

# 1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

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A. TANNENBAUM—SYGMA

## Smash Apartheid! No to 'Power-Sharing!'

The current round of negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African government marks a new phase in the decades-long struggle against the hated system of apartheid, one of the vilest manifestations of capitalism on the planet. The white-supremacist regime's traditional claim that allowing civil rights for the black majority would quickly turn South Africa into a Soviet satellite is no longer taken seriously by anyone but the most paranoid, far-right

elements in the Afrikaner laager. The current infatuation with "free market" economics in the former Soviet bloc has encouraged the ANC leadership openly to advocate a capitalist future for South Africa. Once seemingly irreconcilable foes, the ANC and the apartheid rulers are seriously exploring the possibility of a deal. Although formidable obstacles remain, some kind of settlement cannot be ruled out.

The replacement of racist hard-liner P.W. Botha by

the more pragmatic F.W. de Klerk as head of the South African government was supposed to signal a new reform tack by the apartheid state. War-torn Namibia has finally been permitted its independence. Parts of the vast web of apartheid legislation have been repealed, particularly laws that were already unenforceable, like the pass system. Mandela and Sisulu have been released, along with other prominent ANC figures. Anti-apartheid organizations, such as the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP), have been officially unbanned. The four-year old state of emergency, which gave the police virtually unlimited powers, has been lifted in most parts of the country.

The South African government has not been suddenly seized with an attack of conscience. In the best tradition of bourgeois reform, it is acting to shore up the long-term security of the white ruling class. Some of the changes also represent a belated recognition of reality. Many blacks in the homelands were so desperate that they ignored the pass laws and worked illegally, even if it meant being caught and jailed for several months. However, the fundamental structure of South African society has yet to be changed. Savage political repression remains commonplace, and right-wing vigilantes spread terror with police approval. Large numbers of anti-apartheid prisoners are still in jail. ANC members have not been granted immunity from prosecution. Even as the negotiations were about to begin, a new SACP "conspiracy" to overthrow the government was discovered by the police, resulting in more detentions. Black workers still receive a small fraction of the wages of whites, and capitalists continue to reap huge profits from superexploitation. A thin layer of affluent black professionals and businesspeople has emerged, but the vast majority of blacks still live in poverty, while whites enjoy opulent lifestyles. Apartheid remains a grim reality.

De Klerk's reform policy is based on a recognition that things cannot go on in the old way. This is partly a result of pressure from South Africa's imperialist allies, but chiefly because of the inability of the state to control the militant black working class with traditional methods. Under immense popular pressure, the more farsighted elements among the South African bourgeoisie (traditionally the English-speaking section, but now also embracing some of the Afrikaners) have come increasingly to understand that there is a contradiction between the strictures of apartheid and their aspirations to turn South Africa into a genuine imperialist colossus. South Africa cannot develop its industrial and manufacturing capacity without transforming its indigent, migratory black workforce into a stable labor pool. Ensuring a reliable, skilled workforce not only requires investments in social infrastructure (healthcare, education, housing, etc.), it also means that the black population cannot be totally excluded from political life.

The prospect of granting even limited rights to blacks has produced a white backlash, spearheaded by Eugene Terreblanche and his fascistic Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB). These ultra-racists have substantial support in the state security apparatus, and particularly among the Afrikaner population outside the big cities.

They threaten to meet any "negotiated settlement" with a fanatical white-supremacist insurgency.

The commencement of negotiations between the government and the ANC coincided with an upsurge in murderous attacks on ANC supporters in the townships around Johannesburg by the tribalist vigilantes of Gatscha Buthelezi's Inkatha, abetted by the state security apparatus. Whether these attacks originated from the government, or were instigated by Buthelezi in order to secure a seat at the negotiating table, they rounded to the benefit of the regime. The Inkatha attacks inflamed hostilities within the black population, damaged the ANC's credibility and increased pressure on Mandela for more concessions at the bargaining table. What's more, de Klerk has used the attacks as an excuse to impose "Operation Iron Fist," a measure ostensibly designed to put an end to the violence, but which in reality reintroduces the state of emergency lifted for most of the country in June.

Going into the discussions with the ANC, de Klerk publicly remarked that he has no intention of negotiating himself out of power. But the ANC is not going to ask him to. At this point it is difficult to predict what an eventual deal between de Klerk and the ANC might look like. Any settlement that includes some form of "group rights" (the euphemism for maintaining privileged status for whites) would be a mere modification of apartheid. Even if the bizarre legal superstructure of white supremacy were modified, the substance of racial oppression, which is an organic component of South African capitalism, would remain.

Full-fledged bourgeois democracy is not a viable option for South Africa's capitalist rulers. The masses of the oppressed are too numerous, too impoverished and

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## 1917

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# International Trotskyist Regroupment

## We Go Forward!

The recent fusion of three Trotskyist organizations from North America, New Zealand and Germany to form the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) is a breakthrough in the necessary process of international revolutionary regroupment. A communist propaganda nucleus, no matter how correct its program, must either grow or die; this regroupment has shown the determination and capacity of Trotskyism to grow. It is a small but crucial step toward the rebirth of the Fourth International.

In May, the North American-based Bolshevik Tendency fused with the Permanent Revolution Group (PRG) of New Zealand at a joint conference in Oakland, California. This unified tendency then joined forces in August with the comrades of the former Gruppe IV. Internationale based in West Berlin, following extensive consultations in that city.

With this regroupment, each of the three organizations broke out of its geographical isolation to become subordinate sections of a genuine international current, the International Bolshevik Tendency, which is unique in upholding the Trotskyist program of workers revolution internationally in this period of global reaction. 1917 will from now on be the international organ of the tendency.

Although our organization is small and confined wholly to advanced capitalist countries, the forces that shape its program and preserve its revolutionary integrity are international. A democratic-centralist international provides important checks and counterbalances to the deforming pressures of specific national environments. The North American, New Zealand and German sections of the IBT have real, if modest, roots in three different parts of the world; none has a preponderance of either membership or leadership.

The basis of our fusions—and the strength of our tendency—is our common understanding of the program of socialist revolution. If our three groups had been unrelated phenomena, products of merely local processes or of chance, it is highly unlikely that we could have achieved this unity through a few months of intense political discussions. But the three organizations were always closely related. The program and many of the central cadres of each of the components of the fusion were shaped by a common international political history. There is a sense in which this regroupment merely gives organizational expression to a pre-existing programmatic reality.

### The Struggle for Revolutionary Continuity

All three groups have a common origin in the international Spartacist tendency (iSt—which recently renamed itself the International Communist League,



JOHN TOPHAM

**Leon Trotsky upheld the ideals of the Russian Revolution against Stalinist degeneration**

ICL). Revolutionary organizations, both great and small, have almost always issued from the disintegration and degeneration of pre-existing formations. The Third International was built by adherents of the Second International who revolted against the latter's infamous betrayal in World War I. Most of the early adherents of the movement for the Fourth International were communists who had opposed the Stalinization of the Comintern from within.

In the period following the Second World War, the Trotskyist movement was undermined by Pabloism, a new form of revisionism, which ultimately resulted in the destruction of the Fourth International. But the revolutionary traditions upon which the Fourth International stood were not obliterated. Revolutionary currents emerged from the remnants of the Trotskyist movement which struggled to reverse the process of degeneration. Those struggles against revisionism were often partial and sometimes badly flawed, but they nonetheless represented vital links in the chain of revolutionary continuity. The American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the initiator of the International Committee of the Fourth International (an ephemeral anti-revisionist international center), played a leading role in the struggle to defend the historical necessity for Trotskyist parties against the Pabloist liquidators.

In the early 1960s the qualitative degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the United States produced a factional opposition committed to the defense of a revolutionary perspective, out of which emerged the Spartacist League (SL). In the 1970s the SL won over enough subjectively revolutionary groups and individuals to launch the international Spartacist tendency. From the 1960s until the late 1970s the Spartacists, led by James Robertson, were the sole grouping with a consistently revolutionary program.

Each of the three founding groups of the International Bolshevik Tendency is a product of this history of struggle for anti-revisionist Marxist politics, and most immediately of the Spartacist tendency. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Spartacists themselves underwent a process of political degeneration. Each of the components of the IBT was founded by former Spartacist cadres who were victims of one or another of the bureaucratic purges that disfigured the iSt's internal life during this period.

Each group was committed to the revolutionary communist program promulgated by Marx and Engels, elaborated and put into practice by Lenin and Trotsky, codified by the first four Congresses of the Communist International, further developed by Trotsky's Fourth International and defended by the Spartacist tendency prior to its descent into political banditry. Each was determined to uphold that program against pretenders to the Trotskyist heritage, from the impressionistic tailism of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat (USec), to the classical centrism of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI, the international tendency associated with the British Workers Power grouping) to the leader-cultism of the U.S. Spartacist League and its foreign subsidiaries.

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Despite common political backgrounds, a protracted process of discussion was necessary to sort out political differences and ensure that unity was achieved on a principled basis. The small size and limited finances of the organizations made international contact difficult; preliminary discussions were therefore more prolonged than they would have been with greater resources or closer geographical proximity. Yet all three parties to the fusion embraced the iSt's early fight for revolutionary Marxism and renounced its later betrayals. Bringing together all comrades who share this understanding is an important first step to the reorganizing of the Fourth International.

## **The Necessity of Revolutionary Regroupment**

The Spartacist tendency has a special significance for us because its history and programmatic development are a crucial part of our political capital. This is a tradition we unreservedly, although not uncritically, embrace. But we do not live in the past. Our job today is to build the core of an international revolutionary party, and that requires programmatic struggle with those centrist or revisionist organizations which, by claiming to be revolutionary, divert subjective revolutionaries from authentic Marxist politics.

While opponent organizations such as the LRCI or the Spartacists will not come over as a whole to revolutionary politics, they remain contradictory phenomena. It is important to win sections of the experienced cadres of our centrist opponents, in part, to facilitate more decisive splits among the centrists, and also to accelerate the necessary process of political realignment in the international left. Experienced cadre of other organizations will also form an invaluable component of the IBT in the future. The capacity to offer revolutionary leadership does not come from nowhere; it is only acquired through the experience of collective practical and theoretical work.

For fifteen years prior to its degeneration, the Spartacist tendency was the only revolutionary Trotskyist organization in the world. But by the late 1970s, James Robertson, the Spartacist founder/leader began to substitute his personal authority for democratic-centralist norms. This process eventually led to a series of debilitating purges directed primarily against Spartacist cadres who were perceived by Robertson as potential internal opponents, i.e., anyone capable of independent political thought or organizational initiative. The purges were designed to abort any potential internal opposition. But they were also intended to destroy the personal and political reputations of the individuals targeted, and to drive them out of revolutionary politics altogether.

These early purges became prototypes for a host of similar heretic burnings that followed with increasing regularity in subsequent years, turning the iSt into a lifeless obedience cult. The erratic political zigzags and bizarre stunts that have marked Spartacist public activity over the past decade are the direct result of the subordination of the iSt/ICL to the whims of a single,

megalomaniacal leader. But the existence of the International Bolshevik Tendency in three parts of the world confirms James P. Cannon's observation that:

"The ideas of Marxism, which create revolutionary parties, are stronger than the parties they create, and never fail to survive their downfall. They never fail to find representatives in the old organizations to lead the work of reconstruction."

—*First Ten Years of American Communism*

## The "Logan Question" In the Spartacist Tendency

The founders of the New Zealand Permanent Revolution Group, Bill Logan and Adaire Hannah, were the victims of the most hysterical witchhunt and sordid frame-up in the history of the iSt. Logan was the National Chairman of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand (SL/ANZ) from 1972 to 1977. Hannah, then his companion, was the National Secretary. Under their leadership, the SL/ANZ grew from a handful of relatively inexperienced youth into the strongest Spartacist section outside the U.S. In 1977 the couple was transferred to London at the behest of the Spartacist international leadership, where they were instrumental in winning an important layer of cadres from opponent organizations, and launching the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B).

But Logan and Hannah were scarcely in London a year before they became targets of a mounting campaign of petty criticism by Robertson & Co. These attacks eventually led to their ouster from the leadership of the British section. Logan and Hannah were then transferred to New York under a cloud of suspicion. While performing routine organizational tasks in the group's New York headquarters, the Robertson leadership began the process of "reevaluating" their record in Britain and particularly in Australia. This led to an emotional explosion at the January 1979 Australian summer camp, where the ranks were encouraged to "speak bitterness" about their experiences under their former leadership. Logan and Hannah were accused of a host of "betrayals," "abuses" and "crimes" during their tenure as leaders of the SL/ANZ, which had ended two years earlier.

The process culminated in the "trial" of Bill Logan at the Spartacists' first and only international conference at Colchester, England, in August 1979. A hysterical atmosphere was created, as delegates were subjected to endless anti-Logan diatribes by the Spartacist leadership and "disabused" former comrades primed for the occasion. The whole procedure was full of irregularities: Logan was denied counsel in presenting his case, and the organization refused to provide Hannah, his only witness, with any financial assistance to attend. Needless to say there was plenty of money available to fly in hostile witnesses. Everyone in the organization knew that the results of the trial were a foregone conclusion.

In expelling him from the Spartacist tendency, the trial body declared that:

"Bill Logan is a proven, massive liar and a sexual sociopath who manipulated the private lives of com-



1917 PHOTO

PRG contingent at 1990 Labour Day march in Wellington

rades for reasons of power politics and his own aberrant appetites and compulsions in the guise of Marxism. His crimes are against communist morality and its substrate elementary human decency... he cannot be and should never have been a member of a working-class organization..."

Ten days after Logan's expulsion, when Adaire Hannah attempted to resign from the organization in protest, she was told that the Colchester conference had terminated her membership. Yet the Spartacist leadership had previously told her that there was no reason for her to attend the conference, as she was *not* on trial. Not only was she denied the opportunity to defend herself, she was not even told why she was expelled.

While both the North American BT and the PRG had always held that the Logan trial was a frame-up on the whole, ambiguities remained. During the trial and the process leading up to it, the accused couple's undiminished loyalty to the Spartacist tendency prevented them from grasping the enormity of the fraud perpetrated against them, and hence from defending themselves as forcefully as they could. Robertson took great pains to involve the maximum number of members in the purge to make the guilt of Logan and Hannah an article of faith among his followers. A number of current members of the IBT, then iSt members, believed the substance of the charges against Logan, and joined in the chorus of condemnation at Colchester. Others had private misgivings, but viewed the whole affair as a falling out among bureaucrats.

## Robertson's Star Pupils

The matter was complicated by the fact that charges against Logan contained certain distorted and exaggerated elements of truth. One major item in pre-fusion discussions was to separate the truth from the lies. This was necessary to clear the record and prevent the repetition of similar mistakes.

We arrived at the following conclusions: the Logan

regime in the SL/ANZ was in fact bureaucratic. A commandist leadership style, a punishing work schedule and lack of consideration for members' individual needs seriously marred the group's internal life. But these methods were neither peculiar to, nor invented by, Bill Logan and Aida Hannah. They were similar in quality to practices that were current in a number of Spartacist locals during those years, and that rapidly became the norm for the organization as a whole. Experienced SL cadres from the U.S. took up residence in Australia during Logan's tenure, and participated fully in the leadership of the section without noticing anything amiss. Other top leaders, including Robertson himself, had visited the section and talked to the membership. Not only did they approve of what they saw, but they held up the Logan regime as a model for the rest of the organization. The leaders of fledgling national sections were frequently advised to "do it like Bill and Aida." Logan and Hannah's role in undermining democratic centralism in the Spartacist tendency was inextricably connected to their self-conception, fulsomely endorsed by the New York leadership, that they were the star pupils and most able practitioners of the Robertson school of party building.

The SL/ANZ regime, for all its problems, was run solely in the interests of furthering the political goals of the Spartacist tendency. The allegations made at the 1979 trial, that Logan was an evil genius who routinely interfered in the sexual lives of members to gratify his bizarre sadistic urges, were never anything more than malicious invention on the part of Robertson and his acolytes. In fact, nearly all the incidents cited as proof of Logan's "moral turpitude" were well known to the Spartacist leadership years before the anathema was pronounced at Colchester. Not an eyebrow was raised in New York at the time. Only later, when Robertson decided to get rid of Logan, were certain events seized upon and embellished to depict the former leader of the SL/ANZ as a Svengali. This is the only conclusion that an impartial examination of the documentary record can sustain.

Why, then, did the iSt engineer a frame-up of two of its most capable leaders? The answer is that Logan and Hannah were far too capable for Robertson's liking. They had assumed the leadership of the SL/ANZ in 1972 with a mimeograph machine and a membership that could be counted on one hand; when they departed for London five years later, they left behind them an organization five times its original size, with a stable core of leading cadres, a regular monthly press, promising trade-union work and a solid reputation on the Australasian left.

During their brief tenure as leaders of the Spartacist League/Britain, Logan and Hannah once again demonstrated their aptitude for party building. Within a year, under their leadership, the Spartacist operation in Britain had quadrupled in size, and had recruited some extremely talented and capable cadres from the centrist left. Had this rate of growth continued, it was possible that the SL/B would have become larger than its parent organization in the U.S.

Even though there were no significant political differences between them, Robertson began to regard Logan as a potentially formidable internal opponent, one who might be able to carry a sizeable minority, or perhaps even a majority, of the tendency with him in the event of a dispute. Aida Hannah was Logan's closest political and personal associate. It was not their failures, but their successes, that made Logan and Hannah suspect in Robertson's eyes, and caused them to become two of the earliest victims of the pre-emptive strikes that were to claim many of the Spartacists' best and brightest in the ensuing years.

The purge of Logan and Hannah was followed by a series of traumatizing and largely apolitical authority fights which all but destroyed the SL/B (see "Whither Britain?" *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt* No. 1, August 1983). The SL/B is, to this day, a shadow of its former self.

## The Permanent Revolution Group

The most cogent refutation of the Spartacist slanders against Logan and Hannah, however, is their political record since their expulsion. Despite their bitter experience, and unlike so many members of the '68 generation who have drifted into the social-democratic camp or out of politics, Logan and Hannah have spent the past decade establishing a foothold for revolutionary Trotskyism in New Zealand. They recruited three talented people from the orbit of the Socialist Action League (now called the Communist League, New Zealand affiliate of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, led by the American ex-Trotskyist and idiosyncratic reformist, Jack Barnes). Then, through an entry into the Socialist Alliance, a politically diffuse leftist umbrella group, they succeeded in winning a few young radicals to a caucus based on the Trotskyist program.

The Permanent Revolution Group (PRG) has since intervened in New Zealand's feminist, gay and unemployment movements on the basis of Marxist class-struggle politics. It has also established a fraction on the university campus in Wellington. It recently made national headlines in New Zealand with its expulsion from the New Labour Party, a left-reformist split-off from the extremely right-wing social-democratic Labour Party (see article elsewhere in this issue).

Prior to the fusion, a founding member of the Bolshevik Tendency made an extended visit to Wellington, where he was able to participate fully in the political and social life of the PRG. He found an organization with politics identical in all important respects to those of the North American BT. He also discovered an organization with a thoroughly democratic internal regime, free of the deformations characteristic of the Spartacist tendency, yesterday and today.

## The 1981 Purge of the TLD

After the PRG/BT fusion in Oakland in May, representatives of the new group went to Europe for discussions with the Gruppe IV. Internationale of West



**Gruppe IV. Internationale contingent, February 1983. Placards read: "For the Reforging of the 4th International!," "Smash NATO! Military Defense of the DDR and USSR!" and "No Deportations! Full Civil Rights for all Foreigners!"**

Germany, an organization which was an indirect product of a 1981 purge of the iSt's German section, the *Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands* (TLD). The history of the TLD recapitulated the pattern set by the expulsion of Logan and Hannah: early successes in recruiting overseas cadres to the Spartacist tendency, followed by a New York-engineered housecleaning when an international affiliate began to develop a political life of its own. Unlike Robertson's pre-emptive strike against Logan in the SL/B, the TLD purge at least had a political pretext: the application of the Trotskyist position on the "Russian Question" to the rapidly developing situation in Poland in the autumn of 1981.

When *Solidarnosc* first led a series of strikes against the Polish government in 1980, its political character was not yet determined. The iSt provisionally supported the original strike at the Gdansk shipyard, which created *Solidarnosc*. But when *Solidarnosc* definitively passed over to the side of counterrevolution at its September 1981 congress, the iSt withdrew its support and correctly called for spiking *Solidarnosc's* counterrevolution. This occasion was also used as a cover for destroying the last remnants of political independence within the TLD, and its subordination to the bureaucratic-commandist Robertson regime.

A select team of Robertson loyalists, dispatched to Germany for the TLD's September 1981 conference, demanded that the TLD pass a motion pledging to "take responsibility in advance for whatever idiocies and atrocities they [the Soviet army] may commit" in the course of a possible intervention. A future leader of Gruppe IV. Internationale put forward a counter-motion, which stated that, while the TLD would indeed side militarily with the Soviet Stalinists in a confrontation with *Solidarnosc*, it would take "no responsibility for acts of an anti-proletarian character" on the part of the Russian army.

The counter-motion was fully consistent in its thrust with the historic Trotskyist position on the defense of deformed and degenerated workers states; the Spar-

tacist International Executive Committee resolution, which the leadership was successful in forcing on the German section, represented a serious Stalinophilic deviation. As the External Tendency of the iSt (forerunner of the BT) wrote in 1983:

"Trotskyists give unconditional *military* support to Stalinist regimes battling internal counterrevolution (i.e., *Solidarnosc*) or external capitalist forces... This is quite a different matter than extending *political* support to the Stalinists. We take *no* responsibility for the crimes of the Stalinists against the working people—whether in the course of the military defense of proletarian property forms or otherwise. Military support is extended *despite* such crimes."

—*Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt* No. 1

An article on Poland published during the same month in the Spartacist's main press organ, *Workers Vanguard*, implicitly backed away from the position that had been forced down the throats of the TLD:

"Solidarity's counterrevolutionary course must be stopped! *If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this.* And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counterrevolution."

—*Workers Vanguard*, 25 September 1981, emphasis in original

Despite the ambiguity of this passage, it suggests that the Spartacists proposed to take responsibility for siding with the Soviet army *in spite of* its crimes, rather than for the crimes themselves. Thus the Spartacist leadership cynically enunciated two different lines on a possible Soviet intervention in Poland: an orthodox-sounding line for public consumption, and a Stalinophilic internal line, designed exclusively to rid the TLD of comrades reluctant to snap to attention at Robertson's command. Despite the fact that the Spartacist leaders knew that the internal resolution was publicly indefensible, it served its purpose as a loyalty test to purge the section.

The Gruppe IV. Internationale, founded in February



WILLY ROMER

**Gruppe Spartakus takes its name from the Spartakusbund of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The Spartakusbund participated in the armed workers uprising in Berlin, 5 January 1919**

1983, was led by former TLD comrades who had proved insufficiently malleable. An early public statement by this group is sufficient to counter the Spartacist charges that it was motivated by anti-Sovietism:

"The Russian Question is the pivot of revolutionary policy at the present time.

...  
 "Without the *unconditional military* defense of the deformed workers' states against imperialism and internal counterrevolution, you cannot raise the fight to overthrow your own bourgeoisie. We have to extend Karl Liebknecht's slogan that the main enemy is at home by taking sides unambiguously for the deformed workers' states in case of a military showdown. These positions depend on each other, because the historic interests of the working class to fight against the bourgeoisie and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat imply the duty to defend the social foundations built up by the successful October Revolution in the USSR, as a historic gain of the international working class. The overthrow of one's own bourgeoisie is the best defense of the Soviet Union as well as the defense of the USSR is an unalterable precondition to overthrow the bourgeoisie."

—*Where is the iSt Going?*, emphasis in original

A subsequent pamphlet, *Program First!*, reaffirmed the principled Trotskyist positions on the major international questions that faced the left during the 1980s, including Poland, Afghanistan and Nicaragua. These programmatic statements contain a clear line of demarcation from reformist and centrist pseudo-Trotskyist groups, while avoiding the Stalinophilic tilt evident in SL propaganda. Gruppe IV. Internationale intervened in the West German peace movement, the women's movement, the anti-fascist movement and in major struggles of the trade unions. The organization sought to confront various ostensibly Trotskyist groups in order to regroup subjective revolutionaries among them. It also intervened energetically in the crisis of the

German Democratic Republic in the winter of 1989-90.

While in the past there have been differences on certain questions of historical analysis and methodology, we have always been extremely close in our understanding of the main programmatic positions necessary to advance the interests of the working class. For the past seven years the Bolshevik Tendency and the Gruppe IV. Internationale pursued political discussions, while maintaining comradely relations and undertaking some limited practical work together.

### Resolution of an Anomaly

It was anomalous that two organizations so close politically should remain organizationally separate; the anomaly was sharpened with the transfer of comrades from the North American BT to Germany. The intervention of both groups in German political life at a time of historic social and political crisis required that both sides give urgent attention to resolving this contradiction.

One of the most significant differences was over the assessment of the Spartacists. The BT, viewing the activity of the SL on its North American home turf, characterized it as an increasingly bizarre and cultist organization, whose political gyrations defied standard political categories. The Gruppe IV. Internationale considered the iSt badly flawed and highly bureaucratized, but still formally revolutionary.

Important political crises frequently expose the underlying character of political formations. The ICL's activity in the crisis of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) in late 1989 and early 1990 sharply revealed the fundamental nature of the Spartacist operation. With prodigious infusions of members and cash, the Spartacists founded a new German section, the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, which briefly made



significant gains. These were soon squandered as a result of heavy-handed interventions from New York. More-over, the Spartacist intervention was badly flawed by political adaptation to sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and by the absurd claim that the DDR was in the midst of a "workers political revolution."

The character of the Spartacist intervention in this crisis made it obvious that the ICL could not be considered a revolutionary organization, but rather an obstacle to revolution. While the characterization of the ICL is not a principled question, and was never seen by either side as an insurmountable obstacle to unity, it was a difference that was important for international tactical perspectives. With its resolution, it was possible to move to a close agreement on the tasks of revolutionaries, and thence to fusion.

## We Go Forward!

The regroupment was consolidated when the former North American BT comrades joined with the former Gruppe IV. Internationale members to found the Gruppe Spartakus, the German section of the Interna-

tional Bolshevik Tendency. The name is drawn from the finest revolutionary internationalist traditions of the German working class, the traditions of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

The formation of the Gruppe Spartakus, as the German section of an international Trotskyist propaganda nucleus, is of great significance at this historical juncture. Germany today is an immense industrialized country, standing on the brink of enormous social conflicts. It is also the world's fastest-rising imperialist power, and occupies a central political/economic position in a chaotic Europe.

The International Bolshevik Tendency is conscious of its responsibility as a bearer of the historic lessons of the workers movement, codified in the early years of the Communist International and the subsequent struggle of the Left Opposition under Trotsky, to preserve and carry forward the Bolshevik tradition. We are proud of the preparatory work undertaken by each of the components of the IBT over the last few years. The launching of the IBT is, in an important sense, both a new beginning, and a continuation, of the struggles of revolutionaries who have preceded us. ■

## Greetings from the Bureaucratic Robertson Regime

The fusion between the New Zealand Permanent Revolution Group and the North American Bolshevik Tendency (BT) was first announced publicly on 2 June 1990 at the Lutte Ouvriere fete outside Paris. Ten days later James Robertson, the Spartacist lider maximo, felt moved to write to Wolfgang H., a long-time Trotskyist militant, who had been both a leader of Robertson's German affiliate, and later, the Gruppe IV. Internationale. Ostensibly the occasion of the letter was Gruppe IV. Internationale's break with the majority of a grouping based in the former German Democratic Republic. This group had earlier split from the German Spartacists.

The real intent of the letter is clear from the abrupt reversal it contains on the characterization of the Gruppe IV. Internationale. Previously, the Spartacists had called this group "the German ET" (ET was the short form for the "External Tendency of the iSt," precursor of the Bolshevik Tendency). Comrade Wolfgang himself was referred to as "the ET's Wolfgang" the first time the Spartacists mentioned the existence of the Gruppe IV. Internationale (*Workers Vanguard*, 2 March 1984). As recently as February 1990 the Robertsonites were lumping the two groups together in their ongoing smear campaign against the BT:

"Of the state agencies in the world only the Mossad, the Israeli secret police, has similar appetites. Although they claim to be a separate organization the West German GIVIs have operated as the knowing cohorts of the BT, keeping whatever political differences they have an internal secret."

Now suddenly Robertson finds himself taking time out from his busy schedule to invite a founder of the "German ET" out for a drink, noting that the Gruppe

IV. Internationale is not really so bad after all, merely an "ordinary, sometimes left, centrist formation." While it is easy to see the motivation behind this crude attempt to put a wedge between the two organizations, it is hard to imagine why Robertson thought that after seven years of slandering both the BT and Gruppe IV. Internationale, any of the latter's supporters would be favorably impressed by his sudden solicitousness.

12 June 1990

Dear Wolfgang,

After I started this note I was told that you're not the GIVI leader anymore, but it's still worth saying. Greetings from the "bureaucratic Robertson regime". I just read your "Afterword: ONE STEP FORWARD—TWO STEPS BACK". You shouldn't whine and snivel in public. If you'd paid attention to what we wrote, you would have known that the Ladaists had unsavory proclivities. We found out and now you have. At least, as an apologetic on our part, we didn't know anything about them at the time; you did or could have.

Yours is an ordinary, sometimes left, centrist formation. You personally I always thought to be an old-time left-Pabloist who never otherwise jelled; remember how we argued across Germany and France debating reconstruct vs. rebirth (of the FI)? Your pals in the BT are something else and you have kept your mouth shut.

Maybe we could have a drink sometime over this and other matters.

As Bush says, keep out of deep doo-doo.

Best,  
Jim Robertson

# Smash Apartheid!...

*continued from page 2*

too volatile to be contained by the parliamentary politics and electoral machines used to control the working classes in the advanced capitalist world. A social revolution, which will expropriate the capitalist class and put the workers in power, is necessary for the complete and genuine resolution of the tasks traditionally associated with the democratic (or bourgeois) revolution. This is the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution.

The South African proletariat, which comprises an absolute majority of the black population, is fully equal to this historic task. Over the past ten years, it has demonstrated a militancy and combativity unequalled by any other working class in the world. South African workers have organized mighty unions and conducted furious class battles under the whips and bullets of the racist gangster-police. With only a militant gut-level grasp of class politics, they continue to flaunt the hammer and sickle emblem in defiance of their oppressors, even when Stalinist parties the world over have laid it down. Yet without a leadership firmly based on the program of permanent revolution, the struggle of the black South African masses for genuine equality cannot be fought to a successful conclusion. Such leadership will never be provided by the organization which now claims to speak in the name of the black majority—the African National Congress.

No one familiar with South Africa's recent history can fail to be impressed by the courage of Nelson Mandela, or the heroism of the thousands of rank-and-file ANC militants who have faced prison, torture and death. But dedication and heroism alone are not sufficient. Despite the ANC's widespread popularity with the Western left, and the support lavished upon it by organ-

## South African miners: gravediggers of apartheid

JOHN BEYMOUR



izations that call themselves Trotskyist, the fact remains that its program is purely bourgeois-democratic. While revolutionaries must defend the ANC against government persecution, spreading the illusion that democracy is classless and can be achieved without social revolution means calling on the South African proletariat to relinquish its struggle for social liberation. The ANC therefore constitutes an obstacle to the revolutionary transformation that can alone emancipate the non-white population from the shackles of racial oppression and capitalist wage slavery.

Any organization that stands as an obstacle to revolution inevitably proposes itself to the ruling class as a political and ideological prop to the existing social order. It remains to be seen whether the ANC can play this role without major defections from its ranks, or whether the apartheid state is flexible enough to permit the ANC to act as its "democratic" front. But the negotiations now underway in South Africa have about them the odor of impending betrayal. To anyone familiar with the ANC's real history and ideology, as opposed to the heroic myths that proliferate in the left-liberal swamp, such an outcome will be no surprise.

## The Class Character of the ANC

Although Stalinist dissimulation and right-wing hysteria have combined to obscure the real agenda of the ANC, its pro-capitalist orientation has been well documented throughout the organization's 80-year history. The ANC has never claimed to be a working-class revolutionary organization and, despite the substantial role of ostensible communists in the ANC, it has never sought to end capitalist exploitation in South Africa. For three decades after its founding in 1912 by a small group of Western-educated blacks, the ANC could only be characterized as a petty-bourgeois civil rights organization—and a rather tame one at that. Its constitution was, in the words of one historian, "in the spirit of the black American educator Booker T. Washington" (Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*.)

In its early years the ANC leadership advocated a gradual extension of civil rights to Africans, on the model of the piecemeal enfranchisement of different classes in England. The first beneficiaries of this program were to be the educated black petty bourgeoisie; only later were the black masses to be included. Teaching "loyalty to all lawfully constituted authorities," the ANC even opposed Gandhi's tactics of civil disobedience. Instead, they submitted polite petitions, lobbied for white support, and participated in the Natives Representative Council, a sham institution of pre-apartheid segregation.

The ANC was quite conscious of its class role. In 1918, for instance, ANC leader and founding member Sol Plaatje was contacted by the De Beers Diamond Company for assistance in dissuading Africans from joining whites in strike action. "I had to attend the Native Congress at Bloemfontein to prevent the spread among our people of the Johannesburg Socialist propaganda," he wrote of the incident (quoted in Baruch Hirson, *Year*

of Fire, Year of Ash).

In 1943 the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) was launched under the leadership of Anton Lembede. From the outset, the Youth League cadres, including Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, took a more aggressive approach than their seniors. Their program was African nationalism. While explicitly rejecting communism, the ANCYL advocated Christian morality, African unity, African leadership, African culture, African business, and, for good measure, "African socialism." This particular kind of "socialism" was not at all incompatible with African capitalism, as a 1944 editorial in the ANCYL journal explained: "let the average African realize that the businessman in his own community is his surest friend and champion of his liberation" (*Ibid.*)

During World War II and the immediate postwar period, the demand for industrial labor led to the rapid expansion of the urban black working class. New unions were formed, and a series of strikes and boycotts broke out. The growing power and assertiveness of the black working class provided the main impetus for the formal imposition of apartheid in 1948. Shortly afterward, Mandela, Tambo and Sisulu attained leading positions in the ANC, and their new nationalist orientation was adopted by the organization. The ANC's new program of action signaled a turn towards civil disobedience and the boycott of apartheid institutions. This gained the ANC substantial support among black workers.

The softening of the ANC's anti-communism in this period was more a tactical than a programmatic change. While maintaining their own organizational profile, the Stalinists supplied many of the ANC's key personnel, and embraced the ANC's politics. As a result, the ANC leadership, and Mandela in particular, value the contributions of the SACP, and have rebuffed all government attempts to drive a wedge into the alliance. Yet the ANC/SACP relationship is not evidence of a socialist orientation by the ANC, as both professional red-baiters and apologists contend, but rather of the lack of one by the SACP.

While prepared to accept any "socialists" willing to adhere to its program, the ANC has always been hostile to those who would raise independent working-class politics. The only real change from its earlier blatant anti-communism is that the ANC now uses Stalinist terminology and tactics against those "ultra-lefts" who advocate socialism in South Africa.

### **The Freedom Charter: Petty-Bourgeois Utopianism**

The 1955 Freedom Charter, still the ANC's main programmatic document, is garnished with a few vague socialist phrases; but as the ANC inches towards an accommodation with de Klerk, it is playing down even the mild social demands of the charter. Crafted in true popular-frontist tradition to be all things to all people, the Freedom Charter has been interpreted by some wishful leftists as a socialist document; but in general even its supporters concede (or proudly affirm) the

contrary. Mandela made this clear in 1956:

"it is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis..."

"For the first time in the history of this country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mines and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before."

—quoted in Alex Callinicos, "Marxism and Revolution in South Africa," *International Socialism* No. 31

Thirty-one years later, the ANC's official journal affirmed:

"the Freedom Charter is not a socialist document but a national democratic one..."

"Acknowledging that it is not a socialist document, and was never intended to be, is not a point of criticism or a matter for regret."

"...  
"the African National Congress was never a 'political organisation of the working people;' it was, is and has to be neither more nor less than the linchpin of the national liberation struggle."

—*Sechaba*, May 1987

Ruthless repression by the apartheid government, which culminated in the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of the ANC in 1960, pushed the organization into a turn toward "armed struggle." It was a grossly unequal struggle, and within a few years the ANC underground was crushed. Mandela, who was jailed for 27 years for his role in the campaign, observed at the time that the ANC's military tactics were calculated primarily to influence public opinion. While the military campaign kept the ANC in the news, the crushing state repression effectively eclipsed the organization both militarily and politically for over a decade.

After the setbacks of the early 1960s, the next resurgence of anti-apartheid struggle took the form of a wave of working-class strike actions a decade later. These struggles arose quite independently of the ANC, which was pursuing a low-intensity guerrilla campaign from bases in the frontline states. While the ANC's guerrilla activities may have had a certain symbolic value, they never posed a serious threat to the South African regime. ANC Secretary-General Alfred Nzo remarked in February 1990 that: "we must admit that we do not have the capacity within our country to intensify the (armed) struggle in any meaningful way," (*San Francisco Examiner*, 2 February 1990).

### **UDF Violence in the Anti-Apartheid Movement**

The growth of the independent black trade unions and the left wing of the black consciousness movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s overshadowed the ANC's influence within South Africa. The ANC, however, with a substantial number of new recruits after the Soweto rising in 1976, began to regain its predominance with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. The UDF brought church, community, student and youth groups together with black business organizations under a single umbrella organization loyal to the Freedom Charter. It only excluded the white

bosses' organizations and the collaborationist homeland leaders. The UDF addressed the felt need for some mass organization to coordinate the struggle against the state on a national level and, in the absence of an effective national political organization to its left, gradually harnessed the anti-apartheid movement to the ANC's program.

The ANC and its supporters had long claimed a political monopoly on the anti-apartheid movement. As the UDF moved toward hegemony, this claim began to be enforced physically. Ultimately, not only undemocratic tactics but many gruesome acts of violence were employed against the UDF's left-wing critics, indiscriminately designated as "workerists," and their families. Supporters of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), the major "black consciousness" organization, which frequently criticized the UDF for being too conciliatory to the white rulers, were repeatedly attacked. There were also instances of counterattacks on UDF members. While the sequence of events is disputed, the preponderance of evidence points to UDF supporters as the initiators. There is no doubt that critics of the UDF were on the receiving end of most of the violence.

It is hard to tell what level of the UDF/ANC organized this internecine carnage. There is no reason to doubt Mandela's personal sincerity in deploring some of the worst excesses. ANC leaders of his generation were known for their advocacy of restraint in the use of violence. But the ANC leadership's unmitigated hostility to left-wing critics created a climate in which the murder of members of other anti-apartheid organizations became acceptable.

The May 1987 issue of *Sechaba*, the ANC's official journal, contained the following:

"We are faced again and again with the dead weight of 'workerism' and the ultra-left. Whatever the subtle distinctions between their various factions, so far as South Africa is concerned, they are united only in their attacks on the Freedom Charter and the ANC and those who stand with it, in the hollow booming of their empty slogans, and in their parasitism."

In case anyone missed the point, the article stated explicitly: "so far as those who attack us with the arguments discussed above are concerned, they are not even traitors; we never trusted them. They are part of the enemy." By this definition, anyone who criticizes the ANC or the Freedom Charter (including militants who spent years in jail for anti-apartheid activities) is automatically "part of the enemy." In the present circumstances this amounts to calling for their execution.

The ANC's ferocious hostility, both physical and rhetorical, toward its "workerist" critics echoes the anti-Trotskyist campaign of the Stalin apparatus in the 1930s.



LOUISE GUBB—JB PICTURES  
Walter Sisulu

Once a political organization begins to employ violence as a substitute for political debate in its struggle for mass influence, it is only a matter of time before such techniques are used against internal dissidents as well. Former members of Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the ANC's military arm, have alleged just that. In the 1980s, hundreds of ANC members in Angola were reportedly detained and tortured for criticizing the leadership, and many were killed. Conditions at one detention camp were reportedly so horrible that the mere threat of re-detention drove some former prisoners to suicide (*Sunday Correspondent*, London, 8 April 1990). Nelson Mandela has publicly acknowledged and condemned ANC torture of its own members (*San Francisco Examiner*, 15 April 1990). But ANC dissidents have alleged that the abuse goes on (*New York Times*, 25 April 1990).

### ANC's Struggle for Hegemony in the Unions

The ANC/UDF/SACP's Stalinist tactics also extended to the trade-union movement. The independent black unions, which emerged in the early 1980s as the most powerful force in South Africa opposing apartheid were, on the whole, significantly to the left of the ANC. ANC supporters initially denounced the independent unions for registering legally with the state, but this criticism was soon refuted by the unions' success in defending the workers and extracting concessions from the state. The growth of these mass working-class organizations, and particularly the existence within them of explicitly pro-socialist tendencies, challenged the ANC's claim to be the sole authentic representative of the anti-apartheid movement, and at least implicitly challenged its whole popular-frontist strategic framework.

The UDF attempted to neutralize the trade-union left by simultaneously creating a mass popular-frontist alternative, and struggling to gain control of the unions from within. Factions were organized within the unions to advocate exclusive political affiliation with the UDF. They were successful at first in a few of the weaker unions, but the powerful industrial unions maintained their tradition of political independence. It soon became apparent, however, that when the "UDF only" factions could not win a majority, they were prepared to split the unions. Through a series of splits, again primarily in weaker unions, the UDF was able to expand its original toehold. The fear of splits was then used, often in combination with more direct forms of intimidation, to extend the UDF's grip.

In late 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was launched through a merger of the major independent and pro-UDF unions. By this time the UDF was clearly gaining the upper hand, even though it had still not been endorsed by the core industrial unions. The trade-union left was divided into two wings, one sympathetic to the left wing of the black consciousness movement, and the other essentially syndicalist. The major unions sympathetic to the black consciousness movement did not join COSATU, and later

formed a separate, smaller organization, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU). The syndicalist current in COSATU lacked both a clearly counterposed political program and any internal organizational structure. While critical of the UDF's multi-class strategy, the left unionists tended to value unity, and were therefore inclined to be conciliatory. The better financed and better organized UDF faction won a disproportionate share of the positions in the COSATU leadership.

The pro-UDF factions next launched a campaign in each union to endorse the Freedom Charter. In this venture they employed intimidation, slander, vote-rigging and a variety of other bureaucratic maneuvers. The February 1988 issue of *Azania Worker* reported that before a vote on the Freedom Charter in the National Union of Mineworkers, references were made to necklacing Charter opponents. In the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA), the "Charterist" minority led a split rather than accept majority rule, whereupon the COSATU leadership recognized the minority and refused to recognize the majority. When another vote was conducted after the majority had been vindicated in an out-of-court settlement, the minority resorted to stacking branch meetings with members from other localities, bringing in non-union members to vote and ballot stuffing (*Azania Frontline*, April/May 1988).

### The Disintegration of the Trade-Union Left

At COSATU's second convention in July 1987, the left completely collapsed. The CCAWUSA majority had not been recognized by COSATU, and so its delegates were excluded from the convention. The National Union of Metalworkers, the second largest union in COSATU, sponsored a contradictory compromise resolution that accepted the Freedom Charter as a minimum program, but also talked about the necessity for working-class leadership to go forward to socialism. But the motion died for lack of a second. The other unions which had come out against adopting the Freedom Charter did not put forward any motions of their own.

Many unionists recoiled from the class collaborationism of the UDF, and many more were appalled by the crude techniques by which the UDF/ANC supporters attempted to gain control. Although it had strong support at the base, the syndicalist left was unable to defeat the ANC supporters politically because it never coalesced as a disciplined political formation with a coherent alternative program.

At the convention, the COSATU leadership had lined up numerous speakers from the UDF, and had messages read from the ANC and SACTU (an SACP-dominated exile trade-union front), harping on the supposed danger of endorsing socialism as an objective of the union. Advocates of an as yet unwritten "workers' charter," the syndicalists' projected alternative to the Freedom Charter, were taunted and derided. All this took place while worker delegates on the floor held aloft pro-socialist banners. According to an eyewitness:

"after these messages and speeches against socialism the

workers got up on their feet to chant 'Forward to Socialism' and other songs in praise of socialism! Clearly, some people are having problems explaining to workers that they must not now support socialism."

—*Azania Worker*, February 1988

When it all was over, the Freedom Charter was adopted, and COSATU was formally aligned with the UDF. The trade unions, the most formidable obstacle to ANC hegemony in the anti-apartheid movement, had, at least for the moment, been effectively brought to heel.

Not long after this victory, UDF supporters dropped their insistence on allegiance to the Freedom Charter. The real issue, the authority of the ANC, had been settled, and the UDF could afford to tone down its heavy-handed tactics against the left. This new "glasnost" posture has helped the UDF's successor, the Mass Democratic Movement, and the pro-ANC COSATU leadership to deflect criticism for their earlier behavior. Meanwhile the Stalinists of the SACP and SACTU had the audacity to circulate their own reformist drafts of a "workers charter" in COSATU.

The trade-union left was composed of outstanding union militants who had the capacity to tough it out with the bosses on the shop floor. But the leadership had little access to the history of the international revolutionary movement and no connection to an organization that embodied it. They were thus unable to make an adequate bridge to larger social struggles. As the limitations of undifferentiated syndicalism became clear, many of the shop-floor activists who had previously been critical of the Stalinists' reformist program, ended up capitulating to the ANC/SACP for want of an alternative.

### The Perestroika Connection

The SACP/ANC's reformism is particularly grotesque when applied to South Africa, a regional sub-imperialist power with a developed industrial infrastructure. In South Africa the black working class comprises an absolute majority of the population and has a relatively high level of class consciousness. Yet the Stalinists insist that a struggle for proletarian power is not on the agenda.

The ANC's attempt to reach an accommodation with the apartheid rulers has been actively encouraged by the USSR, the ANC/UDF's main international backer. Even before the Kremlin began to openly advocate a wholesale return to market economics, the Soviet bureaucracy was pressuring the ANC to be more conciliatory to the apartheid regime. Gleb Starushenko, a leading Soviet authority on South Africa, argued in 1987 for "group rights" for whites, a formula for the continuation of apartheid, which the ANC has so far rejected (*Zimbabwean Herald*, 27 July 1987, quoted in *Azania Frontline*, December 1987). Victor Goncharov, another Soviet expert, declared that socialism could not be achieved in South Africa for a century.

The uncertainty of future Soviet aid and the disappearance of the ANC's support network in Eastern Europe have made it more dependent than ever on good

relations with imperialism. As it gained international respectability, the ANC has been distancing itself from the ambiguous "socialist" phrases of the Freedom Charter, and asserting its commitment to private property. The economic program contained in the ANC's 1988 document "Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa" is pure and simple capitalism.

The ANC's message has not fallen on deaf ears. Shell Oil's South African branch greeted Nelson Mandela's release from prison with an ad in the *Weekly Mail*, which proclaimed: "Welcome Back, Nelson Mandela! The stars will shine brighter tonight. Tomorrow, a brilliant future beckons" (*New York Times*, 20 February 1990). Mandela commands the respect of all anti-racist militants for his steadfast defiance of his apartheid jailers for 27 years. His release was a victory for all those exploited and oppressed by the apartheid regime. Nonetheless, Marxists cannot let themselves be blinded to the fact that Shell had good reason to celebrate his release.

Various bourgeois governments are now discussing direct aid to the ANC. During Mandela's summer 1990 world tour, plans were laid for the formation of an international investment bank for South Africa along the lines of the World Bank, contingent on a political settlement. The idea was first suggested by the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, Peter Goldmark, at a meeting between Mandela and American business executives in New York. The working group set up to promote the project includes Goldmark and Thomas Nkobi, the ANC treasurer, and Thabo Mbeki, foreign secretary of the ANC (*New York Times*, 5 July 1990).

The ANC has lately taken great pains to assure the international bourgeoisie that black majority rule will not mean wholesale nationalization of industry. The Freedom Charter states:

"The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

"The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

"All other industries and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people."

Fearful that even the above standard third-world nationalist language may cause a grimace or two in the boardrooms of the IMF, the ANC leadership has issued a new statement on economic policy, which says: "The A.N.C.'s basic perspective is that of a mixed economy in which all sectors contribute towards defining and achieving broad national goals and objectives for the benefit of all," (*New York Times*, 4 October 1990).

## Courting the Chiefs

Besides reaching out to the imperialist bankers, the ANC is also seeking to embrace South African tribal chiefs and homeland leaders, some of the most reactionary elements in black South Africa. Earlier in the ANC's history, all chiefs were automatically enrolled as honorary vice chairmen of the ANC, and given veto power over ANC policy. Subsequently, the chiefs, who were entirely dependent on the apartheid regime, severed all connection to the anti-apartheid movement.

During its guerrilla period, the ANC denounced the tribal chiefs and homeland leaders as stooges for the regime and called for "Death to collaborators!" However, this did not prevent the UDF from establishing the Congress of Traditional Leaders (COTRALESA) in 1987. By 1989, COTRALESA claimed to represent a majority of the chiefs (*African Communist*, 2nd quarter 1990).

Under the blows of vigilante terror, the ANC and Mandela are again seeking a reconciliation with Gatsha Buthelezi and his murderous Inkatha organization. The ANC has recently been referring to General Bantu Holomisa, who has run the Transkei bantustan since taking power in a military coup in 1987 with the aid of South African military intelligence, as a "comrade." Holomisa, the first black graduate of the staff and management course at South Africa's army college, refuses to hold elections and has repeatedly ordered attacks on striking workers (*Inqabay Basebenzi*, January 1990). "Comrade" Holomisa also considers it unwise to unban the ANC in the Transkei just yet on the grounds that "irresponsible elements" might take advantage of any political openings to challenge his rule.

Following the ANC, the SACP has also recently embraced the "patriotic" chiefs. A recent article in the *African Communist* (Second Quarter 1990) suggested that the SACP's previous assertions that chieftainship was outdated and fundamentally undemocratic "could cause a lot of political problems for us." Using the time-honored technique of reformist sellouts, the SACP leadership blames its capitulation on the backwardness of the masses: "one must not confuse one's advanced political consciousness with that of the people," for "not everybody will agree that [chieftainship] must wither away." Instead of trying to organize the masses for struggle against this reactionary prop of apartheid rule, the Stalinists propose that, "A lot of political work will have to be done to raise the consciousness of both the chiefs and the people as a whole on whatever formula of coexistence we find" (*Ibid.*)

## The ANC's Prospects for the Future

The ANC's program of reconciliation with the white rulers in an egalitarian capitalist society is simply utopian. The most it can produce is a deal in which apartheid de jure is replaced by apartheid de facto, an arrangement whose main black beneficiaries would be the thin petty-bourgeois layer. For the ANC to realize its aspirations of sharing power, it must become a bulwark of South African capitalism, and help administer the state that it once labeled fascist. Already it is calling on the apartheid state to take action against right-wing extremists. It is also raising the question of the integration of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military arm of the ANC, into the South African Defense Force.

The entry of the ANC into a white-controlled government would certainly generate an enormous, but short-lived, outpouring of popular good will. The intense social contradictions of South African capitalism and the complex system of racial oppression to which it is inextricably welded will continue to generate massive un-

rest, whether or not de Klerk et al. end up sharing power with the ANC. And once in office, the ANC would be forced to assume responsibility for acts of state repression against its base.

Serious militants must start with a realistic assessment of the class character of political movements. It is no service to the working class to endorse misleadership, however personally heroic and steadfast its cadres may be. Those leftists who argue that the ANC's recent concessions to the right are merely tactical are engaging in wishful thinking. It is the ANC's occasional verbal radicalism that is merely tactical. The interests of the working class must be clearly articulated and counterposed to the class-collaborationist "national liberation" politics of the ANC.

### **The Struggle Against Apartheid: A Class Question**

For left-liberals and their "socialist" hangers-on, talk about "solidarity" with the struggle in South Africa means identifying with the ANC leadership and endorsing its politics. At home this means seeking to pressure the "democratic" imperialists to compel Pretoria to reform and share power with the ANC. But the imperialists can never be forced to act for the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa or anywhere else.

The attachment of so many black workers in South Africa to the great egalitarian ideals of socialism reflects their understanding that their interests are separate from, and counterposed to, the owners of the factories and mines. The workers who have been exploited and oppressed under apartheid tend to be suspicious of the fuzzy utopian visions of the petty-bourgeois ideologues of the ANC.

The struggle to smash apartheid cannot be separated from the struggle for a black-centered workers government, the only way in which a non-racialist and truly egalitarian society can be created. This is first and foremost a struggle of the black working class in South Africa, but it is a struggle which must be open to all, including those whites who are prepared to throw in their lot with the black masses.

Class-conscious workers outside South Africa can play an important role in supporting the fight against apartheid through class-struggle actions in solidarity with the black masses of the apartheid state. A good example of such an action was the eleven-day political strike against South African cargo initiated by a Bolshevik Tendency supporter in the longshoremen's union in San Francisco in 1984 (see: *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt*, May 1985).

### **Break with the ANC—For a Trotskyist Party in South Africa!**

Putting an end to the misery and hopelessness that grips sub-Saharan Africa will ultimately require the creation of a federation of workers states in the region, linked to socialist regimes in the imperialist heartlands. But the basis for workers power exists today in South



LOUISE GUBB—IP PICTURES

### **Armed Inkatha mob terrorizes township in Natal**

Africa. It is a country with a modern industrial infrastructure and a powerful working class which has the numbers, social weight and self-confidence to act in its own historic interests. What is required is a leadership with the program and the political will to attack the system of racial oppression at its roots—private ownership of the means of production.

An organization rooted in the black proletariat, with the courage to fight for a program of revolutionary opposition to the class-collaborationism of the ANC, could grow explosively at the present juncture. With every step toward reconciliation with the apartheid regime, the ANC leadership finds it harder to keep control of the militants who make up its youthful base. The job of revolutionaries in the present circumstances is to create a programmatically-based nucleus around which subjectively revolutionary elements can regroup.

A socialist revolution in South Africa can only be achieved by connecting the struggle for democratic demands with the necessity of the expropriation of the capitalists. The fight for "one person, one vote" from a common voter roll, and the struggle against all manifestations of the racist apartheid system are essential for uniting the broadest layers of the oppressed masses behind the proletarian vanguard. We raise the call for a constituent assembly not in order to institute the fraudulent equality of bourgeois democracy, but rather as a revolutionary democratic demand which can only be realized through smashing the apartheid state apparatus. It is not a demand for power-sharing with the white rulers—the real program of the class collaborationist ANC; it is a call that can mobilize the deepest strata of the masses for popular insurrection, and the creation of organs of workers power. This is the perspective of permanent revolution—the program of irreconcilable struggle against all wings of the racist ruling class and of the eradication of all forms of social oppression through the self-emancipation of the proletariat as the champion of all the oppressed. ■

# Lessons from the Struggle for the Fourth International

## The 'French Turn'

In 1938 Trotsky and his co-thinkers founded the Fourth International with the declaration that "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." The crisis of leadership remains a profound problem in this period of retreat for the international working class. Today the Fourth International exists only as a program and as a legacy of the struggle for revolutionary continuity after Lenin. The Stalinist bureaucracy that strangled the revolutionary movement born of the great October Revolution of 1917 now proclaims its intention to dismantle the remaining social conquests of that victory.

As revolutionary Marxists, we stand on the record of the first five years of Lenin's Third, or Communist, International (Comintern). But the process of revolutionary regroupment carried out by the Trotskyist movement, which led to the creation of a new world party in opposition to the betrayals of Stalinism, is no less significant. Much less has been written, however, about the organization founded to oppose the Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern. Yet the founding of the Fourth International took place under conditions more closely resembling those that revolutionaries face today. Whereas the Comintern was launched with the enormous political authority and material power of the Soviet workers state behind it, the Trotskyists in the mid-1930s were both few in number and relatively isolated from the more advanced sections of the working class, which remained under the sway of the Stalinist

and social-democratic parties.

The tactical reorientation of the Trotskyists in the mid-1930s from open party-building to entry work within the leftward-moving sections of the Second International—the "French turn"—played a critical role in laying the basis for the creation of the Fourth International. This experience holds many valuable lessons for militants who struggle for its rebirth.

### From the Third to the Fourth International

In 1928 the Stalinized Comintern, recoiling from the spectacular failures of its opportunist attempts to ally with the British trade-union bureaucracy and Chiang Kai-shek, lurched to the left and proclaimed that capitalism had entered the third (and supposedly final) period of its existence. According to the theory of the "Third Period," mass proletarian insurrection was always and everywhere on the immediate political agenda. A tactical corollary to this woodenheaded "leftism" was the conception that the mass reformist social-democratic parties were "social fascist" formations that were too foul to be touched in any kind of alliance. This notion proved suicidal for the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), the largest section of the Comintern. As Hitler's Nazis gathered strength in the early 1930s, the German workers movement sat by and did nothing. The reformist cretins who led the Social Democratic Party (SPD) made impotent appeals to the capitalist state to

Popular Front launched at 14 July 1935 rally: SFIO leader Blum (left) and PCF Secretary Thorez (right)

PHOTO TRENDS





curb the fascists, while the KPD ignored Trotsky's calls for a workers united front with the social democrats to resist Nazi terror. Idiotically proclaiming "after Hitler, us," the KPD concentrated its fire on the SPD "social fascists." By dividing the proletariat, the KPD helped clear the path for the Nazi victory (see "The Myth of the 'Third Period'" and "Leninism and the Third Period: Not Twins, But Antipodes" 1917 Nos. 3 & 4).

Until 1933 the Trotskyist movement functioned as an external faction of the Comintern that sought to return it to its original role as an organizing center for world revolution. But the KPD's ignominious surrender to the fascists without firing a shot demonstrated that it was finished as any kind of revolutionary party. In the aftermath of this horrendous defeat, Moscow's brazen claim that the KPD's strategy and tactics had been vindicated was obediently swallowed by every Comintern section. This proved beyond doubt that the Third International was a thoroughly corrupted and bureaucratized machine without any revolutionary capacity. In July 1933 the International Left Opposition renamed itself the International Communist League (ICL), and took up the struggle for a new, revolutionary international: the Fourth International.

### 1934: Social Democrats Turn Left, Stalinists Move Right

The victory of the fascists in Germany immediately raised the stakes for the whole European workers movement. On 6 February 1934, French fascists and monarchists stormed the Chamber of Deputies in an unsuccessful coup. The French working class responded with a massive and spontaneous general strike that cut across traditional party lines. This joint action by the French Socialists and Communists was the first collaboration of the Second and Third Internationals since the initiation of the "Third Period." It resulted from a powerful impulse for unity in the rank-and-file of both parties in the face of a growing fascist threat.

In response to this mass pressure, the French Communist Party (PCF) executed a characteristic Stalinist about-face, and suddenly began making overtures to Leon Blum's Socialists, the Section Francaise de l'Internationale Ouvriere (SFIO), for a unity pact against the right. But this was not a united front in the Leninist sense. From its sectarian "Red" fronts, which excluded anyone who would not accept the Stalinist characterization of the social democrats as "social fascists," the PCF proposed to cooperate with the SFIO on the basis of a mutual abstention from public criticism! This was intended as a first step toward the "organic unity" (or fusion) of the two parties.

The evident bankruptcy of the Third Period and the KPD's collapse discredited the Stalinists in the eyes of many left-wing workers internationally. One of the consequences of this was that the principal beneficiaries of the renewed surge of proletarian militancy in 1934 were not the Comintern sections, but the reformist sections of the Second International, some of which began to emit quite unexpectedly radical noises and to sprout militant



6 February 1934: Police battle fascist attempt to storm the Palais Bourbon

left wings. The French social democrats in particular began to move from their entrenched reformism towards a temporary, unstable and relatively boisterous centrism.

### The Necessity of Entrism

Trotsky quickly realized that the Stalinists' "unity" turn and the rapid growth of the left wing of the social democracy presented new dangers and new opportunities in France. If the movement towards "organic unity" between the two mass workers parties went ahead, the few hundred French Trotskyists, organized in the Communist League (LC), would be sidelined—or even worse, the Stalinists might succeed in completely excluding them from the left.

At the same time, the upsurge of leftist sentiment within the proletariat created an opportunity for revolutionary Marxists, if they could find a way to intervene in this development from *within*. Yet this required that the Bolshevik-Leninists give up their independent organizational existence and enter one of the two major workers parties as a faction. Trotsky argued that, "The League must take an organic place in the ranks of the united front. It is too weak to claim an *independent* place." ("The League Faced with a Decisive Turn," June 1934). Maintaining a separate organizational existence would be a serious political mistake because:

"By placing ourselves on the level of the united front as a weak organization, we are condemned in the long run to play the part of a poor relation who must not raise his voice too high so as not to incur the displeasure of his host. In this manner, our organizational independence

avenges itself upon our political and ideological independence."

—"Austria, Spain, Belgium and the Turn"  
1 November 1934

Entry into the Communist Party was clearly out of the question: its internal life was completely bureaucratized, and in any case the Trotskyists had long ago been characterized by the Comintern as the sworn enemies of the working class. The SFIO, however, was advertising a far more democratic party regime; in late 1933 its "neo-socialist" right wing had split away, and the Blum leadership, which had lurched to the left as a result, was now openly encouraging all self-proclaimed revolutionaries to join the SFIO to fight for socialism. So in June 1934 Trotsky proposed that the French section join the SFIO. After a two-month discussion period, the Communist League entered the SFIO in September 1934 as the Bolshevik-Leninist Group (GBL), with its own press, *La Verite*, and full factional rights.

### Opposition to the French Turn

The "French turn" tactic was hotly debated within the ICL. In France the entry was fiercely opposed by two factions—those of Pierre Naville and Rene Lhuiller, both of which split from the group over the issue. In the U.S. a group centred around Hugo Oehler denounced the turn as a violation of fundamental Leninist principles. Erwin Bauer, a leader of the exiled German section, left the Trotskyist movement over the question. In early 1935 George Vereecken led a split from the Belgian section after the majority voted to enter the social democracy.

The opposition saw the entry as a lowering of the revolutionary banner and a capitulation to the reformist Second International, which had been abandoned as bankrupt twenty years before. Some opponents of the new turn—Oehler for example—condemned all entries into non-revolutionary organizations on principle; others rejected it on tactical grounds. Some, like Pierre Naville, couldn't seem to decide. But the pseudo-intransigence of the opposition only thinly disguised a reluctance to engage in struggle for the allegiance of the mass of the working class. As Trotsky acidly commented in December 1934, "It is much easier to defend 'intransigent' principles in a sealed jar."

It was essential that the ICL sections strike quickly when the chance came to prevent the social-democratic left wings from passing over into the Stalinist camp. And despite criticisms from some ICL members that the turn meant ignoring the Comintern ranks, the growing rapprochement between the Second and Third Internationals made entry into the social democracy the best avenue for intersecting workers in and around the Communist Party.

### Lenin vs. "Left-Wing" Communism

The objections to the French turn echoed the arguments of ultra-left elements in the Comintern a decade and a half earlier. The "left-wing" communists con-



V. I. Lenin

demned Lenin's call for revolutionaries to enter the reformist-dominated unions and to run candidates in bourgeois elections. Lenin argued in his *"Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, that communists cannot spend all their time talking about what should be. If they are to get anywhere, they must take account of the political realities of the world as it is. At its Third Congress the Comintern leadership was forced to admit that in many countries they had not been able to win the mass of the class away from reformism simply through revolutionary propaganda. It was therefore necessary to find a new path to hegemony in the proletariat. The united-front tactic, which was elaborated at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in December 1921, and approved by the Fourth Congress in 1922, provided a framework for the Communist Parties to bloc with the reformists in struggle to advance real, if only partial, interests of the class, while reserving the right to ruthlessly criticize the political errors of their partners. The Leninist united-front tactic thus combined programmatic intransigence with organizational flexibility.

Lenin's proposal that the Communists should also be prepared to extend critical electoral support to candidates of mass reformist workers parties when they campaigned against the parties of the capitalists, was an extension of the united-front tactic. The ultra-lefts of the CI agonized over how revolutionaries could call for a vote for the betrayers who had supported the inter-imperialist war, and who defended the continued enslavement of the colonies. But the critical support tactic was thoroughly principled. It was premised on the understanding that the parties of the Second International are "bourgeois workers' parties;" i.e., working class in social base and historical origin but bourgeois in program. While the reformist workers parties attempted to reconcile the aspirations of the exploited with the maintenance of the capitalist social order, they simultaneously represented, at least on an organizational level, a deformed expression of the political independence of the proletariat. It is this contradictory character that

Lenin sought to exploit with his advice to the small British Communist Party that it should call on the workers to vote for Labour, while warning that the social democrats would not act in a consistently pro-working class fashion. The idea was that once in power, the social democrats would expose their essentially pro-capitalist character, thus making it possible to regroup the more militant sections of their working-class base.

Just as the critical support tactic was an extension of the Comintern's electoral and trade union tactics, the French turn was a further extension of the united front. In 1920 Lenin had advocated that the British CP affiliate to the Labour Party, because the Communists lacked the social weight to expose the reformist leaders to their base through directly initiating joint work. The Trotskyist entry in the 1930s should be seen as an application of this tactic.

What the opponents of the French turn could not see was that Trotsky proposed entry in order better to be able to expose the reformist Blum leadership, while inculcating left-wing elements in and around the social democracy against the syphilis of Stalinism. The turn was a bold tactic aimed at winning new adherents for the Marxist program. But to the opposition the mere fact of entry in itself constituted "submission" and "capitulation" to Leon Blum, and a betrayal of Lenin's struggle to split the Second International. Trotsky replied:

"Lenin had in mind a break with reformists as the inevitable consequence of a struggle against them, and not an act of salvation regardless of time and place. He required a split with the social patriots not in order to save his own soul but in order to tear the masses away from social patriotism."

—"Sectarianism, Centrism, and the Fourth International," 22 October 1935

## The Contradictions In Reformist Workers Parties

The experience of the French entry was closely studied by the whole international Trotskyist movement as it unfolded. When the resolution of the Bolshevik-Leninists received over a thousand votes at the June 1935 convention of the SFIO's Seine Federation, Thomas Stamm, a leading opponent of entrism in the American section, had to admit that the votes had been cast for a revolutionary program, but argued that they still had little or no political significance because the GBL resolution was:

"put in the form of policies for the Socialist Party to adopt. There is no word in them nor any hint of the idea that the policies can be realised only by a party standing for the 4th Internation[al], that is to say, by a new party independent of both the S.P. and the C.P...[The votes] were cast for the perspective of imposing these policies on the SFIO, that is to say, making it a revolutionary Marxist Party, or to put it another way, reforming it."

—"1,087 Votes—What We Gave; What We Got—An Evaluation," 8 July 1935, *Internal Bulletin of the Workers Party U.S.*, No. 1

The majority in the Workers Party (WP) disputed the Oehlerites' suggestion that it was *theoretically* impossible to win the majority of an organization like the SFIO

to revolutionary politics. In motivating the French section's entry in 1934, Trotsky recalled that the French Socialist Party had voted to affiliate to the Comintern in 1920:

"There, in spite of the break of the Bolsheviks with the Second International, the whole section was won over to the Third International. We know of no law that says that a repetition of the Tours Congress is impossible. On the contrary, many of the prevailing conditions speak for such a possibility."

—"The League Faced with a Turn" July 1934

Whatever the likelihood of winning a majority of the SFIO, the possibility could not be ruled out in theory. Moreover, the stance taken by the entrists on this question had extremely important *tactical* implications, as Max Shachtman, a WP leader, reminded Stamm:

"[O]ur French comrades do not orient their *fundamental perspective* upon the prospect of capturing a majority in the S.F.I.O., not because it is 'theoretically impossible', but because...it is *practically unlikely* that the SFIO can be captured by the Fourth Internationalists. But for the Bolshevik-Leninists in the SFIO to proclaim in *advance* that they have no hope or aim of capturing ('reforming') the SFIO, would mean to defeat their aims in advance. It would mean, first, laying themselves open to the charge of driving immediately towards an artificial split and thus giving the bureaucracy unnecessary pretexts to expel them prematurely. It would mean, second, that they would get no hearing from the Leftward moving workers in the SFIO who labor under the illusion that all that is required to make their party all-sufficient is the gradual victory of a revolutionary group inside of the party and the consequent adopting of a revolutionary program and leadership. This illusion can be dispelled only in practice, by their own experience, and not by ultimata by us laid down by us in advance. 'You want to reform your party, comrade?' our people will and do say. 'Very well, then, join with us in an organized way in order to fight against Blum and Co. and for the revolutionization of our party. We shall soon see whether or not M. Blum and his cohorts will allow us to progress in our party along our line without resorting to bureaucratic expulsion measures.'"

—"On the 'Reform' of a Socialist Party," 22 July 1935, *Internal Bulletin of the Workers Party U.S.*, No. 1

## The "French Turn" In France

Though a potentially important lever, the entry tactic was no guarantee of success. There were substantial risks involved in such a tactic, as Trotsky willingly conceded to the French opponents of the SFIO entry, for it was necessary to avoid both opportunist adaptation and sectarian formalism. But in politics there are risks in any course of action. Trotsky also noted that the French section's organizational independence had not prevented it from adapting to Blum before the entry, a reference to the LC's softened criticism of the SFIO in the wake of the February 1934 events.

The execution of the turn by the French section was beset with problems at every juncture, and it could be summed up as a story of missed opportunities. The group's inability to fully exploit the immense possibilities of the turn was largely due to its internal problems.



**June 1936: French workers hold dance in occupied factory**

For over a year Trotsky had been critical of the LC's petty apolitical factionalism, study-circle mentality and routinist failure to vigorously pursue the ICL's reorientation towards launching a new international. Trotsky had also hoped that bringing the LC members into contact with broader layers of working-class militants in the SFIO might serve as an antidote to some of the chronic ailments of the French section.

The problems of the French section could largely be traced to a long-running feud between two factions: one led by Pierre Naville, and the other by Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank. Naville, a founder and central figure of the French section, was a talented theoretician and propagandist who tended to be very conservative tactically, and was organizationally inclined to passive routinism. Molinier was just the opposite. He was extremely energetic and always had some new plan in the works, but was politically unreliable and frequently displayed an excess of programmatic flexibility.

When Trotsky initially proposed that the LC enter the French Socialists, Naville was flatly opposed. He led a damaging split from the organization over the question in August 1934. What followed was somewhat farcical: the international leadership eventually persuaded Naville to enter the SFIO, but could not induce him to join the GBL (which was dominated by the Molinierists) inside the party. Although there was some collaboration between the two groups, they did not reunify until September 1935. The fact that the Trotskyists were divided into two factions within the SFIO, coupled with their tendency to be politically soft towards centrist currents, severely limited their impact. Nonetheless, the

gains achieved by the Bolshevik-Leninists in their fifteen months inside the SFIO clearly justified the entry. In a year they had more than tripled their size, and won large sections of the Parisian Seine Federation and the Socialist Youth.

### **Exiting the SFIO**

By the time of the SFIO's June 1935 Mulhouse Congress, Trotsky concluded that it was time to get out. The Trotskyist GBL appeared to have won as much as it was likely to from the entry; the international class struggle and the movement toward war were intensifying. It was necessary to consolidate the forces won in the social democracy into a disciplined, independent organization rather than dissipate them through a prolonged stay in the SFIO.

There was another important reason for the break: at Mulhouse the SFIO endorsed the explicitly multi-class People's Front with the Communist Party and the Radicals, a liberal-democratic party of the petty bourgeoisie. When the Trotskyists had entered the SFIO, its leaders had been calling for workers to join their party to fight the bosses. The difference between the GBL and the SFIO leadership had thus been over how best to advance the struggle for socialism. But participation in the People's Front meant that the SFIO leaders had established a common political front with the class enemy. This dramatically shifted the political ground.

The class-struggle rhetoric disappeared as the SFIO tops began to advocate the subordination of specifically working-class interests in favor of unity with the supposedly progressive, anti-fascist wing of the bour-

geoisie. This was coupled with threats to expel critics of the popular front. On 1 August 1935, Trotsky wrote to the GBL: "In order to make an alliance with the bourgeois Radicals, [the workers] must separate themselves from the Bolshevik-Leninists." In other words, it was time for the GBL to separate itself from the SFIO.

## GBL Response

The exit from the SFIO proved just as messy and confused as the initial entry. The GBL leadership initially responded to Trotsky's proposal to leave with surprise and reluctance. But the SFIO leadership soon launched an offensive against its left critics and expelled thirteen youth leaders. Trotsky proposed that the GBL should respond to this with an aggressive ideological offensive against the class treason of the popular front, and by openly advocating the creation of the Fourth International. But the GBL leadership was more inclined to play for time by making concessions to placate Blum. The Naville group agreed with Trotsky's proposal, whereas the Molinier/Frank faction wanted to stay in and try to influence the centrist "Revolutionary Left" current around Marceau Pivert. It soon became clear that Molinier's orientation towards the Pivertistes amounted to an adaptation to their centrist program.

When Molinier was unable to win the GBL majority to his position, he flagrantly broke discipline and began publication of a new "mass paper," *La Commune*, a lowest-common-denominator centrist journal designed to appeal to the Pivertistes and provide a shortcut to rapid recruitment. In December 1935, the Molinierists were expelled; once again the GBL was split. Molinier's mass-press gimmick proved a flop and his group was soon isolated.

After months of hedging and making partial concessions, the Bolshevik-Leninist majority finally stiffened its resolve and prepared to break with the SFIO. Meanwhile, Molinier had given up on the Pivertistes, and in January announced the foundation of the "Committee for the Fourth International" (CQI). So once again, at a moment that demanded the greatest possible political clarity, the French Trotskyists were split into two competing groups—a fact that could hardly have made a favorable impression on serious working-class militants in the SFIO. In late May 1936 the two groupings were briefly reunited. But barely a month passed before Molinier was once again expelled, this time for dubious business activities. The new split was to last seven years.

These inconclusive factional struggles sapped the energy of the French section, and paralyzed its ability to act during a critical period of intense class struggle. In May 1936 the electoral victory of the Popular Front sparked a huge strike wave, the biggest the country had ever seen. The SFIO and the Stalinists were caught unaware, and had their hands full trying to get the workers to go back to work. One of their key arguments was that too much militancy threatened the "unity" with the bourgeois Radicals, upon which the Popular Front was founded. For a short period much of the working-class base of both the PCF and the SFIO was far to the left of

their leaders (see *June 1936: Class Struggle and the Popular Front in France*, J. Danos and M. Gibelin). The inability of the French Trotskyists to take advantage of their position as the only organized national opposition to the strikebreaking of the PCF/SFIO leaderships squandered much of the political capital amassed through the fight they had waged within the SFIO against the Popular Front.

## Spain: The Price of Abstention

In drawing the lessons of the French experience, Trotsky observed that, "Entry into a reformist centrist party in itself does not include a long perspective. It is only a stage which, under certain conditions, can be limited to an episode." The Trotskyist entries in the 1930s were predicated on the existence of indigenous left wings within the national sections of the reformist Second International. Such opportunities are relatively unusual and always fleeting. Moreover, a failure to take advantage of them can be extremely costly, as the experience in Spain in the period preceding the outbreak of the civil war demonstrated. Trotsky had repeatedly demanded that the Left Communists, the Spanish section of the Left Opposition, find a way to intersect Largo Caballero's left Socialists. In 1934 the youth section of the Spanish social democracy had declared itself for the Fourth International. But Andres Nin and the leadership of the Left Communists opposed any entry into the Socialist Party. Ignoring the Socialist youth, they courted Joaquin Maurin's Workers and Peasants Bloc, a Bukharinite formation that had split from the Comintern to the right.

In September 1935 the Left Communists turned their back on the Trotskyist movement and fused with Maurin's reformist group to form the centrist Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM). In classical centrist fashion, the POUM sought to substitute maneuvers and equivocation for revolutionary intransigence, and before long found itself underwriting the Popular Front government formed in February 1936. By providing the popular front with a left cover, the POUM constituted an obstacle to the consolidation of a serious proletarian opposition to the disastrous Stalinist policy of class collaboration. The Socialist youth organization—which could and should have provided a recruiting ground for the Spanish Trotskyists—fused with the Communist Party youth in early 1936. They ended up supplying the Stalinist machine with a pool of cadres with which to break the back of the Spanish Revolution. The tragic result was Franco's victory and the crushing of the Spanish workers movement.

## American Entry

Probably the most successful entry in the 1930s was that of the ICL's American section. The Workers Party (WP) had been launched in December 1934 as a fusion of the Trotskyists with A.J. Muste's American Workers Party. In the year following the fusion, the left wing of the Socialist Party underwent a period of rapid growth.

Tensions between the "Old Guard" right wing and the leftward moving "Militants" came to a head in December 1935 when the New York "Old Guard" walked out of the party. Within a few months the split was consolidated nationally.

Although Muste and a small section of the WP membership resisted the proposal for entry, the bulk of the organization enthusiastically embraced the turn. The near unanimity with which the WP's March 1936 national convention endorsed the turn was due to the ideological struggle carried out earlier with the Oehlerites.

Unlike the French Bolshevik-Leninists, the Americans had to make substantial organizational concessions to gain entry into the Socialists. They had to give up their press and were only permitted to join as individuals, not as a body. But these organizational concessions proved fully warranted by the results. The American Trotskyists emerged from the Socialist Party at the end of 1937 qualitatively transformed: they had more than doubled in size, and had won over the majority of the Socialist youth. They had also gained a substantial intellectual periphery, and built a basis for important trade-union fractions among auto and maritime workers. Moreover, by gutting the SP's youth and left wing, they effectively sterilized the social democrats as a political competitor for a generation.

While in the U.S. the Trotskyists avoided the debilitating splits and standoffs that so damaged the credibility of the French Bolshevik-Leninists, the American entry was not perfect. In retrospect James Cannon observed: "There is no doubt at all that the leaders of our movement adapted themselves a little too much to the centrist officialdom of the Socialist Party" (*History of American Trotskyism*). But the difficulties were overcome, partly as a result of Trotsky's forceful interventions with the leadership. After regrouping the Socialist left wing, the Trotskyists founded the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) on New Year's Day 1938. The SWP became the leading section of the Fourth International, which was launched later that year.

### Pabloist Entrism: Liquidationism *Sui Generis*

The ICL's "entrism" turn in the mid-1930s under Trotsky's leadership was both an application and a *development* of the tactics employed by Lenin's Comintern. Despite the difficulties encountered in its application, it was a tactic which accelerated the building of a revolutionary international through a temporary retreat on the question of organizational independence.

In the early 1950s a new and untested leadership of the international, headed by Michel Pablo, began pushing a very different kind of "entrism": deep entrism, or "entrism *sui generis*." Unlike the entrism of the 1930s, this new orientation was not a tactic to build an independent revolutionary vanguard, but rather a proposal to liquidate the precious Trotskyist cadres into the mass Stalinist and social-democratic reformist workers parties, as well as into petty-bourgeois nationalist movements. Pablo's revisionist perspective was an impressionistic response to the seemingly inexplicable



Leon Trotsky

expansion of Stalinist state power in the period following the Second World War.

The Pabloites claimed that the Korean War was the opening shot in a global "War/Revolution," in which the Soviet bureaucracy would be compelled, despite itself, to overthrow world imperialism, and begin the construction of a planned economy on a global scale. They argued that because there was insufficient time to construct viable Trotskyist parties prior to the impending "global class war," the duty of Trotskyists was to act as a "ginger group" to accelerate the reformist parties' supposedly inevitable motion to the left. Pablo's perspective was explicitly premised on a rejection of the centrality of the conscious factor in history (i.e., the Trotskyist vanguard as the carrier of the historically evolved program for human liberation). According to Pablo: "the objective process is in the final analysis the sole determining factor, overriding all obstacles of a subjective order" ("Where Are We Going?", January 1951).

Instead of a tactic to advance the struggle to forge a Leninist party, Pablo's entrism *sui generis* represented a strategic abandonment of the necessity of revolutionary leadership in favor of a policy of adaptation to the "objective dynamics" of history. The fact that a world socialist revolution is without doubt historically necessary does not guarantee that it will automatically triumph. The agency of such historic transformations can only be conscious human beings. As Marx observed in the *Holy Family* in 1845:

"History does nothing...It is man, real, living man who...possesses and fights; 'history' is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve *its own* aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims."

The task of revolutionaries—*our* task—is to create the revolutionary instrument, a reborn Fourth International, capable of leading humanity out of its prehistory into a new classless epoch. In order to prepare for the struggles of the future, it is necessary to assimilate the lessons of the past. Few episodes in the history of the Marxist movement have been subject to more distortion and misunderstanding than the record of the French turn of the 1930s, yet it is a chapter in the history of our movement rich in lessons for today. ■

# The "French Turn" in New Zealand Trotskyism and the New Labour Party



EVENING POST

17 April 1990: NLP member denounces National Council's expulsion of PRG

In late April 1990, the Permanent Revolution Group (PRG), New Zealand section of the International Bolshevik Tendency, completed a year-long entry into the New Labour Party (NLP). This was one of the few principled and successful applications of the Trotskyist entry tactic in recent memory. The NLP was founded on May Day 1989 as a left split from the Labour Party, the traditional organization of the New Zealand working class. Having pursued overtly Thatcherite austerity policies since 1984, the Labour Party had abandoned even a pretense of defending the interests of the working class.

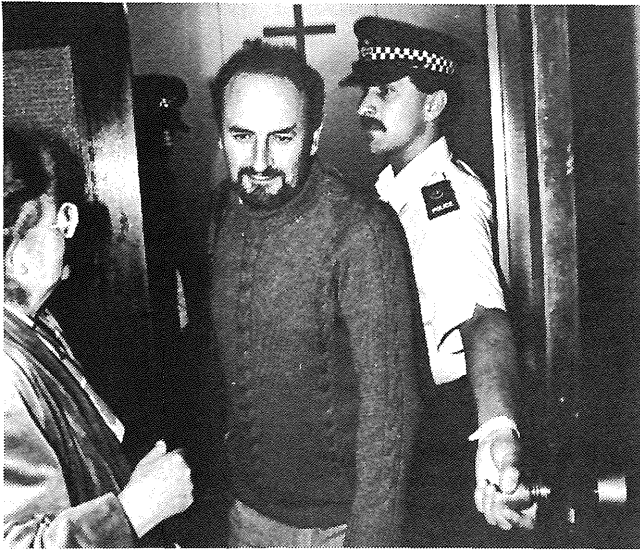
The NLP centered around a fairly right-wing social-democratic member of parliament, Jim Anderton. It immediately attracted a mishmash of disgruntled union bureaucrats and independent leftists. But its declared stand was clear: the Labour Party had betrayed, and so working people needed a new party. The PRG joined the NLP when it was formed, and deliberately set out to apply the lessons of the "French turn" of the 1930s.

As a result of its entry into the NLP, the PRG won several important recruits to Trotskyism, and established a public profile as the leading exponent of revolutionary politics in New Zealand. The PRG resigned in

April 1990 after a farcical "expulsion," in which the Anderton leadership maintained that the group's revolutionism was in irreconcilable conflict with the NLP's "implicit" principle of the inviolability of bourgeois parliamentarism.

The PRG was initially joined in the NLP by the Communist Left of New Zealand (CL). The Communist Left is a peculiar centrist grouping based in Auckland. After years of political solidarity with the anti-Soviet hucksters of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain, the CL is now gravitating toward the British Workers Power's "League for a Revolutionary Communist International."

The CL accused the PRG of capitulating to reformism because the latter characterized the NLP's break with the Labour Party as a step to the left, and because it attempted for a time to fight for a revolutionary program within the new party. But the CL's posturing as "hard" revolutionists was merely a cover for tactical ineptitude. They began their intervention in the NLP by announcing their intention to carry out a split (*Redletter*, April 1989, No. 51). This made it easy for Anderton to expel the CL, despite the opposition of the PRG and other leftists.



DON ROY—DOMINION

### NLP leadership calls in cops to enforce bureaucratic exclusion of PRG from Wellington branch meeting

The CL congratulated themselves on the “principled” nature of their entry, despite the fact that they gained neither recruits nor influence. While they claimed to stand in the tradition of the Trotskyist “French turn,” they had a good deal more in common with the positions of the Oehlerite opponents of the tactic. Whereas the French Bolshevik-Leninists had supported the efforts of SFIO left-wingers who tried to move their party’s program in a revolutionary direction, the Communist Left presumed that the NLP ranks could not be won over. They assumed that they were going to lose, and that attempting to fight to win the party to their program was hopeless. This supposed “intransigence” amounted simply to a rhetorical cover for abstention from political struggle. Why bother to enter the NLP in the first place if the maneuver was doomed from the start?

The PRG proved much more troublesome for Anderson et al. While actively building the Wellington NLP branches and supporting the few pro-working class initiatives taken by the leadership, PRG supporters forthrightly advanced Marxist positions within the NLP. Instead of provocatively declaring their organizational disloyalty, they announced their intention to remain and fight for Marxist politics in the NLP for as long as they could.

Reprinted below is the text of the PRG’s 26 April 1990 resignation statement from the NLP.

When it was first founded, New Labour was a party with the potential to be a voice of ordinary working people, of the oppressed and disadvantaged; it could have been a vital and dynamic gathering place for people with a broad range of viewpoints from the working-class movement. But twelve months later it is now clear that the NLP and its membership can only be a tool for some out-of-power bureaucrats wanting to be in power: NLP democracy is dead.

The first real step came in July last year with the expulsion of the Auckland-based Communist Left

group. The CL had openly declared that they were there to wreck; but their expulsion was, just as openly, an anti-communist move. It was a danger signal, and the PRG opposed it vigorously.

The last few weeks have seen that rightward move deepened and consolidated. One thing’s clear: it’s Jim’s party now. And Jim’s voice is the only voice we’ll hear coming out of the NLP.

### Constitution Flouted

The Founding Conference at Queen’s Birthday weekend last year rejected draft constitutional provisions which would have excluded organisations like the PRG. We established a broad-based democratic party open to all groups who fought for the interests of the oppressed and the disadvantaged.

But the National Council has changed all that. In order to make sure that it’s only Jim’s voice we’ll hear, the National Council has had to disregard the NLP constitution. On 18 March this year it passed the following resolution:

“That pursuant to Articles 5.2.1 and 5.1.5(a and c) of the Interim Constitution, membership of the PRG is incompatible with membership of the NLP.”

But these provisions of the Constitution give no grounds for the expulsion or proscription of the PRG whatsoever.

Article 5.2.1 concerns organisations which may choose to apply for associate membership. There is nothing to say that any organisation has a duty to apply. This article is simply not at issue in this case.

### Incompatible Objectives?

Article 5.1.5 (a) is about proscribing those organisations which espouse “beliefs and principles which are contrary to the principles and objectives of the NLP.” The principles and objectives of the NLP are stated in its constitution; we support all of them. It doesn’t say anywhere that you have to believe that Parliament is a sacred and eternal institution. The PRG accepts and has repeatedly declared its acceptance of the principles and objectives of the NLP.

Article 5.1.5 (c) is about proscribing organisations which act “in a way which is disruptive of the NLP administration or organisation.” But PRG members have all observed the administrative and organisational requirements of the NLP with care. The PRG is guilty of no act disruptive of the NLP; and the National Council hasn’t even bothered to try and invent any. No specific disruptive act has been charged by them.

### The Need for a Hearing

But, in any case, proscribing an organisation under the constitution requires a hearing. That means that the case for proscription has to be made in a way that those opposed to it are given a fair chance to answer that case. There was no attempt to make the case for our proscription before the National Council reached its decision.



We were invited to make a submission to the March 18 meeting at which we had to try and guess what their case might be. The little they told us was false: the Chair informed us that Article 5.1.5 (c) was not relevant to the proceedings!

So they rode roughshod over the Party constitution. And they knew it of course. We suggested that the matter be put to arbitration: we can find a respected, independent trade-unionist or two, put both sides of the argument and get an impartial view on the constitutional issues.

But no, they wouldn't want to do that. NLP president Matt McCarten refused to comment when this was put to him (*Dominion*, 19 April), and they've done nothing to take up the suggestion. They fear an impartial view because it would show not only their deliberate violation of the constitution, but also their motives.

And their motives are simple old McCarthyite anti-communism, together with a desire to have a party where everyone thinks the same way.

So they made no serious attempt to present a case against us. Since the Communist Left expulsion they had tried to foster a sentiment that only left-wing "extremists" are concerned with things like constitutional provisions, with the party adhering to its own rules. For the Anderton leadership a constitution is something to be used only when you're in the mood.

Their "case" was only a general assertion that deep faith in the parliamentary system is somehow implicit in the party constitution. So how many other positions are "implicit" in the constitution? And just when and how does Jim let ordinary members know what they are?

## Sue Bradford's Resignation

Left Currents member Sue Bradford, the founding Vice-President, announced her resignation on 9 April. Referring to the expulsion of the PRG she said:

"I felt it was the beginning of the end in terms of a process whereby people who did not agree with what the Anderton group were laying down would eventually be kicked out...."

"They [the PRG] were the first lot to go. It could have been me or people from our group next. It could have been feminists. It could have been the green groups."

—*New Zealand Herald*, 10 April

Sue Bradford is right. Anderton is now consolidating a right-wing hold on his party. That's the meaning of the expulsions.

For instance, the vast majority of the NLP has been exerting a consistent pressure on him to introduce an abortion law reform bill into Parliament, and he doesn't want to do that. He's got to pick out the ring-leaders. And a lot of the ring-leaders were PRGers. There's no chance the NLP will do anything about abortion now.

Similarly, there are a lot of NLP members who would like to push for a real programme to end unemployment, including massive public works and a thirty-hour, four-day week with no loss of pay. For Anderton it's necessary to get rid of a core of these members, and getting rid of the PRG does that.

And even though most NLP members are not ready to fight for a massive round of nationalisations of industry and commerce under workers' control, the presence of the PRG in the party, wanting to put that question on the agenda from time to time, was an embarrassment.

So they simply made an unconstitutional and invalid decision to exclude the PRG. Our reaction was simple: we insisted on the truth—that the party rules meant that we remained members. But matters couldn't last like that for long.

## Wellington Central Selection

On Tuesday 17 April a meeting of NLP members resident in the Wellington Central Electorate was called to select the NLP candidate. Two members of the National Council stood at the door and obstructed the entry of members. They allowed entry only to people who signed a statement to the effect that they were not members of the Permanent Revolution Group. About ten people signed and went in. The majority of NLP members present objected to the procedure as unconstitutional and undemocratic, refused to sign, and became angry at being obstructed from entry to their meeting.

As the *Dominion* said on 18 April:

"it was clear to observers many of the dissatisfied people were not members of the group [the PRG]. Some New Labour Party members backed the trotskyist faction's right to be at the meeting and complained about what they said were attempts by party leaders to override members' wishes..."

Some party members left the building before the trouble started, saying they were appalled they were not given a chance to vote on whether the revolutionaries should be allowed in.

For half an hour there was a stalemate. The General Secretary of the Party then went to get the Police, and while he was gone the crowd outside the hall started to push, and got in very easily despite the attempts of the two National Council members to hold people at the door.

## Karen Donaldson's Tale

Every radio news bulletin over the next twenty-four hours seemed to report a new and additional injury to the chief of the NLP guard at the door, Karen Donaldson. None of it was true. According to the *Evening Post* (18 April): "She said she was pushed over, had her arm twisted and lost her shoe in the melee." She wasn't pushed over, she didn't have her arm twisted, and her foot remained firmly in her shoe throughout. "She intends laying charges against those who had pushed her", the *Post* went on. This is, at best, improbable. She certainly did not lay charges, and she certainly had no grounds on which to do so.

For our part, we had nothing to fear from any charges—although we suggest that an independent arbitrator is the way to deal with disputes like this. For our part, we'd welcome an independent investigation.

But these people don't want anyone to know what

really happened.

All they're interested in is smear. The prospective candidate, Jeff Montgomery, joined in the accusations of PRG violence. "That was particularly despicable," he said (*Evening Post*, 18 April).

And Jim Anderton described the PRG as "violent fanatics who had no place in a democratic organisation" (*Dominion*, 19 April), and "a bunch of thugs" (*Evening Post*, 23 April).

## Intentional Political Lies

These are all intentional political lies. And Anderton has been pushing the same ones since the Founding Conference: there he even managed to convince sections of the media that the Conference had seen calls for immediate political violence. As we said then, we believe in democracy and we don't want violence. But we believe the road ahead will see those who run the capitalist system resisting a movement for socialism with violence, and when that time comes we must be prepared. When it's necessary we'll be for self-defence against the violence of the bosses.

But we are thoroughly opposed to violence within the workers' movement. We believe in democracy in the left, with decisions made by majorities. We can accept being in a minority. Anderton knows this; but the truth does not constrain him.

## The Real Violence

*Salient*, the student newspaper, got it right when it said that the "violence" at the meeting was "the kind of pushing you'd expect in a crowd" (23 April). But there was also something else more serious at that meeting: real violence, real undermining of democracy. It was carried out by the NLP leadership. Not direct violence, of course—they don't need that right now. But the NLP leadership is quite willing to use the background violence of the bosses' state and its police in order to force its will on this "New" Labour Party.

## Calling the Cops

At the 17 April meeting they called the Police to keep NLP members out of an NLP meeting. The Police got there too late to keep anyone out, so they used the Police to close the meeting down. That is the use of violence. That is what was despicable at the 17 April meeting. And that is the way Anderton intends to continue: they've now called on the Police to give "protection" to the forthcoming candidate selection meetings in the Wellington area (*Evening Post*, 23 April).

The PRG has declared repeatedly that we would honour a majority decision of a meeting of NLP members resident in an area. We were prepared to face the test of democracy at the 17 April meeting: if we were properly asked to go, we would simply have gone. Along with the other NLP members outside the doors we called: "Let the meeting decide!"

But the NLP leadership could not face the test. They



## PRG's expulsion from NLP was widely covered by New Zealand press

claimed afterwards that the PRG had sabotaged the meeting—but "the meeting" was outside wanting to get in. The bureaucrats sent to play guard were faced with the embarrassing situation of blockading the hall from the majority of NLP members attending.

So the decisions of the Founding Conference, the constitution, truth and democracy all went out the window. The Police were called. The PRG was evicted.

## A Wounded, Bleeding Party

The NLP is a damaged party; it's been badly wounded by its own National Council. As a result there's been a severe haemorrhaging of unorganised leftists—people resigning or simply fading away.

All the best people are leaving.

The PRG has been fighting for its membership rights, for the right to party democracy. We wanted to be part of a party with a membership which fought for the interests of the working people and the disadvantaged, and which brought together all the tendencies which share that aim, irrespective of their differences.

But the NLP is not that kind of party any more. Democracy is dead in the NLP—the interests the Party serves now are the interests of a man who has no higher ambition than personal power.

So we resign.

Many good people remain in the NLP, but they can now be servants of only one master. They will discover this. And the haemorrhaging will continue. ■

# Defend Iraq!...

*continued from page 32*

The Kremlin bureaucrats, Iraq's former allies, have cravenly joined the imperialist campaign against Iraq. At the hastily arranged September 9 summit between Bush and Gorbachev, the Soviet chief signaled his willingness to go along with U.S. plans for a military assault. Gorbachev's acquiescence, which flows from the Kremlin's policy of wholesale capitulation to imperialism internationally and capitalist restorationist forces internally, is not only treacherous but also stupid, for it means acceptance of a new, permanent imperialist military encampment 600 miles from the southern border of the USSR.

A vital part of American war preparations has been a campaign in the mass media to whip up chauvinist, racist anti-Arab hysteria and to portray Saddam Hussein as a deranged maniac. But the imperialists' denunciations of the Iraqi regime and its leader are sheer hypocrisy. They were perfectly happy to see Iraq invade Iran in 1979, and had little to say when Hussein used poison gas against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians. As for the "principle" of defending the sovereignty of small countries which Bush and his allies are loudly proclaiming, Saddam Hussein aptly observed that they have never been particularly concerned about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And everyone recalls how only last December Bush launched the bloody invasion of Panama, six years after the American rape of Grenada.

But Iraq is not a soft target like Panama or Grenada. Even though it is widely expected that a U.S. attack will mean massive civilian casualties, the Iraqi population appears determined to defend their country. Although the military outcome of an American-led attack on Iraq is impossible to predict, it is unlikely that the Pentagon can deliver a lightning victory. The battle-tested Iraqi army is not expected to roll over and play dead, and the U.S. rulers know that popular support for their projected war is superficial and will quickly evaporate if many U.S. soldiers start coming home in body bags. A lot of people will soon begin to wonder why thousands of young Americans (and tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians) have to die just so the "Seven Sisters" can continue to corner the world oil market.

There is a lot at stake in this struggle. A victory for U.S. imperialism and its allies would mean even greater exploitation, poverty and misery for the oppressed masses of the region. It would also encourage the imperialists to launch new interventions in the neo-colonial world to secure cheap raw materials, cheap labor and monopolize markets. At home, imperialist aggression will translate into further attacks on the living standards of poor and working people to raise the \$1 billion a day that a war against Iraq is expected to cost. A defeat for the U.S.-led imperialist coalition against Iraq would be a victory for American workers and for all the oppressed and working people of the earth.

While the U.S. has thus far been successful in rounding up votes in the UN, the facade of imperialist "unity"

is already showing cracks. The U.S. has been demanding that Japan help pay for the military buildup, but so far Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu has only offered token contributions to countries in the region suffering from the disruption of trade. The German bourgeoisie, which cannot afford to antagonize the U.S. as it prepares to swallow up the German Democratic Republic in October, has sent a few minesweepers to the Gulf. But like Japan, America's other main economic rival, Germany has little enthusiasm for Bush's military adventure. The European Economic Community, under German leadership, has so far refused to finance the American intervention. The Japanese and Germans are acutely aware that a U.S. stranglehold on the Persian Gulf and its immense oil reserves will not work to their advantage in the long run.

The recent history of the Middle East is one of domination by imperialism and its Zionist allies. The Arab masses rightly resent this domination. They also resent the obscene wealth accumulated by the emir of Kuwait and a handful of other oil sheiks. Thus Saddam Hussein's confrontation with Bush and his call for a *jihad* against the Western invaders has struck a chord among millions in the Middle East. The willingness of many Arab leaders, particularly Egypt's Mubarak and Syria's Assad, to aid and abet U.S. aggression can only discredit them domestically, particularly if the Israelis eventually enter the picture. Whatever the ultimate outcome of the current confrontation, the fragile political balance in this volatile region has been upset for some time to come.

In calling for the military defense of Iraq, Marxists give no political support to Hussein. While many Arab youths have mistaken him as some kind of anti-imperialist fighter standing up to Bush, his attempt to grab control of the Kuwaiti oil fields was no blow against imperialism, but simply an attempt to improve the position of Iraq within the international capitalist order.

Only a socialist federation of the Middle East forged in revolutionary struggle against the Arab sheiks and dictators, as well as the Zionists and imperialists, can guarantee equality for all the national and ethnic groupings in the region and open the road to a decent life for the exploited and oppressed masses. But the struggle to overthrow Hussein is a struggle for the workers and oppressed masses of Iraq—the intervention of the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East can only be reactionary. Class-conscious workers in the imperialist countries have a duty to take a hard stand against the warmongering of their "own" imperialist pirates. Only through taking up the weapons of class struggle will it be possible to derail the war preparations of our rulers and advance the struggle to uproot the whole predatory system of capitalist exploitation.

***Down with Imperialist Aggression against Iraq!  
Not One Soldier, Not One Penny  
for the Imperialist Pirates!***

***Israel Out of the Occupied Territories!  
Imperialists Out of the Middle East!***

—International Bolshevik Tendency statement,  
10 September 1990

# For Class Struggle Against Imperialist Aggression! Communist Tactics and the Antiwar Movement



Bay Area demonstration against American military intervention in Middle East, 20 October 1990

The domestic political situation in the United States weighs heavily in the calculations of the imperialist chieftains as they prepare to unleash mass destruction on the people of Iraq. The White House has so far managed to keep a majority "on side," but the support is very shallow, and is shrinking. Many black, Hispanic and white working people do not like the idea of going to war for Big Oil.

The war that the U.S. government is preparing to launch against Iraq is one in which American workers, and the oppressed and exploited of the whole world, have a side. The blockade of Iraq is, in itself, an act of war. Socialists must do everything possible to defend Iraq and defeat the aggressive designs of "our own" government.

On the campuses there is already widespread opposition to Bush's aggression against Iraq. A teach-in at Berkeley on 14 September attracted some 1500 students. Besides a section of isolationist conservatives represented by right-wing ideologue Pat Buchanan, most of those who oppose the war preparations are those identified with the radical-liberal left: "solidarity" activists, black

community representatives, feminists, peaceniks, liberal clerics and ostensible socialists. Yet, if popular support for war falls further, a "dovish" wing of the Democrats will doubtless emerge.

## Lessons of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement

The reformist left anticipates just such a development and consciously aims to recreate the popular-frontist anti-Vietnam war movement of the 1960s. This movement was dominated organizationally by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), but subordinated politically to the liberal imperialists of the Democratic Party by the SWP's insistence that the antiwar movement be limited to the "single issue" of U.S. Troops "Out Now!" There is nothing wrong in uniting with other organizations around a single common-denominator demand, but revolutionaries in such a united front cannot limit themselves to the minimal common political basis of unity. In setting the political limit in its antiwar front groups with the demand for American withdrawal, the SWP consciously ruled out any expression of Marxist, class-struggle politics.

As the war dragged on, a substantial section of the U.S. bourgeoisie came to believe that they should cut their losses and get out of Vietnam. The National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) gathered considerable resources and built massive peace marches featuring Democratic Party doves like Bella Abzug and Vance Hartke. Every NPAC march featured preachers, labor bureaucrats and liberal dignitaries who droned on endlessly about the need for "peace." Keeping this "broad mass movement" intact meant ensuring that no discordant anti-imperialist speakers got close to the microphones.

Under the guise of building a "single issue" movement, the SWP excluded all attempts to connect the Vietnam war with the need for revolutionary struggle against U.S. imperialism. The liberal politics of NPAC also dictated the *form* of protest—the SWP was positively hostile to suggestions for work stoppages and all other class-struggle tactics. By politically policing the hundreds of thousands of radical youth and disaffected workers who came to oppose the imperialist war, the SWP helped ensure that the protests never spilled over to challenge the racist and anti-working class domestic policies of the American rulers. By limiting the politics of the movement to the requirements of the liberal wing of the capitalists, the SWP effectively aborted the opportunity for the development of a *class-conscious* current

within the American working class that could oppose imperialist militarism at its roots. When U.S. troops were finally pulled out, the antiwar movement evaporated.

### **WWP/SA: Competing Pop-Frontist Coalition Builders**

The same questions about how Marxists should organize against imperialist war that were posed 25 years ago at the beginning of the Vietnam antiwar movement are again raised by the unfolding Gulf crisis. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) has attempted to intervene in recent antiwar mobilizations on the basis of a consistent revolutionary Marxist perspective.

There are two main antiwar coalitions in the Bay Area, each dominated by an ostensibly socialist organization. The "Emergency Committee to Stop the U.S. War in the Middle East" (ECSUSWME) was initiated by the crypto-Stalinist reformists of the Workers World Party (WWP). The BT attended several ECSUSWME planning meetings and proposed that the coalition be open to all organizations opposed to U.S. aggression in the Gulf. We also argued that all participants should be allowed to express their points of view at events. Our comrades advanced two slogans as a political basis of unity: "No War for Big Oil/U.S. Out of the Middle East!" and "No U.S. Intervention in the Middle East!"

At the 22 August "Emergency Committee" meeting, BT comrades argued for this approach, and proposed to drop the slogan "Money for Human Needs, Not War," from the committee's program because it amounts to calling for the "progressive" wing of the U.S. capitalists (i.e., the Democrats) to reform the imperialist system. Of course, this is why the demand appeared in the first place—to keep the door open for the Democrats or their surrogates. The unwritten rule of popular-frontist formations is that no one can present a Marxist analysis of the contradictions of imperialism, or the necessity for revolutionary struggle, because this would "alienate" people still in the liberal-Democratic camp. The BT proposal generated considerable discussion, and was narrowly defeated. But the WWP had a majority, and so the ECSUSWME remained a popular-frontist propaganda bloc based on a reformist/utopian program.

After losing this critical vote, which confirmed the popular-frontist character of the ECSUSWME, the BT comrades sat through the rest of the meeting as non-voting observers. A subsequent leaflet by a couple of sloppy centrists, who style themselves the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency (RTT), erroneously stated that the BT "claims to be in the left wing of the Committee," and chastised us for not voting for one of the many RTT amendments put forward to give the coalition's popular-frontist program a more leftist coloration.

The BT has also intervened in the other major coalition in the Bay Area, Socialist Action's "Committee Against a Vietnam War in the Middle East" (CAVME). CAVME is organized around a single demand: "U.S. Out of the Middle East!" But Socialist Action (SA)

proved no more open to the proposal to create a united front than the WWP. It is not just a matter of excluding revolutionaries. The SA reformists are so firmly committed to building a multi-class "single issue" antiwar movement based on liberal politics that they do not put forward their own speaker at CAVME events! True to their 1960s SWP heritage, SA measures the success of an event purely by how many people participate, rather than the politics that they are organized around. SA considered the teach-in at Berkeley on 14 September a huge success. A BT spokesperson who attended a 22 September CAVME meeting disagreed:

"We do not think the 'teach-in' on the 14th was a big success from a revolutionary perspective because out of the over 20 speakers, not one, *not one* put forward a revolutionary defeatist position; nor was a class-struggle perspective to end war put forward. In our opinion this amounts to an anti-communist exclusion of your left-wing opponents."

### **Spartacist League: "Left-Wing" Abstentionism**

There are times when possibilities for the intervention of revolutionaries are tightly restricted by the hegemony of the reformists within the movement. But right now the reformists are far from hegemonic, and most of the people prepared to demonstrate against U.S. intervention are open to considering different points of view. For example, the 22 September CAVME meeting attracted a hundred people, at least half of whom had no organizational affiliation. Several BTers were there, along with a dozen supporters of the Spartacist League (SL). Socialist Action was clearly worried about losing control of the meeting and seeing their front group turned into a united front that granted Marxists, like everyone else, the right to put forward their views.

Unlike the BT, the Spartacist League did not try to contest the policies of SA; they were happy merely to denounce them. SLers at the meeting criticized CAVME because its program did not include a call for breaking the imperialist blockade of Iraq. Such a call would be perfectly appropriate for a united front against U.S. war provocations. Yet, instead of pushing to amend the basis of unity to include this demand, or supporting the BT's efforts to "break the blockade" against Marxist politics in CAVME, the SL cited these as reasons not to be involved. This is not just tactical ineptness. The SL leadership has so little confidence in its members' ability to function in a broader arena that even the most minor tactical moves or utterances must be dictated from the top. Sustained interaction with members of other leftist groups threatens the leadership's organizational control of the rank-and-file. Thus the SL "intervention" amounted to a series of criticisms designed to cover its abdication from any serious fight for influence within the emerging antiwar movement.

That evening the SL held a sparsely attended public meeting to discuss the events in the Gulf. Commenting on the SL's attitude, a BT speaker remarked:

"It's easy to make ultimatums comrades, but it's much harder to engage in political struggle to influence the periphery of the reformist left. If the antiwar movement



October 1983 demolition of Marines' barracks drove US military out of Lebanon

is *a priori* left to the leadership of the Marcyites and Socialist Action, then it's simply a self-fulfilling prophecy to say in advance that it will be dominated by the reformists."

Our comrade also noted that the SL's abstentionism contrasted sharply with its activities at the beginning of the movement against the war in Vietnam. The SL only broke with the Committee for Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade in 1965 when the committee insisted that participating organizations could not raise their own slogans on demonstrations. Before walking out, the SL attempted to reverse this anti-communist exclusionism. Two years later, on 24 October 1967, the SL Political Bureau discussed a plan to bloc with Stanley Aronowitz to intervene in the committee to make it a "bona fide united front," in which there were "no restrictions on any group's right to raise its own propaganda."

It seems that our criticisms at the forum hit a nerve. The SL promptly responded with a polemic in the 5 October 1990 issue of *Workers Vanguard* (WV). Entitled "BT: Pimple on the Popular Front," the article accused us of capitulating to liberal-Democratic critics of Bush's Middle East war drive. As "evidence," it pointed to a textual difference between two versions of a BT leaflet entitled "No United Nations Fig Leaf for U.S. Imperialism! U.S. Troops Out of the Middle East!" The 8 September version of the leaflet contains a condemnation of Daniel Ellsberg's support of direct U.S. military intervention, which was omitted from the 29 September version. WV did not tell its readers that Ellsberg had publicly repudiated his call for unilateral U.S. intervention at the 14 September Berkeley teach-in (i.e., between

the first and second version of our leaflet), and had joined other liberal notables in calling for a stronger UN role. No reasonable person could interpret this omission, made solely for the sake of factual accuracy, as an attempt to soft-peddle our opposition to the liberals and the UN's role in the Middle East.

### The Fire Last Time: Marines In Lebanon In 1983

The last time the U.S. military set foot in the Middle East, the SL exhibited a cowardly, social-patriotic reflex. In 1983, the U.S. was literally blown out of the region when a Muslim truck bomb devastated the Marine encampment in Beirut. The fearsome anti-imperialists of the SL, who a year earlier had denounced the Marines as "the world's most notorious imperialist butchers" with "the blood of millions of toilers on their hands," whose name was "synonymous with the bloody suppression of colonial revolt" (WV, 3 September 1982), suddenly began calling for saving the survivors of the attack. The External Tendency of the iSt (forerunner of the BT) sharply attacked the SL's social-patriotic call to get the Marines out "alive," and called instead for their removal from the Middle East "by any means necessary."

The destruction of the Marine barracks in October 1983 was a defensible act that drove the U.S. military out of Lebanon. It was the biggest defeat inflicted on U.S. imperialism since the war in Vietnam. Any supposedly revolutionary organization, particularly one based in the U.S., should welcome a similar outcome to the current intervention.

### For Revolutionary Intervention In the Antiwar Movement!

The conclusion of the WV polemic quotes Joseph Seymour, the SL's leading theoretician: "There is no antiwar movement independently of an anti-capitalist movement." This is pure sectarian drivel. Does the SL now consider that there was no "antiwar movement" in the U.S. in the late 1960s? There was such a movement. The problem with it was that the SWP and the Stalinists managed to keep it "independent" from revolutionary Marxism, and the result was that thousands of activists were channelled into the dead-end of Democratic Party politics.

While it is true that any serious antiwar movement must *ultimately* engage in struggle against the capitalist system that fosters and requires war, such movements are nearly always politically amorphous in their initial stages. This is a point that Lenin made in *Socialism and War*:

"The sentiments of the masses in favour of peace often express incipient protest, anger and consciousness of the reactionary character of the war. It is the duty of all Social-Democrats [i.e., Communists] to utilize these sentiments. They will take a most ardent part in every movement and in every demonstration on this ground; but they will not deceive the people.... Whoever wants a lasting and democratic peace must be in favour of civil

war against the governments and the bourgeoisie."

The task of revolutionaries is to intervene in antiwar movements to steer them, or at least their more radical wing, in an anti-capitalist direction. Writing off the incipient opposition to U.S. aggression in the Middle East because it is not revolutionary *from the start* effectively hands the antiwar movement over to the liberals and their leftist hangers-on.

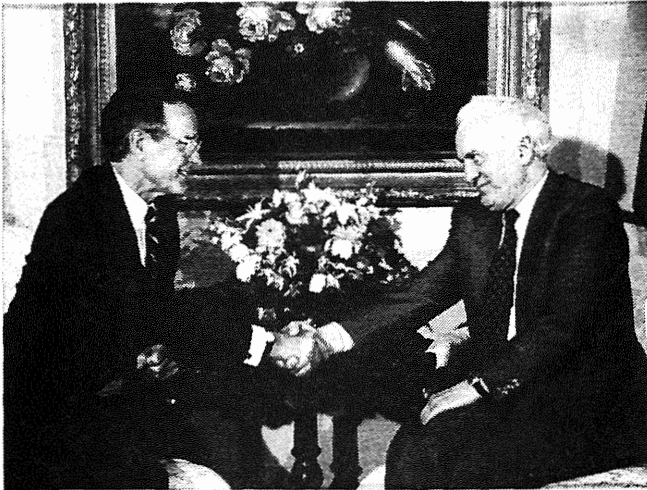
When it was a Trotskyist group, the SL consciously avoided such sectarian stupidity. A document endorsed by James Robertson at the founding conference of the SL in 1966 outlined a very different approach to antiwar work from that pursued by the Spartacists today:

"The S.L. must not appear to allow the correctness of our program to breed an abstentionist attitude on our part. Our role is not to sit on the sidelines and lecture the anti-war movement while refusing to 'dirty our hands'

in the day-to-day work of the movement; rather, the attractiveness of our program will be enhanced to the extent that we prove in practice the practicality of our ideas by vigorously putting them into practice. This does not mean that we do nothing but engage in simple 'Jimmy Higgins' work to 'prove ourselves' and eschew the necessary internal political confrontation within the anti-war arena. Rather we seek [to be] both the best activists and the most programmatically clear fighters against the war."

It is absurd for revolutionaries to stand aside because participants in the antiwar movement are taken in, to one extent or another, by the saccharine phrases of the reformists. The task of Marxists is to struggle to win workers and youth who oppose Bush's war drive against Iraq to struggle against the whole system of exploitation and piracy that lies at its root. ■

## Desperately Seeking Snetkov



DIRCK HALSTEAD

**Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze gives George Bush free hand for US aggression against Iraq**

A leaflet issued by the Bay Area Bolshevik Tendency on 8 September dealing with the imperialist aggression against Iraq made the elementary observation that:

"Revolutionaries should not look either to the 'soft' Stalinists in Moscow or to the 'hard' Stalinists in Havana for action in this crisis. The only force that can do the job is the same one that Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky looked to—the international proletariat."

The ostensibly Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL), which only a few years ago organized a "Yuri Andropov Brigade" in honor of one of Stalin's successors, has taken a different tack. At the outset of the crisis, Helene Brosius, the Spartacists' international secretary, sent a letter to various Soviet ambassadors (with a copy to the SL's favorite Soviet officer, General B.V. Snetkov) "demanding" that the cowardly Kremlin bureaucrats stand up to the imperialists and supply Iraq with armaments. "We should make vigorous efforts in the current situation," Brosius advised. The "we" is of course the Kremlin and their would-be deputies at the Spartacists' New York headquarters.

There are several problems with the proposal, one of which is the obvious incongruity of "united fronts" between elephants and fleas. In principle there is nothing wrong with making demands on the Stalinists, but it only makes sense when they at least purport to stand for the defense of the workers and oppressed against the imperialists. Throughout the 1980s we demanded that the USSR grant the Nicaraguan Sandinistas' requests for MIGs to defend themselves against imperialist attack. At that time the Soviet Union was keeping Nicaragua afloat. In the current situation in the Middle East, however, with the Soviets unambiguously *supporting* the imperialist aggressors, making such a demand is absurd. The Soviet bureaucrats' policy toward Iraq is a corollary of their declared intention of restoring capitalism in the USSR.

Such considerations are of little interest to the Spartacist polemicists. The 5 October 1990 issue of *Workers Vanguard* (WV) accuses us of "balk[ing]" at the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union because we "did *not* crib our [i.e., the SL's] demand that the USSR rescind its arms embargo of Iraq." The scribes who toil in the WV editorial offices apparently see no contradiction between this accusation and their pronouncement in the same issue that, "the wretched Gorbachev regime in the Kremlin has come forward as Bush's hard cop against Iraq."

Brosius concluded her August epistle to the Soviet bureaucracy with a gentle reminder that: "The Soviet government fought to the end, successfully, to keep the oil fields of Baku out of the hands of the imperialists." The only time the imperialists occupied Baku was during the civil war in 1918-19. The Soviet government that "fought to the end," and forced the British to abandon Baku, was the Bolshevik government of *Lenin and Trotsky*. On 5 August 1937, when Stalin was acting as a "hard cop" against the Spanish Revolution, Trotsky observed that, "To equate the October Revolution and the peoples of the USSR with the ruling caste is to betray the interests of the workers..." We could hardly agree more. ■

# *Imperialist Troops Out—By Any Means Necessary!*

# Defend Iraq!

CHRISTOPHER MORRIS—BLACK STAR



**Members of Iraqi People's Army prepare to resist imperialist attack**

The illusion that the "end of the Cold War" would usher in an era of global peace and harmony has been abruptly shattered by the recent imperialist provocations against Iraq. The U.S.-led intervention in the Middle East, ostensibly in response to the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq's Saddam Hussein, is designed to protect the interests of the big oil companies by establishing American military control of the Persian Gulf. A huge American army is encamped in Saudi Arabia and U.S. air and naval forces are deployed throughout the region. Britain, France, Canada, Australia, Germany and a host of smaller capitalist states are also participating in blockading Iraq. For public relations purposes the imperialist expeditionary force also includes a few thousand Arab auxiliaries from Egypt, Syria and Morocco.

At this point it appears that the U.S. is bent on precipitating a bloody confrontation with Iraq. In any such military conflict it is the duty of all class conscious workers to defend Iraq against the imperialists. It is urgently necessary for the international labor movement to oppose the criminal aggression against Iraq and

to initiate concrete actions, up to and including political strikes, to block the imperialist war preparations.

The initial clash between the Iraqi and Kuwaiti rulers over oil production and pricing was a falling out among thieves in which working people had no side. Oil-rich Kuwait, which was fostered by the British to help maintain their control in the region, was a country run by a reactionary monarchy. The foreign workers who comprised the majority of the population were denied any political or economic rights. The Ba'athist government of Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, is a repressive dictatorship that has routinely tortured and executed thousands of leftists and other political dissidents. Hussein also has a record of brutally suppressing Iraq's sizeable Kurdish minority. Marxists are equally hostile to Kuwait's emir, Saudi Arabia's king and Iraq's Ba'athist dictator. But what began as a regional squabble in which Marxists could take no side has now been transformed into an interimperialist attack on a "Third World" country. The U.S.-organized blockade of Iraq, under the flag of the United Nations, is an act of aggression that workers around the world must oppose.

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