt and discredited Fianna Fáil. Her candidacy struck strong chords among women, who suffer most from the stultification and social backwardness of this bourgeois-clerical state. The blatant anti-woman outbursts from supporters of her rival Brian Lenihan and their attempts to drape themselves in the mantle of "national Christian Irish views" backfired.

It is a measure of the repression in Irish society that the election of a woman who stands for the simple rights of divorce and contraception, and who has defended in court the right of student leaders to distribute information about abortion, is viewed as a "breaking of the mould." A good part of the Irish bourgeoisie, presently lacking a viable alternative to the government of the Taoiseach (prime minister) Charles Haughey, favour Robinson's popular-front politics in order to turn a fresher face towards the "Europe of the 1990s" and to top up the reservoir of reformist illusions in the face of a decade of depression ahead. But by the standards of the objective needs of the working people and the oppressed, Mary Robinson's anti-Haughey coalition is an illusion-filled trap.

One of the most economically and socially backward countries in Europe, Ireland has suffered centuries of British colonial rule. The Catholic clericalist "republic"

shares the island with Northern Ireland, six counties in the province of Ulster partitioned off at the time of independence to ensure a Protestant majority there and still ruled by British imperialism. The bourgeoisie in the South capitalises on the justified outrage of its population over the brutal oppression of the Ulster Catholic minority by the British occupying army and the Protestant paramilitary organisations: they seek to divert attention from their own administration of misery in the Irish Republic, where a third of the population lives below even the government's own officially defined poverty level; divorce and abortion are illegal; male homosexuality is a crime; contraception is severely limited. The working masses and oppressed women of Ireland need a social revolution which will expropriate the bourgeoisie, destroy the stranglehold of the Catholic church on social policy and education, and open the road to a just resolution of the national question in Northern Ireland.

No Support to the Robinson Popular Front!

Leave aside the fact that the presidency is a figurehead position. Marxists sometimes give critical electoral support



Alan Betson

Mary Robinson, Republic of Ireland's first woman president, reviews guard at Dublin Castle. Her "liberalism" is kept tightly within safe, respectable limits, including opposition to abortion.

to a workers movement candidate standing independently of the bourgeois parties, as a tactic to win the proletarian base away from pro-capitalist leaderships and to the communist vanguard. But Robinson was the candidate of a popular-front alliance between the subreformist workers parties and the Fine Gael conservatives. It would have been unprincipled to advocate a vote for her.

Moreover her programme is the programme of Irish Labourism. The Labour Party leadership's support for Haughey's Programme of National Recovery and its successor, the Plan for Economic and Social Progress, an austerity pact which has delivered lower wages and higher profits over the last three years, has been a critical prop for the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat govern-

ment. By tying the unions, which organise a major proportion of the labour force, into permanent collaboration with the ruling class, Labour and the Workers Party have served their capitalist masters well. The enthusiastic students who worked night and day to turn out the Robinson vote have, whatever their subjective intentions, helped bolster the flagging support for these pro-capitalist parties and strengthened their hand for the future austerity policies that the Irish rulers will demand as world recession squeezes the vulnerable economy.

As for the social issues which played such a large role in her campaign, Robinson keeps her liberalism within safe, respectable limits. Pandering to right-wing sentiment, she declared she has "done more practical work than any

Bishops Weigh In Against Condoms

In early March Ireland's prime minister, the Taoiseach Charles Haughey, announced government proposals to lower the age to legally purchase condoms from 18 to 16, and lift restrictions on their sale. Instantly the Catholic church launched a virulent attack on these plans, and within a week the government was in penitential retreat.

Haughey's Fianna Fáil split over the question. At a party conference one delegate complained: "Wait till we go to Mass tomorrow. Then we'll see the croziers swinging in every direction." Other members distributed a leaflet attacking Haughey's proposals, asking "Has our party sunk so low?" and calling on delegates to "protect our children and our party" from "lax laws."

Disarray reigned amid Haughey's coalition partners, the supposedly secular "Progressive" Democrats, who split from Fianna Fáil in 1985 over its social backwardness. The opposition bourgeois Fine Gael labelled the government "aging hillbillies in a desperate attempt to seem trendy"—and then, after some mealy-mouthed evasion, also came out against Haughey's proposal. And the Labour Party-backed, "pro-contraceptive" president Mary Robinson seems to have lost her voice.

But not so the church. Defending its "moral leadership," the Catholic hierarchy has come out in force. Indeed, the bishops' horror at the threat posed by rubbers in the hands of teenagers has its ludicrous side (especially to Americans, who don't suffer the social weight of an established church). Say the priests, Haughey's proposal "could destroy the Irish family as we have known it" (the Bishop of Limerick); it attacked the "fundamental values of family life" (the Archbishop of Dublin).

But in a country where the Catholic church holds enormous political and social power, where grinding poverty is the norm and abortion is illegal, this reactionary clerical outcry is not to be simply mocked. Its intent is to strengthen the moral and political hold of the church over the government and the consciousness of the masses. To be sure, many working people,

women and youth of Ireland have a healthy disdain for the pronouncements of the church hierarchy, particularly when it comes to sex and contraception. But they still suffer the consequences of its moral bigotry imposed on society at large; indeed, in Ireland illegitimate children and their mothers are subjected to extreme humiliation.

The availability of contraception should be the most elementary democratic right. For any meaningful incursion on the horrible burden of oppression of working women in Ireland, it is necessary to call in addition for free abortion on demand as a component of free, quality health care. But instead, condoms are virtually unavailable, especially in many rural areas; the 1985 Family Planning Act amendment prohibits condom advertisements; and the Irish Family Planning Association has been fined £500 for selling them inside the Dublin Virgin Megastore!

Haughey's minimal dispensations on condoms were in part the result of public pressure to deal with the AIDS epidemic. In fact the Irish government, true to form, has entirely ignored this issue. Its attitude reflects that of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Dr. Newman, who grossly declared, "The AIDS issue is a red herring of the first order.... Those countries of Europe where condoms are to be got here, there, and everywhere are infested with the disease." His colleague, the Bishop of Meath, even tried to suggest that condoms were responsible for the spread of AIDS.

The Catholic hierarchy isn't pleased with all the recent talk of legislation and white papers (governmental statements) on contraception, divorce and homosexuality. It had grown accustomed to the old-style operators of the Fianna Fáil, hitherto attuned to the faithful's obligation to have quiet chats with the bishops before making any proposals on the social terrain. The bishops are reasserting their right and duty "to proclaim the moral law" and they expect convinced Catholics, including legislators, to take account of this. So the church sneezed and the state caught cold.

other Irish politician to stop Irish women going for abortions" (citing her presidency of the unmarried mothers association Cherish and campaigns for contraception). Her declared intention to open an illegal stall selling condoms was withdrawn early in her campaign at the first breath of criticism from Lenihan. Her prominent past as lawyer for the Well Woman Clinic and for students fighting the anti-abortion "Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child" (SPUC) was completely eliminated from her campaign literature. Since her election, Ireland has witnessed the imperialist carnage in the Gulf, continuing inroads by SPUC and, most recently, an assault by the church on contraception. But Robinson's only action of public note has been to sack the entire staff at her presidential palace.

A noteworthy aspect of Robinson's politics is her desire to "modify" Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which declare the whole of the island to be the territory of the Republic and claim the right of jurisdiction over that territory. Thus when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in 1985, Robinson had no criticism of Dublin's implicit recognition of the 1921 partition. When she resigned from the Labour Party in 1985, it was because she opposed the Agreement *from the right*; she complained it "did not involve" the communalist, anti-Catholic Unionists in Northern Ireland. She had no problem solidarising with the Agreement's goals to draw Ireland closer to NATO and to strengthen British/Irish collaboration in repressing the Irish Republican Army. This is not surprising, given her membership from 1973-80 on the Executive Committee of the Trilateral Commission, a Cold War cabal whose other alumni include Henry Kissinger and George Bush.

One week following Mary Robinson's election, IRA prisoner Dessie Ellis was extradited to Britain, where he will be tried by a judicial system notorious for its racist frame-ups. She made no move to intervene on his behalf. Indeed, the Republican nationalist Sinn Fein reports that "she has written in favour of extradition."

Robinson's stance typifies a wing of the southern bourgeoisie which seeks an accommodation with the capitalist politicians of the North, at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority, in pursuit of the chimera of a "peaceful" bourgeois coexistence. Today there are renewed efforts, represented by the initiative of British secretary for Northern Ireland Brooke, which look towards some solution to the "Irish problem." A recent *Economist* (30 March) asserts that "the emergence of a strong, secular republic in the south could do much to encourage a better neighbourliness in the north." Notably, Robinson's election was favourably received by northern Orange politicians. Peter Robinson, deputy to Ian Paisley, the fascist leader of the Ulster Unionists, called her "not the sort of individual one would slight by passing in the street."

For Separation of Church and State!

While Robinson won a figurehead post, another appointment was made late last year, this time to a real seat of power. Dr. Cahal Daly was elevated to the archbishopric of Armagh and Primacy of All-Ireland, taking over as Ireland's top Catholic cleric. Daly is a hardline reaction-



Popperfoto
Irish socialist James Connolly, a leader of the 1916 Easter Uprising, was executed by the British overlords.

ary, 100 percent anti-IRA. One of his acolytes in the North, Father Dennis Faul, welcomed his appointment with the chilling prophesy: "He will tackle the sort of liberated Catholicism which has got loose in Ireland in the last 20 years."

Recently urbanisation and partial industrialisation have eroded the church's grip on society. A third of the population lives in the Dublin area, undercutting the old rural bastions of religiosity and priestly control. A recent survey shows that 82 percent of the population still attends weekly mass, but in Dublin and Cork city the figure is much lower at 64 percent. In the heavily unemployed and working-class area of Tallaght in Dublin only one in ten attend mass weekly.

Still the Catholic church and its allies won every major "moral" battle of the eighties. They forced and won the 1983 referendum to make abortion constitutionally illegal. In 1986 a campaign of fear squashed divorce reforms. Abortion counselling and information services have been under repeated attack. These "crusades" have unleashed a frenzy of anti-woman bigotry with harsh consequences: Anne Lovett, a frightened pregnant teenager, died with her baby in a grotto where she hid to give birth in secrecy; Joanne Hayes, falsely accused of infanticide, was grossly framed up in the 1984 Kerry babies case (see "Irish Students Fight for Abortion Rights," W&R No. 37, Spring 1990).

Historically the church was key to the consolidation of a bourgeois state in the Republic. With the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the Catholic church solidified a leading position in both social and political life, taking upon itself the control of health, education and the "moral well-being" of Irish society. The constitution of 1937, drawn up by then prime minister Eamon De

Valera, was written in close collaboration with leading elements of the church and codified the clerical nature of the state. Though the church failed to get canon law incorporated in the constitution, Article 44 recognised its "special position," and its authority was substantial, particularly as regards the role of women and the family. According to Edward Cahill, a Jesuit and one drafter of the 1937 constitution (quoted in C. Curtin et al., *Gender in Irish Society*, 1987):

"Women are not suited for certain occupations, a woman is by nature fitted for home work; and it is this which is best adapted to preserve her modesty and promote the good upbringing of Children and the well-being of the family."

Though a referendum in 1972 removed Article 44 from the constitution, the influence of the church in the state remains pervasive.

The church owns and controls 88 percent of all secondary schools, most of the hospitals and huge plots of real estate. Its stranglehold on the health service, and the desire to keep Irish women "in their place," led to a big row between the church and the state in 1950-51 when Dr. Noel Browne, then minister for health, attempted to introduce the Mother and Child Scheme, a limited free health programme for pregnant mothers and young children. Within months the church crushed the scheme and

had the government brought down. Prior to this the church played a key role in the Cold War purges of the workers movement, getting the Labour Party to expel its left wing on charges of "Bolshevism" and to drop its constitutional aim of a "Workers Republic." In the 1970s when the government made its only "serious" attempt to introduce nondenominational schools, the church bitterly and successfully opposed the proposal. In Northern Ireland it insists on the segregation of Catholic youth into poorly funded Catholic schools.

Protestant sectarians in the North ostensibly base themselves on 18th century liberalism, which seems quite enlightened compared to 17th century Catholicism, but in fact their organisations are more akin to 20th century fascism. The Presbyterian churches in Ulster vie with the Catholic church in reaction. Though not as overtly, they are also committed to education segregated by religion. It was their pressure which halted the extension of the British 1967 act decriminalising abortion to Northern Ireland, forcing thousands of women to join the thousands from the South travelling to Britain for expensive abortions. In the 1980s when a prominent southern gay activist senator, David Norris, took the Irish state to the European Courts over its laws against homosexuality, Ian Paisley and his Free Presbyterian Church campaigned around the slogan "Save Ulster from Sodomy."

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Clerical backwardness is deeply embedded in Ireland, and only confirms Irish revolutionary James Connolly's prediction in 1914 that imperialist, communal partition "would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish Labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements whilst it endured."

Religious reaction and communal division are integral to the maintenance of capitalist exploitation and immiseration. Mary Robinson and her Labour Party backers, committed to a capitalist future in Ireland, cannot dent the real power of the church in Irish life. Without mobilising the working class to overthrow capitalism there will be no escape from the imperialist oppression, sectarian bloodletting and grinding poverty that have been the island's plight for so long.

In Ireland today there is a glaring need for the complete separation of church and state—for free, quality, secular education at all levels, a free, secular health service (including contraceptives and abortion on demand), and the decriminalisation of homosexuality. But these democratic demands can only be won as part of an organised working-class struggle for socialist revolution. That is what the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group, sympathising group of the International Communist League, is fighting for. Thus we raise the demand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland and reject the nationalist view that the Protestants should be forced into a unified Ireland. We seek to bring the social power of the Protestant and Catholic working masses to bear in a common struggle for an Irish workers republic, part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. ■

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American capitalism's "recreational facilities" for youth in South Bronx ghetto.

Education...

(continued from page 40)

their children to well-financed private schools or suburban "public" country clubs that the black population has no access to, while the poor clock time in urban holding pens where little education can take place because there's no money for teachers, books or equipment—and little in the way of jobs promising a future for minority youth as a motivation for study.

Black youth, particularly young black men, are fast becoming "missing persons" from a society that's locked them into ghettos with no exit from poverty, unemployment and cop terror. At *minimum* what's necessary is massive funding of public education, a busing program extended to the suburbs where the better schools are, and jobs for all. To open the schoolhouse doors to minor-

ity youth, the Spartacus Youth Clubs fight for open admissions and no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for students. The elite private universities should be nationalized and open to all!

As a result of *struggle* in the civil rights movement some gains were wrested from the government which decided it had better throw some money at the problems of black America lest the whole country blow up. The big lie of the civil rights movement was its preaching of reliance on the federal government as the defender and protector of the oppressed. The bedrock of racial oppression in this society is the capitalist economic system in which blacks are a doubly oppressed race-color caste. The government is the enforcer of the racist capitalist order. Segregated housing, racist cop terror, unemployment and the violence against black people in the "war on drugs" all send a straightforward message that American capitalism is no longer interested in preserving blacks as a "reserve army of labor." The racist rulers of this country have decided that the financial cost of black life is expendable overhead. Moreover, education is dangerous—it can make people "uppity" and rebellious. Besides, where would they get "volunteer" soldiers for their next bloody war unless millions of young men and women are desperate enough to enlist in exchange for job training?

Black History and the Class Struggle

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Jim Crow's New Clothes: "Voluntary" Segregation

On the "home front" of Bush's "New World Order," the White House aims to drop "smart bombs" at the black population with this attack on public education. What's necessary is a massive fightback on behalf of all working-class youth! Instead, what we're getting from middle-class black elected officials and black nationalists is *accommodation* to the attack on black rights dressed up as proposals for "Afrocentric" schools exclusively for black males. In Milwaukee, two "African American Immersion" schools have been designed as segregated schools for black male youth in the elementary and middle grades. Similar plans are being debated for implementation in New York, Detroit, Baltimore and elsewhere.

Two generations since the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the doctrine of separate and unequal education, black and white children rarely attend



Library of Congress

Literacy is a weapon in the struggle for freedom. Black Civil War soldiers with school teachers and spelling books.

the same schools. Busing for school integration is dead—killed by liberals in Congress following the lead of violent racist mobs in the streets. White flight has left schools in most major cities with declining tax revenues, decrepit facilities and an overwhelmingly black and Hispanic student enrollment.

Black youth are routinely “tracked” out of pricier college prep programs, disproportionately disciplined, and young black males in particular are tagged as “problem learners.” Meanwhile segregated housing patterns assure majority white suburban schools of hefty property taxes and facilities resembling scenic country clubs for a chosen few (although posh surroundings do not necessarily make for learning, and among rich and poor in this country there is a growing “equality” of ignorance).

What looms behind the proposal for segregated schools are the deadly and grim facts of life and death for black male youth. Nearly one out of four black men between the ages of 20 and 29 is in prison, on probation or on parole. Forty percent of black males in their 20s are unemployed. The death rate for black men in Harlem over the age of 40 is higher than that of the same population in Bangladesh! For millions of black women there are no jobs, welfare is disappearing, and the government’s “workfare” program threatens to rip away welfare benefits *and the children* of single mothers who won’t take whatever subminimum job Big Brother wants them to slave at. All these social conditions reflect the vicious poverty and deprivation of basic needs endemic to capitalism, the root cause of the black American nightmare.

Ironically, the proposal for “voluntarily” segregated schools is made by turning upside down the argument advanced for integration by NAACP attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Spottswood Robinson in the watershed *Brown v. Board of Education* battle. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in 1954 that to separate black children from white children solely because of their race generates “a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” Advocates of the Milwaukee plan grotesquely claim that segregation is necessary for black children to understand their own self-worth.

Self-segregation of black males will only serve to reinforce and legitimize the social segregation that already exists. Just as freedom fighters in South Africa reject the program for bantustan education pushed by the apartheid

racists, we denounce a plan to segregate black male youth in holding pens in the name of “African American Immersion”! In a racist society, separate is always expressly unequal—a guarantee of inferior facilities and greater social regimentation for blacks. If compulsory segregation used to be the means by which a Jim Crow society deprived blacks of attaining any economic or social power, it is now increasingly the means for social *control*. Kenneth Clark, the black sociologist whose research guided the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, hit the nail on the head in denouncing schools for black males as “prep schools for correctional institutions” (*New York Times*, 10 January).

Black History and Class Struggle

The Milwaukee program, and others like it, are packaged under the rubric of cultural nationalism and stress the need for black teachers and a curriculum centered on African culture and the achievements of black Americans. But in America today, youth of *all* races are lacking the basic skills—reading, geography, mathematics—that *any* culture demands. At bottom, however, these segregated schools have little to do with discovering race pride as an expression of dignity, and nothing to do with race consciousness of black oppression. To reduce the fight against institutionalized racism to a question of individual self-esteem is a not-so-new twist on the old “blame the victims” theme.

Segregating black children from white, and black boys from girls, buys into the racist condemnation of all black males as incipient criminals who must be isolated and whipped into shape. This is not the militant black nationalism of the ‘60s, which at least expressed opposition to this whole racist system, although it lacked the program to change it. Today’s move for segregated schools is a cynical cultural-nationalist *withdrawal* from struggle at the very moment that the ruling class is intensifying its attacks against the black population.

Certainly the internalization by blacks—and whites—of racist stereotypes is a most pernicious and crippling effect of racism. Black history and the struggles of oppressed peoples of all races are excluded or belittled in school textbooks. Marxists solidarize with every genuine effort to expose the racist ideology which presents oppression as “natural” and even just. The Spartacist League’s *Black History and the Class Struggle* pamphlet series highlights

the history of fighters like John Brown, Frederick Douglass, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Malcolm X and others because that history must be reclaimed by the working class and minorities to fight the injustices of the present. But the struggle for freedom is not ultimately a psychological battle, but a political one. As Marxists we understand that education is a class question. Quality education for the masses will be possible only with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of working-class rule.

The idealist concept of "African American cultural values" as promoted by these segregated schools is a bogus abstraction. There is no distinct set of values that all blacks adhere to. There's a world of difference between Angelo Herndon, a black Communist who led black and white unemployed workers during the Depression and who for his leadership was thrown into jail for leading a "slave insurrection" in Atlanta, and say, Martin Luther King Jr., whose turn-the-other-cheek pacifism and liberalism shackled blacks to the Dixiecrat Democratic Party. Moreover, any conception of the role of black people in society cannot be separated from the social mechanisms and institutions that transmit such knowledge. School textbooks today celebrate King for his misleadership of black struggle—and omit that he was assassinated in Memphis where he went to support a sanitation workers strike, or that he opposed the Vietnam War. Black revolutionaries like Herndon are still a complete "blank space" in "official" history.

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

For a small "talented tenth" black elite, token gains of the civil rights movement brought more black faces in high places and a tier of black Democratic Party mayors who act as overseers of inner-city ghettos on behalf of the racist capitalist ruling class. Like Booker T. Washington, whose authority grew in the wake of a wave of racist terror that smashed Radical Reconstruction and who glorified segregation of the races, black misleaders today push cynical segregationist schemes in the face of resurgent racism. They've made their peace with the system and aren't about to lead any fight against it.

Faced with a labor movement that's done little to defend the black population (or itself) from the bosses' attacks, and seeing no gain from gradualist liberal integrationism, ghetto youth and petty-bourgeois college students gave a hearing to the sinister demagogue Farrakhan with his message of segregation and "black capitalism." But capitalism only works for people with capital, and exhortations for blacks to "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" are meaningless if you have no money for boots.

For a layer of petty entrepreneurs seeking to profit from pathetic "black capitalist" schemes, segregation poses a chance to exploit "their" market, "their" people, their way. This perspective is nothing new. Black business owners were the last to join the civil rights movement because they knew black access to white-owned firms would hurt their pockets. To comprehend the futility of "black capitalism" one need only look at a list of Fortune 500 firms, or consider the fate of historically black colleges. Blacks aren't missing from the echelons of the bourgeoisie because of a lack of self-esteem, but because a small minority, the ruling class, makes the rules, writes the laws and tax codes to perpetuate the rule of the rich, owns and controls the government, and uses the cops and courts



Ebony

Civil rights activists in the 1960s demonstrate for integrated education.

to "legally" terrorize ghettos and barrios. The ruling class also controls the major universities—and black colleges get a fraction of the crumbs thrown toward education.

Separatism does have an appeal today among a layer of black youth who rightly hate this racist society and bitterly resent the betrayals of black freedom struggles by leaders preaching accommodation. But the mechanism for white domination and black oppression in the U.S. is not forced assimilation, but *segregation*. The case for integrated schooling was argued powerfully by Frederick Douglass, who fought his way out of slavery, educated himself, and became a powerful leader of the left wing of the abolitionist movement. In 1872 he wrote:

"From our observations during a trip to the South we are convinced that the interests of the poor whites and the colored people are identical. Both are ignorant, and both are the tools of designing educated white men; and the poor whites are more particularly used to further schemes opposed to their own best interests. The cunning ex-slaveholder sets those who should be his enemies to fighting each other and thus diverts attention from himself. Educate the colored children and white children together in your day and night schools throughout the South, and they will learn to know each other better, and be better able to cooperate for mutual benefit."

The tasks Frederick Douglass confronted after slavery was smashed still remain and the promise of black emancipation is still unfulfilled. If militant black youth who despair of the long-betrayed promises of equality in American society as it is become reconciled to the illusory solace of separatist programs, the revolutionary class struggle will lose fighters and leaders we urgently need. Racial oppression is so deeply built into the American class structure that only the *destruction* of existing class relations and the change in class rule—the passing of power into the hands of the multiracial working class—will strike at the heart of racism and bring about equality through *revolutionary integration* into a socialist society. Finish the Civil War! Black liberation through socialist revolution! ■

Bush Goes After Public Education, Nationalists Push Segregated Schools



Young Spartacus

New York City, April 30: Spartacus Youth Club demands "Open Admissions and Free Tuition" in striking students' march at city workers rally.

For Quality, Integrated Education for All!

Education has always been grasped as a prized weapon in the struggle for black emancipation. The black troops who turned the tide in the Civil War against the slave-owners went into battle with their spelling primers strapped to the same belt as their cartridge boxes. Knowledge—and a good musket—were recognized as the necessary artillery to combat servitude and enforced ignorance. A direct gain from the defeat of the slavocracy

Young Spartacus

in the Civil War was the establishment of a public education system for all. But the defeat of Radical Reconstruction ushered in a period of Jim Crow segregation and separate and unequal schools for black people—a situation that still exists *de facto*, if not *de jure*, today.

Last December, the federal Department of Education tried to ax scholarships for minority students, declaring them "discriminatory." After a public outcry from students, educators and civil rights organizations, Bush's hatchet men withdrew this specific attack and scurried back behind closed doors to revamp their plans for racist rollback. Now the White House is scheming to liquidate

public education entirely into the "free market"! Public funds will "follow the students" to private schools—which will duplicate on a national scale the "white flight" to racist "academies" in the South following the Supreme Court's 1954 desegregation decision. Of course the ruling class isn't united behind the administration's plans to simply destroy the public education system and turn America into a "Third World" country. But with the U.S. capitalist economy in decline, they'll have a hard time coming up with the money. And all wings of the ruling class agree that—leaving aside a thin layer of blacks who will be educated to take up positions in the professions—education for the vast mass of poor black youth is a "luxury" that "we" can no longer afford.

The normative standard for the U.S. ruling class is to offer its downtrodden and exploited black masses abstract equality: the *illusion* of formal democratic rights in a whole system of racist oppression that wipes out any economic means for achieving genuine equality. But today's rulers are so ominously intent on reversing every gain black people have won that they don't even bother with the lying promises. This is a program to officially enshrine the racist status quo: rich white people will send

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