

Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League



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Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!

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Spartacist

RESISTANCE: Tens of thousands march to celebrate the October Revolution, Moscow 1991.

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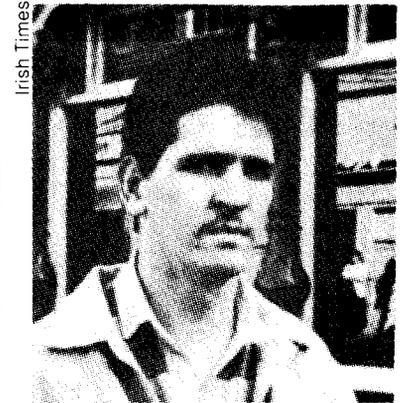
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Dublin Demonstrators Demand: Smash Racist Attacks Against Travellers!

On 11 October 1991 the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group, sympathizing group of the International Communist League, participated in a demonstration protesting the racist exclusion of Travellers from a Dublin pub. To defend those arrested at the protest by the Gardai (police) and to further expose the vicious face of racism in the "enlightened" Ireland of liberal president Mary Robinson, on 15 October 1991 the DSYG issued a leaflet, "Smash Racist Attacks Against Travellers!" (reprinted below).

Travellers in Ireland are a nomadic people similar to the Gypsy peoples throughout Europe. In 19th century Ireland, for example, they occupied a niche as itinerant craftsmen and horse traders. Today, this role has largely disappeared and many Travellers have to rely on remittances from relatives in England, perhaps along with minimal part-time building work in Dublin. Travellers fill Irish jails in disproportionate numbers, are subject to brutally enforced official discrimination, and are the butt of derision and contempt. Their oppression mirrors that of the Irish in Britain.

The pronounced social backwardness of Ireland's ruling Fianna Fail Party is rooted in its historical base among small-time, small-town capitalists and exploiting farmers, bulwark of the overweening Catholic church. This is the late 20th century "gombeenocracy" described in the leaflet—the heirs of the 19th century's "gombeen man," a usurious middleman whose exactions weighed down the rural poor. Another reference which may not be familiar to readers is "beyond the Pale"—a term coined in the 15th century to describe the area of Ireland inhabited by Gaelic clans and not subject to English control. Not only in the rural heartland of this rotten



Michael Collins, a Traveller and actor on popular Irish TV show, was arrested for protesting racist exclusion of Travellers.

gombeenocracy, but in the seat of "enlightened Robinsonism" in South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire, anti-Traveller oppression is rife. In the well-heeled, liberal suburb of Dun Laoghaire, there are virtually no authorized halting sites for Travellers and it is here that some of the most egregious racist injunctions, police provocation and evictions have taken place.

Last December a young Traveller woman, Anne Maughan, froze to death in a ditch in Blanchardstown, County Dublin. Such tragedies are not uncommon among Travellers, forced to endure the damp, cold Irish winter without heat and sanitation. The Irish state is responsible for such deaths as it continues to force the Travelling people to live in degradation and poverty.

* * *

On 11 October, over 50 demonstrators picketed and occupied Dublin's Palace Bar in protest over its exclusion of Travellers. The Gardai soon arrived to quash the protest, pushing the demonstrators out of the pub and onto the street, arresting six. Among those arrested was Michael Collins, a Traveller and actor on the popular TV programme "Glenroe" who had also been refused service at the Bowes pub, picketed by anti-racist protesters a week earlier. *Drop all charges against the six now!*

As the Gardai struck, we in the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group chanted: "From South Africa to Dublin, smash apartheid!" which was soon picked up by the entire picket. And it was no accident that on the same day the *Evening Press* reported that the Dublin County Council had voted to "physically remove" Travellers living on "unauthorised" sites in the Dublin area and take them to the county border "where they will be ordered to return to the counties where they have been normally resident." Designed to "combat" an "influx" of Travellers into the capital, this grotesque measure certainly smacks of apartheid.

As Martin Collins of the Dublin Travellers Education Development Group put it: "It's outrageous and Travellers

Women and Revolution

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Lesley Howling

Irish Travellers in southeast London, 1986. Discrimination hounds Gypsies in every European country, from Britain to Switzerland.

will react against this decision. What you're talking about here is eviction and putting a quota on the number of people who can come to Dublin. It's completely racist...." Travellers are to be driven onto any piece of waste ground, preferably next to a vermin-infested dump and preferably well "beyond the Pale." As official Dublin struts around as the "1991 European City of Culture" replete with the supposed "progressive" face of President Mary Robinson, the gombeenocracy have shown themselves prepared to brutally enforce a bantustan policy against Travellers. It's high time for the workers movement and all decent people to mobilise to put an end to these attacks against the Travellers!

There are over 30,000 Travellers living in the Irish Republic, one-third of them in horrific roadside "halting sites," most of which lack elementary sanitation or other facilities. The toll of such oppression is taken in premature death: infant mortality due largely to respiratory diseases and gastroenteritis is three times higher among Travellers than the rest of the population; only 1.7 per cent of Travellers live to be 65 years old. Discrimination is pervasive, from not being served in pubs or hotels to being forced to pick up the dole at separate times from everyone else. Paltry official attempts to "settle" individual Traveller families in council housing or to erect official halting sites often lead to attacks by racist thugs.

Travellers fill Irish jails in disproportionate numbers, and are the butt of derision and contempt, displayed often without even a fig leaf of liberal public hypocrisy. Limerick University, for example, has spent the better part of a year in court trying to evict a few families whose caravans were parked near the front gate of the college. The reality is that there is a racist consensus in this country extending all the way from the Fianna Fail gangsters to the despicable Labour and Workers Parties.

Karl Marx observed over a century ago that for the English working class to free itself from the chains of exploitation, it would have to actively take the side of the Irish workers and peasants struggling against the British Empire. In much the same way, the defence of the Travellers' community is an acid test for Irish revolutionaries; their treatment in Ireland echoes the vile chauvinism directed against the Irish in Britain.

The plight of the Travellers must be championed by the workers movement, which has the social power to beat back the attacks on Travellers. Today, with a crisis-racked government, with unemployment at 19 per cent and a third of the population under the government's own poverty line, the wretched, pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy is working overtime to keep the lid on class struggle. We fight to forge a genuine Leninist-Trotskyist party which can act as a tribune of the people, fighting for the liberation of women and the defence of all the oppressed including Travellers and homosexuals. While initiating the protests against the pub bans on Travellers in Dublin, the state-capitalist Socialist Workers Movement (SWM) has enthusiastically embraced those counterrevolutionary forces throughout Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union whose shock troops are fascistic, anti-Semitic, racist scum responsible as well for unleashing attacks against the Gypsies (Roma and Cinti peoples). For their part, the cheerleaders for Yeltsin's counterrevolution in the Irish Workers Group (IWG) have simply abstained from the protests in defence of the Travellers.

We do not forget that in the Nazi Holocaust as many as half a million Gypsies were exterminated in the death camps. The Bolsheviks who led the Russian October Revolution of 1917 smashed the anti-Semitic Black Hundreds fascists. And, despite bureaucratic Stalinist misrule, it was the Soviet Red Army that smashed the Nazi scourge in Europe! As a communist youth organisation in the tradition of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky we in the DSYG recognise that only successful socialist revolution can clear away all the reactionary crap produced by this clericalist state. For workers action to smash the anti-Traveller attacks! Workers to power in Ireland! ■

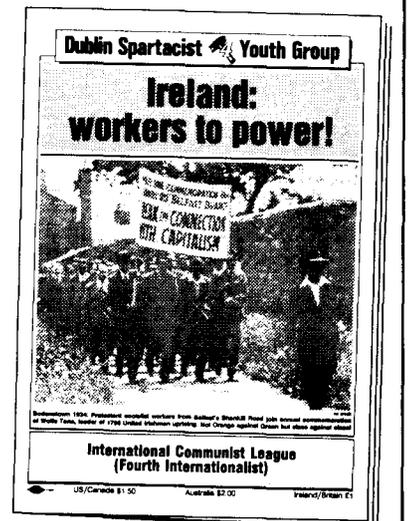
Ireland: Workers to Power!

Partial contents:

- Theses on Ireland
- Northern Ireland: For a Proletarian Solution!
- Irish Students Fight Anti-Abortion Reaction
- Robinson's Popular Front: Trap for Workers and Women
- Connolly's Legacy and the Struggle for a Revolutionary Party

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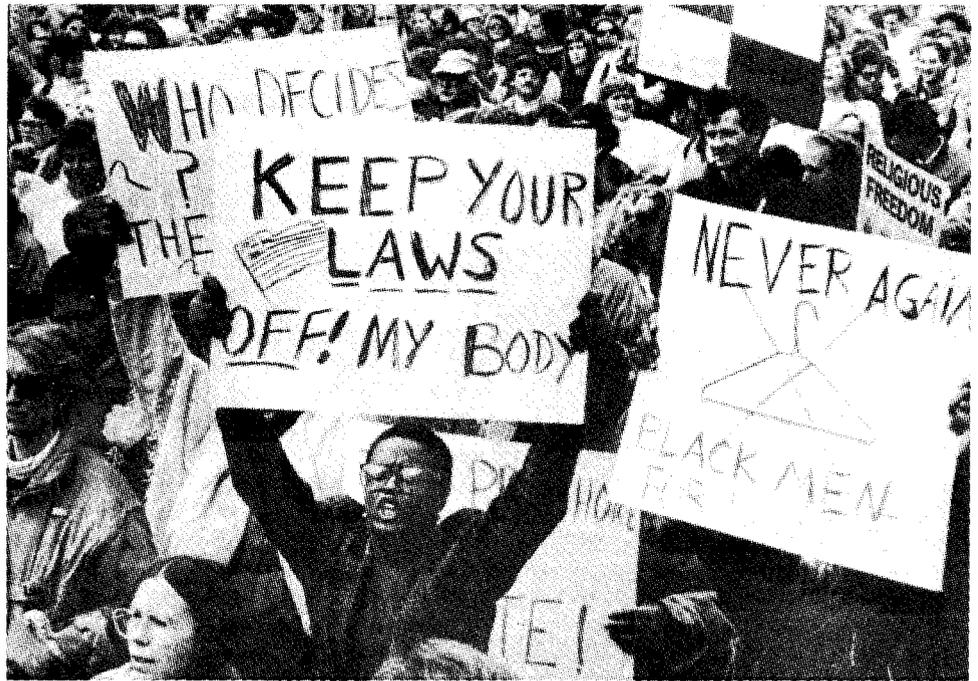


"New World Order" Anti-Abortion Onslaught

"What do you know of these things? You come from a generation that thinks rain is poison, sex means certain death and anything that's fun will give you cancer," Hunter S. Thompson, gonzo journalist and sardonic '60s veteran, told Columbia University students last year. For several generations of youth now, the world their elders offer has been one of gloom, miserable expectations and fearful hysteria over AIDS and abortion and sex in general. But things were not always quite like this.

Not even those dour monsters of repression, the Puritan "founding fathers," were as monolithic as we've been taught in school. In 1625 an Englishman, Thomas Merton, established a plantation, named Merry Mount, in the New England colony of Plymouth. There men and women revived pagan May Day and maypole festivities, including sex outside marriage and general "profane and dissolute living," while welcoming the Indians to cohabit with them. Eventually the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony broke up this early experiment in "alternative lifestyles," as John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman's amusing history of American *Intimate Matters* (Harper & Row, 1988) details.

American history would certainly have been different if that Plymouth plantation had flourished—but it was not to be. The point about this experiment, and the many other "free love" communes, utopian societies and sexual libertarian movements which have risen and fallen throughout American history, is not that such attempts could have been successful, or that they provide exact models of the kind of society we would like. "Sexual utopias" are utopian precisely because they are unable to shatter the social and economic restrictions of the dominant society which perpetuate sexual misery. A society predicated on class inequality and exploitation, on injustice and violence, on irrationality and racism, cannot foster relations of free equality among men and women. Nonetheless, the continual reappearance of such movements is at least a useful reminder in grim times that not everybody buys the religious right's attempts to convince us there can be no happiness this side of the grave. To borrow from Robert Frost's poem on walls: "Something there is that doesn't love" celibacy and monogamous marriage.



David Vita

New York rally in 1989 opposes Supreme Court's attack on abortion rights.

Gore Vidal, impeccable as usual on sexual matters, elegantly stated the obvious in "The Birds and the Bees" (*The Nation*, 28 October 1991): "Despite the best efforts of theologians and philosophers to disguise our condition, there is no point to us, or to any species, except proliferation and survival.... Men and women are dispensable carriers, respectively, of seed and eggs; programmed to mate and die, mate and die, mate and die." This imperative is most strong for youth: our rulers can make it harder or easier, but adolescents are going to strike out for an independent sexual existence regardless. Though we do not share his patrician stoicism or literary attitude of world-weary disdain, Vidal's apocalyptic vision conveys a certain appropriate urgency:

"Those who would outlaw abortion, contraception and same-sex while extolling the family and breeding are themselves the active agents of the destruction of our species. I would be angrier if I had a high opinion of the species, but I don't, and so I regard with serenity Pope and Ayatollah as the somehow preprogrammed agents of our demise, the fate of every species. Hordes of furious lemmings are loose among us; and who would stay them, particularly if they have the Book to throw?"

We would. We communists seek to make the struggle for sexual existence easier, as part of our goal of a society in which individual freedoms are paramount. Historically socialists have aligned themselves with forces fighting for what is often called sexual libertarianism, taking points from the philosophy of such figures as the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, or the work of nurse Margaret Sanger in

the bohemian days when she wrote for the *Rebel Girl* and fought to make contraceptives available to poor working women.

Unlike the utopians (including the 1960s gay/lesbian and other "lifestyle liberationists"), we do not advocate any particular kind of sexual expression. Our goal rather is to liberate people from the restrictions of the family, the central social institution of bourgeois society, and from the domination of organized religion, an important prop of capitalist ideology, so that once freed of these moral straitjackets they can then decide for themselves what they want to do.

The family enslaves women to endless domestic drudgery and serves the vital role of tying sex to private property rights, thus necessarily keeping the patriarch's woman and his children (whom he must know are "his" in order to bequeath to them "his" property), from making their own sexual choices. The moral code of "one man on one woman for life" is triply reinforced by the authority of the family, the fear of god instilled by hellfire preachers, and the armed fist of the bourgeois state, with its "vice squads" and labyrinthine legal codes damning, for example, "adultery," "fornication" and "sodomy" (and not just between homosexuals). The inextricable link between capitalist class society and the family makes it clear that the liberation of women can only come about in a socialist society in which productive resources are put at the service of humanity. Then the institution of the family can be replaced with socialized childcare and housework, freeing women to be full participants in social and political life, while organized religion and the state pass into the museum of ancient history.

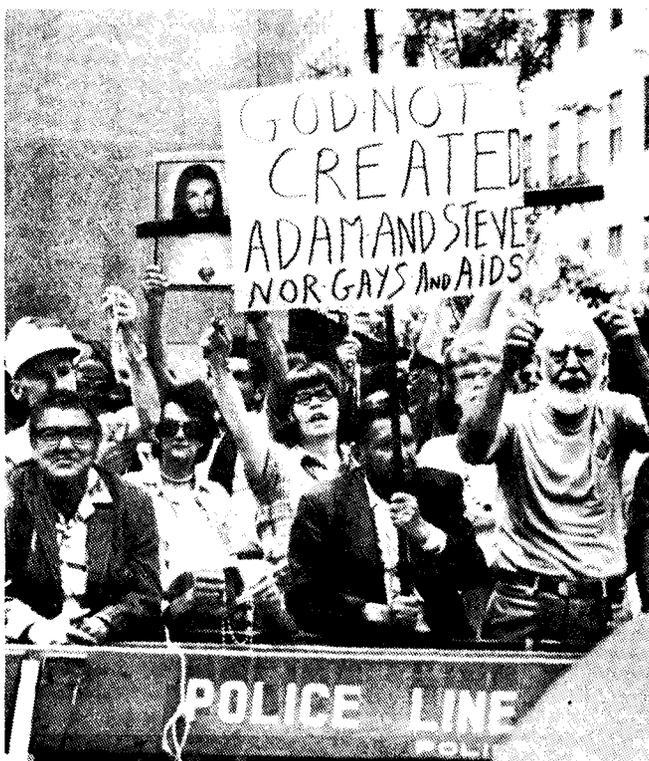
Bush's "New World Order": Coat Hanger and Lynch Rope

The moralistic frenzy launched against the American people over the past ten or twelve years is part of an

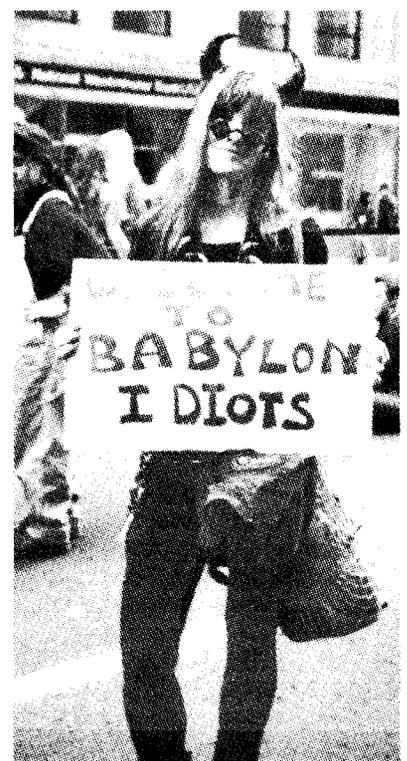
all-sided social reaction to reassert "traditional values" in the service of U.S. imperialism: with greater or lesser success, our rulers have tried to push prayer in the schools, "creationism" instead of Darwinism, household slavery instead of jobs for women, and police crusades against dirty movies and pornographic literature. "Sexual abstinence" is the "answer" to AIDS—and kids will pay with their lives for our rulers' refusal to adopt at least the partial measures of education and distribution of condoms. The campaign to rip abortion rights away from American women is the spearhead right now for a general capitalist offensive against women's rights and civil rights, organized by the White House and its Supreme Court appointees.

It's the "New World Order" of triumphant American imperialism after its easy win against Iraq, a country the size of Kentucky. And it's no accident that shortly after Bush grabbed the Persian Gulf oil spigot, hordes of furious "Operation Rescue" fanatics began storming Wichita abortion clinics. Wrapping the yellow ribbon of the slaughter of over 100,000 Iraqis around their own anti-woman drive, they carried signs like "Support Our Unborn Troops." These Bible Belt bigots are the street shock troops of an offensive by decaying American capitalism seeking to reinstitute the days of unabashed outright racism and woman-hating.

"It's OK to be a pig again" is the message, from drunken "blackface" frat parties to swastikas and racist epithets on students' doors and reports of rising sexual harassment on college campuses. They'd like to drive blacks and other minorities off the elite campuses, making them again exclusive playgrounds and training grounds for the white upper class—that's what is really behind George Bush's attack on the supposed "politically correct" crowd who at least think that overt racism is in poor taste. "Ex"-Klansman David Duke has ridden to national prominence on the racist coattails of official



Crucifix-waving bigots (left) hate women and gays. New York demonstrator (right) "welcomed" anti-abortion fanatics, who were overwhelmed by abortion rights mobilization on 29 September 1991.



government policy.

For women, Operation Rescue and its reactionary masters want a return to the days when wives were chained to a passive role as semen receptacles and fetus incubators, tied to endless drudgery (with maybe a little minimum wage homework on the side, like gluing computer parts together). The Bush administration openly joined forces with the Operation Rescue bigots to argue before the Supreme Court that blocking abortion clinics does not violate the "KKK act" because it isn't "discriminatory"—indeed, Operation Rescue wants to keep everyone out!

Abortion Rights: Already Gone for the Poor

Into this seething crucible of all-sided hatred and tension came the explosion of the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill "sexual harassment" hearings. The spectacle of these two "Talented Tenth" black professionals and Yale Law School graduates slinging it out in front of the near lily-white Senate was truly creepy, as every smear job, sexist and racist stereotype was dragged out. Yet what was most



Shames/Matrix

Teenage mother and child. Capitalist society has consciously, cruelly abandoned an entire generation of ghetto youth.

disgusting was that the Senate had already dismissed Clarence Thomas' real crimes as a certified enemy of black rights and women's rights: he is a Reaganite right-winger who has chopped away at and subverted even the most minimal equal rights laws, a black front man for white-supremacy whose associates are tied to the bantustan governments of apartheid South Africa, a hanging judge who is "personally" not "bothered" by the racist legal lynching of the death penalty.

Above all the fight over Thomas' nomination was over abortion rights. Ever since the Supreme Court legalized abortion nationally two decades ago in *Roe v. Wade*, America's rulers have been chipping away at it. Now Bush thinks he's got the anti-abortion majority on the

Supreme Court he needs to finish the job Operation Rescue has been unable to do: get rid of *Roe v. Wade* on the national level and smother abortion rights in the state legislatures. Rich women will always be able to get abortions, whether legal or not, and the best medical care in the world. But for poor women in this country, safe abortion—an expensive procedure in this medicine-for-profit system—is already long gone. In 1976 Congress, with support from both the Democrats and Republicans, passed the Hyde Amendment banning the use of federal Medicaid funds for abortions.

The atmosphere of witchhunting, the sidewalk bigots blocking clinics, the ranting of Sunday school moralists, have driven many doctors to either abandon performing abortions or to at least raise their prices. Further, a shadow industry of shabby "abortion mills," operating illegally and in rundown, filthy offices, has grown up in cities like New York, where poor immigrant women, often speaking little or no English, have no access to decent medical care or to information about contraception or abortion services. In November 1991 one Dr. Abu Hayat was arrested and charged with performing an illegal abortion on 20-year-old Rosa Rodriguez, who the day after the procedure gave birth to a one-month premature baby with a severed arm! The "doctor" charged her \$1,500, taking her passport, green card and jewelry as collateral for part of the payment. Another of Dr. Hayat's patients died of a perforated uterus.

Since 1984 the U.S. government has banned funding internationally to clinics that provide abortion services. When over 200,000 women already die around the world each year in botched abortions, this criminal policy can only increase the death toll. According to Jodi Jacobson of the Worldwatch Institute, abortion-related deaths are rising throughout Africa and Asia (with the exception of China, where abortion is legal and free). In six Latin American countries, unsafe abortion is the foremost killer of women in their twenties and thirties, and the second leading cause of death in another six. Close to a million Latin American women are admitted to hospitals each year for post-abortion complications. Only Castro's Cuba provides abortion on demand.

The Left, NOW and the '92 Elections: Fleas on the Tail of the Democratic Donkey

We're now in the third term of Reaganism, yet a solid majority of the population still strongly supports abortion rights. When there's an election centered on the issue of abortion, the "pro-choice" candidate usually wins—as the Republicans are finding out to their chagrin. But mouthing support for women's rights from politicians in a country that won't even pass the Equal Rights Amendment can't stop the rightist onslaught.

The major abortion rights groups in the U.S.—notably the bourgeois feminist National Organization for Women—have tied their tactics firmly to the bosses' Democratic Party, and are gearing all their efforts toward the '92 elections. Even in do-nothing parliamentary terms, this is pretty pathetic. When Bush vetoed Congress' attempt to overturn the outrageous "gag rule" that bans family-planning clinics receiving federal funds from even mentioning the word "abortion" to their clients—Congress couldn't muster the votes to overturn the veto!



Gamma

Social-democratic traitors to Trotskyism proclaimed "Solidarity with Solidarity," adopting Polish Solidarność logo to identify with Lech Walesa's clerical-nationalist movement. Walesa and friends: anti-Communist, anti-Semitic, anti-working-class, anti-woman.

The Democrats are a bunch of spineless losers. Kids today have never seen a Democratic Party president in power, so it's hard to peddle illusions in something akin to a mythical beast. If it weren't for the terrible state of the U.S. economy, the Democrats wouldn't have a chance of winning in '92—it's so bad humorist Russell Baker calls the Democrats the "Dead Brains Society," while pleading, "Hey, you Demos, get out of that grave—there's a whole country out here waiting for somebody to stand for something!" (*New York Times*, 30 April 1991). The problem is, the Democrats do stand for something: they and the Republicans are co-equal partners for capitalism, the two "property parties." In this division of labor it's the Democrats' job to hoodwink the masses with rhetoric about "social justice" and "equality of sacrifice" to mobilize the population behind imperialist war, for example. It was Democrat Truman who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Democrat Kennedy who tried to invade Cuba and who started the dirty, losing Vietnam War.

No sooner was Thomas confirmed than, in a cynical ploy, Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union decided to bring the Pennsylvania abortion law to the Supreme Court. This political maneuver is calculated to force a reactionary decision, which these cynical liberals think will heat up the abortion issue during the '92 elections and help elect a Democrat. This ploy threatens to entrench a law requiring a mandatory 24-hour waiting period and the chilling restriction that teenagers must either have parental consent or beg some government official for the right to have an abortion (like Orrin "The Exorcist" Hatch?). This is totally cruel and insane. How many pregnant, frightened teenagers, unwilling new mothers and mutilated or dead women do NARAL and Planned Parenthood think will bring in sufficient electoral votes? There will be plenty of crocodile tears streaking the feminist pols' cruelty-free mascara, but their eyes are fixed on playing political softball with bourgeois politicians, not on the desperate needs of the kids and poor

women who will suffer the effects of this cruel gimmick.

NOW has its own '92 electoral maneuvers, scaring the Democrats with reformist "third party" prattle. In reality NOW honchos are up to their "dress for success"-clad elbows in bitter intra-Democratic Party brawls like the recent battle between Bella's daughter Liz Abzug, who came out as gay, and Tom Duane, who announced he was HIV positive, for a Greenwich Village seat in recent NYC elections. Even empty threats that some of these bigger fleas would hop off the cooling corpse of the Democratic Party, though, was enough to thrill the tiny constellation of "leftist" sellouts, from the black hole of the Communist Party's ancient hacks to the rapidly cooling "red dwarfs" of the New Left.

This "third party" cheerleading from leftists is the sheerest fraud, designed to give a left cover of "independence" to their perennial tailing of NOW's "mainstream" feminists, who just want a bigger role among the stooges of the Democrats. At an October BACORR rally in San Francisco the Revolutionary Workers League had yet another set of initials on its literature table, a new women's group acronymed NWROC. NWROC, its leaflet explains, "could pressure NOW and NARAL to use their much larger resources to organize actions that *could* save Roe v. Wade." NWROC aspires only to be the "action-oriented left wing" of NOW within the Democratic Party circle.

As soon as they get any influence, these petty-bourgeois groups go to work to build illusions in "fossils for choice" like Dems hack Bella Abzug. Recent pro-abortion rallies on both the East and West Coasts, organized by such "independent" groups as BACORR and WHAM!, were dominated by anxiety to influence the bourgeois candidates in upcoming elections, as well as the ever-depressing spectacle of all those well-meaning "priests for choice"—as if coming out for a simple democratic right requires a religious blessing. These groups are so sucked into the ideological mainstream that they can hardly say the "A-word." WHAM! in New York is so defensive it now

prints on its press releases, "WHAM! is not 'pro-abortion.' Nobody is 'pro-abortion'."

"Feminists in One Country"

It's consistent that a bourgeois outfit like NOW seeks to identify with counterrevolutionaries in the USSR. NOW's Patricia Ireland said in Wichita this summer, "The people of the Soviet Union defended their freedom with their lives and their bodies against tanks, with Yeltsin." More disgustingly, almost the entire panoply of the American left has jumped onto the pro-capitalist bandwagon in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Perennially shameless, the CP hailed NOW's "third party" hype for "a new force in U.S. politics to ignite in the United States the revolution for democracy that is sweeping the world" (*People's Weekly World*, 21 September 1991). What revolution? Do they mean the anti-Semites and fascist gangs, the Serbs and Croats killing each other in a nationalist frenzy, the black marketeers, skinheads and Pamyat fascists and pro-capitalist pirates swarming over East Europe and the Soviet Union today in the wake of the collapse of Stalinism?

In the U.S., where defense of abortion rights is the issue which is bringing young people out into the streets, the opportunist "left" claims to be the biggest champions of women's rights. But this posture is given the lie by their long record of cheerleading forces abroad which are smashing women's rights. Like "socialism in one country," the Stalinists' justification for their own sellout of international revolution, the U.S. reformists posing as champions of abortion rights are "feminists in one country." Internationally their anti-Sovietism has led them to bloc with the most deadly enemies of women's rights. The so-called "left" is mostly a bunch of lying sellouts whose support for abortion and women's rights runs a distant second to their appetite to act as the front men for the semi-human face of the most rapacious imperialist power on earth.

Take the International Socialist Organization (U.S. analogue of the British Socialist Workers Party), which is

working hard to present itself to young pro-choice activists as the best defenders of women's rights. The ISO has long since abandoned any pretense of defending the USSR against imperialism. At an October 1991 ISO forum at San Francisco State University, a Spartacus Youth Club member in the audience argued against ISO positions, pointing out that to Marxists, imperialist war, racism and sexism are inseparable from capitalism. She attacked the ISO's support for Yeltsin's counterrevolution in the USSR, where women stand to lose essential social gains like free abortion and childcare. How can you fight women's oppression if you support Solidarność in Poland, or Khomeini in Iran like the ISO does? she asked. When Khomeini rose to power in Iran, the ISO's *Socialist Worker* (February 1979) actually stated that "Iranian women are on the threshold of a freedom denied them for years." In fact, Khomeini's theocratic revolution immediately put women back into stifling veils—which the ISO claimed were a symbol of resistance to imperialism.

From Khomeini's Iran to Lech Walesa's slavishly pro-capitalist, pro-Catholic church Solidarność counterrevolutionaries in Poland to the bloodthirsty tribalist CIA-backed mercenaries in Afghanistan battling the Red Army, these reformists have been on the wrong side of the class line and therefore on the wrong side of the fight for women's liberation. They cheered the capitalist reunification of Germany, which meant the wholesale destruction of the ex-East German system of contraception, maternity and childcare benefits. Today in Poland clerical reactionaries have tried to entirely criminalize abortion, including *prison terms* for women! While this failed, abortion is now much more difficult, and costly, to obtain. And the Catholic church has launched a campaign of intimidation and sheer terror, including public denunciation at Sunday mass of women who have abortions and picketing of pharmacies that carry contraceptives. This is the result for women of the dismantling of the former deformed workers state in Poland under the guidance of the pro-capitalist Solidarność—the only union Ronald Reagan ever liked. And the ISO agreed with him. We of the Interna-



Bolshevik poster shows Asian woman rejecting the veil, religious hierarchy and symbols of oppression. Her banner reads, "Free in my Caspian homeland."



Workers Vanguard

Spartacist contingent in 5 July 1989 New York City protest against Supreme Court decision allowing states to impose restrictions on abortion.

tional Communist League told the truth and demanded, "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!"

We Are the Party of the Russian Revolution

These "democratic" apologists for counterrevolution would like us to forget that it was Lenin's Bolsheviks in the early Soviet state who legalized abortion on demand for all women and abolished all legal distinctions between children born in marriage and "illegitimate" babies. Moving to end the power of the Orthodox church, the early Soviet state abolished all laws against homosexuality and made divorce easy to get. For decades fellow-traveler types would make a kind of half-apologetic defense of the USSR along the lines of, "So all the apartments are gray, all the clothes are gray, all the factories are gray, all the food is gray—but at least there are apartments and clothes and jobs and food." And they were all sort of gray—but they were there, and that was a great gain.

But the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 wasn't made so we could all live in gray barracks. It was made with the most amazing, scandalously far-reaching goals for the whole human race in history—to finally, once and for all, set off a chain reaction of world revolution that could usher in the beginning of a world freed of the exploitation and oppression of the millions by a few rulers. Women's liberation was key for the Bolsheviks, and they made the most sweeping attempts in history to abolish the restrictions of patriarchal society. The flaming reds and vibrant yellows of the avant-garde Futurist artists were but a reflection of all the cultural innovations and aspirations centered around that revolution. Though the bitter poverty of the young workers state, capitalist encirclement and the betrayals of Stalinism threaten to snuff out that flame, still it has lit the hopes of the world's workers and the oppressed for decades—and that revolution continues to light our path forward today.

The Spartacist League has maintained its principles, program, and commitment to working-class revolution in large part because we are rooted in the history of the Russian Revolution and Trotsky's fight for unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism. That has been and remains a fundamental anchor. What we have learned, we have learned in great part from the Bolsheviks.

Our task as revolutionaries is to fight illusions that any-

body in Congress, the White House or the Supreme Court, all institutions structured to maintain capitalist rule, can guarantee any fundamental rights for women, for blacks, or for the working class as a whole. Such fundamental issues won't be settled in Congress or by the judges in their black robes. As the growing numbers of young women and men who've been coming out to defend abortion clinics in confrontations with the "god squads" demonstrates, there is a lot of will to fight back where it counts. What's needed are mass mobilizations of labor, women and minorities to stop the anti-abortion crusade in the streets. A workers party must be forged which will champion the cause of all the exploited and oppressed and lead a fight for "Free abortion on demand! Free quality health care for all!" As part of building that revolutionary party, a defender of democratic rights for all, we stand for the perspective of a women's section of the party, to reach out to the most oppressed sectors of society, making their battles an inextricable part of our fight, and linking their demands for freedom to the social power of the working class, producers of all the wealth of society.

We have been consistent in our goals. Though the New Left women's movement has long since disintegrated, what we said to young radicals before abortion was legalized in 1973 remains true today:

"In itself the issue of abortions is a *reform* demand. For revolutionaries, particular reforms which strike blows at the oppressive institutions of capitalism and increase the capacity of the working class to struggle must be supported. But the revolutionary always seeks to pose demands which transcend the capitalist framework, increase the consciousness of the exploited and oppressed of the objective need for socialist revolution as the only way to fully achieve and safeguard their needs, and lead to greater class organization and higher forms of struggle on the part of the working masses.... SL/W&R has insisted that the women's movement cannot go forward until it adopts a proletarian perspective and recognizes that the uniquely leading class in the socialist revolution is the proletariat under the leadership of the vanguard party."

— "SWP/WONAAC Sink in Bourgeois Swamp,"
Workers Vanguard No. 11, September 1972

We are committed to building that vanguard party to lead the working class to victory in this country and around the world as part of the International Communist League. Join us—we have a world to win. ■

Revolution Day, Moscow 1991



Spartacist Photos

International Communist League raises red banner of Trotsky's Fourth International in Moscow on anniversary of 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Our sign below "Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky; Defend the Lenin Museum!" protests Moscow mayor Popov's threat to close Lenin Museum.



Bankrupt Stalinism Opens Floodgates to Capitalist Restoration

Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!

The ascendancy of Boris Yeltsin's openly pro-capitalist, Russian-chauvinist forces in the aftermath of their victory over the deliberately inept "coup" of August 1991 represents a huge defeat for the working masses the world over. The Russian Revolution of October 1917 belongs not only to the Soviet workers, but also to all those around the world who are condemned by capitalist exploitation to squalor, famine, racial oppression, disease and the ravages of war. For all those fighting for revolutionary social change in their own countries, from South Africa to Haiti to the U.S., the threat of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union today is an urgent issue. The outcome of the Soviet crisis—which class will rule, the proletariat through a political revolution led by a genuine communist party, or the bourgeoisie through the destruction of the workers state—has grave implications for the workers of the whole world.

Gorbachev's capitulations to imperialism directly paved the way for the slaughter of 100,000 Iraqis by the U.S. mass murder machine in its drive to dominate the world's oil supplies and demonstrate its military superiority and ruthlessness to its economically more dynamic rivals, Germany and Japan. Now the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Cuba is an open invitation to attack by the vengeful Yankee rulers. And the path toward trade wars and new world war opens up as the big imperialist powers intensify their competition for hegemony, which is now further fueled by the prospects for new wage slaves and new markets since the collapse of Stalinism in East Europe and the USSR.

Revolution Day: Mass Protest Against Yeltsin Counterrevolution

But the outcome in the Soviet Union is not yet decided. The powerful Soviet working class—the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the revolutionary toilers of October 1917—has yet to enter decisively upon the scene of the massive historical struggle now taking shape. "Tsar Boris" has decreed that all price controls are to be lifted by the end of 1991, all unprofitable enterprises are to be shut down, collective farms are to be privatized, and the central economic ministries are to be dismantled. But carrying out this program of even greater impoverishment of the Soviet working people is not so simple.

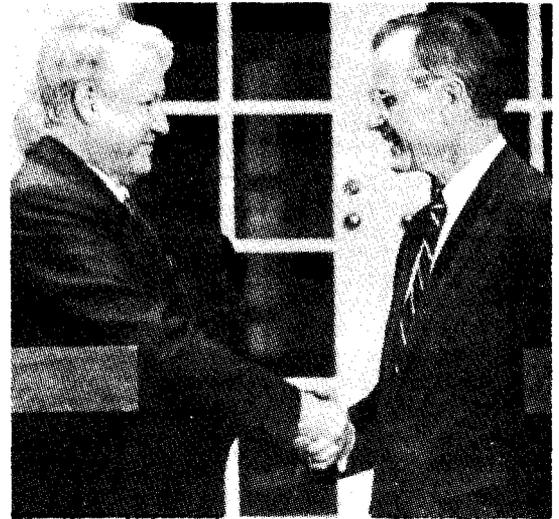
Since the coup attempt, the jockeying between Yeltsin's

Russian Republic, Gorbachev and the nationalist leaders of the non-Russian republics has produced a power vacuum at the center of the fractured Soviet Union. The "democrats" have entirely failed to firmly consolidate their hold after their easy victory over the halfhearted coup. The would-be capitalists fear the "shadow of the working class"—they fear provoking outbreaks of massive resistance if the proletariat is pushed too far.

On Revolution Day—7 November 1991, the anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—the hostility and desperation of the proletariat exploded in a mass demonstration against destruction of the remaining gains of the revolution. As many as 90,000 came out in Moscow in an angry protest against the counterrevolution spearheaded by Yeltsin and Gorbachev. In Leningrad, Kiev and elsewhere thousands more took to the streets.

Gathering before the Lenin statue in Moscow's October Square, there were hundreds of red flags snapping in the stiff winter wind. In contrast to the regimented formal parades of previous years, this was an outpouring, heavily proletarian in composition, of people who wanted to take a stand for socialism. They chanted "Lenin! Lenin!" and "Down with the bourgeois dictatorship!" They carried hand-painted signs with such slogans as "Privatization: A Dream for Millionaires, for the Workers a Graveyard," "Yeltsin: Russians Will Never Be Slaves—Your Rapacious Reforms Will Not Work," and "Down with the CIA's Perestroika!" They repeatedly sang the *Internationale* and other revolutionary songs from the early days of the Soviet Republic under Lenin and Trotsky.

As tens of thousands marched to Red Square, they voiced a deep working-class hatred toward the agents of Wall Street and Frankfurt. It is this deep commitment to egalitarianism which must be rooted out for capitalism to be implanted. For generations the Soviet workers have believed that because they are workers—because they create with their hands and brains the wealth of society—they have a right to a job, to a place to live, to education and medical care. The anti-capitalist sentiment of much of the population remains an unorganized but powerful obstacle to the schemes of the restorationists now in power. Multinationals do not want to invest in the USSR until they're sure the workers can be kept in their place—namely, down. And the counterrevolutionary forces cannot count on the armed forces (which they're



Der Spiegel

21 August 1991: Pro-Yeltsin crowd at Russian "White House." Partners in counterrevolution Bush and Yeltsin congratulate themselves.

Spartacist

also seeking to massively purge) to break strikes against Yeltsin's austerity plans.

Defend the Gains of October!

The Russian Revolution was the shaping event of this century. For the first time ever, the working class held state power. Led by a resolute revolutionary party, the Bolsheviks, the workers took leadership of all the oppressed, welding together the peasants' thirst for land, the national minorities' fight for liberation, the soldiers' and sailors' desperation to get themselves out of the imperialist slaughter of World War I. Expropriating the exploiting classes, the revolution *broke the power* of the old order—the decrepit absolutist political system, the blood-sucking landlords, the obscurantist clergy, and the capitalist class itself.

By breaking the power of the oppressors and establishing a regime of workers power, the revolution laid the basis for great social advances. Women in Soviet Russia gained the right to free abortion on demand before women in the West could even vote. The Bolsheviks struck down all laws against homosexuality, and wiped out the anti-Semitic pogromists. Rapid industrialization lifted this backward country into the modern world. A *multinational* country was forged out of the former tsarist "prison house of peoples." By taking economic decisions out of the realm of private profit, the revolution made possible achievements which capitalist liberals and reformists are always talking about but can *never* deliver. Promises of racial equality, talk of "empowerment," of allocating resources based on "human needs not profits" are simply lies under capitalism. The Russian Revolution opened the road to making them reality.

Now every gain the Soviet workers fought for is on the chopping block. Soviet women are already being driven from their jobs to the home, while prices soar for formerly free services like health care and childcare centers (see "Interview with Soviet Women," page 17). What Yeltsin has in store for Soviet working people can be glimpsed in Eastern Europe today. In the former East Germany, Nazis threaten Jews and outright pogroms are

unleashed against immigrants, while wholesale purges drive former Communists from public life and jobs, producing severe shortages of personnel in schools and hospitals. Childcare facilities, which once allowed 94 percent of East German women to hold jobs, are closed while abortion is criminalized. Out of a population of about 16 million, actual job losses (including workers on the "short workweek," often zero hours) are nearly 5 million! No wonder births are down by 40 percent, marriages by half and suicides have more than doubled.

Stalinism as a Regime of Crisis

The Soviet Union, the first workers state in history, was sapped and undermined by decades of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, but the victory of counterrevolution is not yet assured. The Soviet workers are beginning to enter the field of today's battles. They will fight to preserve the revolution's social conquests which they take for granted, *if they can see a way to do so*. What is lacking is leadership. No section of the discredited bureaucracy—the heirs of Stalin, who usurped the workers' political power and massacred Trotsky and the Old Bolsheviks to make the party the *antithesis* of Leninism—can offer a way forward.

The Stalinist bureaucracy arose out of the USSR's isolation. With the Russian working class demoralized by the failure of the revolution in Germany, a conservative bureaucratic caste took shape under Stalin (see "How Stalinism Undermined Legacy of October Revolution," page 22). They did not restore capitalism in Russia, but their bureaucratic commandism, mismanagement and corruption undermined the gains of the revolution—collectivized property and a centralized planned economy—while alienating and demoralizing the working people. The capitalist world market exerted an unremitting pressure on the workers states, while imperialist military hostility necessitated a substantial arms budget—an enormous drain on an economy which, unlike a capitalist economy, has no inherent need for war production.

To secure and defend its privileges, the Stalinist bureaucracy had to demobilize the working class while seeking

to appease hostile imperialism by renouncing the program of world revolution. Turning Marxism on its head, in 1924 Stalin proclaimed the "theory of socialism in one country"—a policy of betrayal. In exchange for the vain hope of easing the imperialists' hostile encirclement of the USSR, the bureaucracy opposed and thwarted revolutions everywhere else.

Amid the political turmoil of a capitalist regime in social and economic crisis, revolutionary leadership is decisive. Where an intransigent leadership willing to fight for power is lacking, apologists for "class peace" and "national interest" step into the breach to shore up bourgeois rule. Under the impact of World War I, the professed socialist movement split between the social-patriots and a revolutionary wing. From that time onward there has been a clear distinction between reformist currents who found reasons to support "our own" ruling class and revolutionaries who embrace the Leninist imperative that "the main enemy is at home." Thus after World War I and the Russian Revolution, it was the social-democratic reformists who beheaded the workers revolution in Germany in 1918-19 and murdered the revolutionary Spartakus leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

The Stalinists became "reformists of the second mobilization"; the enormous authority they gained as the ruling party of the Soviet Union and their more militant rhetoric relative to the social democrats made them a far more effective instrument in sabotaging workers struggles. The Stalinists betrayed the workers struggle in country after country—from China 1925-26 to Germany 1933 to Spain 1936. The wave of Soviet patriotism and the smashing of the Nazis in World War II gave the bureaucracy a legitimacy it had never previously held. From Italy and Greece to Indochina, the Stalinists squandered crucial revolutionary possibilities—those intense, infrequent historical moments when acute crises of the bourgeois order open up a rare and fast-moving window of opportunity for the proletariat to fight for power. They then turned around and cited the failure of proletarians elsewhere to repeat the Bolshevik experience as "proof" that the working class in today's world has no revolutionary capacity.

Trotsky, assassinated by a Stalinist agent in 1940, did not foresee and could not have predicted the inherently

unstable Stalinist bureaucracy lasting for as long as it did. But he warned that the Soviet bureaucracy could not indefinitely continue the balancing act of resting on the workers property forms which issued from the 1917 Revolution while bowing to world imperialism. In light of the galloping counterrevolution in the Soviet Union today, Trotsky's brilliant analysis of the nature of the Soviet state in his 1936 book *The Revolution Betrayed* reads like it was written only yesterday.

Against renegades who claimed the bureaucracy was a new ruling class, as well as Stalinist apologists for the bureaucracy who claimed their system was strong and stable and perfectly capable of "peacefully coexisting" with the imperialist world powers indefinitely, Trotsky argued that either a revolutionary workers party would overthrow the bureaucracy and open the road once again to unleashing the productivity and creativity of the Soviet masses, or else the bourgeoisie would overthrow the Soviet ruling caste and with it the socialized property forms inherited from October.

Discussing the privileged position of the Stalinist bureaucrats, he observed: "It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder." This is exactly what is happening in the USSR today. A section of the Stalinist bureaucracy has become the junior partner of Western capitalism. Privileged bureaucrats, black marketers and Soviet "yupskies"—precisely the forces that rallied to Yeltsin's "barricades" in August—seek to enrich themselves by selling the people's property. *This is the logical culmination of "socialism in one country."* The Stalinists abroad have no answer except to wring their hands while some secretly pine for the good old days when Stalin "solved" all problems with the methods of repression and mass murder, while the social democrats and their "left" tails wax gleeful over the "death of Communism" and plead for a bigger role for themselves in a U.S.-dominated "New World Order."

From World War II to Vietnam

There is nothing new about the "Russian question" being the keystone of a revolutionary policy. With the end of World War II and the subsequent establishment of military parity between the so-called "two super-

Leon Trotsky shortly before his assassination by Stalin's agents in Mexico, 1940. Left Opposition intransigently defended USSR against threat of capitalist restoration. Right: Trotsky's 1935 article, "Where is the Stalin Bureaucracy Leading the USSR?" in *Bulletin of the Opposition*.



powers," the "Cold War" became the underlying factor of world politics. Although it took some years before public opinion was shifted from the egalitarian rhetoric of the Depression/war period to the "reds under the beds" reactionary crusading of McCarthyism, the Cold War effectively started with Hiroshima, as the triumphant imperialist power, the Americans, nuked the civilian population of the defeated Japanese enemy, serving notice above all on the Russians that the so-called "American century" had begun. Meanwhile, it was the "spectre of Communism" which eventually led the American federal government to acquiesce to the demands of the black population for formal equality under the law and to finally supervise the dismantling of the "Jim Crow" system of the South which, established by the defeat of Reconstruction, had endured for a century.

But the "American century" was easier proclaimed than achieved. The USSR was the other victor of World War II, and the expansion of Soviet power through the transformations from the top down in East Europe, and the



Planeta



Planeta

Leading Bolsheviks included many non-Russian combatants against the tsarist "prison house of peoples": Sverdlov, first president of the Russian Republic, was Jewish; Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, was Polish. Below: Shaumyan, head of the Baku Soviet in 1918 (left); Rakovsky, chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the Ukraine.



Novosti



Novosti

victory of the Chinese Revolution, produced the "Soviet bloc." The USSR achieved rough nuclear parity with the Americans, while the "conventional" Korean War (in which three million Koreans died) ended in stalemate. And then the arrogant Americans, strutting their "world policeman" role by taking over the French colonial war against Communists in Indochina, got trapped in a quagmire which ultimately split American society, triggering the first large-scale radicalization since the demise of the "Popular Front" 1930s and all but destroying the U.S. army as an effective instrument, before the bourgeoisie cut its losses and got out. Thus the 1980s began a new period of bourgeois counteroffensive against the "Vietnam syndrome"—a "moral" and military rearmament signaled by Carter's "human rights" crusade: the U.S. Olympic boycott and the funding of fundamentalist Afghan cutthroats to kill Russian soldiers, the championing of pro-imperialist Soviet "dissidents," the contra war against Nicaragua, the crusade for "free trade unions."

It should be noted that this "Cold War II" period of American military provocation and "human rights" hypocrisy was also the period in which America's imperialist rivals (particularly the World War II losers, Japan and Germany) were overtaking the Americans economically. The decision to finance the awesome military buildup against the USSR by rolling up huge budget deficits (as well as by rolling back the limited gains won by mass struggles during the civil rights/antiwar era—the bourgeoisie's counteroffensive was socially satisfying but financially quite incapable of generating the sums needed) is largely responsible for the erosion of U.S. imperialism's economic position: formerly the world's largest creditor nation, the U.S. is now the largest debtor.

"Free Trade Unions" and State Department Socialists

It was in Poland a decade ago that imperialism found its best chance to refurbish its "democratic" credentials and give its anti-Soviet "Cold War II" a façade of working-class legitimacy. When Lech Walesa's Solidarność consolidated around an openly pro-capitalist, pro-"free world," pro-Catholic Church program, the bourgeoisie saw its first chance to actually "roll back" Communism and re-establish a capitalist regime in a deformed workers state. The international Spartacist tendency stood virtually alone on the left in exposing Solidarność as a *company union* on behalf of the CIA, the Vatican, and Wall Street and Frankfurt bankers.

Now, of course, with the collapse of the former Communist regimes in East Germany, Poland and the USSR ushering in great misery for the masses, there is no shortage of U.S. "left" groups coming forward to bewail the mass unemployment, the explosion of rents and food prices, the destruction of childcare, the rise of racist and anti-Semitic terror and violence. But these ills necessarily accompany the replacement of the mismanaged and inefficient centralized economies of the deformed workers states by "the magic of the marketplace." Those who urged "Solidarity with Solidarity," championed German capitalist reunification in the name of "self-determination" and cheered the crowds of Soviet businessmen, restorationists and fascists on Yeltsin's "barricades" share, to the limited extent they have influence on events, the responsibility for the present state of affairs.



WV Photo

Bulletin [Australia]

New York, September 1981: Spartacists opposed power grab by reactionary Solidarność, company union for the CIA and capitalist bankers. Solidarność leader Lech Walesa (right) flaunts money from Western backers.

That section of the "left" which is the most gleeful over the "death of Communism" and the victory of the Yeltsinites should actually, if there were any justice in this world, be embarrassed to show their faces in public, inasmuch as the present social cataclysms manifestly give the lie to their "theories" of the Russian question, in particular the absurd idea defended for decades by "state capitalists" that the USSR and its satellites embodied a new form of class rule where the bureaucracy was a new ruling class. If the Stalinist-ruled countries were "state capitalist," of course, the transition to private capitalist ownership would prove no more momentous than the replication on a large scale of the American business decision to diversify the phone company monopoly.

But the root of such "theories" is not theory but *appetite*. The purpose of all efforts to define the USSR as a new form of capitalism rather than a deformed workers state was nothing other than to create a justification for support of one's "own" bourgeoisie. Just as the onset of World War I led the opportunist "socialists" of the Second International to put aside their internationalist and pacifistic verbiage and enlist on the side of their own rulers, the Cold War pulled self-described "socialists" into the "camp" of the "free world." From the time of the Korean War onward, "State Department socialists" have echoed the rhetoric of bourgeois ideologues that American capitalism, whatever its problems, was more "free" than the USSR which, manifestly "totalitarian" in its political system, supposedly reduced the working class to soulless slaves who were no longer even capable of struggle, unlike "our" workers, of course.

This class-collaborationist appetite could be seen in the antics of most American leftists during the recent Persian Gulf war. The "antiwar movement" was firmly dominated by social-chauvinists who wrapped themselves in stars and stripes and yellow ribbons as they championed the government's fig leaf of "UN sanctions" or piously worried about the safety of "our troops" as the U.S. terror-bombers orchestrated the slaughter of 100,000 Iraqis. The olive branch these "leaders" were waving was reaching out to liberal politicians of the Democratic Party—the men who brought us the Vietnam War and

the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, eager participants in the Reagan/Bush war on America's inner cities over the past decade—in hopes of winning these bourgeois gentlemen to the cause of "peace."

The reformists endlessly seek a bloc with some mythical "progressive" section of the ruling class. Their standard operating procedure is the attempt to win friends and influence people among the trade-union bureaucracy and influence people among the trade-union bureaucracy, which in this country is slavishly pro-capitalist and openly committed to "class peace." Nowhere was this mechanism more clearly operating than over Polish Solidarność. Though most American workers were kind of indifferent to the whole thing, the labor bureaucracy in the U.S. and abroad was passionate in crusading for "free trade unionism" and Lech Walesa. Millions of dollars were funneled to Solidarność through the agency of the European social-democratic parties while AFL-CIO operatives plied their trade of dirty tricks as they sought to give a "labor" cover to the only "union" that Ronald Reagan ever loved. The AFL-CIO was in its element, carrying out the U.S. government's policies in the tradition that has given it its well-deserved nickname of "AFL-CIA" among labor militants from Latin America to South Korea. They even used some of the same personnel that served in the original Cold War, like Irving Brown, who hired gangsters to break up left-led unions in Western Europe following World War II by beating, terrorizing and assassinating pro-Communist unionists.

What "Solidarity with Solidarity" meant to right-wing "socialists" in America was precisely the chance to reach out to this country's rulers through the intermediary of the sellout union leaders, who last summer paraded a bunch of Vietnamese and East European counterrevolutionaries on Labor Day. American workers, who have seen jobs, wages, conditions and social services in this country go down the tubes without a fight, are supposed to join in celebrating the "death of Communism."

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

Today what we are seeing is the stinking corpse of *Stalinism*. Gorbachev's perestroika was a last desperate attempt of the Stalinist bureaucracy to preserve its position



Spartacist

Moscow, 1 December 1991—ICL organizes clean-up of Karl Marx statue defaced by Yeltsin's mob.

by adopting capitalist measures. But perestroika enormously fueled the forces of capitalist restoration which reached their fruition in Yeltsin's power grab. Now no section of the bureaucracy presents a credible resistance to the capitalist-restorationist dictatorial "democrats." The pathetic August coup "leaders" pledged loyalty to perestroika, and failed to take any measures to seize Yeltsin or even cut off his private phone line to Washington. Ossified "hardliners," also called "patriots," who are as fearful as was their mentor Stalin of what could happen if the working class were to be unleashed as a force in defense of its interests, did absolutely nothing to mobilize their working-class supporters at the decisive moment to act against the Yeltsin counter-coup, while they continue to yearn in vain for the imposition of "order" the way that Stalin did it.

While claiming to stand above all for the unity of the USSR and the preservation of its world position, such "patriotic" organizations as the United Front of Toilers, the Russian Communist Party and Soyuz embrace Great Russian chauvinists, tsarists and vile anti-Semites who further provoke nationalist and communalist bloodletting and fuel the accelerating decomposition of the multinational Soviet Union. The "patriots" compete with the Yeltsinites in Russian nationalism, putting forward "programs" which are antithetical to polarizing Soviet society along clear class lines, which is the only way forward out of the present impasse. Both the pro-Western "democrats" and the Stalinist "patriots" are enemies and oppressors of the Soviet working people. Soyuz leader Colonel Viktor Alknis declares, "My model is the market first and democracy later," the so-called "Chilean model" implemented in Chile over the corpses of militant workers following the Pinochet coup.

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is intervening to bring the Trotskyist program back to the land of its birth. In September 1991, ICL comrades participated in demonstrations, organized mainly by the Stalinist "patriots" milieu, against the closing of the Lenin Museum—the first public expressions of communist opposition to Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's counter-coup. In Moscow on Revolution Day, comrades and supporters marched under the red banner of Communism emblazoned with the insignia of Trotsky's Fourth International, and sold more than 5,000 items of Trotskyist literature.

As much as possible with our small forces, our comrades have intervened to argue for the program of Trotskyist internationalism and to show the way forward. The historic catastrophe now facing the Soviet working people cannot be prevented or even softened by defensive economic struggles. A Leninist vanguard party is urgently needed to lead the coming battles.

To combat shortages of basic foodstuffs, and in the face of the real threat of famine, workers committees must be set up to oversee the distribution of food, smashing the stranglehold of parasitic petty traders, black marketeers and pro-capitalist bureaucrats who would become Russia's new capitalist exploiters. The vast quantities of foodstuffs they are hoarding must be seized and defended, which requires the formation of workers defense committees, i.e., the nucleus of workers militias, in coordination with pro-socialist elements of the Soviet Army.

The attempts to victimize national minorities, to rip apart the multinational Soviet proletariat while giving free rein to monarchists and Pamyat thugs and pardoning Nazi war criminals, must be met by organized, multinational, independent workers defense guards.

These urgently necessary measures can be a step in creating organs of proletarian dual power to challenge and overthrow the Yeltsin/Gorbachev counterrevolutionary gang. Independent workers committees must be formed in factories, mines, railroad yards and other enterprises to prevent layoffs and privatization by taking plants and controlling production. Such workers committees can be the basis for genuine soviets, drawing into their ranks collective farmers, oppressed minorities, working women, Red Army soldiers and officers, old-age pensioners—all those who will be victimized by the "new order." Authentic soviets acting in defense of the urgent needs of the working people must go over to the offensive to become organs for the struggle for power. Once again, the key is leadership.

For decades, the oppressive, corrupt and parasitic Kremlin oligarchy falsely claimed the historic mantle of Lenin's Bolshevik Party. In reality, it was the Trotskyist Left Opposition which preserved and carried forward the revolutionary internationalist program of Red October. It is urgently necessary to build a new Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union, uniting the most class-conscious workers with those intellectuals, evidently not numerous, who reject the prospect of participating in and profiting from the construction of a regime of exploitation. Only under the leadership of such an authentic communist party, section of a reformed Fourth International, can the Soviet working class and its allies defeat the forces of bloody capitalist counterrevolution. The unfolding of this desperate struggle will shape our world for years to come. ■

Interview with Soviet Women

The Bolshevik Revolution established equality before the law and championed the full emancipation of women, in particular striving to replace the institution of the family through socialized childcare and housework. While the Stalinist degeneration of the revolution later undermined or overturned many of the social gains made by women in the Soviet Union, free childcare, free abortion and free education are rights that Soviet women have long claimed as their own (see "Women and the Permanent Revolution," page 28). Yeltsin's threatened counterrevolution against the remaining gains of October would mean mass unemployment and household enslavement for these women.

On 31 October 1991 in Moscow *Women and Revolution* interviewed two Soviet women workers: Tania, whose granduncle was a Bolshevik, works in a technical design office and is a supporter of the International Communist League; Ludmila is an artist and participates regularly in the human chain defense of the Lenin Museum. They spoke of the contradictory experiences of women under Stalinism, of the tremendous deterioration in social conditions of workers and women suffered already under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, and of their lifelong commitment to their communist convictions. We print here an edited translation of our discussion with them.

* * *

W&R: Tell us a little about the situation of women workers and about the working class in general.

Tania: For a woman here about eight or nine hours per day are taken up by her job. Leaving for work at seven in the morning, she would get home around seven at night. I am the mother of two daughters, and I practically never see them. Simply getting food takes up an enormous amount of time. After 7 p.m. there's nothing in the stores except cornmeal. No milk, no bread. What I'm going to feed my children tomorrow I really don't know.

I am extremely tired on the job. Our industries are totally disorganized, and work is sporadic. A woman can earn very little in industry because all the leadership positions are occupied, as a rule, by men. The broad masses of women carry out the lowest-paid, most labor-intensive, most exhausting and tedious work. Our wages are generally scanty. Those who work at state enterprises get wages of around 400 rubles per month maximum.

W&R: What does that mean right now?

Tania: Yeltsin and Popov state that a minimum for a person currently living in Moscow is 521 rubles. We find ourselves not much better off than the unemployed. We don't even have enough for food.

I work at the moment for a technical organization, a design office. We have a lot of highly qualified people, including women. We are being told at work: So who's asking you to stay? Go on, go on home, do the washing, do the cleaning, do the sewing, stay home. Live off your husbands. The state of industry in the country is so abysmal, that it has no need of women's hands, their heads, their brains—they just aren't needed. There's barely

enough jobs for the men. So are these women now supposed to go home to knit booties and cook *pirozhki*?

At work we talk only about how and where we can get food. We still have our grapevine system. We function as a kind of mailbox: such and such an enterprise is closed, you have to be at work on time, leave on time, you can't do anything during working hours.

But it hasn't always been this way here. This has to be emphasized, that all this began in '87. I believe that what awaits women in our country under Yeltsin is a drastic worsening of their situation. Right now, linked to the transition to another economic system, we are confronting the fact that they are preparing for very massive layoffs, and it is the women who will be laid off first.

Yeltsin is planning to liquidate the collective farms, in which the majority of those employed are women. What they are going to do, where they are going to go, nobody knows. Even though it was very hard work, they could do it and whoever wanted to had the right to work there. What are they going to do now, will they be able to get some kind of leases, will they have the money to buy equipment or get some kind of cattle and raise it on their own? Nobody has a clue.

Ludmila: There is a really famous correspondent on television, Tsvetov, a specialist on Japan. He is a partisan of



Bolsheviks organized working women through journal *Rabotnitsa* (*The Working Woman*). Editorial board in 1917.

introducing "Domostroi," a regime in which a woman carries out only domestic activity. She doesn't go to work, but occupies herself with nothing except raising the children and doing housework. I'm not sure how much he was influenced by a similar system in Japan, but he thinks that this has to be imposed by force. He appears constantly on television now.

W&R: In order to give women the possibility of full participation in society, it is essential to eliminate social inequality between men and women. The Bolshevik program included the replacement of the family by means of socialized childcare and other measures. Of course there is a contradiction between the program of the Bolsheviks and the subsequent history of the woman question in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

Ludmila: After the Bolshevik Revolution women were provided with very great opportunities. They were able to attend school on an equal footing with men and to



Der Spiegel

The kings return? Russian reactionaries back the Romanov pretender to the throne Grand Duke Vladimir (left), shown with Orthodox Patriarch Aleksy II in ceremony to rename Leningrad "St. Petersburg."

get the same quality of education. Married women could also have any job for which they possessed the appropriate skills. The state helped them raise their children with all the social benefits.

W&R: Could you tell us something about abortion?

Ludmila: The October Revolution allowed women to secure abortions, but Stalin, in 1936, prohibited them, and they were permitted again only after Stalin's death. Under Brezhnev there were certain well-known problems. Doctors would talk women out of having abortions, especially married women. It was regarded as obligatory for a woman to bear children whether she wanted it or not. When I was 20, I managed to get an abortion only because my husband and I didn't have a registered marriage. Abortions were quite inexpensive; all you had to pay was five rubles.

But since that time the price has been raised regularly each year. The operations are still permitted for the time being, but doctors in women's clinics try to talk young women out of it by telling them that they won't be able to have children, although this is not true.

W&R: Is it difficult here in the Soviet Union to get birth control?

Tania: We have never been given information about birth control at women's health clinics. I'm not sure whether this was deliberate, or for lack of qualifications. Condoms are sold only at very expensive commercial prices. There is only one system for women to prevent pregnancy. There is a chart by which you can calculate the days that are safe, when a woman can't get pregnant. Altogether there are only about five dangerous days. For quite a long time they distributed an incorrect chart in the Soviet Union. Information on this has always been inadequate here. For women who already have children and don't want any more, the only thing they recommend at health clinics is the IUD.

Ludmila: As Tania said, women are the first ones to suffer with a general deterioration of the economy; in particular marriage out of economic necessity is already a lot more common than it used to be. Before 1987 we had free medical care, we had free education, free childcare facilities and nurseries. Now they are planning to privatize housing for big money and there is a growth in the number of extremely expensive organizations. It is complicated to get access to them because of the way society is undergoing a differentiation between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

More and more often there are cases where a woman can't get an abortion: either she has no money, or somebody has talked her out of it. Before such cases were virtually unheard of, but now they are often finding murdered babies. If they go as far as prohibiting abortion altogether (which may happen, especially since the Orthodox church prohibits abortion), the number of such cases can rise.

If Yeltsin and Gorbachev have a total victory our children will never get a higher education. Why? According to initial estimates it will cost 7,000 rubles per year. That means the entire course of study will cost 35,000, which must be paid up-front. For a middle-level art institute they plan to charge a fee of 10,000 for four years. So our children won't be able to undertake their studies, even though Soviet power provided free education.

Tania: Professions like law or economics will be strictly for the upper level of society. To be educated at a law faculty, according to present estimates, will cost from 50,000 to 70,000. A normal person, earning money by his own hands, his own labor, and not through the exploitation of wage labor, couldn't earn that kind of money over his entire life. Our children will learn only to read and write, just as it was before the Revolution of 1917. They will be able only to serve the upper class.

Ludmila: The key moment was 1987, because that was when the propaganda began in our mass media for the capitalist lifestyle. In 1987 the article was deleted from the Brezhnev Constitution about the vanguard role of the Communist Party in the development of society. In gen-

eral, it was from that moment that we began to reject a lot of newspapers, which we had read up until then, because they adopted a pro-imperialist, pro-capitalist position.

Tania: Beginning in 1991 you hear it on the radio every single minute: how we've finally broken with socialism, with the myth of communism, how we're finally building capitalism, just like we've wanted to for so long. And all the programs which the Soviet people were accustomed to have disappeared. There are now restrictions against particular types of broadcasts here. We have censorship of a particularly vicious kind, I would say. Every bit as bad as in Stalin's time.

Ludmila: Not a single pro-communist political event gets any coverage in our mass media, with the exception of two or three newspapers.

Tania: At the time of the so-called putsch, as we call it, there was simply a counterrevolution, namely a Yeltsin-Gorbachev-Bush counterrevolution, conducted according to the script furnished by the U.S. White House. There was an article in *Pravda* about how Bush knew about everything that was going on in Moscow through a direct telephone link with Yeltsin.

Ludmila: If they score their ultimate victory, we will lose all the benefits we had exclusively thanks to the October Revolution.

W&R: The Bolsheviks thought that whether a woman was married or not was her own private business. Are there any difficulties here currently with divorce? If a woman wants a divorce, will this be a problem or not?

Ludmila: One achievement of the October Revolution was full freedom in concluding a marriage contract, as well as in dissolving it—instantly for that matter. It was simply a matter of stating your wish. Now the period required to register for marriage here in the USSR is set at one month, but for a divorce it is quite a bit longer. Furthermore, there has been a constant rise in the amount you have to pay for a divorce. Getting a divorce is a rather complicated business. To begin with there is a long court process, in which an attempt is made to reconcile the two sides. An effort is made to preserve the family at any cost, regardless of whether it was unhappy or dysfunctional.

Tania: In 1982 each side had to pay about 50 rubles. Before 1 April 1991, 300 rubles had to be paid by each party. What the figure is right now, we just don't know.

Ludmila: You're paying a state duty. It's a tax on divorce. Considering the increase in the power of the Orthodox church in the country, the possibility can't be discounted that this could be made the state religion. It may well happen that as a result of the strengthening of influence of the Orthodox church, only church-sanctioned marriages will be recognized, in which there is no right of divorce.

W&R: The Bolsheviks also opposed discrimination against homosexuals. They thought that no measures should be taken against nontraditional sexual inclinations. Now discrimination against homosexuals does exist.

Ludmila: Lesbianism isn't punished, but male homosexuality was put under the criminal law during the Stalin period, and it hasn't been removed to this day. You can



E. P. Dutton

Young women meet in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). Bolsheviks fought to draw women into political and social life through measures like socialized childcare and housework.

be condemned for up to two years in prison.

W&R: A very important newspaper of the Bolsheviks was *Rabotnitsa* (*The Working Woman*). In 1917 most of the Bolshevik newspapers were suppressed during the capitalist reaction after the July Days, and it was possible to publish only *Rabotnitsa*, which became the main publication of the Bolsheviks. There were many women organizers. Lenin stated in his speech on the second anniversary of October that without the assistance and support of the women, the Bolshevik Revolution could not have been carried out.

But it's quite rare to see a woman in politics here. Usually I can only spot a few women in a room where a political meeting is going on. A lot of women were among the leading Bolsheviks, and we are proud to be constructing a party where women are in positions of leadership. What do you think of the role of women in politics?

Tania: I work in a large organization of up to 1,500 people. Rather a lot of women used to work there. We had somewhere around 400 who were communists. Of those more than 100 were women. So the women, generally speaking, did take part. In our country, women take a more active role than men when it's a matter of any type of social measures.

But a woman tends to have the brakes put on her at the middle level. At her job she plays an active role, but she just won't be able to go any higher than that. The most important positions, what we call the cream, those are occupied by men. They've left all the dirty work, all the day-to-day slogging to the women.

Ludmila: In our administrative system there were always a very large number of women. They have occupied a very different position. The caste system, the

apparatus, very often included some particular women. But they were somebody's relatives; they didn't show any sign of communist activity, in the sense of mass work anyway.

This is a particular layer of people, who are used to living in comfort, who are used to getting certain privileges as a result of the responsibilities they have assumed. Right now they risk losing those privileges of theirs, and they'll hold on tight to keep them. They have no communist consciousness whatsoever.

W&R: Of course you know of the heroic role played by Soviet women during World War II, in the struggle against fascism. Our paper has written about the women flyers, described in a book called *Night Witches* in English.

Ludmila: It was the women's flying regiment of Marina Raskova. Until 1987 there were masses of broadcasts on that in this country. I remember these women flyers ever since my childhood; they were really famous people in the Soviet Union.

W&R: After the war came a time of purges. They started spreading a slander that the women who had fought in the war were prostitutes. Stalin wanted to return women to their lesser role. Can you say anything about this?

Tania: In Stalin's time they made films about the war and always left out the part about the women's heroism. They only began to make pictures of this after Stalin was already dead. Under Brezhnev quite a few films were made showing the kind of role women played in the war. Generally at that time such positive propaganda was quite big. But apparently it wasn't enough to compete with the propaganda of the good life in the West. Back in the Brezhnev period, which everybody curses so much now, there were some very good books as well. Some wonderful poems were written, whose authors would now very gladly forget they had ever written. You can't say they were simply done on command; they were very expressive.

Ludmila: I have been told these films are pretty close to reality, and people watch them with tears in their eyes as they remember their youth. They were 16 to 20 years old during the war. Perceptions at that time are sharp, and they've remembered everything incredibly clearly. Now they're over 65 to 70 years old, and they've ended up in a pretty awful situation. It's hard for them to understand what's going on.

Tania: They are faced with the question: what did we fight for? The people who saved the world from fascism have been brought to this.

W&R: What do people say about the war today? I know that now there is a lot of propaganda saying that the victory over fascism is unimportant today.

Ludmila: There was one elderly man who expressed his thought that those who died in the Great Patriotic War were very lucky people. He envied them, because they knew what they were giving their lives for. Dying was a tremendous happiness, and people really went into battle with that feeling.

Now they say things like: hey old man, if you hadn't fought, we could be drinking Bavarian beer now. That's what they're saying to a war hero, a veteran who stopped Hitler! They turn the fact that he won into an accusation against him! You see, if this victory had never happened,



ADN-Zentraibild

July 1944: Partisan women enter Minsk, liberated in Red Army advance against Nazis.

we'd be living the good life now, we'd be a German colony.

Tania: They say: Hitlers come and go; so what if even Hitler had won? Eventually he'd be gone. And then you'd simply have the "global economy," which would have won out in our country as well, and so by now we'd all be living just like they live in the West, and everything would be wonderful here.

Ludmila: It is a very specific kind of people who talk like that. As a rule, it's the very young people, the ones most strongly influenced by imperialist propaganda. They are the ones who have suddenly decided that, under socialism with its free education, free medical care, free housing, life has been miserable (so the explanation goes). And if only they could be living under capitalism, it would be terrific.

I don't know what price they're prepared to pay to bring about this fine way of life. Maybe they're prepared to become *mafiosi* and steal money, or simply rob people. That's why criminal activity has become so much stronger here. It's a very specific kind of people who are grieving over the fact that we don't have capitalism now.

W&R: There is a tremendous threat of counterrevolution here, but this question has not yet been decided. For example, if there were already fascism here, we would have a much more difficult time meeting with you. The question is one of leadership. We are attempting to establish a Trotskyist party here. It's not like the situation in the former East Germany, where they now have the Fourth Reich, or Poland, where Solidarność is in power. It's possible and essential to fight.

Ludmila: Now we do have a fascist organization here in Russia, Pamyat. For the moment its members are few in number, but they are freely selling their literature in the Metro. It's terribly shameful, and of course no law will be passed here to suppress fascism, because the only laws they're going to pass in our country these days are

laws to suppress communism.

At present there is no attempt to take on the statements made by Pamyat, either in the press, or on television. Everyone simply keeps quiet. Just as if this were a completely insignificant group of people, who simply have their own views, but nothing more.

Maybe you should just call it pure Russian chauvinism, what Yeltsin is propagandizing at the moment. But you just pay attention to some of the things this guy is saying: it's just Russians, Russians, Russians. It's not far at all from there to Russian fascism. Yeltsin was the first to accept the Pamyat organization, before he became president.

W&R: We need to call for a mobilization of workers and nationalities against Pamyat. It's shameful that Pamyat is planning to demonstrate in Leningrad, the hero city, on November 7. In Leningrad! We need a party that has the potential to mobilize the working class to smash the fascists. Now, when they are still few.

Ludmila: What's bad is that the mass of the population does not believe that it's fascism. Maybe they don't want to see this. They say: how can this be here, how can fascism be here, when we fought fascism? This is a very dangerous position.

The Patriots current exists here. These people are the ones who put above all else the great, mighty, indivisible Russia, and the establishment of such a state. Their positions are very close to the fascists. They come out against the democrats. But we have the impression that if the democrats promise them this great, mighty, indivisible Russia, the Patriots will be ready to do anything.

Just as in Germany in 1933, to a great many of the pro-communist intelligentsia, the pronouncements of the Patriots seem so repugnant, they just provoke laughter. But one has to be aware that this is a very great danger. Unfortunately, many don't see this at the moment. We have to open the people's eyes to the existence of fascism here.

One of the times I was standing in one of the human chains at the Lenin Museum a young man came up. "What are you standing there for?" he says. "Well, never mind, soon you'll stop standing here. We've finally set up our White Guards," he says, "Yeltsin—he's our main leader for ideology." So he opens his jacket and he has this White Guard medal with some symbol of old Russia. He says: "We already have about 2,000. Soon we'll have 25,000." We say to him: "What are you going to do, come and shoot us?" He says: "Well, if you don't understand words, then of course, what else is there to do with you?"

It's pretty clear now in Moscow there's some kind of self-styled popular guard being formed, made up of youth. For pay. It's going to be a sort of rapid strike force against any demonstrations, strikes, meetings that will be held.

W&R: We hailed the Red Army going into Afghanistan because the Red Army stood against the *mujahedin*, against the reactionaries who wanted to enslave women, and because it was defending the borders of the Soviet Union. Do people in the Soviet Union know about the situation of women in Afghanistan? Do they know that they have to wear the veil?

Ludmila: There was always a broad awareness about the situation of women in the East. But again, with the

beginning of perestroika they stopped talking about it. Because of this, when the armies went into Afghanistan, immediately the condition of women stopped being discussed.

Tania: The propaganda says only that we invaded a foreign country, we sent our children to die. They did not tell us about the women, or about the children.

Ludmila: We understood that they were fulfilling their international duty. But besides this, with one hand they were sending in the army, and with the other hand they were telling us at the same time: what are children doing there, and what are they dying for? So they played on people's maternal feelings. And it ended in the fact that the army was withdrawn, and we consider this a terrible betrayal of the communists in Afghanistan. The fact is that we did not fulfil our international duty to the end as we should have done. For us it was a big blow, finding out about the withdrawal of the army out of Afghanistan.

W&R: What do you know about the situation of women in Central Asia?

Ludmila: We heard that there were mass self-immolations in Turkmenistan on account of how hard the conditions of life were for these women. There was mass protest against their situation and the discrimination they face.

W&R: Maybe you would like to say something to the workers and women workers around the world and in the West.

Ludmila: We support the world proletariat. I am a professional artist and jewelry maker and I have a son. My situation may be a bit better than the situation of other women, because I can earn a living by my own labor. My education I got free, thanks to the Soviet power. At the Lenin Museum frequently foreign correspondents approach me and ask what I do for a living. When they hear that I am a jeweller, they are very surprised that I support the workers, because they consider that on account of my economic position I should belong to another class.

But my whole life I have been a person of communist convictions. I am proud of this, and I do not plan to renounce them as Yeltsin and Gorbachev have done. We need international solidarity and ask that this be shown as widely and as powerfully as possible.

Tania: All my life I also have been a communist, literally since childhood. That's the way I was brought up. I identify with the Bolsheviks. My granduncle was one of the members of the old VTsIK [All-Union Central Executive Committee]. I was born in Red Presnya, the workers district in Moscow. My ancestors were all highly skilled workers. These were the people who raised me and they were most intelligent people, with a deep inner understanding, despite their lack of formal education.

I would like the workers of all the world to know that we are here, that we are not all like those who support Gorbachev and Yeltsin. There are many others among us here. We will do everything possible, with all our might to see that neither counterrevolution, nor Yeltsinism, nor their base betrayal of the Soviet people shall pass. We hope that with each passing day we will become more and more; the workers press must also support us.

W&R: Thank you. ■

Trotsky Was Right: How Stalinism Undermined Legacy of October Revolution

The following speech, edited for publication, was given by Spartacist League Central Committee member Jim Robertson at a 17 November 1991 meeting in the Bay Area for the Lenin-Trotsky Fund.

There are two great Westernizers in Russian history: one was Peter the Great and the other was Lenin. They were Westernizers not in the sense that they wanted to create colonial dependence for the Russian areas, but seeing the immense backwardness of Russia—one in a period where autocracy was the order of the day and one where the proletariat had become a significant factor—each reached out, in his own way and in his own time, to modernize Russia.

In the case of Lenin, this was not on a nationalist basis, not in order to beat the Turks, the Prussians and the Swedes, but to create a new world order that Marx and Engels had sketched out, in which one would abolish the struggles for ascendancy between imperialist powers and the necessity for national struggles for self-determination or independence. That laid the basis for the Communist International. I use Lenin's name as shorthand for the entire Bolshevik Party, of which he was the undisputed leader. He had a great many colleagues in this endeavor.

Modern Russian history opens with the Decembrist Uprising in 1825, when sections of the officer corps and the first sprouts of the Westernizing intelligentsia, facing the implacable opposition of tsarism, thought in terms of a coup, and were executed or deported to Siberia for

the result. The Decembrists did not look toward the tsarist intrigues in Europe—you know, how to play the Austrians against the French against the Prussians and the rest. They had drawn conclusions from Russia's expansion indigenously several thousand miles to the east; for example, they enthused over the eastward expansion into Siberia and all the way to Alaska. I don't know if they appreciated the reason why Russia could expand indigenously for thousands of miles, simply absorbing native peoples. The reason was that the Russians were involved in the fur trade, and they did not try to exterminate the natives or to culturally transform them, but to hire them as assistants to do what they already had done all their lives for many generations. It was simply an accelerated hunting/gathering activity, only this time for the world market. For related reasons, but very contrary to British imperialist practices, the Russians sexually intermingled with the natives, and the children were named Ivan and baptized. So there was a process of organic absorption, and thus the Russian Socialist Republic extends all the way to the Kamchatka Peninsula, to the Pacific Ocean. To this day American Baptist missionaries have trouble with the Aleuts in the Aleutian Islands, who insist on clinging to their ancient ancestral Bible that goes back into an infinity of time, which happens to be in Cyrillic.

The tsarist court and its entourage went another way. Russia had been a strong state certainly since the time of Peter the Great. The autocracy and the church were subordinated to the tsarist empire itself, and the nobility's



M.S. Nappelbaum

**V.I. Lenin at
First Congress of
the Communist
International, 1919.**

titles were generated from service to the imperial court and the imperial administration. In the 19th century, an intelligentsia grew up, along with a countercurrent of Slavic mysticism. That's why I can call Lenin, validly, a Westernizer, because he fought this very reactionary current that said there's a special Slavic soul and we must eschew all things Western.

Lenin wrote a little essay, "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism," in which he said the Marxist movement "is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism," referring to the repeated revolutions that had taken place in the metropolitan areas of France since 1789. And he focused on the new, but very concentrated, proletariat that was growing up in the various parts of the tsarist empire.

Through the 1905 revolutionary experience and the disasters that the Russian government experienced in World War I, the Bolsheviks regrouped in the course of a general social revolution, a prolonged popular revolution. The October 1917 insurrection was a coup planned after all the intermediate forces had tried to make various kinds of compromises between the old order and the appetites of the working class and, to a considerable extent, of the peasantry, which were never to be satisfied. Each government (most typically Kerensky) had continued to honor its treaty obligations to the Allies and had continued to endlessly send millions of men against the all too murderously efficient German army.

The coup was very successful—rapidly and highly peacefully in Leningrad, and equally rapidly but not quite as peacefully in Moscow—and was simply accepted all across the Soviet Union, all the way to Vladivostok. It took about six months for the White Guard officers and their Allied advisers and financial suppliers to begin to develop effective White armies, which were put in the field in the summer of 1918. Russia experienced a terribly debilitating civil war. The Bolsheviks won it: they had interior lines of communication, and when it came right down to it,



Planeta Publishers

Petrograd: 18 June 1917 mass demonstration was a sea of Bolshevik slogans. Signs call for: "Power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies" and "Down with the Capitalist Ministers."

although a good many of the ideas of the Bolsheviks were not too appetizing to the mass of the Russian peasantry, it was a better deal than the tsarists were offering.

But Russian industry, badly deteriorated, virtually ceased to exist. The few hundred thousand workers who had been in the vanguard of the 1917 Revolution ceased to exist, by and large, as a working class. They died or they were pulled into the administration or especially into the army. There were no raw materials for factories anyhow, except those that were diverted exclusively to the Civil War. When the Civil War was about won (under the policy of War Communism, which was simply a ruthless

Bettmann Archives



Peter the Great (foreground) sought to modernize Russia by introducing Western science and technology such as Dutch shipbuilding.



Hoover Institute Archives

Red Army poster of 1920 urges working-class recruits to learn how to become military leaders. Best of Soviet proletariat gave their lives in the bitter civil war.

seizure of peasant products), the end of the war and the growing disgruntlement of the peasantry were signaled by the Kronstadt uprising. It was an uprising of sailors, peasant boys who had been put in this safe area during the war to replace the Bolshevik sailors who had gone to the front or otherwise served the revolution.

The Bolshevik Party at the time was and had been debating a new course, but meanwhile was inertially carrying out the policies of War Communism. The Kronstadt uprising marked the first of about 50 years of alternative interpretations of the Soviet Union as something other than a workers state. At that point, the anarchists began calling for a third revolution. One theoretical interpretation after another that the Soviet Union was no longer a workers state became current. In renouncing the Soviet Union as a workers state, the state capitalist currents have based themselves on about three different—and more or less mutually counterposed—points of qualitative departure.

Meanwhile, something very bad was at work in the USSR. Without the political ballast of the proletariat, all parties other than the Bolsheviks, more or less, were undergoing polarization (with the exception of Martov's Left Mensheviks, who still staggered down the middle of the road). Some groups were simply becoming counterrevolutionary, while the other wing, like some Left Social Revolutionaries and a few Left Mensheviks, went over to the Bolshevik Party. So the Bolshevik Party became the repository of such revolutionary virtues as continued to exist in the Soviet Union. But meanwhile deterioration was taking place within the Soviet Union, along with various personal transformations.

The death of Sverdlov and the illness of Lenin vastly facilitated the concentration of administrative powers in the hands of a fairly minor figure known as J.V. Stalin. Actually, he was a Georgian named Djughashvili, but like some semicolonial individuals, he was a greater exponent of Great Russian chauvinism than the ordinary Russian. In the fall of 1923, the growing pressures of economic dislocation, the disorganization of the peasantry and the lack of industrial production created what Trotsky called

the "scissors crisis." When the scissors are closed, the prices of industrial and agricultural goods are close together. But with prices for industrial goods rising and for agricultural goods falling, the scissors open, and there is growing discontent among the peasants.

So there was a big debate in the Bolshevik Party. The debate was slammed shut; by then the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union had acquired a sufficient consciousness to begin to act in concert. There was a party conference in January of 1924 where, as a way to shake the fist of the bureaucracy at the party, the representation proportions were completely out of line. Substantial forces in the Leningrad and Moscow Communist parties were in opposition to the administration, which was then, with Lenin out of action, concentrated in the hands of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin, who constituted a "Troika," as it was called, a team of three.

With this administrative control ensured, the boys at the top began rapidly to develop new theories. The failure of the German Revolution—which Lenin had looked to as the beginning of the necessary extension of the revolution internationally—in 1918-19 and in 1923 propelled the move to the right in the Soviet Union. In the fall of 1924, Stalin advanced the extremely characteristic idea that "we will build socialism in Russia alone." In this miserable, wracked country, somehow socialism was to be built. The ideologist Bukharin found favor. His idea was that not only can you build socialism in one country alone, but you can build it at a snail's pace, entirely independently of the world market and imperialist economic and military appetites. It was isolationism with a great vengeance.

There was a very considerable regroupment of those who rejected this and insisted that the fate of the Soviet Union was intimately associated with international and revolutionary developments. Trotsky was simply the best-known figure. The balance of the '20s consisted in power maneuvering: first, the isolation and downgrading of Zinoviev, and then, eventually, of Bukharin. But it was a period of relative mass social freedom, while the administration at the top was fighting it out, and

Nikolai Bukharin (center) served as Stalin's ideological hatchet man against Trotskyist Left Opposition during the 1920s. (At right is Stalin's lieutenant Sergo Ordzhonikidze.)



the Stalin faction emerged triumphant.

Its triumph, at the end of the 1920s, generated a considerable totalitarian grip on Soviet society which rapidly spread into practically every field of human endeavor. (The only one that I can think of that was excluded was music. Stalin executed a lot of poets, because he could kind of figure out what the poetry meant; if it meant the wrong thing, you got eliminated. He could never quite get the composers, because that was a little obscure. But he imposed such a structure on the musical arts that the bitter joke was that if Stalin couldn't whistle it, you couldn't

get it published.) So this rather frothy bureaucracy had consolidated around a faction, and this added impetus to Mensheviks or anarcho-syndicalists who wanted to find new reasons to write off the Russian state as at bottom not a working-class state.

Seen through Stalin's eyes, the whole thing was terribly difficult. First he had to deal with his allies, who had bigger names than he did, and he got rid of them. Then his own faction more or less believed the doctrines of socialism in one country as they were first enunciated, and were somewhat idealistic. They began to like a chap named Kirov, who in 1934 was shot to death, which was of great convenience to Stalin. He immediately blamed his opponents. In 1934 the Russian CP had the 17th Party Congress, in which a lot of votes were not cast for Stalin. The party didn't have another congress until 1939, and hardly anybody was still alive who had been to the 1934 congress. The consolidation of a totalitarian bureaucracy of a very brittle and murderous sort, along with extensive, enormous purge trials, meant the liquidation of the tops of the economy and the army and the like. It resulted in the sentencing of many millions of men and women to time in forced labor camps, which became a significant factor.

So again new interpretations of the Soviet Union were made. In the early New Deal, two guys named Berle and Means wrote an influential book saying that American capitalism is no longer owned by the capitalists, but instead by the managers of American industry, and the capitalists who own the shares are merely parasites. As a description of the day-to-day operations of American capitalism, this is as suitable as any other. But when you get into a factional struggle in a corporation, you very rapidly learn it is not the managers, but the holders of the common shares, that in fact do own. But that was probably the germ from whence Shachtman and Burnham in the American Trotskyist movement got their idea that the people who were managing Soviet society are the owners of the means of production. In America this was a prevailing idea—called "bureaucratic collectivism"—among revisionist elements for quite a while. It never took hold in England, where various forms of state capitalist ideas dominated: that is, that the Soviet state itself is the one capitalist. I was never attracted to this idea, because capitalism is associated with the development of surplus value, of exploitation, and the Soviet Union allocated its labor on the basis of administrative decisions and quite



Lenin and Trotsky among delegates to the 10th Congress of the Russian CP, March 1921. Delegates helped crush Kronstadt mutiny linked to White Guard counterrevolutionaries.



International Publishers

Russian Orthodox priests march at head of Black Hundreds pogromists, 1907. Pamyat fascists today (right), Great Russian anti-Semitic terrorists legitimized by Yeltsin, march in Moscow in early 1991 with portrait of Tsar Nicholas II.



Spartacist

independently of the possibilities of financial return. But right down to this day, the current British centrists and left critics of the Labour Party and New Leftists think along the lines of "state capitalism."

Trotsky was developing an analysis of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state, in which the political commanding heights had been seized by a bureaucracy which was inherently unstable and polarizable. This bureaucracy represented a kind of a bridge between the base, which was the Soviet Union that had issued out of the revolution and Civil War, and a series of accommodations with the imperialist powers. So socialism in one

country has a very important corollary. If socialism is going to exist only in one country, what is the role of the working class in the rest of the world? The answer is, to defend socialism in that one country, by supposedly finding friendly capitalists to make common electoral blocs and parties with, as opposed to the hostile and evil capitalists who want to do something bad to the Soviet Union. That's the root theory that still operates in the American Communist Party today, which sees progressive Democrats and evil, reactionary Republicans.

All this was a very slow process. Stalin died, they got a semi-reformer, actually personally a decent chap, Khrushchev. He seems to have been the only top Soviet leader who was not personally involved in the mass, bloody terror. But perhaps he wasn't too ept. At least he didn't remain in power very long, but he told a good bit of the truth about the past. All of this, of course, is implicitly immense evidence that the bureaucracy was and is not a possessing class. In order to possess, you have to be able to inherit. But in Russia if a bureaucrat gets fired from his job, it's like working for the Ford Motor Company—you're fired, you're out, and that's it. And you end up at best with a very small pension, and at worst shot as a traitor. So this was not a class in that it did not offer the perquisites of ownership, which are very real and have been real in every society hitherto.

Under Brezhnev, which they now call a period of stagnation, things ran pretty well. But there was no more real terror. If you were a dissident, you might be abused a bit, deprived of your job, sent off for a few months of re-education, then you would come back and hang around in Moscow writing *samizdat*. In general there had been a multilateral agreement that with Stalin gone, and his henchman Beria (the head of the KGB) having been shot as a British agent since 1919, they weren't going to do this to each other anymore, that it was too hard.

Furthermore, changes had taken place. They'd already gone through a generation of bureaucrats, who started out as rather bright, uneducated, ambitious peasants who found favor in the eyes of their chiefs. They went out



Victoria and Albert Museum

Meeting of village elders, 1910, with women in back: Poverty and oppression prevailed across Russia. Stalinist dogma of "socialism in one country" glorified backwardness and betrayed international revolution.

and worked hard, but then they too had children—and the children hung about in the main centers of the country, because they didn't want to go back to the farm. They got high-grade degrees from Moscow U. and places like that. They are the new intelligentsia. And they look to the West, not in the sense of learning from it, but of conciliating it and becoming consumers, with a house in the hills somewhere near Los Angeles. And that explains, by and large, the social base of Yeltsin.

The Russians have been sealed off for a very long time, and they're quite innocent. They believe that any criticism of the United States is a lie by the bureaucracy, because they've been lied to a lot, as well as told the truth a lot. They think that one can simply join the West. Well, one can join the West, all right, like Brazil or Mexico. And that's what the world bourgeoisie would like to do with the Soviet Union. But they have a problem: it was profitable for the United States to spend tens of billions of dollars a year in war preparations against the Soviet Union, but nobody wants to put capital into Russia because the prospect of extracting profit is very uncertain. So very little money is flowing into East Europe as a whole, except the Germans are maintaining and rebuilding an infrastructure in East Germany, after having destroyed its industrial base. And if the Poles can't get money, it's not going to be so easy for the Russians either.

The East European countries now are neocapitalist without capital. It doesn't matter that they haven't managed to denationalize any plants because nobody wants to buy anything—the industrial capacities are not particularly good—and furthermore it's a stormy area. But Russia had an indigenous proletarian revolution. The historical memory of the proletariat is badly but not entirely impaired. Stalin created the Stakhanovite program, in which people are supposed to be paid for how hard they work. The idea of equality is a pervasive feeling among huge masses in the Soviet order. To them, the idea of private ownership of the means of production looks quite literally like *sheer theft*. So that has been for the Russian proletariat, which is now a much larger section of Soviet society, something that never caught on. Meanwhile the Yeltsin forces are fast accruing everyone who wants to introduce inequality and impoverishment for the masses, and status as a bourgeoisie co-equal with the West (a semi-utopian aspiration) for the few. Yeltsin is a really despicable character who has long had relations with the anti-Semitic fascists of Pamyat, for example. His main drive is for an early, fast, brutal capitalization of the USSR, at the expense of the constituents that stand outside of Russia itself.

So the issue has not yet been completely joined in the Soviet Union. On the 74th anniversary of the October Revolution, in defiance of the authorities and without official authorization, the working class began to raise its head and come forward with slogans. Not all of them were so appetizing, because there are some nationalists there who want to blame the Jews for everything, as well as Wall Street. But there are also some internationalists, so when we intervene, when we have trouble with some people who want to beat us up, there were always groups that come and defend us, too. The mobilization in Moscow in particular was very large, around 90,000. And this was in spite of the threats by Popov, the liberal mayor of Moscow, who up until the last couple of hours said that he wasn't going to let the march happen.

It's quite important to get the Soviet working class into

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action, and along intensely political and Bolshevik lines. The issues do not lend themselves to simple economism: a better deal with the trade union to get a few more rubles from management. Because obviously—and it's obvious to the Russians, too—the whole of the country hangs in the balance. While Gorbachev's earlier appointees were liberals, the late ones were rather conservative, and they split off and last August they tried to stage a coup, which was a disastrous, isolated failure. They turned their backs on the working class, and the coup collapsed. But the Yeltsinites do not have complete control yet. We are dealing not with a totalitarian bureaucracy, but a decomposed one. There is every kind of bureaucratic obstacle while at the same time very shady operators will print our stuff for a very considerable amount of dollars—anything!

There is a window of opportunity; the police do not knock on your door. We want to exploit this very much against the capitalist-restorationists, and to engage in a struggle among those who oppose the capitalist-restorationists and against those, like the Great Russian chauvinists, who believe in Mother Russia, "beat the Yid," and the suppression of the constituent republics. We find a considerable base of support for our position for a Leninist-Trotskyist party, which means for a political revolution in the Soviet Union. ■

Women's Emancipation and the Struggle Against Imperialism

In the epoch of imperialist decay, worldwide economic crisis and capitalist counterrevolution have put women in the cross hairs of reaction as the bankers and their politicians and priests drive them into the confines of the family, the kitchen and the church. In the U.S. politicians of both parties have egged on Bible bigots in the assault on women's fundamental right to abortion, while women's social gains in the former deformed workers states of East Germany and Poland are among the first targets of capitalist restoration. Bourgeois ideologues call this the triumph of "democracy" and the "death of Communism."

The observation of the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier that the emancipation of women stands as a decisive index of general social progress introduces "Women and the Permanent Revolution," here reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 17 (March 1973). In the generation after the French Revolution, Fourier addressed the oppressed status of women as the most acute and manifest expression of the contradiction between capitalist society and its own ideals, "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*." Today, nearly two centuries later, daily life for the majority of women on the planet—nearly two billion poor women in the impoverished Third World—is little better than that of a beast of burden. Across vast regions of the globe women are swathed in the veil, or subject to hideous mutilations like female circumcision (suffered by some 100 million in Africa), or sold into marriage against their will. In the backward countries, the woman question engages the deepest prejudices and engenders the deepest fears in societies encumbered with ancient traditions, which are buttressed by imperialist domination. "Women and the Permanent Revolution," printed in *Workers Vanguard* before the consolidation of *Women and*

Revolution as the journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League, is devoted to illuminating the struggle against imperialism and racism and for national liberation, the emancipation of women and socialist revolution.

Flowing directly from the great historical transformation of the Industrial Revolution, Western women can generally take for granted certain fundamental rights such as the ability to choose a marriage partner, to learn to read and write, to vote. While they remain oppressed by the institution of the family, a key bulwark of capitalist rule, their overall position is, relative to that of the women of the East, a measure of the gains of capitalism over feudalism and tribalism. But capitalism's progressive historical role has long since ended. For example, the growth of capitalism spawned the social and political forces that destroyed the feudalist domination of the Catholic church and embraced the principles of the Enlightenment. But today the capitalists consciously manipulate and cynically reinforce the most deeply ingrained religious reaction. In the 1950s the high priest of the Cold War, John Foster Dulles, exulted that:

"...the religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious virtues. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find and develop it."

—quoted in Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (1957)

While whipping up anti-Muslim racism to build domestic support for imperialist adventures, Washington forges military alliances with tribalist cutthroats in Afghanistan and theocrats in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Spartacist League's *Women and Revolution* upholds the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution, linking struggle for women's liberation to the social power of the proletariat, the only consistently revolutionary, anti-capitalist class in modern society.

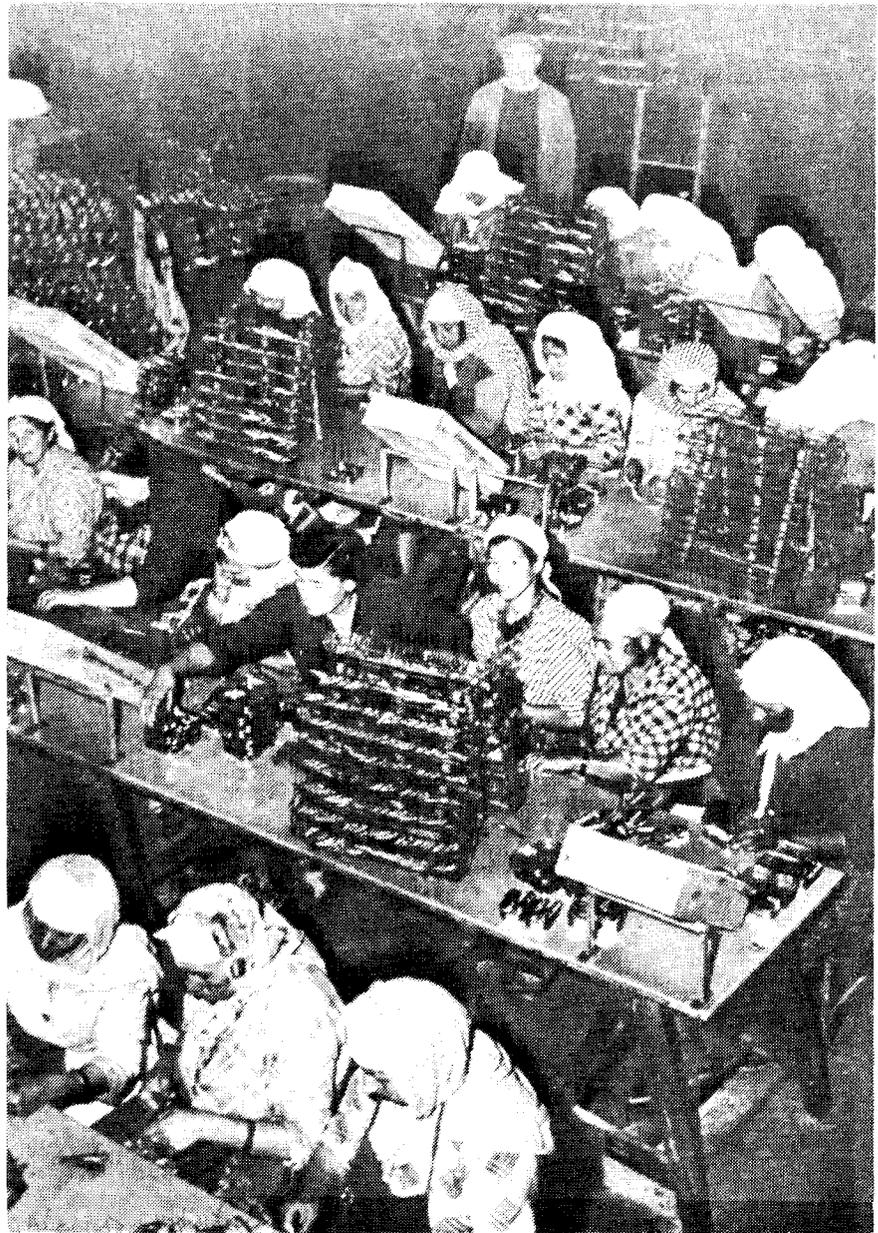
There is no margin for independent development of the backward capitalist countries. The weak "national bourgeoisie," intimately tied to imperialism and threatened by its "own" proletariat, cannot take up even the democratic tasks formerly associated with bourgeois revolutions, to say nothing of "building socialism." Against Stalinists and petty-bourgeois nationalists, Trotskyists hold that only the program of the permanent revolution can overthrow imperialist domination through workers revolution uniting all of the oppressed behind a Leninist vanguard party, the tribune of the people. Such a party will mobilize the revolutionary determination of the women toilers of the East as did the Bolsheviks in 1917 when they threw off the chains of tsarist society and broke the power of the Orthodox church.

Nationalism Against Women

When this article first appeared, the Algerian defeat of French colonialism in a bitter, bloody war was over ten years in the past. But among New Leftists and other petty-bourgeois revisionists, cheerleading for the left-nationalist FLN (National Liberation Front) included support for its disgusting embrace of the veil as a "symbol of resistance." Now Algerian women are being battered in a fundamentalist holy war as the Islamic Salvation Front seeks to take control of the country and completely eliminate even the paltry gains they have made.

This tragedy was replayed as farce in 1978 and 1979 when pseudo-leftists of all varieties hailed the seventh-century reactionary ayatollah Khomeini as the "anti-imperialist" leader of a great "progressive" struggle. At the height of Khomeini's popularity, the international Spartacist tendency (now the International Communist League) stood alone in telling the truth about the "Islamic Revolution" and calling for the exploited and oppressed to break from Khomeini and fight for a workers revolution.

With its extreme conditions of combined and uneven development Iran was the closest analogue to the Russian tsarist empire at the time of the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty. In such conditions of backwardness, even the mildest token reforms can evoke terrifying revenge against women from the strongholds of superstition. Khomeini first went into opposition against Iran's Peacock Throne during the "White Revolution" of 1963, when to counter the threat of a "red" socialist revolution the shah tampered with the Islamic code to afford some legal rights to women: Western dress was officially approved and the veil discouraged, while the right to vote was introduced. Though



Jeune Afrique

Algerian women factory workers: participation in social production provides a precondition for social emancipation.

these advances were generally limited to the upper classes, leaving the masses of Iranian women untouched, such tokens, combined with the shah's "land reform," were enough to spark the revolt of the mullahs against this perceived threat to their dominance of Iranian society. Based solidly on a reactionary social agenda and the class interests of the mullahs and *bazaaris*, the Khomeini forces took advantage of the popular revulsion against the U.S. imperialist-sponsored shah and his regime of dictatorship and torture.

Absent as a factor from the social convulsion in Iran was the working class, which has historically been militant and pro-Communist, and which included an important component of ethnic non-Persians (particularly Arab oil workers). The key element of a Bolshevik vanguard party, such as led the Russian working class to victory in 1917, was missing. As we said in our special issue on Iran,

"Down With Islamic Reaction! For Workers Revolution in Iran!":

"To unleash the tremendous revolutionary potential of the woman question requires a class-struggle leadership armed with a broad new vision of a social order of equality and freedom. The fight for the basic needs of the vast mass of Iranian women—an end to forced marriage; literacy and education; contraception; freedom from poverty and legal subjugation; No to the Veil!—is an attack on the foundations of the capitalist social order and poses nothing less than socialist revolution."

—*Women and Revolution* No. 19, Fall 1979

Afghanistan: Red Army Fought Tribal Reactionaries

The bitter experience of Khomeini's Iran, where thousands of leftists and other opponents have been slaughtered, where women are beaten and jailed if they do not wear the *hijab* (veil), exposes the deadly dangers of the Kabul government's reconciliation with the mullahs today in Afghanistan.

In 1980 the battle for Afghanistan became what was probably the first instance of a shooting war in modern history ignited specifically by the question of women's emancipation. The revolt of the CIA-backed *mujahedin* against the Soviet-backed regime was fueled by Kabul's attempts to reduce the bride price and to teach young girls to read. Faced with unenviable options on its Afghanistan border, the Brezhnev regime in the Soviet degenerated workers state chose what it saw as the lesser evil: intervention against the U.S.-backed tribalist reactionaries. This pushed the Soviet military into defending (however reluctantly) social progress and women's rights, opening the road to the liberation of the Afghan toilers from a miserably poor, feudal-derived state composed of a mosaic of nationalities, ethnic and tribal groupings with virtually no proletariat. Assimilation into the USSR through

an Afghan workers state would have constituted enormous social progress. Calling for the defeat of Washington's tribalist "holy warriors," we said, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and "Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!"

Gorbachev's criminal withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces from Afghanistan in 1989 was a cold-blooded betrayal of the Afghan and Soviet peoples. It also helped pave the way for the U.S. bloody war in the Persian Gulf and fueled imperialist appetites for counterrevolution in the USSR itself (see "Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!", page 11).

Ancient Roots of Women's Oppression

In reprinting "Women and the Permanent Revolution" we note that our knowledge of the development of early human society has deepened in the intervening period. We know far more about these subjects than could Marx and Engels when they were first formulating the principles of historical materialism in *The Holy Family* and *The German Ideology* in the 1840s. It was not until later into the 19th century that the study of anthropology and archaeology developed; in particular Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877) had an enormous impact on Marxist thought. The exciting discoveries of more recent decades by no means negate the analysis given in Frederick Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, the key Marxist text on the subject. Instead, they amplify and reinforce the materialist understanding of the origins of women's oppression in the institution of the family.

It is now generally agreed—even by those who agree on little else—that agriculture was a fairly early discovery in the development of a more advanced technology. In the early, biologically based division of labor between men and women in the hunter-gatherer societies, women,



Jalil/SIPA

Haiti in the epoch of imperialist domination: desperate poverty for masses in waterfront shanties.

as the gatherers, were likely to have been key to the discovery that one can cultivate plants, as well as to the invention of other arts like weaving. The social surplus made possible by such revolutionary technological advances laid the basis for the development of classes, with a ruling, leisured class able to live off the labor of others. The institution of the family, with accompanying monogamy and domestic enslavement of women, arose to ensure inheritance of property through the male line. As society

differentiated into classes, rulers maintained their domination through the armed state.

Engels called the overthrow of mother right and the development of the family "*the world historic defeat of the female sex*"—the first entry of social oppression into human history. It is our task, as Marxist revolutionaries, to sweep away all institutions of oppression and exploitation through socialist revolution to build a new world of equality, dignity and abundance.

Women and the Permanent Revolution

For Marxists the emancipation of women from their special oppression is a precise gauge of the degree to which a society has been purged of social oppression as a whole. This interrelationship was first formulated by the utopian socialist Fourier:

"The change in a historical epoch can always be determined by the progress of women towards freedom, because in the relations of woman to man, of the weak to the strong, the victory of human nature over brutality is most evident. The degree of emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation."

—Théorie des Quatre Mouvements

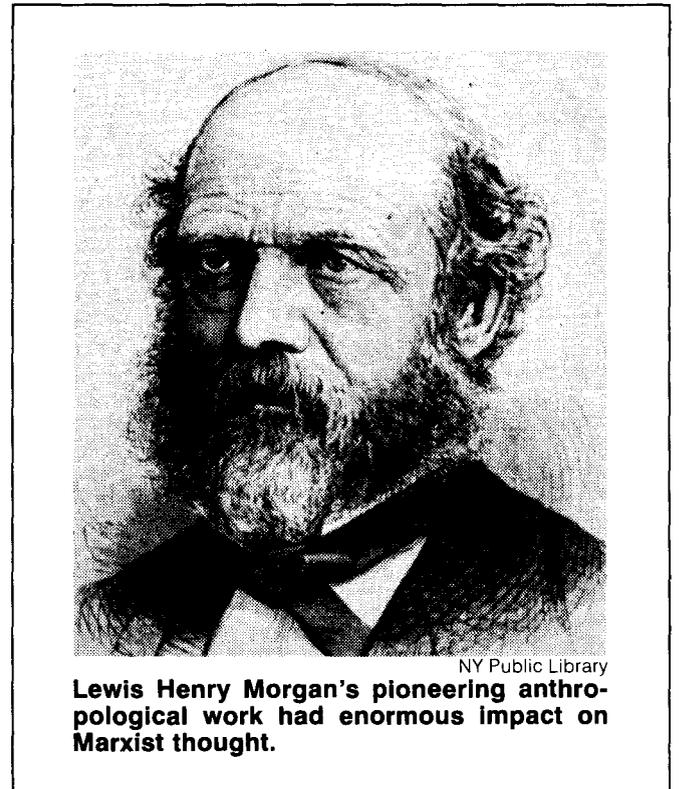
Fourier was paraphrased by Marx in *The Holy Family* (1845):

"The relation of man to woman, is the *most natural* relation of human being to human being. It indicates therefore, how far man's *natural* behavior has become human, and how far his human essence has become a *natural* essence for him, how far his *human nature* has become *nature* for him."

In a blunter and more succinct fashion, Marx repeated the same point 23 years later in a letter to Kugelmann: "social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex, (the ugly ones included)."

Monogamous Family Emerges

One of the ironies of history is that the origin of the special oppression of women is rooted in one of the earliest social advances—the development of human technology beyond the day-to-day struggle for bare subsistence characteristic of hunting and gathering societies. With the introduction of cattle breeding, metal working, weaving and, lastly, agriculture, human labor power became capable of producing a substantial social surplus. Under the impact of these technological developments, the institution under which labor power is reproduced, the family, underwent a profound transformation. As Marx and Engels pointed out in *The German Ideology*, the propagation of the species engendered the first division of labor between man and woman. Because of women's procreative functions, the lot of childbearing, child rearing and general domestic tasks fell to them. The household was the general sphere of woman's activity. However, the development of technology, domestication of animals (including other humans, usually war prisoners or slaves) and the land, and the development of tools took place in the general sphere of man's activity, and it was he that appropriated the concomitant expansion in social wealth. Thus, the advent of private property and the need to transfer this property through inheritance gave rise to the patriarchal law of inheritance and law of descent. The monogamous



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Lewis Henry Morgan's pioneering anthropological work had enormous impact on Marxist thought.

family was developed to ensure the paternity of the children, with the incumbent seclusion of the wife to ensure her fidelity. Seclusion meant an exclusion from public life and social production.

"Monogamous marriage was a great historical step forward; nevertheless, 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."

—Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*

Prior to the growth of private property and the monogamous family, arms, like tools and property, were held in common. However, with the development of private ownership in the means of production and procreation, and the polarization of society into economic classes, weapons became monopolized by bodies of men separated from the rest of society. These armed bodies of men constituted the essence of the state. While appearing to stand above classes, the state is in reality the instrument whereby the dominant economic class in each epoch maintains its hegemony. The ancient state was the state



Bullioz

Working women of Paris lead march on Versailles, October 1789. The French Revolution's ideals of formal equality were stifled as the bourgeoisie stabilized its rule.

of the slaveowners for holding down the slaves, the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs and bondsmen, and the modern, "democratic" state is the instrument of the capitalist class to maintain its dominance and ability to exploit labor.

In each epoch the family, like the state, has been principally an institution for perpetuating the dominant property form and the dominant economic class. For the slave, serf and wage slave—i.e., for those social classes without property to inherit or defend—the social institutions of inheritance and defense, the family and the gendarme, are principally institutions of subjugation.

Limitations of Bourgeois Progressivism

With the advent of industrial capitalism, the family entered a state of relative dissolution. In order to drive down wages, capitalism sought to lower the cost of producing and reproducing labor power through drawing the entire family into the labor process. This meant breaking down the guild structure, at first through "piecing out" work to individual families, and then by concentrating them into industrial sites and company towns. In countries with belated capitalist development, such as tsarist Russia, guilds and the development of home industry were skipped, and serfs drawn directly into large, bleak company towns.

The return of women to social production provides the precondition to their social emancipation, but under capitalism it meant the further enslavement and degradation of women, as they were forced to take on wage slavery in addition to their domestic slavery. Unable and unwilling to provide social substitutes for the economic role of the family, however, the capitalists encouraged women to return to the domicile and kitchen with consciously generated propaganda in favor of the family and religion. Thus capitalism expanded the productive forces and laid the technological basis for the socialization of domestic work and the replacement of the family as an economic unit, but was and is unable to accomplish this replacement, just as it laid the basis for the international socialization of the means of production, but still cannot eliminate national boundaries.

Capitalism depends for its survival on the traditional, archaic social institutions of class rule: private property, the monogamous family and the nation-state. As the productive forces generated by capitalism increase, they strain against the bounds set up by the social institutions upon which the system depends, and the capitalist class becomes more virulent in trying to shore up and reinforce institutions which become increasingly more reactionary. The capitalist-backed trend of women out of the plants and back to the domicile reached its zenith in the Nazi campaign for woman's enslavement to "*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*,"—"children, kitchen, church."

The bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, which cleared away feudal institutions from the path of capitalist development, replaced social relations

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based on obligations and privileges with those based on contractual equality, and thus had a profound effect on the family. Equality of rights between the sexes was given expression by the bourgeois revolution's most radical ideological advocates, especially in regard to the ownership and inheritance of property. But even in the realm of formal legality, the bourgeoisie was frightened by the consequences of its own revolution and immediately dug into the medieval past for archaic institutions with which to stabilize its rule. Thus, the French Revolution was followed by a further political counterrevolution, a Thermidor in which the agents of the bourgeois revolution, the rural poor and the urban sans-culottes, were disinherited. Thermidor in terms of the family and the special oppression of women was provided by the Code Napoléon, which made women the property of their husbands, requiring a woman to obtain her husband's permission in order, for example, to obtain a passport, make a will or sign a contract.

In a similar fashion the equality of nations proclaimed by the bourgeois revolution was subordinated to the drive of the industrially advanced nations to subjugate less developed nations in the struggle for markets and raw materials. The interrelationship between the subordination of the equality of the sexes and the equality of nations is graphically demonstrated by French imperialism. When Napoleon III thought that a higher birthrate was essential to provide workers and soldiers for expanding the French Empire, he appealed to Rome and won from the Pope a redefinition of when life begins from the traditional Catholic view that it begins when the fetus can survive outside of the womb, to the present immediately-following-conception view. This transformed abortion from a venial into a mortal sin, and on this basis Napoleon III drew up the restrictive abortion law which France has today.

Women Under Decaying Capitalism

Thus the bourgeoisie was never consistently democratic, even when the democratic tasks necessary to consolidating its class rule were on the agenda. In the epoch of imperialism, the imperialist countries have a further direct interest in suppressing the democratic and national aspirations of the colonial and semicolonial masses. Had the imperialist powers in China supported the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion (in which armed women's brigades played an important part), a modern Protestant nation might have emerged there in the last century. Instead they backed the Manchus, upon whom they were already dependent to ensure stability. The road to imperialist subjection lay through bolstering the most reactionary and repressive aspects of semi-feudal society combined with the penetration of that society by the most advanced capitalist technique.

The inability of the "national bourgeoisies" of these colonial countries to shatter the feudal past and carry through a bourgeois-democratic revolution was conclusively demonstrated in the course of the last century. The national bourgeoisie, generally recruited straight from the old nobility, and dependent on relics of the feudal past for its survival (e.g., latifundia in South America), developed as the dependent broker for imperialism. The native bourgeois classes in the colonial world were unable to separate themselves from the entanglement with imperi-



Joseph Abeles Collection



Museum of American China Trade

Western imperialists backed the Manchu dynasty in China, bolstering women's oppression. Foot-binding was hideously crippling (below: normal feet at left, bound at right).

alist domination for fear of setting off forces—principally the anti-capitalist struggle of the workers, in alliance with the peasantry—which would sweep them from power as well.

Analyzing the tasks of a revolution in tsarist Russia and their means of accomplishment, Trotsky formulated the theory of the permanent revolution. He concluded not only that proletarian leadership would be required to accomplish the basic bourgeois-democratic goals of the revolution—since the bourgeoisie was unable to take a revolutionary path against the autocracy—but also that



Khomeini's reactionary "Islamic Republic" must be smashed through socialist revolution, said Near Eastern communist speaker during 1979 Spartacist U.S. tour.

the proletariat would have to place its own, *socialist* goals immediately on the agenda if the revolution were to be successful. In order to uproot feudal autocracy and colonial domination, the working class would have to uproot the bourgeois order which had grown up within, and now propped up, these institutions.

The question of women's emancipation in the Third World continues to demonstrate the truth of Trotsky's conclusions and the lessons of the Russian Revolution which they anticipated. Equal rights for women is a basic democratic right, avowed by all democracies and accepted as a goal by all "national liberation" movements. Yet the special oppression of women is grounded in the very basis of the property system itself. Just as the anti-colonial struggle which limits its goals to the establishment of an independent state fails to provide real independence from

imperialist domination, so the "revolution" which stops short of overturning capitalism has proven unable to uproot women's oppression.

Bangladesh provides such shocking examples of inhuman imperialist behavior that the complete domination of the "national liberation" struggle against Pakistan by the equally reactionary, rival Indian imperialists is forgotten. Yet this fact absolutely precluded the accomplishment of any democratic tasks by that movement. Among the victims of the struggle over Bangladesh were 200,000 Bengali women who were systematically gang-raped by the West Pakistani army. Marshal Khan's troops then had the heads of these women shorn, a mark of disgrace in Bengali society. The women were then turned loose, only to be rejected and massacred by their husbands, brothers and fathers as Sheik Rahman, former feminist Indira Gandhi's faithful seneschal, came to power. The state that emerged behind the bayonets of the Indian army proved no more liberating for the women of Bangladesh than the regime which perpetrated bestial gang rape. The vengeful persecution of the Biharis under the new state is no consolation.

Algerian Independence Little Gain for Women

When "national liberation" does not simply replace one imperialist suzerain for another, as in Bangladesh, but results in a measure of real political independence within the context of continued imperialist economic domination—viz., Algeria—the unimproved condition of women reflects the continued failure to accomplish basic democratic tasks of the revolution for the masses. The Tripoli Program, basic manifesto of the Algerian Revolution, vaguely promised formal equality, but even the law of the new regime codifies sexual inequality for women, many of whom fought in the FLN as both auxiliaries and commandos. For example, the maximum punishment for adultery committed by men is one year—for women, two. And the reality is much worse than the letter of the law expresses—while forced marriage is now illegal, every year even the government is forced to admit that many suicides take place to avoid forced marriages. This could

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be attributed to the difficulty in overcoming tradition, yet the attitude of the Algerian regime is one that is *hostile* to overcoming tradition. Boumédiène, president of Algeria's "Revolutionary" Council, said:

"We say 'no' to this [Western] type of evolution, for our society is an Islamic and a socialist society. A problem exists here. It involves respect for morality.... For we have seen among several peoples who have been recently liberated, that woman, once free, hastens to think of things which one need not cite here.... The evolution of Algerian woman and the enjoyment of her rights must be in the framework of the morality of our society."

—8 March 1966

And this speech was given on International Women's Day! The speech inspired the walkout of a number of women. In "socialist" Algeria, where every student receives religious education, women have been kept out of politics, generally out of higher education, and under the veil as well.

Algerian society has not been without some democratic reforms, even reforms which touch upon the family. But each reform is elaborately justified only after tortuous religious debate and tedious reinterpretation of the Koran.

Modern imperialism has not forgotten its Rudyard Kipling, has not forgotten how to wrap itself in the mantle of a "civilizing mission," especially regarding the "weaker sex"—as it rapes both the women and the natural resources of the subjugated nations. French imperialists, whose Code Napoléon did not allow a woman to open a bank account or take a job without her husband's permission until 1966, paraded themselves in Algeria as the defenders and liberators of Muslim womanhood. Perhaps the most ludicrous expression of this pious hypocrisy was the so-called "Battle of the Veils." After 13 May 1958, when the French *colons* ransacked the Governor General's headquarters, bringing down the Fourth Republic, a leading *colon* woman organized the Feminine Solidarity Movement, which paraded de-veiled Muslim women around

to give eulogistic speeches on how good it was to be liberated by the society of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*—the complete marriage of feminism and imperialism! In reaction, the veil became a symbol of the resistance to French imperialism, as did the Muslim family, the traditional customs, etc. Thus, not only were centuries-old customs of domestic slavery and oppression not abolished, but the symbols of these very customs were adopted by the "Revolution"! Thus Boumédiène says "no" not to French imperialist hypocrisy—his hatred of which is a sham—but to the basic achievements of the French Revolution.

The most articulate expression of Third World nationalism which, like the Russian Narodniks, reduces "socialism" and "revolution" to feudalistic revivalism, is to be found in that darling of the café revolutionaries, Frantz Fanon—the official ideologue of the Algerian FLN. While his *L'An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne* (translated as *A Dying Colonialism*) is a testament to the courage and fortitude of the Algerian revolutionary woman—showing how involvement in the FLN revolutionized her social standing—Fanon finds her strength not in the liberating experience of equality imposed by commando life, but in patriarchal Muslim tradition:

"What is true is that under normal conditions, an interaction must exist between the family and society at large. The home is the basis of the truth of society, but society authenticates and legitimizes the family. The colonial structure is the very negation of this reciprocal justification. The Algerian woman, in imposing such a restriction on herself, in choosing a form of existence limited in scope, was deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat."

Fanon is quite correct when he states that after participating in the national liberation struggle the Algerian woman "could not put herself back into her former state of mind and relive her behavior of the past." But for Fanon, as for the Narodniks, the very cultural and social backwardness of the masses is itself a source of their revolutionary capacity. The Narodniks, the supreme petty-bourgeois



Der Spiegel

Iranian women in Teheran. Women are whipped and jailed for violating the Iranian theocracy's medieval rulings.



Viktor Bulla

Petrograd, March 1917. Working women raise banner: "Comrade Workers and Soldiers, Support Our Demands."

radical democrats, denied the *bourgeois* character of the democratic revolution, i.e., agrarian revolution, national independence and democratic rights, which constituted the parameters of their program. For the Narodniks, for Fanon and for the official Algerian regime and its sundry Stalinist-Maoist-Pabloite apologists, such regimes are "socialist" despite their incapacity to carry through even the basic democratic tasks of bourgeois revolution. What emerges is a Third World nationalism, profoundly anti-democratic, feudalistic and in this case Muslim fundamentalist.

Women and the Russian Revolution

If the Algerian experience is the negative confirmation of the permanent revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was both positive and negative confirmation. The Russian Revolution emerged from the cataclysmic experience of world war in a country which, like the colonial countries, combined the latest in capitalist technology—industries that were totally merged with finance capital and as such ultimately controlled by the Bourses of Western Europe—with the most backward medieval institutions. At the same time Russia was the "chattel-house" of nations, itself an imperialist power with expansionist appetites in Asia Minor and the Balkans. Given Russia's belated bourgeois development, it skipped over that stage which nurtures a strong urban petty bourgeoisie with strong democratic institutions and illusions. When the radicalized female of the intelligentsia entered politics, it was not as a feminist or suffragette, but as a terrorist. According to the reports of the tsarist Minister of Justice, Count Pahlen, of the 620 people summoned before the courts for revolutionary activities during the 1870s 158 were women. The 29-member Central Executive Committee of Narodnaya Volya (People's Freedom) in 1879 had ten women. One of the members of

this group, Sofya Perovskaya, directed the assassination of Alexander II.

The terrorist activity of the radicalized middle-class women was the prelude to the militant class battles of Russia's working women. Concentrated primarily in textile industries, they were in the vanguard of the strike struggles of the late 1890s. After the turn of the century bourgeois feminists organized "Women's Political Clubs" in St. Petersburg. In the winter of 1907-08 the Russian Social Democrats organized the "Society for Mutual Help Among Working Women" and issued the publication *The Working Woman*. When the bourgeois feminists organized the first All-Russian Women's Congress in 1908 the "social-democratic women were represented by their own separate class group, numbering 45 women. Having passed their own independent resolutions on all questions, the women workers finally walked out of this 'ladies' congress" (A. Kollontai, *Women Workers Struggle for Their Rights*, 1918).

One of the differences between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was over whether to organize an independent proletarian women's group or participate in the bourgeois feminist groups. After the final split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1912 the Bolsheviks distinguished themselves by continuing to struggle to draw proletarian women into the revolutionary movement. The Bolsheviks resumed publication of *The Working Woman* in 1914 for International Women's Day. This holiday, which had originated in 1908 in Manhattan's Lower East Side (Rutgers Square) by women in the needle trades, was adopted by the Second International under the leadership of Clara Zetkin in 1911. It was first celebrated in Russia at the instigation of the St. Petersburg textile workers in 1913 and celebrated again in 1914 complete with processional, mass meeting and the first appearance of the red flag in St. Petersburg. The next celebration was in 1917 and

marked the opening of the Russian Revolution.

The Stalinists who try to fit the Russian Revolution into their two-stage schema claim that the February Revolution was the bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolution. While the February Revolution was bourgeois in that it put the bourgeoisie into power, there was very little democracy about it, especially in relation to the emancipation of women. Taking the church and ecclesiastical courts out of the private affairs of marriage and divorce was achieved only later, by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Likewise, it was only after the Bolshevik Revolution that a real effort was made to alleviate the domestic slavery of women through the establishment of nurseries, crèches, maternity care, public dining halls and laundries.

The Bolshevik Revolution established another basic tenet of the permanent revolution—the need for proletarian leadership over the peasant movement. While the agrarian revolution was spontaneous, the struggle to summon peasant women to a full public and political life was not. The political mobilization of the peasant women required the courageous and persistent efforts of the Bolshevik party women, many of whom were recruited from the St. Petersburg textile factories which had been in the vanguard of the Russian class struggle for three decades prior to the revolution. Organized in the special Communist Party sections dedicated to drawing in the oppressed women masses behind the revolution, party cadre, often disguised in *paranyas* and *eluchvons* (the veiled clothing worn by the women in Muslim territories of the Soviet Union) would carry the message of the revolution to the most backward areas of Russia. In order to reach women in nomadic tribes the CP's women's sections would organize Red Yurtas, or large tents which dispensed medical as well as political propaganda. Their efforts culminated in the First All-Russian Conference of Proletarian and Peasant Women in November 1918, attended by 1,700 delegates. One of the participants described the conference as follows:

"In 1918, when the civil war was raging, when we still had to struggle against hunger, cold and unprecedented devas-

tation, when it was still necessary to defeat the enemy on countless fronts, at this juncture the conference of proletarian and peasant women was summoned. Hundreds of working women, from the remotest factories and villages, had come to Moscow with their complaints, grievances and doubts, with all their cares great and small."

—F.W. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia* (1933)

Thermidor Reverses Gains

But the Soviet Union, an economically backward country to begin with, ravaged by imperialist intervention and civil war, encircled and blockaded by hostile capitalist powers, was unable to provide the economic basis for the construction of socialism; it could only "generalize the want." Lenin and Trotsky realized that just as the democratic revolution must grow into the socialist revolution if the democratic tasks of the revolution are to be solved, so must socialist revolution grow directly into world revolution. The failure of the revolution to spread led to the seizure of power by the conservative state bureaucracy under Stalin in 1923 which converted the Soviet Union's isolation from a profound defeat into a rhetorical "victory" with the anti-Marxist, nationalist "socialism in one country" doctrine. As Stalin consolidated power, the new ruling elite also required the revival of the monogamous family as the bulwark of this national "socialism"—just as it was a bulwark of the fascist political counterrevolution in capitalist countries.

The Stalinist political counterrevolution simply ran the film of the revolution backward in the realm of women's rights. The party women's sections were liquidated in 1929; homosexuality was made a crime in 1934; abortion, which had been legalized in 1920, was illegalized in 1936; from 1935 through 1944 divorce was made increasingly expensive and complicated; and in 1944 even coeducation was abolished. To accomplish these measures, Stalin relied on the conservatizing influence of the peasantry, which generally was alone in welcoming them.

Of course, at each stage Stalinist apologists could find economic and social reasons for each of Stalin's counterrevolutionary measures. As Trotsky said in *The Revolution Betrayed*, "You cannot 'abolish' the family; you have to



Spartacist and PDC banners at April 1989 abortion rights march in Washington, D.C.

replace it. The actual emancipation of women is unrealizable on the basis of 'generalized want!' Thus, even the revolutionary government of Lenin and Trotsky had to face horrendous problems, especially in terms of the family and women's emancipation. For example, in 1922 Lenin's wife Krupskaya estimated that there were seven million homeless children, while Lunacharsky, Commissar of Education, estimated nine million. Adoption had to be illegalized in 1926 to prevent the exploitation of child labor by the peasantry! The chief "accomplishment" of Stalin was to turn difficult conditions into a rationale for entrusting all power to a conservative, counterrevolutionary ruling clique which *adapted* to the backwardness in order to survive.

Women Under "Third World" Stalinism

In Yugoslavia, China, North Vietnam and Cuba, petty-bourgeois leaderships commanding peasant-based armies succeeded, because of exceptional historical circumstances, in overturning capitalism despite their completely pro-capitalist, "democratic" programs. This fact alone has enabled these countries to play a role free of direct economic and political subservience to imperialism; that is, enabled them to fulfill the basic task of the anti-colonial revolution. But these victories took place as military confrontations which were lost by the imperialist and allied native bourgeois forces despite the best efforts of the

"revolutionary" leaderships to sell out the struggle in exchange for a "revolution" safely contained under capitalism (such as did happen in Algeria and most similar situations). The proletariat, a victim of earlier defeats, lacked leadership and failed to play a role as an active contender for power in these revolutions.

As a consequence, what emerged was not proletarian democracy, but regimes as bureaucratically deformed as that which emerged from the degeneration of the revolution in the Soviet Union—i.e., deformed workers states. Within these regimes, once again the emancipation of women is a most accurate gauge of the general emancipation. While women have been granted formal equality, no consistent, concerted effort has been made to liberate them from domestic slavery. While women have increased their access to socially productive roles, they are generally restricted to those areas which are a simple extension of domestic work, such as textiles and nursing. In North Vietnam, after 26 years of war, women are still not permitted to play a combat role in the regular army. And only the exigencies of war have forced the North Vietnamese bureaucracy to establish nurseries and crèches. Birth control and abortion are legalized and illegalized at the whim of the bureaucracy.

Politically, women are no more or less disenfranchised than their husbands in the absence of proletarian democracy. In the absence of special party sections for women,

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Neil Leifer



Members of Cuban militia in Havana. Yankee imperialism has Cuban Revolution in its cross hairs.

there are no special vehicles to train and equip them to enter the party. The recruitment of women is generally done through moral exhortation. Most women are shunted off to the local Women's Democratic Federation where they can circulate petitions for peace, justice and equality. In China, the Women's Democratic Federation, which once claimed a membership of 70 million, was headed by Liu Shao-chi's wife; it was therefore abolished by the Cultural Revolution!

In backward and colonial countries, petty-bourgeois classes oppressed by feudalism and imperialism, particularly the peasantry, are more numerous than the proletariat. In order to come to power, the proletariat must mobilize these classes behind it in the struggle against imperialism and for basic democratic rights. Yet the proletariat is the only consistently revolutionary, anti-capitalist force in these countries. In order to overthrow capitalism and begin an unobstructed path toward socialism, the revolution must be made on the proletariat's terms and with its program. The family as an economic unit enslaving women could then be replaced through socialization of the means of production and reproduction of labor power. But the revolution which rests on the peasantry or on a specious amalgamation of the interests of peasants and workers (that is, on a modified program of a section of the petty bourgeoisie) finds that for the peasantry, the family is the existing economic unit of small-scale agriculture, as opposed to the factories and socialized industries of the workers. Unlike the workers, the class interests of the peasants are based on deepening private ownership of small plots, which means retaining the family structure. But the peasants are incapable of reorganizing society. Their conservatizing influence can only be overcome through the leadership of the workers.

Thus, the interrelationship between the land question and the family is a key to understanding the zigzags of the degenerated and deformed workers states. For industrialization requires a food surplus; a food surplus requires mechanization; mechanization requires industrialization,

etc. How to break out of this vicious cycle? The New Economic Policy (NEP), primitive socialist accumulation (the tax in kind), persuasion and example were the methods of Lenin and Trotsky. Bureaucratic fiat, whose parameters are only the precipices of catastrophe, is the method of Stalinism, which veers from Stalin's "Kulaks, enrich yourselves" and Mao's New Democracy to forced collectivization and the Great Leap Forward. During the Great Leap Forward and Stalin's forced collectivization, women were encouraged to participate in social production, and the family tended to be subordinated. But these measures did not correspond to the real tempo of economic development, and no substitutes for the family as an economic unit were developed. Stalinist regimes were thus forced to strengthen the family structure as the only non-revolutionary way out of the chaos they had created and to conciliate the enraged peasantry. The proletariat, precisely the class for whom the family plays no economic role, is destined by history to lead the struggle for women's emancipation.

Women and Permanent Revolution

While class exploitation is the main axis of social struggle, it is not the only form of social oppression. Insensitivity to the special forms of oppression, national, racial and generational as well as sexual, is a form of opportunism. Economism, the ideology of trade-union bureaucrats and their hangers-on like the [then leftist] Labor Committee and the Workers League, thrives on such opportunism. However, refusal to see the interlocked nature of special oppression and the class struggle, to posit roads (e.g., bourgeois feminism) other than the class struggle for dealing with special oppression, is both reactionary and utopian. Because the question of women's oppression and the family is fundamental to class society, the solution can only be a global uprooting of capitalist property and the preparation for a classless communist society. Only an international proletarian party, conscious of its tasks and mission, can provide the necessary leadership for such an upheaval. ■

Is Big Sister Watching You?

NOW & the FBI

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 531 (19 July 1991), with an afterword by Women and Revolution.

Strolling through the aisles of the exhibition hall at NOW's 25th national convention at the New York Hilton on July 5-7, delegates and guests did a double take as they came upon a booth with a giant shield and the sinister question on the backdrop: "Is your future with the FBI?"

Leftists, black militants, antiwar activists, labor movement organizers, victims of the McCarthyite witchhunts which targeted Communists, homosexuals, in fact anybody considered even slightly to the left of Attila the Hun by J. Edgar Hoover's American Gestapo, all have nothing but loathing for the FBI. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO ("Counterintelligence Program") set up and murdered black militants, including Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark gunned down in their beds. Scandalously, however, the bourgeois feminist National Organization for Women welcomed the FBI to its national conference.

It wasn't just the booth. In the glossy NOW conference brochure (titled "Empowering Women") there was a full-page ad for the FBI, giving their pitch a special feminine appeal featuring a "wardrobe" with handcuffs and 10mm Smith & Wesson (we can just picture it: "Special Agent Harris wowed 'em in a drop-dead sheath with deep décolletage and major accessories..."). The G-men were also listed among the "Supporters and Advertisers" in the brochure.

At least when Gloria Steinem took CIA money, there was some attempt to cover up, *de facto* acknowledgment that it was a shameful thing to do. But Patricia Ireland, NOW vice president and heir apparent to Molly Yard, openly let the spies in; she told one outraged protester, they figured since the FBI would be there anyhow, why not take their money for the booth? Only in the last hours of the conference on Sunday, after growing protests by furious delegates, many with firsthand experience of FBI terror, was she forced to make a reluctant public statement admitting it was a "serious political error."

By the second day of the confab, at NOW's march and rally against the Supreme Court abortion "gag rule," New York Radical Women had a leaflet out calling to "Protest the FBI Participation in the 1991 National N.O.W. Conference." The leaflet noted, "Allowing the FBI to promote a friendly public image as an 'equal opportunity employer' gives cover to its spies and police agents to penetrate more deeply into the women's movement." Women from Gainesville, Florida had initiated an anti-FBI resolution, which was bureaucratically squashed in an "issues" committee.

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Workers Vanguard

Protesters at FBI recruiting booth at conference. FBI has long targeted blacks, women, gays, leftists; COINTELPRO operation set up Black Panthers and other black militants for murder.

A little after 3 p.m. Saturday, a speak-out protest against the FBI took place in front of the (by then empty) booth. Alex Leader of the University of Florida Campus NOW said one of the reasons she opposed the FBI was because she had known Judith Brown, one of the founders of the 1960s radical women's liberation movement, for whom a memorial service had been held only a few weeks earlier. She told how Brown had received over 400 pages of (heavily censored) FBI files on herself. "Why do we

want to be in an institution that stands for oppression?" was a heartfelt sentiment.

The 30 to 40 activists there quickly sized up the situation and did the right thing. As they were taking down the exhibit, two NOW conference goons, Dixie L. Johnson (who was credited with the conference brochure) and Diane Welsh (New York NOW's "Consciousness Raising Committee" chair), raced over to defend the FBI table. One of them said, "women in the FBI are working on things that are very important for us, like drugs." Conference manager Johnson went for sex-baiting, grabbing the arm of a young man in an ACT UP cap and hissing, "He's a man!" He was firmly defended by the protesters.

Ms. Dixie finally personally dragged the FBI's stuff away under the curtains at the back of the booth, presumably for safekeeping. Participants in the action used NOW's own rhetoric to shout down the NOW goons, chanting "Civil disobedience!" and "This offends women!" Getting that obscene booth out of there was undoubtedly a great relief to many of the conference participants, though no credit goes to those so-called "leftists" who apparently sat there in their booths like little lambs for a day and a half cheek by jowl with the FBI. The feds' booth was across from the Women's Commission/"Fourth Internationalist Tendency" (FIT); the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Socialist Action were a few booths down the aisle. Perhaps they felt constrained not to "make trouble." For years they've been the "best builders" of NOW, claiming that "consistent feminism leads to socialism." Well, here it leads to the FBI.

Sisterhood of Spies?

The NOW leadership knew perfectly well what they were doing when they gave approval for the FBI booth, but it took insistent pressure to get them to own up. By Saturday evening the Gainesville women had gotten over 200 signatures for their anti-FBI resolution, thereby getting it included as number 48 in a list of over 50 resolutions to be supposedly discussed and voted on Sunday (naturally the conference never got to most of them). When a longtime activist from Atlanta finally managed despite bureaucratic obstacles and calls of "He's out of order!" to raise the question of the FBI from the floor late Sunday, Patricia Ireland was prepared with a "point of personal privilege" to lay out the NOW line (no discussion allowed, of course).

"The executive committee had discussed it," she said. "People had a couple of opinions. Our people know who the FBI is, they know about their disruptive tactics. They know they infiltrated various groups and had campaigns that went as long as 40 years, for instance to disrupt the SWP and their relationship with other organizations. We've seen articles that the FBI has gone to libraries and pulled out of the backs of books lists to find out who's reading certain books. And in some measure perhaps, and I don't mean to be flip, I was thinking about *The Silence of the Lambs*. I'm thinking of women who are killed by serial murderers and women agents who were portrayed in that movie as resourceful and intelligent, and who took on her supervisors when they did sexist things."

So Jodie Foster and Hollywood's Hannibal the Cannibal just swept them away? Not really. Ireland went on to say, "I'm thinking about women in positions of power and

authority, to help change institutions. We also are trying to get women into positions of power and authority in the military." Sure, NOW came out against the Gulf War and they protest ROTC on campus. But what if "Stormin' Norma" Schwarzkopf was calling the shots? Their real aim is to be power brokers and influence peddlers in the world of bourgeois politics.

Many well-meaning women activists treat NOW as if it were some kind of class-neutral parliament of women. In reality it acts as a liberal ladies' auxiliary of the Democratic Party. In the '88 elections NOW was out in force ringing doorbells for Dukakis. One of its leading spokeswomen has been Bella Abzug, the ubiquitous Democratic fixture at popular-front peace crawls. Back in the mid-'70s they had an orgy redbaiting the SWP. But all it took was



Lederhandler/AP

For Patricia Ireland (left) sisterhood includes FBI spies; Gloria Steinem (right) worked for the CIA.

a phrase from Molly Yard about a "third party" for reformists like the SWP and the Communist Party to go into ecstasy.

As Marxists who fight for women's liberation through socialist revolution, we oppose the politics of feminism which obscure the critical class line. If it's a choice between fighting for social liberation or defending the capitalist status quo, NOW has no trouble deciding—they won't even call for free abortion on demand (women members of the AMA wouldn't like it).

NOW's scandalous embracing of the FBI only underlines the political gulf between middle-class and working-class approaches to the issue of women's oppression. This scandal is the tip of the iceberg, an example of how bourgeois feminism handcuffs women to their oppressors and thus is an *obstacle* to the forward movement of women, and working women in particular.

Some of the women fighting the FBI presence were veterans of the radical women's liberation movement group Redstockings, who quite rightly made an issue of Gloria Steinem's willing receipt of CIA funds early in her career. As we detailed in *Women and Revolution* (No. 38, Winter 1990-91): "The CIA funded cultural institutions like the National Student Association, *Encounter* magazine and even a 1952 Paris tour by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Gloria Steinem, one of the founders of the bourgeois feminist *Ms.* magazine, knowingly took CIA money as director of the 'Independent Research

Service,' which sponsored young Americans going to youth festivals in Vienna and Helsinki in 1959 and 1962." Needless to say, Steinem was a featured speaker at NOW's convention.

The open FBI booth at the NOW conference is a sign of these reactionary times, as were the cop contingents in the San Francisco and New York Gay Pride marches and the LAPD booth at this year's "Gay Pride Festival" in Los Angeles—only a couple months after the videotaped racist beating of Rodney King! A lot of NOW's current law-and-order themes dovetail perfectly with the ruling class' attempts to hire more cops and impose police terror in cities across America.

Only a few days after the NOW conference ended, New York's *Village Voice* (16 July) published a major article titled "ACT UP Under Siege," detailing a suspicious pattern of harassment, anonymous phone calls and bizarre provocations against activists highly reminiscent of the FBI's COINTELPRO disruptions against leftists and blacks. Is Big Sister watching you, now, too?

A final note: NOW's own official report of its conference, published in a big 20-page *NOW National Times* (Summer 1991), not surprisingly made no mention whatsoever of the FBI or NOW's supposedly "serious political error." It's natural that NOW would sweep the dirt under the rug; what's rather more disgusting is that so-called socialists

have done exactly the same thing. It was gross enough that the FIT, along with fellow SWP offshoot Socialist Action and the SWP itself, all apparently sat passively across from the FBI booth during the conference. But in two articles on NOW in the FIT's *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (September 1991), "We Won't Go Back" and "NOW Continues to Explore Idea of New Party," in all the thousands of words the three little letters FBI never appear. This is a conscious cover-up of a scandal, right in line with the FIT's shameless tailing after these bourgeois reformists who are now timidly touting a "third party."

Meanwhile, Socialist Action blandly noted the FBI protest, while devoting more space in its front-page article, "Nat'l Organization for Women Calls for Giant Mobilization in Spring 1992" (August 1991), to complaints that its own maneuvers and pressure tactics didn't get the hearing they deserved. The SWP itself, however, remains the original "best builders" of middle-class reformism, retaining its own inimitably fatuous "Where the Ayatollah Khomeini goes wrong on democratic rights"-style of tailism. The *Militant* (26 July 1991) account noted "FBI table protested," while proudly pointing out that "representatives staffing a Pathfinder literature table located near the FBI's table reported brisk sales of pamphlets exposing FBI spying." Oh, good—we wonder, though, did the three FBI agents eyeing their booth get it all down on videotape? ■

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Canada Persecutes Woman Victim of Iran Regime

TORONTO—The racist Canadian government came within hours of deporting a 40-year-old Iranian woman who fled her country after being savagely beaten by Islamic fundamentalist thugs. In June 1988 "morality police" of the Iranian "Revolutionary Guards" raided a birthday party at a private home. They dragged "Mrs. A." off, tied her hands to a table and viciously flogged her 35 times across her back and buttocks with a thick wire cable. She was also fired from her job. Her "crime"? Not wearing a veil while dancing. And the Canadian government agrees that Mrs. A. is guilty!

"She was prosecuted for violating a law of her country...in conformity with the laws of the state," a refugee tribunal declared in May 1990. So it's OK to stone "adulteresses" to death and execute homosexuals, also laws of the Iranian state? Apparently, since the tribunal ruled that Mrs. A.'s brutal whipping was "not exceedingly harsh." To be sure, Islamic law meant that she "could not choose the style of her dress and her amusements"(!), but it did not "violate internationally accepted standards" nor "deprive the claimant of an essential and inalienable human right."

Women in Iran have no rights! The Islamic theocracy of the mullahs means driving women back into the dark ages of medievalism, of brutality, torture and killings. It is not a question of "amusements," but of life and death. Women are legally less than human, chattel, forced to wear the stifling *hijab* (veil). Vans of the religious police (*komiteh*) patrol city streets, on the lookout for "immodestly dressed" women, young couples going out together, "at home" dance parties and shops selling "vulgar music cassettes, obscene magazines" and alcohol. This is the government that issued an assassination order against noted author Salman Rushdie because his unsparing attack on religious fundamentalism—particularly the harsh sanctions for women under the *shari'a*—was not "in conformity" with the laws of the Iranian theocratic state. Over the past few months hundreds of demonstrators in Iranian cities have been arrested in clashes with the *komiteh*. Journalist Trudy Rubin reported in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (25 June 1991) on a major *komiteh* campaign last spring:

"One 17-year-old music student, picked up leaving an art gallery with her mother, said she received 10 lashes on her legs with a rubber hose in early May, because her hair was showing. She was held in jail for 36 hours, with no food, along with several younger girls. Lashing of women has been a common punishment for violations of Iran's Islamic code."

The Canadian refugee tribunal *upheld* the fundamentalists' anti-woman frenzy, claiming that what Mrs. A. and other Iranian women are subjected to doesn't constitute persecution. She was arrested and imprisoned in Toronto in mid-October, facing imminent

deportation to Iran. Her husband, a political opponent of the Iranian theocracy, and their children had to go into hiding, while Canada's cops tried to hunt them down.

The Partisan Defense Committee and the Trotskyist League of Canada joined with other organizations and individuals to demand: "Give Mrs. A. and her family asylum now!" In the face of mounting protest, at the last minute the government backed down after steadfastly declaring their intention to deport Mrs. A. and her family.

This is only the latest racist and anti-immigrant atrocity perpetrated by Canada's rich white rulers. During World War II, declaring "none is too many," the government closed the borders to Jews fleeing Hitler's Holocaust and interned thousands of Japanese Canadians in concentration camps. Five years ago all the federal parties, including the social democrats of the New Democratic Party, whipped up an anti-immigrant hysteria over the arrival of Lankan Tamils and Indian Sikhs fleeing murderous terror in their homelands. In a binge of chauvinist race-hate, the government plans the deportation this year of 5,000 immigrants, including Iranians, Caribbeans, Africans, and Central and South Americans.

When its policy of *drugging* those being deported was exposed, the government decreed a new "humane" policy of shackling and gagging them! Only days before moving to deport Mrs. A., the parliamentary assistant to the Immigration Minister called the only black Member of Parliament "Sambo" and another government MP labeled a female member a "slut." In the framework of the "New World Order," especially since the imperialist war against Iraq, these racist, woman-hating bigots have no difficulty enlisting as enforcers of the reactionary anti-woman "laws" of the Iranian Islamic theocracy.

After putting Mrs. A. and her family through hell, the Canadian Immigration Minister declared: "We have a good system. It works...." This is obscene. At the very time of this pronouncement, the government intended to deport "Mr. G.," an Iranian oppositionist. He was tortured with burning cigarettes in Iran's prisons. The Canadian Refugee Board asked if he smoked! Yet Canada's rulers love to strut the world stage proclaiming what fine "humanitarians" they are.

The government allowed in only 7,500 refugees this year, not even close to their own "target." And in early November Ottawa announced even more "get tough" measures, including more powers for immigration cops. As the Trotskyist League declared at a 400-strong demonstration in Toronto on October 23: Asylum for refugees from reactionary terror! Full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers and their families!

Magic Johnson...

(continued from page 48)

the great escape fantasy from a reality of grinding poverty and oppression. For them there's not a lot of joy or opportunity for high achievement, so they identify with sports as a connection—hopeful and illusory—to those few who do make it to the big leagues, the big money, and the acceptance and even admiration by white America. For many, Magic Johnson seemed to bring youth's cloak of invincibility and immortality into adulthood. Now the prospect of seeing an adored superstar wither and die has brought the agony of the AIDS epidemic home to millions. A *Sports Illustrated* headline captured the impact on America: "Like One of the Family."

The fantasy of super stardom now follows Magic Johnson off the court and into the battle against AIDS. The expectation that Magic Johnson and heightened awareness and concern can turn around this catastrophic epidemic is in itself a devastating condemnation of the American government. Tens of thousands have died horrible deaths because there is no cure and because the government has done precious little to find a cure or alleviate the suffering of those infected with HIV, and a very great deal to make it worse: giving free rein to insurance company greed, closing hospitals, fostering discrimination. The virus has been a "giggling factor" in the halls of the White House, welcomed as a divine mop-up operation of capitalist society's most despised pariahs: homosexuals.

The criminal neglect and bigotry by the government and the medical establishment based on the insistence that AIDS was a "gay disease" has also led to the death of thousands of black people. In 1981, Dr. Arye Rubinstein, a pediatric immunologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, documented cases of AIDS in black children in the Bronx. He was scorned, ignored, his paper returned unpublished because the *New England Journal of Medicine* thought it impossible that children could have a "homosexual disease." By 1988 one out of every 61 babies born in New York was HIV-infected.

Magic Johnson wants to take a "safe sex" message to the black community. He told a national audience from the Arsenio Hall show to "put your thinking caps on and put your caps on down there" (gesturing below his belt). But powerful institutions, from the government to the schools to the black church, demand "behavioral change," not education. Vice President Quayle countered Magic, stating, "I would not say safe sex, I would talk about abstinence." If "safe sex" is a contradiction in terms, talk of teenage abstinence is utterly absurd.

Larry Kramer, founder of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) and author of the play *The Normal Heart*, appeared on Ted Koppel's *Nightline* the same evening as Magic Johnson's announcement. Kramer said:

"He's going to die and I'm going to die. And the 40 million people that the World Health Organization predicts are going to be HIV-positive by the year 2000 are going to die. We are not talking epidemic, Mr. Koppel, we are talking plague. No amount of education is going to end this plague. The only thing that will end this plague is a cure. And research is simply not being done because George Bush and Congress don't care. I beg Magic Johnson to be the spokesman for a cure."

Tasks of basic education, support for the sick, hospices



Kennebunkport, Maine, 1 September 1991—ACT UP protests Bush's criminal neglect of AIDS epidemic.

for the dying, all of which should be energetically undertaken by public health authorities, are picked up by groups like the Gay Men's Health Crisis. Based in the largely white, petty-bourgeois milieu of the organized gay community, with access to jobs, education, health insurance, and connections, GMHC has reached out to provide help to black and other destitute AIDS victims. But heroic ad hoc volunteerism is always a cruelly insufficient resource for any endeavor a society actually cares about, and meanwhile we have an exponentially growing public health disaster. In Harlem, Watts and Miami's "Little Haiti," AIDS is spreading furiously among IV drug users. More than half of the people infected with HIV in this country are black and Hispanic. The AIDS virus is compounded by systematic race and class oppression: poverty, unemployment, decrepit housing, inadequate schools, too few hospitals and no health insurance. By the time people in these conditions are diagnosed, most are only weeks away from death.

Sex, Race and the AIDS Witchhunt

An estimated *ten million* people around the globe are infected with HIV and everywhere outside the U.S. and Western Europe the primary means of transmission of the virus is through heterosexual sex. The devastation wrought by the disease in sub-Saharan Africa has brought incalculable horror; India, Thailand and Brazil are threatened by the rampant spread of this plague. The enormity of the shock in the U.S. of a famous heterosexual person announcing he has the AIDS virus is in itself a monument to the ignorance, bigotry and backwardness of this country whose rulers have greeted this terrible disease as "God's retribution" against homosexuals, IV drug users and other social "deviants."

The intersection of disease with sex calls out every

hatred, every prejudice in this sick society. In Georgia, the Ku Klux Klan sport "Thank God for AIDS" T-shirts. Reactionaries obstruct fighting this disease and welcome AIDS as a political weapon to instill fear as part of a racist, religious, anti-sex witchhunt. For the past year public health officials, Congress and the bourgeois media swarmed like vultures to the ravaged body of Kimberly Bergalis (who apparently contracted AIDS from improperly sterilized equipment at her dentist's office) in order to further spread fear, loathing and state repression of "guilty" carriers who infect "the innocent."

Randy Shilts (author of *And the Band Played On*) commented: "In his fight against HIV, Magic Johnson should not confine his concern to heterosexual victims.... The depressing subtext to Johnson's announcement was that suddenly people cared about HIV because it struck someone they liked, someone who clearly didn't 'deserve' it" (*Sports Illustrated*, 18 November). And the bluntly honest Charles Barkley confessed: "I'm disappointed in myself that I don't feel bad for everyone who has AIDS like I do about Magic." If Magic hadn't made it to the NBA he could be just another black man dying of AIDS in a Michigan ghetto—and no one would give a damn.

Magic Johnson's commitment to educate black America in particular about the virus, and more generally to fight the opprobrium heaped upon the estimated one million Americans who are infected with HIV, may help, but awareness is not a cure. What is required is to fully mobilize society's resources for AIDS research as well as to care for those infected. What stands in the way is the government's policy of malign neglect, reinforced by pervasive social backwardness. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar said it best: "This is still a nation of bigotry and fear." Just look at the skyrocketing incidents of gay-bashing since mainstream America became "aware" that thousands of homosexuals were dying of AIDS. Stars don't come bigger than Magic, and now even against him the backlash has begun.

Since the bigots can't blame gays or IV drug use for Magic's infection, they've unleashed a torrent of prejudice against sex itself. From other players, like Phoenix Suns guard Kevin Johnson, we get misogynous tales of satanic temptresses stalking locker rooms and parking lots for sexual prey: "The women hover and wait to try to get you." From right-wing ideologues and boozy, lunkheaded, hypocritical moralist sports writers we get the inverse—that "innocent" women are the victims of oversexed, spoiled men. On the sports page, Dave Anderson outrageously denounced "the egotistical essence" of Johnson testing positive for HIV. "He's not St. Magic of Sunset Boulevard; he's Earvin Johnson of the Fast Lane who finally got caught for speeding." On the opinion page we get Patrick Buchanan thundering, "We want to ignore the traditional morality, but never pay the price...there is a moral distinction between Kimberly Bergalis and Magic Johnson that cannot be lost."

For women this is nothing but a rehash of the sexist stereotypes of women as either Virgin Marys or Lay Down Sallys. For black men, it's a racist double standard. Warren Beatty, Jack Nicholson or Donald Trump aren't pilloried in the press for their sexual exploits—it's accepted as a "legitimate" lifestyle of the rich and famous and white.

Black athletes, who weren't born with silver spoons in their mouths, are held to a different code of conduct.

The price of fame and adulation for them is high: no politics, no drugs (except what the owners pump you up with), praise god whenever possible, and be a patriotic "role model" for the Moral Majority bigots to hold up for youth. In the NBA, the blackest of professional sports, players have been denounced by the media for "perverse commercialism" when they promote products like high-priced sneakers. But if your great-great-grandfather amassed the family fortune through buying and selling black slaves, then you're "old money" and a pillar of the community.

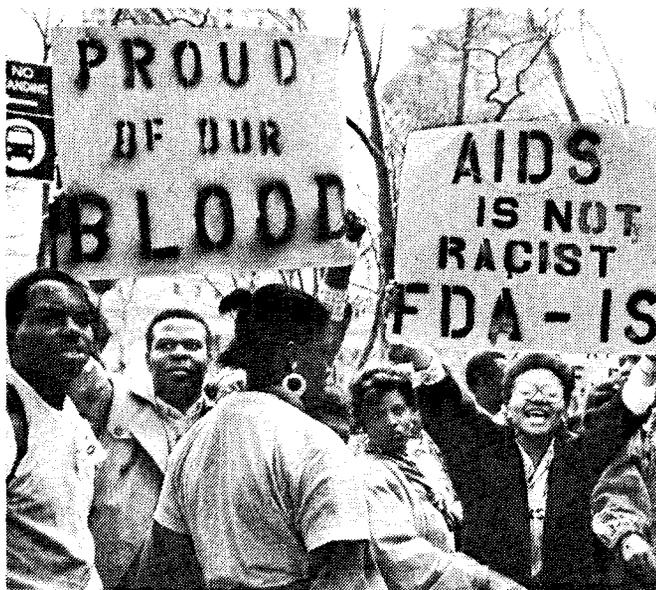
In the context of the convulsive civil rights and Vietnam antiwar struggles of the '60s and early '70s, some black athletes broke the mold, at a huge personal cost. Muhammad Ali was stripped of his boxing title (and millions in endorsements) when he refused to be drafted and stated, "No Viet Cong ever called me nigger." Gold and bronze medalists Tommie Smith and John Carlos were banished from the U.S. Olympic team for their defiant "black power" salute when the American flag was raised over their heads and the national anthem boomed during the 1968 Mexico City games. In the macho world of sports, it took tremendous courage for football player Dave Kopay to come out of the closet.

It's a sign of these conservative times that even as Magic Johnson courageously goes public with HIV, he repeatedly attributes his infection to "God's way." Much of the sports world has responded with moments of silence and public prayers. This plays into the hands of every bigot, from the Catholic church to the White House to the black preachers who have *opposed* every measure that could prevent the spread of AIDS, like sterile needle exchange programs and condom distribution in the schools. They think it's "God's will" to wipe homosexuals, drug addicts, teenage mothers with AIDS babies off the face of the earth. They demand "behavioral change," by which they mean abstain from sex, abstain from drugs...or drop dead.

Sex and hormones is a lot of what being a teenager is



Julio Rivera, murdered 2 July 1990 in New York City by skinhead gay-bashers. For integrated workers defense guards against terrorist attacks!



New York City, 20 April 1990—Over 70,000 Haitian protesters denounce U.S. government's racist "blood ban."

all about, but for kids today, sex without a condom is like playing Russian roulette. In Chelsea, Massachusetts, an economic wasteland, 20 percent of adolescents are infected with sexually transmitted diseases, and the rate of HIV infection is 50 times higher than that of the rest of the state. In an emotional hearing on November 12, a proposal to distribute condoms in the Chelsea schools was defeated by priests and administrators who argued against "promoting sex." As 15-year-old Sabrina Sullivan retorted, "Sex does not need to be promoted."

AIDS is caused by a virus, not by "sin," and not by sex—any kind of sex. Our species didn't evolve to its present state through chastity. Nor did anyone ever advocate an end to the "heterosexual lifestyle" because it was responsible for spreading herpes, gonorrhea and syphilis. But now we have a government with the mindset of Salem witchhunters—they preach abstinence not only because they think people with AIDS deserve to die, but as part of a whole repressive puritan drive to mold obedient boys and girls for Bush's New World Order.

Criminal State Neglect as Epidemic Rages

Magic Johnson has accepted Bush's offer to join the National Commission on AIDS, and vows to "tell President Bush that it's time to drop the political barriers that have slowed down efforts to find a cure for the disease." The Commission issued a report in September advocating national health care and delivered a scathing attack on the Bush administration's lack of response. As Carisa Cunningham, a spokeswoman for the AIDS Action Council, said, "if the President continues to ignore the recommendations of the commission, it doesn't matter who sits on the commission or what they say." Bush and Congress only want Magic's winning smile as window-dressing for a policy of neglect.

Likewise in New York City where AIDS is ravaging the ghettos and barrios, the city's response has been to plaster filthy urine-stenched subway cars with slick bilingual advertisements of happy faces announcing that they've

tested positive for the AIDS virus and life has never been better. It's enough to make you scream—but the most curdling howls of rage would not begin to do justice to the appalling state of medical care in capitalist America. Even the *New York Times* (17 November) acknowledged:

"As AIDS becomes more deeply entrenched in the culture of poverty, inspiration alone can only help so much. Already, those answering Johnson's call to get tested for the virus may face months of waiting. Those who test positive and lack health insurance may find themselves in a three-month line just to see a doctor, let alone gain access to costly life-prolonging therapy."

Thirty-four million Americans have no health insurance at all. There are 200,000 reported cases of AIDS in the U.S. and over 125,000 deaths. On 1 January 1992, the definition of AIDS will change from having an opportunistic infection to having either an infection or a T4-cell count (cells which fight infections) of less than 200. It is estimated that under this new, more appropriate definition the number of AIDS cases in the U.S. alone will soar to 350,000-400,000. At the same time, the less than \$500 million allocated for education about AIDS in the U.S. is being slashed by \$14 million for fiscal year 1992.

There is more than enough money to slaughter Iraqis, or line the pockets of Bush's family and capitalist friends, as in the S&L bailout, which will cost taxpayers about \$500 billion—because the American ruling class has a program of death and destruction. They build prisons

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Workers Vanguard



**New York City,
13 November 1991:
Woodhull doctors'
two-day strike
was the first ever
by attending
physicians. Crisis
of U.S. medicine
for profit is
dangerous for all
health care workers.**

instead of schools, shut down mental hospitals, dump the sick on the streets, yank the homeless out of their shantytowns and subway platforms, slash spending for welfare, Medicare, and on and on. AIDS in America has rapidly become a disease of poverty. Black youth have been tossed on the slag heap by a ruling class that sees them as a troublesome "surplus" population. The only way out of the literal dead end they face is a thoroughgoing socialist revolution that creates jobs, free quality education and health care for all.

The government's chief response to the AIDS crisis has been hysteria and repression. Just as the Bergalis case fueled a blizzard of bills pushing for mandatory testing and blacklisting of health care workers backed by threats of fines, jail terms, and loss of jobs and licenses, so too will Magic Johnson's announcement be jumped on to push mandatory testing for drugs and HIV in sports and other occupations. Boston Celtic Kevin McHale has already called for mandatory testing in the NBA. These calls for mandatory testing represent the triumph of ignorance over science. AIDS is spread not through casual contact but exchange of semen, blood or vaginal secretion. Who's at risk in the locker room is not McHale but an HIV-positive player, whose suppressed immune system makes him more susceptible and less able to fight infections from colds and viruses that are spread casually. The only purpose then of mandatory testing is to stigmatize, victimize and blacklist.

Since a test for HIV antibodies first became available in 1985, the Spartacist League has opposed any and all government attempts to legislate mandatory testing of anybody. Instead, we advocate *voluntary, anonymous* testing for those who want it. In this racist, anti-gay society, forced testing only exposes those most in need of help to the vicious bigotry intensified since the onset of this terrible epidemic. In 1989 UCLA researchers terrified millions with a clinical study they claimed showed that even people who tested negative for AIDS might really have

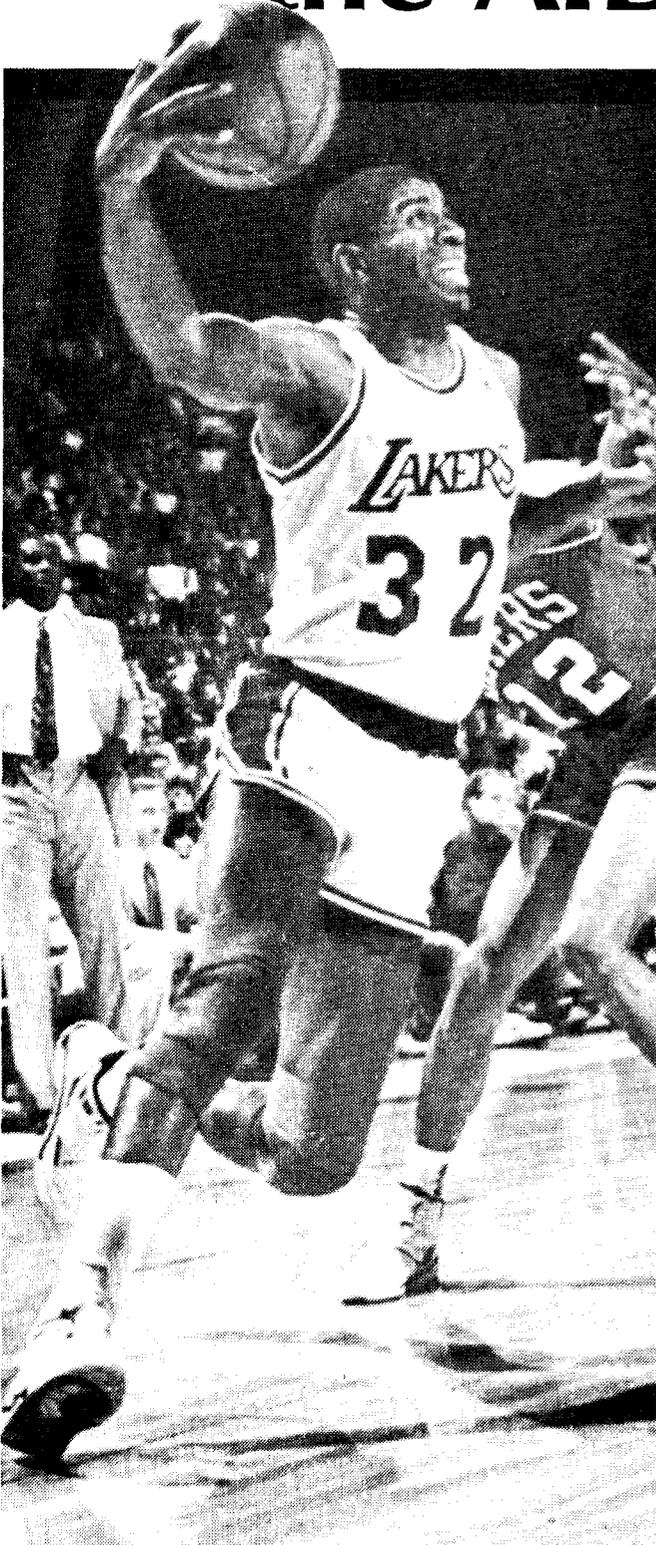
already been exposed to the virus but wouldn't develop antibodies and test positive for an indefinite period of years. Medical experts long ago concluded these findings were false—the interval between infection and a positive test result is short, less than six months—but the public wasn't informed until this month! Such indifference and incompetence make a mockery of the witchhunters' demands for mandatory testing.

The answer to the AIDS crisis is science, not hysteria. But in this sick capitalist society, scientific research on AIDS is hampered by underfunding, grotesque squabbles among drug companies and research teams for glory and prestige, and especially by a medical system run for profit. AIDS patients are bankrupted by the drug companies, who charge a fortune for drugs that appear to be life-prolonging, like AZT. And while the FDA takes forever to get new medications on the market, AIDS victims are legally persecuted for seeking out new medications the only way they can—through an international black market.

We need *billions* for AIDS research and *international* cooperation in research for a cure. We're facing a devastating plague here, and society should be mobilized from top to bottom to fight it. But of course this capitalist society is organized to produce for profit, not to fill human needs. And there's no better example of that than what has happened and continues to happen and *not* happen with the AIDS crisis. This government is doing everything in its power to push a reactionary social and political program that prevents effective treatment or containment of the disease and that ensures that its effects will be most devastating and inhumane.

As we wrote in "The Agony of AIDS" (*Women and Revolution* No. 35, Summer 1988): "The fight against AIDS cries out for a socialist revolution which will lay the basis for a society which will end all forms of social oppression. Only then will the limits of science be the sole limits—and those will constantly be enlarged through thoughtful, energetic research." ■

Magic Johnson and the AIDS Crisis



Soohoo/NBA Photo

Legendary Los Angeles Lakers basketball star Earvin "Magic" Johnson.

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 539, 22 November 1991, newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

On the early afternoon of November 7, Magic Johnson calmly stepped up to a microphone as if it were just another NBA free throw line and stunned the world with the announcement that he had been infected with the HIV virus. Johnson announced his immediate retirement from professional basketball and pledged to become a spokesman in the battle against AIDS, cautioning, "You think it can never happen to you, that it only happens to other people. If it can happen to Magic Johnson it can happen to anybody."

His composure and bravery in publicly announcing his infection with the AIDS virus—a death sentence for its overwhelmingly gay, black and Hispanic victims who also suffer a plague of bigotry—was met with an unusual outpouring of support. Philadelphia 76ers' forward Charles Barkley adopted Johnson's uniform number "32" for the rest of the season as a personal tribute. Phone lines to AIDS organizations were jammed coast to coast as thousands called in \$32 contributions or asked for information about the virus. Young black kids who practice Magic's moves with the basketball in vacant lots and schoolyards across the country cried and talked of their fears for themselves, their older brothers and sisters, and their idol.

For more than a dozen years Magic Johnson has dominated the sport of basketball. The Los Angeles Lakers had not had a losing month since Magic joined the team in 1979. Lumbering down the lane on the break with his shoulder-high dribble, arching jumpers from "downtown," master of the touch pass, no-look pass, fake pass, "junior sky hook," and now and then a crushing slam dunk, Johnson led his Lakers to five NBA championships. He is also that rare professional gracious enough to visit the opposing team's locker room to offer congratulations when the Lakers lost.

To list Johnson's achievements only scratches the surface of his game. Magic Johnson is one of the very few who changed the way the game was played. The on-court coach, Magic demonstrated that teamwork, setting up teammates to score, was an art. In the dozen years since Johnson and his friend Larry Bird brought their rivalry onto the hardwood floors of the Boston Garden and the Great Western Forum, pro basketball was transformed from an exciting but little-watched inner-city game to a vastly successful international business—helping overcome the last vestiges of a quota system in basketball by proving that white fans will turn out for a "black sport."

Especially for minority youth who face big "Do Not Enter" signs at the gates of most walks of life, sports are

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