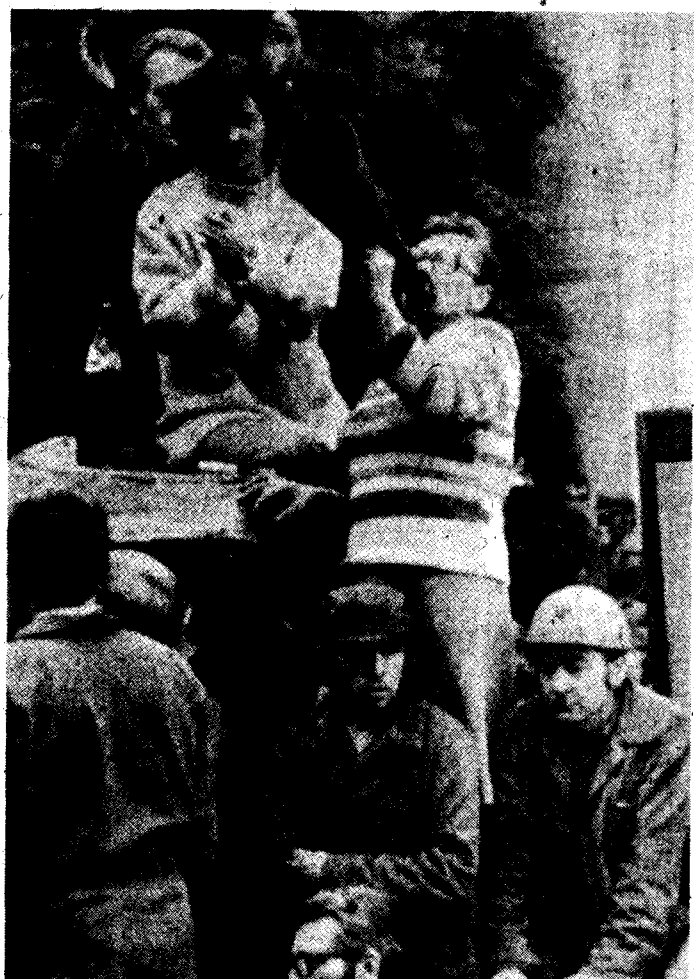


## *A Workers Poland, Yes! The Pope's Poland, No!*



Alain Keller



AP

Everyone predicted it was coming. A restive, combative working class, peasant strikes, massive foreign debt, chronic and widespread food shortages, a powerful and increasingly assertive Catholic church, the burgeoning of social-democratic and clerical-nationalist oppositional groupings. All the elements were there. Poland in the late '70s was locked in a deepening crisis heading toward

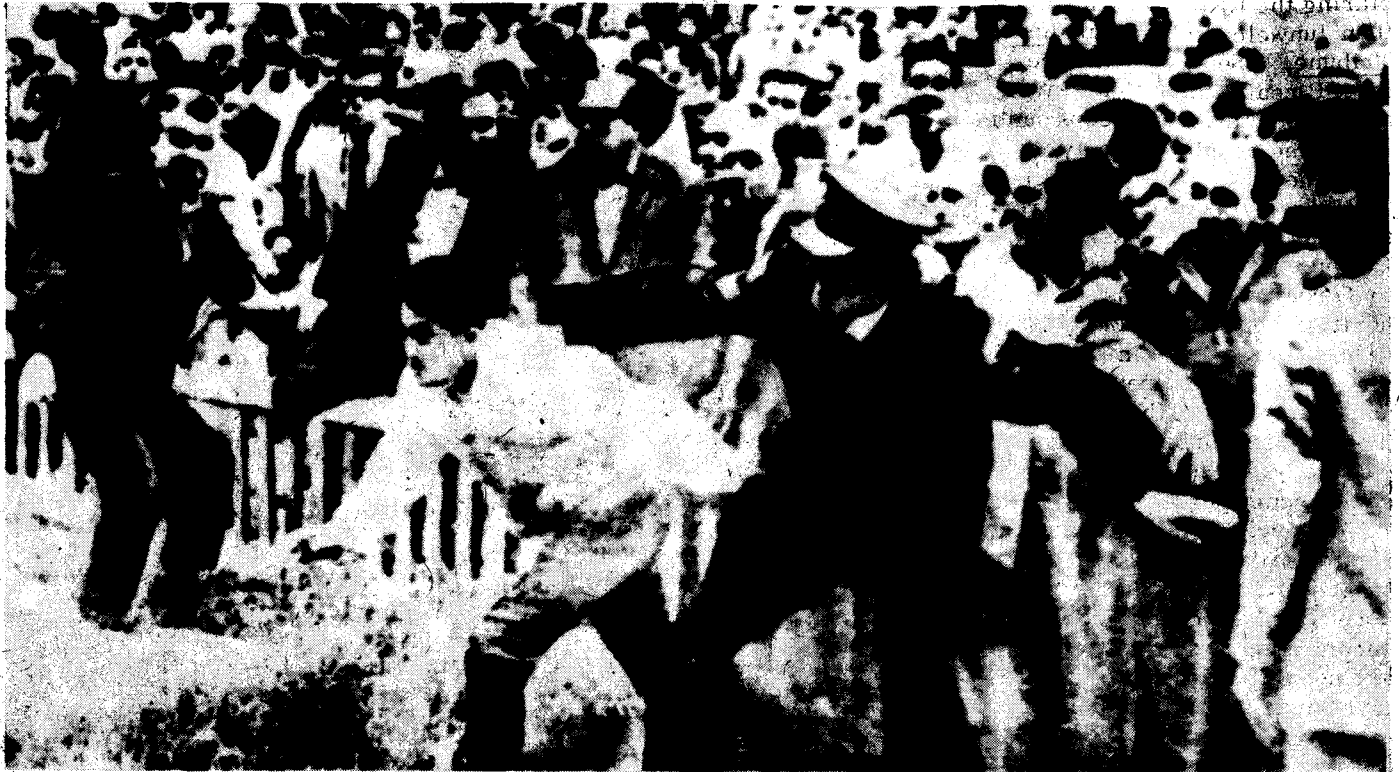
explosion, an explosion which could bring either proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy or capitalist counterrevolution led by Pope Wojtyla's church.

The Baltic coast general strike was the most powerful mobilization of the power of the working class since France May 1968. But was it a mobi-

(continued on page 9)

## No Reliance on the Bosses' State

# Labor Must Stop the Klan!



Thousands broke up Nazi rally, Toronto, 1965. Cops protected fascists.

Star photo by Eddy Roworth

The KKK and the Nazis are on the rise, emboldened every time they crawl from their holes without being smashed. In broad daylight a gang of KKK/Nazi hoodlums cold-bloodedly murdered five people in Greensboro, North Carolina last November, and now the KKK has opened an office in Toronto, fascist "recruiters" pop up in Vancouver and preachers of genocide get hours of airtime in the media. These scum are the enemy of all decent people. They must be stopped now, before they can grow.

There is a typical "Canada the good" attitude that it "can't happen here," that the KKK is a peculiarly American phenomenon. This "nationalist" arrogance denies the ugly reality of this country, a place that David Duke (leader of one KKK faction) thinks is the last bastion of white supremacy (*Toronto Star*, 14 March 1977). Canadian "liberals" laughed at the four organizers the Klan sent up to the Prairies in the 1920s, but they stopped chuckling when the KKK grew to thousands. And the fascists could grow again.

Jimmy Carter's anti-Soviet warmongering over Soviet ballerinas, Cuba and Afghanistan has produced a fertile climate for all kinds of reaction-

aries to creep out of the woodwork and pass off their anti-black, anti-labor, anti-Semitic, anti-socialist venom as the domestic analogue of anti-Sovietism. In this context, it's no accident that the former leader of the fascist *Western Guard*, Geza Matrai, who attacked Soviet Premier Kosygin in 1971, has resurfaced as head of the "Anti-Soviet Action Committee" at the University of Toronto. While Brzezinski pointed his gun down the Khyber Pass, the KKK/Nazis are pointing theirs at unionists, blacks, Jews and gays.

When the KKK announced they were opening an office in an immigrant area of Toronto's East End, the city's ethnic communities, labor movement, the left and gay organizations reacted with a palpable sense of outrage. The black-run Toronto newspaper *Contrast*, knowing full well that they're on the fascists' hit list, headed its (4 July) editorial "KKK Maggots Out," and concluded: "Let these degenerates not miscalculate this time. . . . Fire will be met with fire." But the liberals and the reformists, from Metro chairman Paul Godfrey to the Communist Party (CP), are trying to direct such combativity into impotent and dangerous parliamen-

tary cretinism: they are calling on the bosses' racist state to "Ban the Klan."

The CP, hoping to cash in on Canada's "anti-hate" laws as well as the Canadian parliament's unanimous vote to condemn the KKK, sent a belly-crawling, servile open letter to Ontario's top Tory, William Davis: "[Attorney-General] McMurtry, and you as Premier, would better serve the interests of the people of Ontario by declaring the KKK illegal, rather than 'unwelcome'" (Canadian Tribune, 1 September). Does the CP really think that Davis and McMurtry, whose cops can't "find" the people who burned down the CP's Toronto office building, will protect them from the Klan? As the Trotskyist League stated in an open letter to Toronto area unions and minority organizations last July: "There is no sense in calling on the racist, strikebreaking cops and courts to ban the Klan. Only the organized labor movement has the power to smash these racist scum."

The fascists are ultimately capitalism's last line of defense, and even if the bourgeoisie is not yet financing and actively encouraging their growth, they are not going to use their official thugs against possibly useful racist, anti-labor shock troops. The cops were complicit in the Greensboro massacre, and then they arrested the victims of the deadly KKK/Nazi attack! Back in 1965 Canadian Nazi John Beattie tried to hold a rally in Toronto's Allan Gardens. Four thousand people turned out to bust up this scum's provocation against labor, minorities and the left. They trashed the "rally," but Beattie escaped unscathed--thanks to the protection of massive squads of cops who beat the anti-fascist protesters!

It is not impossible for the capitalists to pass legislation under the cover of "Ban the Klan." However, these laws (like in Britain) are directed at maintaining "public order" and are primarily used as tools against labor and the left. Working people cannot rely on the bosses' government but on the strength of the organized labor movement, the only

social force that can sweep the fascist vermin from the streets for good.

**It Can be Done!**

The Trotskyist strategy for a labor-centered fight against the fascists was dramatically confirmed twice in the past year. Last November, just after the Greensboro murders, the KKK



The Canadian KKK, 1927: Labor, minorities must stamp out hooded cross-burners.

planned a "victory march" in downtown Detroit. The Spartacist League/U. S. (SL) together with militant auto workers (who drove two Klan-hooded foremen out of the Ford River Rouge plant) took the initiative and organized a counter-demonstration. Despite the active opposition of the city authorities and a virtual news blackout, over 500, mainly black auto workers, rallied to say "The Klan Won't Ride in the Motor City!" The KKK-killers didn't dare show their faces.

When the Nazis announced they were going to "celebrate Hitler's birthday" in San Francisco, the SL and Bay Area union militants formed the united-front April 19 Committee Against Nazis (ANCAN) to make sure the Nazis didn't celebrate anything. Nine local unions and 35 union officials backed ANCAN's call. On April 19 there wasn't a Nazi in sight. Their rally site was occupied by 1,200 angry unionists, socialists, Jews and gays.

Militants in the Letter Carriers Union of Canada Local 1, inspired by the Detroit and ANCAN successes, introduced a motion in July just after the KKK opened its offices to organize a massive labor/minority demonstration to stop the Klan. The stew-

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# A Tale of Two Factions

## RWL Falls to Pieces

"Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every-  
thing."

--"As You Like It"

With all the touching concern of a confused parent who tried but failed, the 1 September issue of Socialist Voice tells its readers that "the building of the RWL [Revolutionary Workers League] has suffered a setback, which Socialist Voice hopes is temporary." The editors, however, express all the senility of an organization that is in an advanced state of decay. Oh what "an extremely unfortunate situation," what "unnecessary confusion" they sigh as the various factions pack their bags and leave--taking with them members, mailing lists, subscribers lists and in Quebec the entire press apparatus.

In the spring November 14 Tendency (N14) leaders Bob Mills, Brett Smiley and Joe Flexer casually walked out, with 30 members in English-speaking Canada. They were followed out in August by the Public Faction (PF) which left with 50 members mostly from Quebec but with supporters in English Canada. Headed by Barry McPeake and Leon Peillard the PF took with it not only members but the press. In September subscribers to Lutte Ouvrière received two copies of the paper--one published by the PF, the other under the name of the Ligue Ouvrière Révolutionnaire (LOR).

Senior long-time members of the RWL such as Ernie Tate have given up the ghost and left. Now there are rumors trickling out of the 60 or so active and non-active members of the RWL that there is a new "Open Faction" for those who stayed in but hate the leadership. Stated simply, the RWL is falling to pieces.

Even the splits reflect the momentum to decomposition. When N14 members from the Prairies and Vancouver decided to hold a conference in Winnipeg to discuss fusion with the PF, the Hamilton-based leadership of N14 went on strike; their comrades were told that if they wanted to talk unity with the "ridiculous little Public Faction" they could count Hamilton out. The PF--while no doubt seeking to split the N14--is itself the object of a good deal of flattery and attention from the significantly larger ex-Maoist In Struggle! (IS!). The PF's identification with the "Fourth International," at least for now,



SC Photo

**RWL: The marriage is over, the children have left and the house is for rent.**

stands in the way of IS!'s advances. At the same time however its unrequited loyalty to the United Secretariat (USec) is itself a ready-made self-destruct mechanism.

As is the nature of all opportunists both the N14 and the PF chose to fight the RWL almost exclusively on the terrain of domestic politics. There were all the usual squabbles over the NDP and Quebec. As the PF exited it hurled back the charge of English-Canadian chauvinism at the RWL leadership. Worse yet, PF leaders privately report that the RWL majority decided, after the fact, that they should have participated in the Parti Québécois' "yes" committees. Thus, the long-standing clash between the left-nationalist Quebec Mandelites and the right-wing "consistent" nationalism so well expressed by the old Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière (LSO) has once again come to the fore. But, what both the N14 and the PF essentially ignore is the very thing that stands behind both splits--the crisis in the USec.

### The Trouble With Ernest

When Moreno and the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) tore out a third of the USec in a spectacular split last year, it was Ernest Mandel, the man to whom the leaders of both splits sold their political souls, who lost big. While the reformist, American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) methodically consolidated into a fairly homogeneous

group within the USec internationally, Mandel's former followers decomposed in several directions. In Germany the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten majority is at war with the USec leadership over the same provincial German issues which have divided the group for ten years--principally the class nature of, and orientation to, the SPD. The central committee of the French section--which for years has pandered to the left-social-democratic/Euro-communist milieu and uncritically enthused over

pro-Western Soviet dissidents--split 20 to 22 over Afghanistan. The large minority adopted an outright pro-imperialist line. Meanwhile the British International Marxist Group's project of liquidation into the state-capitalist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of Tony Cliff is prevented only by the SWP's refusal to have them. After all, why should the relatively homogeneous Cliffites swallow an indigestible group of inveterate factionalists when they can rip  
(continued on page 6)

## USec "Chador Socialist" Tours Australia

Who on the left could defend the barbaric stonings of "adulterers," "homosexuals" and other "sex criminals" in Khomeini's Iran? The murdering attacks against leftists by clerical fanatics? The genocidal destruction of Kurdish villages by Persian chauvinism in turban? The imprisonment of women in the head-to-toe veil, the chador? Who? The Socialist Workers Party of Iran (HKE, sister party of the Revolutionary Workers League), that's who.

In July HKE spokesman Fatima Fallahi toured Australia to defend the "Islamic Revolution"



Australasian Spartacist  
SL/ANZ Greets Fallahi: SWP! HKE! Running Dogs of Khomeini!

against those of little faith. But when Fallahi arrived she ran straight into a campaign by the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand (SL/ANZ) which thoroughly exposed this "chador socialist" as the political stooge of the mullahs' bloody right-wing terror.

After Fallahi sped off back to Allah's revolution in Teheran, the RWL and their co-thinkers in the United Secretariat didn't dare publicize the tour outside of Australia. And the "Sayings of Fatima Fallahi" printed below are obviously the reason why. Fallahi's visit was a disaster for her sponsors; for the SL/ANZ it was a raging success. Nine new comrades applied to join the international Spartacist tendency, in large measure because of the SL/ANZ's campaign against

this belly-crawler for Khomeini. For workers revolution in Iran!

### Sayings of Fatima Fallahi

"Our revolution is a progressive revolution and one of the beautiful revolutions in the whole world history."

"We've got the only Islamic socialist revolution in the world."

"We're proud of the chador, a symbol of our struggle against U.S. imperialism."

"I wear my chador, go to the mosque at 5 o'clock, join prayers and after prayers sit down and talk politics. And they know I'm a socialist and they respect me."

\*\*\*\*\*

(Question: "...is it true that homosexuals are being stoned to death in Iran?")

"Well, it is not true.... Those people that were executed... they were not homosexuals. These people, they were rap[ing] the kids, or gave money to the kids to have a sexual life with them.... The majority of the Iranian people, they don't know what the homosexuality is."

"...if a girl is going to have a sexual life before getting married, the family don't want to let her in the house anymore. So the majority of the Iranian people, their custom is not to have any sexual rights before getting married...."

\*\*\*\*\*

On the stonings of gays and adulterers:

"This is a backward country; these are our traditions. As a socialist I am personally against violence of this kind. You have to understand it is a 95 percent Moslem country...out of revolution comes evolution."

\*\*\*\*\*

(Question: "Thousands of Kurds were killed by Khomeini, what do you say?")

"Khomeini did not kill them."

"The imam has been right before, he never compromises, and he is right now."

"My opinion about Islam is that it is socialism."



## RWL . . .

(continued from page 5)

out a chunk from the outside?

Mandel's chickens have come home to roost. It seems that so many of the political tendencies generously included in his "new mass vanguard" have had more success in recruiting from the USec than vice-versa. After years of sweeping the Russian question under the rug, the USec is now reaping the reward in the form of a massive anti-Soviet bulge in the face of American imperialism's renewed warmongering against the USSR.

### Mandel's Lost Children

Within North America it was the definitive victory of the SWP that triggered both splits from the RWL. At the time of the fusion of the LSA/LSO and the RMG/GMR (Groupe Marxiste Révolutionnaire) we wrote:

"The one-time centrists and New Leftists of the RMG and GMR will either be swallowed by the more experienced and effective reformists from the LSA/LSO, or they will (in one way or another) find themselves exited from the RWL."  
--"RMG, GMR Surrender to Reformism,"

SC No. 19, September 1977

What the ex-RMG/GMR leaders obviously didn't count on was the active intervention of Mandel... on the SWP's side. Old N14 documents complain bitterly about the promiscuous intervention of the Barnes/Mandel "Majority Caucus" into the internal life of the Canadian section. But bitterness soon became outright rejection of the USec and all the "far left."

Of course there is ample cause for bitterness. After all it was under Mandel's tutelage and in the name of the USec's gross parody of the "Fourth International" that the RCT split from the LSA and built the RMG and then--under the same banner--lashed up with the LSA only to be chewed up and limp out. Today, the N14 tendency's program smacks of the "god that failed"--no more "little central committees," no more "international,"...no more Trotskyism.

While Mills et al. have washed their hands of the whole affair, the PF is willing to forgive... and certainly forget. Guided by the sacred Mandelite principle that nothing succeeds like success, the PF clearly believes that if they get the numbers, they will get the franchise:

"By building an organization Lutte Ouvrière intends to show in practice its capacity to construct the Fourth International in Quebec and in Canada. Lutte Ouvrière will struggle to be recognized as a legitimate part of the Fourth International. The Fourth International lives and will live."

--Lutte Ouvrière, 26 August [SC translation]

Haven't we heard this sometime before? In 1973 the Revolutionary Communist Tendency (RCT) was

convinced that they would get the franchise. Young RCTers could listen starry-eyed to reports of visiting representatives of the International Majority Tendency (IMT) about the astronomical growth of the French section, of fighting fascists in the streets of London and Paris and above all of the imminent split with the reformists of the SWP being prepared in Europe. But the split never happened, the IMT no longer exists and all Mandel's stars have fallen. Does the PF really believe that Mandel is going to be more willing to tangle with the SWP over a mere handful of Quebec supporters than he was with the Internationalist Tendency (IT) in what was a qualitatively more advantageous situation for the then-existing IMT? When the expelled IT hammered desperately at the USec's gate, Mandel looked the other way:

"...In its desperate thrashing about, the IT has tried to persuade itself that the Pabloism of the United Secretariat is only a shibboleth, an empty political epithet. They are finding out differently. The organizational consequence of the USec's objectivist, tailist line is disinterest and contempt toward the painstaking building of communist cadres. What are 112 ITers in the United States to the Pabloist mind?--after all, the automatic unfolding processes of the New Mass Vanguard or some successor gimmick will certainly bring thousands; surely one speech by Ernest Mandel in a suitable mass meeting could win far more, so why worry about small change like the political death of the IT, which is merely the major part of three years of left oppositional activity in the SWP? Thus it is not subjective, evil or ill will that causes the USec tops... to look upon the IT not as comrades but as pawns; this willful destructiveness is only the necessary corollary of their impressionistic politics."

--"SWP Stages Mass Purge," WV No. 49,  
19 July 1974

### The Public Faction and the Party Question

If the N14's perception of the USec is more down-to-earth than that of the PF, the PF at least claims to want to build a combat party. But to reconcile their unilateral split from the RWL with their stated aim of remaining in the USec, they turn to the Lenin of pre-1912 as opposed to Lenin, the builder of the Comintern:

"11. What is the Trotskyist Faction? It is not a tendency, an internal faction but a public faction with its own bi-national discipline, its line of intervention, its discipline, its public face. Let us remind comrades that the bolsheviks and the mensheviks were public factions with separate press, disciplines and interventions from 1903 to 1917 in spite of attempts to reunification between 1908 and 1912, common Conventions, attendance to the second international, etc... Pub-

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## Bureaucrats Squelch PSAC Walkout

# For One Union of Postal Workers!



Jeff Goode/Toronto Star

PSAC pickets shut down Toronto's South Central postal facility.

September 19--"The Sleeping Giant has Awakened" read the picket sign of a striking member of the Clerk Regulatory division of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). For the first time in the union's history, on September 8, federal clerks walked off the job--over the opposition of their national leadership. The 50,000 federal clerks have been working without a contract since November 1979 and have not had a wage increase in close to two years! Fed up with the PSAC bureaucrats' appeals to the members to stay on the job until a strike vote had been taken, the ranks of the union voted with their feet.

By mid-week the government workers wildcat had swelled to 10,000, centered mainly in Ontario and Quebec. For six days postal service in Toronto was effectively shut down as postal truck drivers, members of the Letter Carriers Union of Canada (LCUC), refused to cross the picket lines of the PSAC postal administrative clerks. The PSAC bureaucrats were running scared in the face of this massive rebellion by the ranks and worked double-time to regain control. By September 14 the local PSAC bureaucrats were lined up to drop the ax, and from Ottawa national president Andy Stewart issued the order to go back to work. Stabbed in the back by their own union leadership the clerks returned to work September 16.

While the strikers were abandoned by the gutless PSAC tops, throughout the walkout their fellow trade

unionists in the LCUC and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) stood by them. Postal union stewards and members came out to strengthen the picket lines. But above all it was the refusal of the postal truck drivers to cross the picket lines that gave the real weight to the walkout. The drivers stood their ground even in the face of letters sent down by the postal bosses threatening discipline, up to and including firing, for refusing to cross picket lines (in the aftermath of the walkout management has reportedly been posting instruction bulletins on how to scab!).

In response to management's threats the stewards' body of LCUC Local 1 in Toronto passed a motion to defend the drivers against any victimizations. An injury to one is an injury to all! If the postal bosses try to come down on the drivers the union must respond with immediate strike action!

While the PSAC strikers more than welcomed the solidarity of the CUPW and LCUC they were completely taken aback that anyone should honor their picket lines. Respecting picket lines should be a gut reaction for every trade unionist but the sellout PSAC tops have over the years attempted to make scabbing a union institution. Even during the federal clerks' walkout members of the General Labour and Trades division of PSAC, who work as postal mechanics, crossed the lines. Postal union militants were justifiably infuriated--

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## RWL...

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lic factions are not uncommon in Communist history."

--"Report of the Trotskyist Faction to the Vancouver Branch of the RWL," 23 August

What this reading of Bolshevik history deliberately suppresses is the evolution of Lenin from a revolutionary social democrat and left-Kautskyan to the founder of the Communist International. In practice in Russia, Lenin strove to create a disciplined, programmatically homogeneous revolutionary vanguard. With the betrayal of the German Social Democracy in August 1914 Lenin broke definitively from the Kautskyan concept of the "party of the whole class" wherein centrist, reformist and revolutionary currents, sometimes peacefully, sometimes with great friction, co-exist. But then the PF split was motivated less by political differences than by opportunist organizational considerations. In its view the RWL is still "revolutionary" albeit a little opportunist but worst of all ... "a sect."

Quite correctly the N14 does not describe its split in left/right terms. Rather it presents a sliding scale of sects--the RWL is a sect, the Groupe Socialiste des Travailleurs is half a sect, Lutte Ouvrière in France is perhaps 3/4 a sect, the French OCI is a big sect.... But the British SWP--now there's a serious organization! The N14's affinity for the Cliffites is not an expression of any desire to forge international links (which would be out of the question for these Canadian parochialists) but rather of the N14's appetites. The N14--which has a significant state capitalist component of its own--admires the reformist syndicalism of the SWP particularly as expressed in its relative disinterest in the Labour Party. While the N14 has no difference with the RWL's strategy of first winning workers to the NDP and then perhaps to "socialist" politics, it is repelled by the RWL's organic orientation to Canadian social de-

mocracy. But, where the British SWP owes its large size to the existence of a highly politicized and combative working class and a large layer of disaffected young workers there is little basis for the N14 to hope for similar growth in this country.

The N14's formula for building an organization--a series of networks primarily within the unions--has more in common with Ed Sadlowski's "Steelworkers Fight Back" campaign than its stated goal of building a mass vanguard workers party in Canada. With its explicit rejection of Trotskyism, coupled with a willingness to accommodate to anti-Sovietism and a defining appetite for power in the unions, this little group centered in Hamilton steel is headed on a trajectory straight into anti-communist trade unionism.

### Reforge the Fourth International--Join the iSt!

Attempting to lure the PF (and maybe some N14ers) back into the fold (and, not unimportantly, for international consumption), the RWL has offered the olive branch of "unity." To sweeten the pot the RWL, in the same Socialist Voice announcing the PF split, presents an absurd pollyannish prognosis of impending success:

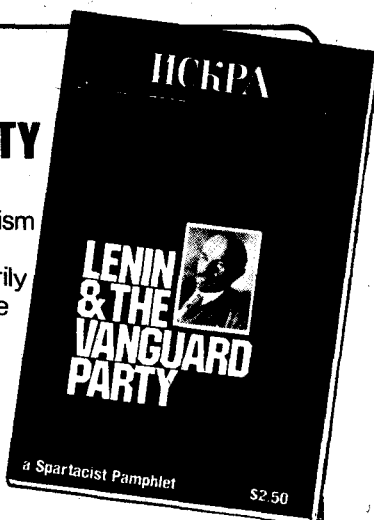
"There is a greater hearing now than ever before for the program of the Fourth International and its pan-Canadian section, the Revolutionary Workers League."

The truth is obviously otherwise: the RWL is hemorrhaging badly. So much for the great Canadian "hope" for a "united" USec.

We do not look kindly on the USec's squandering of cadre through the cynical horsetrading and backstabbing that is the trademark of this Potemkin Village "Fourth International." The international Spartacist tendency (iSt) has been built largely through fusions, particularly with left oppositional currents from the USec like the Bolshevik-Leninist Tendency of the RMG. These fusions were the result of hard programmatic struggle for the principles of Trotskyism as set out in the nine point draft declaration of Trotskyists expelled or driven from the USec who now adhere to the iSt (see Spartacist No. 29, Summer 1980). It is this program that has stood the test of time and driven the iSt forward while the USec shatters. Forward to the Rebirth of the Fourth International! ■

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# Poland . . .

(continued from page 1)

lization for working-class power? That is the decisive question.

Now there is a settlement on paper. The Polish workers have forced the bureaucracy to agree to "new self-governing trade unions" with the pledge that these recognize "the leading role" of the Communist party and do not engage in political activities. Insofar as the settlement enhances the Polish workers' power to struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, revolutionaries can support the strike and its outcome. But only a blind man could fail to see the gross influence of the Catholic church and also pro-Western sentiments among the striking workers. If the settlement strengthens the working class organizationally, it also strengthens the forces of reaction. Poland stands today on a razor's edge.

The compromise creates an impossible situation economically and politically; it cannot last. In a country facing international bankruptcy, heavily subsidized by the Soviet Union, the strikers are demanding the biggest free lunch the world has ever seen.

Politically the Stalinist bureaucracy cannot live with this kind of independent working-class organization, a form of cold dual power. The bureaucracy is not a ruling class, whose social power is derived from ownership of the means of production, but a caste based on the monopolization of governmental power.

The settlement was conditioned, on both sides, by the presence of forty Soviet divisions in East Germany. The Kremlin has already made disapproving noises about that settlement, and Soviet military intervention cannot be ruled out.

## Workers Democracy or Clerical-Nationalist Reaction?

The present crisis was triggered once again by increases in the price of meat. To raise the price of food without a wage increase was to invite an immediate, nationwide mass strike/protest like in December 1970 and June 1976. The regime figured it could minimize the financial cost and social disruption by granting wage raises only to those groups of workers who made some trouble.

July and early August saw a flurry of slowdowns and strikes. But on August 14 when 17,000 workers seized the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, the Stalinist regime was faced with a fundamentally different

order of challenge. It was the Baltic shipbuilders who, in 1970 toppled Gomulka and forced his successor Gierek to accept an independent workers committee for a time.

Within a week 150,000 had downed tools, 200 factories were shut and the Baltic ports--Gdynia, Sopot, Szczecin, Elblag as well as Gdansk--were paralyzed. And it seemed as if every time the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) met, it raised five more, and more political, demands--"free" trade unions, end all censorship, free all political prisoners (there were only six). What had begun as a series of quickly ended wage struggles had become a political general strike.



Gorgoni/Contact

Pope Wojtyla/John Paul II on pilgrimage for anti-communism in Poland 1979.

What is the political character of the strike and the consciousness of the workers? Certainly the workers are reacting against bureaucratic mismanagement, privilege and abuse. The Polish workers' grievances are real and they are just. The firing of an old militant, Anna Walentynowicz, a few months before her retirement, which reportedly sparked the Lenin Shipyard takeover, should infuriate every honest worker. The existence of special shops exclusive to party members and cops, which the strikers demanded be abolished, is an abomination, a rejection of the most basic principles of socialism.

But if we know what the Baltic workers are against in an immediate sense, what are their positive allegiances and general political outlook? Early in the strike there were reports of singing the Internationale, which indicates some element of socialist consciousness. Some of the strike committee members had been shop-floor leaders in the official trade-union apparatus who were victimized for trying to defend the workers' interests. They undoubtedly were and possibly still are members of the ruling Polish United Workers Party

(continued on page 10)

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## Poland . . .

(continued from page 9)

(PUWP, the official name of the Communist party). These advanced workers surely desire a real workers Poland and world socialism.

While the imperialist media always plays up any support for anti-communist ideology in the Soviet bloc, there is no question that to a considerable degree the strikers identify with the powerful Catholic church opposition. It is not just the external signs--the daily singing of the national hymn, "Oh



UPI

MKS leader Lech Walesa

God, Who Has Defended Poland," the hundreds of strikers kneeling for mass, the ubiquitous pictures of Wojtyla-John Paul II (talk about "the cult of personality"). The strike committee's outside advisers consist of a group of Catholic intellectuals headed up by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, editor of a leading Catholic journal.

The strike leaders flaunted their Catholic and Polish nationalist ideology. At the signing of the strike settlement, Walesa ostentatiously wore a crucifix and used a foot-long red and white (the Polish national colors) ballpoint pen, a souvenir of Pope Wojtyla's visit to Poland last year. (To top it off, Walesa's father, who has emigrated to the U. S., posed with Ronald Reagan as the Republican reactionary officially kicked off his presidential campaign.)

Even more ominous was the demand for "access by all religious groups [read Roman Catholic church] to the mass media," a prerogative for which the Polish episcopate has long campaigned. This is an anti-democratic demand which would legitimize the church in its present role as the recognized opposition to the Stalinist regime. Significantly, the strike committee did not even demand the right to such

media access for itself or for the "free trade unions" it was fighting to set up. In effect the Baltic ship-builders were asking for a state church in a deformed workers state.

But the church is not loyal to the workers state, Far from it! The Polish church (virulently anti-Semitic) has been a bastion of reaction even within the framework of world Catholicism. Especially since the 1976 crisis the Polish church has become increasingly open and aggressive in its anti-Communism. Early last year the Wall Street Journal (2 January 1979) observed:

"Thus, the priesthood has become in effect an opposition party. The number of priests is at an all-time high of 19,500 and many openly defy the Communist Party by building churches without government approval."

The power and the danger of the Polish Catholic church are clearly revealed in the present crisis. The day after the Lenin Shipyard seizure Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski led 150,000 "pilgrims" in a commemoration of the bourgeois-nationalist Pilsudski's victory over the Soviet Red Army in 1920, reminding them how Poles acted when "freedom of life was endangered" (UPI, 15 August). A week later Pope Wojtyla declared before 1,000 Poles in the Vatican that "we are united with our countrymen," a deliberately provocative act under the circumstances.

The Polish episcopate, fearing both Russian military intervention (the Warsaw Pact forces were maneuvering nearby in East Germany) and its own inability to control a workers' uprising, has taken a different, more cautious tack. But whatever the present tactical calculations of the Polish episcopate, in a power vacuum the church, well organized and with a mass base, will be a potent agency for social counterrevolution.

### "Free Trade Unions"?

Until a few days before the settlement the general strike was limited to the Baltic coast. While the Baltic coast workers are highly volatile, they lack the socialist traditions common to the other main sections of the Polish proletariat--the heavy-industrial workers around Warsaw and Krakow, the Lodz textile workers, the Silesian miners. Had the general strike spread throughout Poland, its political axis could quite possibly have shifted to the left and away from clericalism.

The particular slogan of "free trade unions," pushed for years by the CIA-backed Radio Free Europe and the Catholic church, has acquired a definite anti-Communist and pro-Western connotation. Remember the 1921 Kronstadt mutiny's call for "free Soviets"--free from Communists, that is!

An integral part of the Trotskyist program for proletarian political revolution in the degenerated/deformed workers states is the struggle for trade unions independent of bureaucratic control. Trade unions and the right to strike would be necessary even in a democratically governed workers state to guard against abuses and mistakes by administra-

tors and managers. But it is far from clear that the "free trade unions" long envisioned by the dissidents would be free from the influence of the pro-Catholic, pro-NATO elements who represent a mortal danger to the working class. In any case, in the highly politicized situation in Poland today the "new, self-governing" trade unions cannot and will not limit themselves to questions of wage rates, working conditions, job security as was the case, for example, with the Szczecin workers committee in 1971. They will either be drawn into the powerful orbit of the Catholic church or have to oppose it in the name of socialist principle.

And in determining that outcome the presence of a revolutionary vanguard party would be critical. A central task for a Trotskyist organization in Poland would be to raise in these unions a series of demands that will split the clerical-nationalist forces from among the workers and separate them out. These unions must defend the socialized means of production and proletarian state power against Western imperialism. In Poland today the elementary democratic demand of the separation of church and state is a dividing line between the struggle for workers democracy and the deadly threat of capitalist restoration.

Poland presents the most combative working class in the Soviet bloc, with a history of struggling for independent organizations going back to the mid-1950s. It is also the one country in East Europe with a mass, potentially counterrevolutionary mobilization around the Catholic church. Thus, unlike Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, the alternatives in the present crisis are not limited to proletarian political revolution or Stalinist restabilization.

### The Bitter Fruits of the 1956 "Polish October"

Key to understanding the exceptional instability of Stalinist Poland is the compromise which staved off a workers revolution in 1956. As in other East European countries the post-Stalin "thaw" produced a deep crisis within the Polish bureaucracy which extended to other sections of Polish society. Promises of "socialist legality" and higher living standards led in 1953-56 to a rising line of intellectual dissidence and working-class unrest.

In August Wladyslaw Gomulka, with a reputation as a victimized "national-liberal" Communist and honest workers leader, was reinstated in the PZPR; in October he was made head of it. While granting large wage increases for a few years, Gomulka gradually bureaucratically strangled the workers councils, which had helped bring him to power. He also suppressed the dissident Marxoid intellectuals. At the same time, his policies permanently strengthened the potential social base of counterrevolution--the peasants and the priests.

The abandonment in 1956 of agricultural collectivization (never very extensive) has had a profound effect on Poland economically, socially and politically. It has saddled the country with a backward, smallholding rural economy grossly inefficient even by East European standards.

The strength of the Polish church is based on the social weight of the rural petty bourgeoisie. Only by eliminating their hideous poverty and rural isolation can the hold of religious obscurantism on the masses be broken.

An immediate, key task for a revolutionary workers government in Poland would be to promote the collectivization of agriculture. And this has nothing in common with Stalin's mass terror in the Russian countryside in 1929-31. Cheap credits and generous social services should be given those peasants who pool their land and labor, while higher taxes would be imposed on those who remained petty agricultural capitalists.

Polish Stalinism has strengthened the church not only by perpetuating a landowning peasantry, but also in a more direct way. Since 1956 the Catholic Znak group in the Sejm (parliament) has been the only legally recognized opposition in any East European country.

### Blood on the Baltic and Gierek's Maneuver

In 1970 the Gomulka regime decided to dramatically raise food prices an average of 30 percent--incredibly just a few weeks before Christmas. The Baltic ports ignited. Led by the shipbuilders, thousands of workers, some singing the Internationale, attacked police and tried to burn down Party headquarters in Gdansk and Szczecin. Over the objections of the top generals, Gomulka ordered the army in, tanks and all. More than a hundred workers were reportedly killed, many times that number wounded. Once again Poland was seconds away from a revolutionary explosion.

And once again the bureaucracy presented to the workers a new face and a new deal. Edward Gierek, an ex-coal miner and party boss of the mining region of Silesia, had a reputation as unpretentious, pragmatic and competent. Whereas in 1956 Gomulka had promised the workers democratization, in 1971 Gierek promised them prosperity. He promised huge wage increases for the workers, higher procurement prices and state pensions for the peasants plus the rapid modernization of Polish industry. And how was this economic miracle (the term was actually used in official propaganda) to be achieved? Through massive loans from the West and also the Soviet Union. The Polish Stalinist bureaucracy rode out the crisis of 1970-71, but only by mortgaging the country to West German bankers.

### For Workers Control of Production

Polish workers must not pay for the gross mismanagement of Gierek's regime. Nor should they have the slightest confidence in the bureaucracy's "economic reforms." Egalitarian and rational socialist planning, capable of overcoming the mess the Stalinists have made of the Polish economy, is possible only under a government based on democratically elected workers councils (soviets). As a revolutionary, transitional step toward that, Polish

(continued on page 18)

## TL Conference

# We Go Forward!

The Trotskyist League of Canada's Fourth National Conference, held in early September in Toronto, took a series of important steps to drive the TL's work forward. Determined to build a viable section of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt), the Conference fought for a perspective of recolonizing Vancouver, actively pursuing the destruction of centrism in Canada, deepening our trade union and student work and struggling to return Spartacist Canada to monthly frequency. A struggle to firmly orient the section in these perspectives was resisted by several older members, who proved unable to make the leap from an ingrown existence, culminating in their resignation from the party (see box p. 14). While not belittling past contributions of these ex-comrades, TL comrades welcome the necessity to themselves shoulder new responsibilities for the work. And for the several new comrades attending their first Conference, the struggles were a living lesson in bolshevism.

The Conference fought hard to turn the TL toward the opportunities presented by the current political situation. The rightward shift in the political climate is occurring at a considerably slower pace in Canada than in the U. S. as Carter's war drive and the recession are creating a political gap between the two countries. The Canadian government's hesitancy to join in the anti-Soviet grain and Olympic boycotts reflects the jackal imperialist character of Canada. If the U. S. cannot provide a prey for Canada to feed on, there will be a tendency to look elsewhere. But because of the integration of the U. S. and Canadian economies, Canada can never act as independently as the West European states.

Because of the depth of the recession and the combativity of the working class in Canada, the social democrats will look to more militant tactics as a means to keep their base. In just the last two months there have been four plant occupations/sit-downs with more possibly on the horizon, opening up a rich field of intervention for revolutionists. While the social democrats use such tactical militancy to cover protectionist schemes and Canadian "nationalism," the TL, alone on the left, has called for sit-down strikes against layoffs/closures at the same time exposing the dangerous chimera of trying to foist the capitalists' crisis onto the backs of foreign workers.



TL conference ends in singing of "Internationale."

The fight brought forward a whole layer of comrades and began the forging of a genuine collective leadership. With this as a basis the Conference decided to send a team of our best comrades to Vancouver to augment our recent recruitment there. Returning to Vancouver will begin the basis for a national network. As noted at the First Delegated Conference of the iSt:

"One-branch 'sections'...are schizophrenic locals which are concentrated in one city but are forced to assume some of the responsibilities of a national section...."

--Spartacist No. 27-28, Winter 1979-80

British Columbia has one of the most militant working classes in English-speaking North America and is linked to the powerful U. S. West Coast labor movement (predominantly through the chain of ILWU locals). The fact that In Struggle! (IS!), stagnating elsewhere, has grown substantially in Vancouver in our absence is an indication both of the gains to be had and the most glaring example of what we lost by cutting back the local. Vancouver apparently offers our best current chances for recruitment, laying the basis for further, much-needed political growth and geographical expansion.

Over the past year the TL has made repeated trips to Quebec to intersect the political turmoil surrounding Lévesque's phony, blatantly undemocratic referendum. As Leninists we adamantly de-



SC Photo

# Why We Joined the TL

Printed below, slightly abridged, are three letters of application for membership in the Trotskyist League which were accepted by the Conference.

## Brian Campbell

1972 and 1974 NDP Candidate, Mayor of  
Vancouver

Being in agreement with the principles and accepting the program of the Trotskyist League of Canada, I agree to abide by the discipline of the organization and to support the party financially. The following statement is in support of my application and an explanation of the evolution of my commitment to the liberation of mankind that has led to my decision that the Trotskyist League of Canada and the international Spartacist tendency is the only organization with both the will and the program to lead the working class to a successful world-wide revolution.

My social activism and political experience have been long and varied... taking me from a theologically-based social-work orientation to my present understanding of the need for class struggle and a Leninist vanguard party to lead it. The basis of my commitment, which has permitted me to take this route while all my former friends and associates have remained mired in religion or various forms of reformism, is my moral outrage at the oppressive social system, my desire to understand that social reality and my search for concrete organizations to change it....

Initially my participation in social and political issues emerged from my membership in the United Church and the Student Christian Movement. This involved a series of social-work projects and, in the early sixties, participation in the Student Union for Peace Action and demonstrations to admit China into the United Nations.

While orienting to the ministry my social activism and political awareness deepened while my theology became increasingly rationalized. My theological seriousness took me through traditional liberal United Church theology, existentialism, the "Death  
(continued on page 15)

defend the right of the Québécois to self-determination, including the right to secede. But we are not nationalists and do not today advocate independence as national antagonisms have not grown to such a point that the possibility of class unity between the English- and French-speaking workers is decisively blocked. While the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) has lost almost its entire Quebec membership (again!) and IS! floundered in endless petition campaigns to pressure the Parti Québécois, the TL's program gives us leverage to intervene since it is the only revolutionary answer to the national question in North America. The Conference reaffirmed the necessity for continued intervention into the major political events in Quebec.

### Smash Centrism

The shattering of the United Secretariat has produced a series of splits/spin-offs from the RWL. During the discussions leading up to the Conference a comrade noted the historic obligation of the IS to successfully conclude the International Committee's partial and abortive struggle against Pablistism:

"There should have never been a Pablist tendency with any life and viability in Canada, just as there was never one in the United States. The RW--whatever it was called back in the old days, RMG/RCT--should have had the same half-life as the IT. And the reason it didn't was because  
(continued on page 14)

## TL Conference . . .

(continued from page 13)

of the belated development of a Spartacist tendency in Canada. Because if there had been a Spartacist tendency in Canada earlier, most of the people who came out with the RCT... would have come over....

"So we have not finished the job! Pabloism has no right to exist on the North American continent! It is a violation of historical right that there is any Pabloism left in North America that has not debased itself, humiliated itself and crawled back into the reformist current represented by the SWP and its satellites."

We aim to carry forward the heritage left by James P. Cannon in his successful conduct of the 1953 struggle against Pabloism in North America.

### A Bit of Party History

The TL's membership is derived almost totally from the intersection of the New Left and social-democratic milieus. The recruitment out of these left circles has vindicated our regroupment orientation, but has carried with it the obligation to resist the most deadly characteristics of this milieu which is heavily petty-bourgeois, historically counterposed to the working class and, in this period, reflects all of the apolitical cynicism associated with the "me" generation. Over a period of years these traits became a counter pressure with-

## Former Editor of SC Resigns from TL

September 6, 1980

Dear Comrades:

I never thought I'd be writing out a resignation from the iSt, the only revolutionary organization in the world, but here it is. At the request of the organization I am resigning from the TLC.

In my 6 1/2 years in the organization I have never really assimilated any Cannonism--instead on the org. question I have always tended to New Leftism. [The National Chairman] was probably right when he said that to make it in the org. I would have to undergo a "personality transformation"--something that's not going to happen as far as I can see.

So I guess it's best that I leave--Although I am very reluctant to do so. I have no bitterness towards the org. --and of course I agree with the political program. I'm just very sorry that I couldn't have fitted in.

[Tom] Riley

in the TL to the Leninist traditions carried forward by Trotsky and James P. Cannon and finding their contemporary expression in the iSt.

The parochialism and narrow Canadian "nationalism" of this social strata have compelled the TL to struggle for better integration into our international organization. Twice layers of cadre who could have balanced off these problems have been assigned to work outside of Canada. These comrades proved their internationalism by taking these assignments and successfully carrying them out. They have brought this experience to bear on the TL and have played a significant role in revitalizing the section.

Within our own party comrades were confronted with manifestations of ingrown cliquism and the kind of behind-the-scenes maneuvering that they had rejected when breaking from the RMG and other leftist organizations. In a manner reminiscent of the struggle against the "cloned youth" in the American Spartacus Youth League, a "star" conception of leadership went hand in hand with placing administrative and technical ability above the program and Leninist organizational norms.

The responsibilities of communist leadership--to shape, train and develop comrades into hardened Bolshevik cadre--were alien to a few who preferred secret gripe-sessions and who denied their own responsibility to build a political collective. Their method of operation was appropriate to life in social democracy, not a Leninist organization. Refusing to fight for their politics either inside or outside the party, some (now ex-) comrades ultimately lost the political edge they once had, degenerating into pursuers of various personal goals. This led to obscuring the qualitative difference between members and non-members.

In a sense which will be incomprehensible to mensheviks and now-aging New Leftists, the Conference marked a big step forward in the struggle to forge a Leninist cadre in Canada. As we noted in

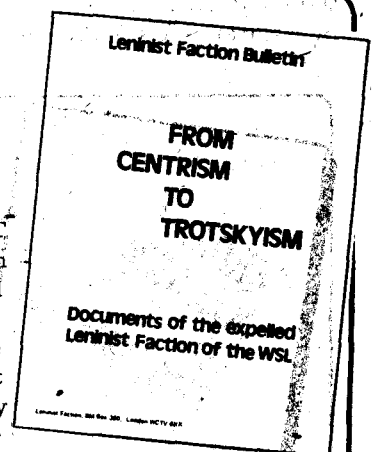
(continued on page 21)

## Documents of the expelled Leninist Faction of the WSL

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

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## Why We Joined . . .

(continued from page 13)

of God" movement, liberation theology, the theology of power and Christian Socialism. My social critique of the church, the rejection of my attempts to reform it and my continued attempts to rationalize god and the transcendent out of my theology resulted in my severing my, by this time, loose relations with the church in the late sixties. . . .

While pulling out of the church I became progressively more active in the NDP. It is an interesting statement on the politics of the NDP that coming out of the church and based on my social activism, I was almost immediately identified as being on the left-wing of the party.

Over the eight years, beginning in 1968, that I was involved in the NDP, I managed a number of federal and provincial election campaigns both on a volunteer and on a party-paid basis. I was a delegate to provincial and federal conventions, a delegate to the provincial council, chairman of numerous policy-making committees, constituency president, two-time president of the Vancouver Area Council and twice NDP candidate for mayor of Vancouver (1972, 1974). In the later instance, my vote was approximately 13 percent or 13,000 votes.

My first involvement with an organized left-wing was the left-nationalist Waffle. Attracted to it because of its program for socialism and its opposition to American imperialism, I was part of the BC Steering Committee. This was my first introduction to left debates and involved left-leaning social democrats, former Communist Party [CP] members and members of the LSA [League for Socialist Action, now the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL)]. While not questioning Canadian nationalism, I, along with others, was critical of the James Laxer leadership campaign. . . . The final blow was Laxer moving that [then NDP leader] David Lewis's nomination be made unanimous even as he represented the most reactionary aspects of the NDP. That act exposed the careerist nature of the Waffle leadership and precipitated a split in the BC Waffle leadership which

resulted in the minority, of which I was a member, being expelled by the majority which consisted of [BC NDP leader Dave] Barrett supporters and former CP members. The expulsion destroyed the [BC] Waffle as it removed its literary and organizational core.

The five persons expelled [thought] that the weakness with the Waffle was its parallel organizational structure. We decided to integrate into the local Vancouver constituencies, gain control of them and the Vancouver Area Council and use that as a base for putting forward our program. The Vancouver Area Council became the focal point both for the drive to enter the NDP in municipal politics under the party banner and the left-wing of the party. While operating on a strategy of being the best builders of the NDP and thus gaining authority in the party for a left social-democratic program, the leadership of the VAC, myself being the most publicly prominent, were the most sophisticated and at the same time the most naive believers in the reformability of Canada's right-wing social democracy.

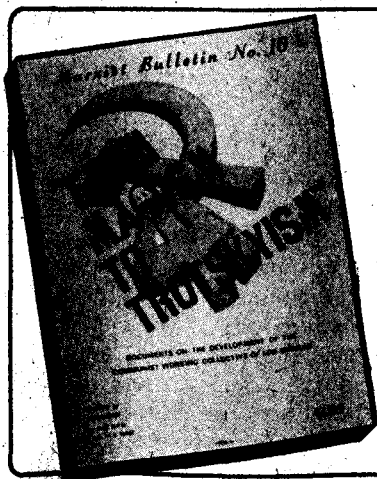
While the left, a very loosely organized heterogeneous grouping, managed to gain control of parts of the provincial conventions and even control the provincial executive for a period of time, our program represented little more than an attempt to make social democracy more efficient and direct it to avoid certain pitfalls as a result of its own shortsightedness.

Nevertheless, the legislative caucus did whatever it wanted regardless of the directions of the membership. The membership, as individuals, also followed their own course regardless of the outcome of the debates. Democracy in social democracy was the right to hold debates at conventions after which everyone did as they pleased except for the left who were attacked for not being accountable to right-wing party policy.

The conflict between the legislative caucus and the left grew increasingly bitter. The rightward drift of an already right-wing social-democratic government culminated in the NDP breaking the strikes of 150,000 railroad, Teamster, Retail Clerks and IWA members in 1975. . . . For the first time the VAC publicly spoke out against the NDP government. Lobbying among union bureaucrats for a campaign of resistance to the legislation and against the leadership of the NDP, the VAC attempted to swing the 1975 BC Federation of Labour convention into active attack. Some headway was made, but Barrett, while speaking to the convention, called a provincial election. The bureaucrats immediately fell into line and the convention endorsed the NDP. After losing the election, the legislative caucus moved once again to eliminate the VAC. This was finally accomplished by a provincial council ruling that constitutionally it never existed.

The LSA, who were active supporters of the VAC, used the VAC as a base of support for their various single-issue campaigns. At no point did they ever mention the Transitional Program or provide an analysis of social democracy. They solicited support

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## Why We Joined . . .

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for their campaigns, and, to the best of my knowledge, never attempted to win or split any of the VAC or left leadership. Their program differed only in certain instances and there was never any attempt at programmatic clarification. When the party shifted to the right, they shifted faster than the rest of the left, always remaining within sight of the mainstream of the party. We looked upon the LSA as another faction or interest group in the party, like the women's committee or the eco-freaks, who had to be appeased in order to maintain their support. When I left the NDP I was clear that I was not interested in the LSA nor in the devious and dishonest Stalinists of the CP who I dealt with extensively at the municipal level. Neither had the courage to put forward their politics in their own name (even the VAC never entered an organization unless it did so under its own name).

Finally the VAC, after I began to explore revolutionary politics, chose to fight the final round of attacks on constitutional rather than political grounds. They were thus eliminated on technicalities and not on the basis of a clarifying political fight. That legacy was the result of the type of organization the left represented. We were in fact an undisciplined grouping of every possible reformist current within social democracy. If the LSA had any kind of entry perspective this was truly an excellent opportunity. [But] when elements of the VAC tried to form a study group, it was the TL that intervened programmatically to fracture it and expose its inconsistencies.

I was forced to come to terms and evaluate my experience in social democracy. . . . I read histories of the Second International which showed beyond doubt that my experiences were not unique but were simply part of a long history of betrayal which is central to its political program. I could no longer delude myself on the basis of my own provincialism that the NDP was reformable if only the right tactic was used. I could not deny that social democracy was historically bankrupt.

While being attracted to the Trotskyist League initially on the basis of their seriousness and organizational questions, I little understood democratic centralism. My central problems with the politics of the TLC were Canadian nationalism, caucus work in the trade unions and the Russian question. . . . It was clear from my experiences with the CP and LSA as well as the general lack of seriousness of the [now defunct] RMG [Revolutionary Marxist Group] that the TL was the only hard, consistent Leninist organization. It became a matter of some importance to become more knowledgeable in the Marxist and Trotskyist basis of this program.

At the same time, and a more serious obstacle, I had to grapple with whether I was going to do what was popular or what was correct. Moving from mass work with the rewards social democracy can offer and losing friends and security at a time in my life when everyone else was moving towards greater

financial security was a frightening risk.

I submit this application because the costs of betraying the central motivation of my life to this point is to render trivial the rest of my life. The demands of intellectual honesty and the refusal to be politically impotent require that I apply. The Trotskyist League embodies the lessons of the struggles of the working class and the program to lead them to victory. Its internationalism, the work of the iSt in London and San Francisco, the defense work of the Partisan Defense Committee, the work of the trade union caucuses, the positions on the coal miners strike, Iran, Afghanistan, Chile, Poland and the very important debates on the party question. . . all confirm and support that the program and organization of the international Spartacist tendency is the nucleus of the future mass revolutionary party.

I choose communism and will fight as a member of the Trotskyist League to overthrow capitalism before it causes the barbaric destruction of humanity.

Comradely,

Brian Campbell

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### Perry G.

- 1970-73 Young Socialists; organizer, Winnipeg Branch (1971); alternate, Executive Council (1971-72)
  - 1971-73 League for Socialist Action; Revolutionary Communist Tendency (1972-73), RCT Central Committee (1972)
  - 1973-77 founding member, Revolutionary Marxist Group; Winnipeg Executive Committee (1973-74)
  - 1977 founding member, Revolutionary Workers League
- 

The following is my application for membership in the Trotskyist League of Canada. I am in complete solidarity with its program. In this application I will outline my convoluted path to the revolutionary politics of the TLC and international Spartacist tendency. It is not unique. It is the story of a leftist deflected from revolution by Pabloism and won to it by the revolutionary regroupment policy of the iSt.

I joined the Young Socialists [YS], the youth group of the League for Socialist Action [LSA], the former Canadian section of the USec [United Secretariat], in 1970. At that time the LSA was growing very quickly and recruiting a layer of youth radicalized by the Vietnam war. I was one of them. Without anything to measure it against the LSA appeared to be revolutionary. Its cadre quickly indoctrinated its new members in its reformist politics. The bureaucratic mechanism of applying those politics however quickly shook them loose. The example I experienced was the women's revolt.

The women's revolt was a feminist outburst. The LSA, in adapting to the radical feminism of

the/early 70s, used it as an ideological justification for the purge of all potential dissidents. Unbeknownst to me, I was a potential dissident.

I had become an organizer of a YS local after proving myself a loyal hack by taking part in the purging of the former organizer whose crime was to question the 100 percent regime of the local LSA honcho. It is poetic justice that my victimization was for the same reason. Fighting my victimization I came up against the stonewall of the bureaucratic regime. Confused, I compared notes with others who had experienced a similar fate.

Seeing the LSA in disarray--its membership had fallen by two-thirds in a few months--and suffering personal victimization, we began to develop political differences. We opposed feminism and nationalism. Our incipient tendency was quickly picked up by the [now defunct] centrist International Majority Tendency (IMT) of the USec, then engaged in a factional war with the SWP [Socialist Workers Party] and its junior partner, our enemy, the LSA. We split from the LSA and fused with leftward-moving elements from the NDP, forming the Revolutionary Marxist Group (RMG). The RMG was left centrist, having many correct criticisms of the LSA but without a revolutionary program of its own. Aligned with the centrist IMT, it was doomed to degenerate.

The SL, following the politics of revolutionary regroupment, confronted the RMG with its politics. Through hard polemics it was able to intersect a left tendency in the RMG, the BLT [Bolshevik-Leninist Tendency, a founding component of the TL]. Unable to deal politically with the BLT, the RMG expelled it.

At first I had been very hostile to the BLT. I fought against its positions, and strangely found myself isolated. The organization I was a member of refused to fight. A second disillusionment. Very slowly I was won to Spartacist politics: first to the program, and then to the method. By the time the BLT was expelled I was questioning, reading its publications and going back to the classics. Coming into agreement with most Spartacist positions, I retained a Pabloite methodology, and continued to try to form rotten blocs in the RMG. The fusion of the RMG and the LSA closed this avenue to me.

By 1977, the IMT, and with it the RMG, had moved far to the right. Its fusion with the LSA was the final step in this process. I did not want to take part in this return to reformism and became a supporter of the iSt, the only revolutionary group around. I was a rat abandoning a sinking ship. Becoming a supporter of the TLC was a big step forward, but I still was not ready to go all the way.

A supporter of an organization is not a member. A member of a revolutionary organization is a committed professional revolutionary, that I was not yet. Pessimistic and used to disillusionment, I was still suspicious enough to hold back. It was

only the repeated demonstration of the politics of the iSt in action, the revolutionary caucuses in the trade unions, the exemplary anti-fascist work, the building of new sections of an international democratic-centralist tendency that convinced me that the iSt put its money where its mouth was. My personal experience in Kenora, where we were able to intersect the consciousness of militant strikers, was also important. The strikers respected our newspaper. I felt proud.

What finally convinced me to apply was the impression left on me by the recent conference of the SL/U. S. I was impressed by the ability of the party to fight for the communist program against incipient rightward tendencies, something the RMG could never do. That broke me finally from the cynicism and pessimism that I acquired in the USec. A successful recovery from Pabloite burn.

I therefore decide to apply for membership. I believe in communism, and believe that I can become a Bolshevik. I want to join this Bolshevik group. We can win, the alternative is unthinkable.

So forward to the rebirth of the Fourth International, forward to the Socialist Revolution.

Perry G.

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### Miriam M.

•1979-1980 Executive, NDP Vancouver Centre  
Federal Constituency Association

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I made contact with the Trotskyist League of Canada in October 1979. I was then a member of the NDP and on the executive of the Vancouver Centre federal constituency association.

My active support of the NDP began in June 1976 when I worked in the Vancouver East by-election for Dave Barrett. I had assumed that NDP equaled socialism, and that capitalism was actually reformable. I began to question both of these assumptions during the May 1979 federal and provincial elections, in which I worked as an organizer for Ron Johnson's campaign, and was very active in the Gary Lauk and Emery Barnes provincial campaign. My criticisms centered mainly on the NDP's tailing after innumerable petty and parochial issues, special interest groups such as feminists, seniors and gays, and their opportunist "back anything if it means votes" election strategy.

I was also disturbed by the absence of any talk about nationalization (remember--I was a social democrat). Still, the possibility of proletarian revolution in North America had no reality for me. I thought that it was fine for Asian and Latin American countries, but did not apply to developed countries. I had become critical of the NDP, but was still interested enough to sit on the executive of the riding association, partly because the carrot of political education classes had been waved around

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## Poland . . .

(continued from page 11)

workers must struggle against the bureaucracy for control over production, prices, distribution and foreign trade.

The Polish Stalinist bureaucracy's economic mismanagement is today glaring. Nonetheless, the historical superiority of collectivized property and centralized economic planning, even when saddled with a parasitic bureaucracy, remains indisputable.

### Break the Imperialist Economic Stranglehold!

Early last year Poland avoided becoming the world's biggest bankrupt only by a major rescheduling of its debts. But Poland's Western bankers are, in an opposite way, just as fed up with Gierek's economic mismanagement as Poland's workers. They demanded and got the right to monitor all aspects of economic policy and to have their recommendations taken very seriously--an unprecedented step for a deformed workers state.

A key task facing the Polish proletariat is to break the imperialist economic stranglehold. What a revolutionary workers government in Poland would do is cancel the foreign debt. Well, not quite. The workers might export comrade Edward Gierek to West Germany, where he can work off his obligations in some Ruhr coal mine. A very good idea, some Polish worker might say, but will the bankers of Frankfurt write off \$20 billion with a shrug? What of imperialist retaliation, economic or military? Polish workers can counter such retaliation only by mobilizing the West European, centrally West German, working classes under the banner of a Socialist United States of Europe.

### For the Revolutionary Unity of the Polish and Russian Workers!

A hallmark for a revolutionary party in Poland is a positive orientation to the Russian working class (which incidentally pays no small share of Poland's debt to the West). And this is not simply a matter of abstract proletarian internationalism. It is a matter of life and death.

Illusions about the good will of the Western capitalist powers common in East Europe do not extend to the Soviet Union. Having lost 20 million in fighting Nazi Germany, the Soviet people understand that NATO's nuclear arsenal is targeted at them. This understanding is now heightened by Washington's open threats of a nuclear first strike. The Soviet masses also know that the imperialist powers' war against their country, hot and cold, began with the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. Russian working people see pro-Western "dissidents" like Sakharov for what they are--traitors to the socialist revolution.

If the Kremlin believes that the Soviet conscript army can be depended on to suppress any mass upheaval in Poland or Czechoslovakia, it is not simply out of mechanical discipline or Great Russian chauvinism. The Soviet people fear the transformation of East Europe into hostile, imperialist-allied states

extending NATO to their own border. The Kremlin bureaucrats exploit this legitimate fear to crush popular unrest and democratic aspirations in East Europe, as in Czechoslovakia in 1968. There were numerous reports that Soviet soldiers were shaken when on occupying Prague they encountered not a bloody fascistic counterrevolution, as they had been told, but protests by Communist workers and left-wing students.

Revolutionary Polish workers cannot hope to appeal to Soviet soldiers unless they assure them that they will defend that part of the world against imperialist attack. A Polish workers government must be a military bastion against NATO. And a proletarian political revolution in Poland must extend itself to the Soviet Union or, one way or another, it will be crushed.



Edward Gierek (right).

- For trade unions independent of bureaucratic control and based on a program of defending socialized property!
- For the strict separation of church and state!
- Fight clerical-nationalist reaction! Guard against capitalist restorationism!
- Promote the collectivization of agriculture!
- For workers control of production, prices, distribution and foreign trade!
- For proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy--For a government based on democratically elected workers councils (soviets)!
- Break the imperialist economic stranglehold--Cancel the foreign debt! Toward international socialist economic planning!
- For military defense of the USSR against imperialism! For the revolutionary unity of the Polish and Soviet working classes!
- For a Polish Trotskyist party, section of a reborn Fourth International!

(Adapted from Workers Vanguard No. 263, 5 September 1980)

# Klan . . .

(continued from page 3)

ards' body passed the motion, but the local executive amended the word "demonstration" to "campaign," explicitly counterposing it to an action. An attempt at the next Local 1 meeting to bring back the original motion failed (with 13 for and 19 against). Instead the local bureaucrats set up an "anti-Fascist" committee to ensure that no action was taken.

On September 18 Local 1 passed a motion initiated by the committee calling for a campaign to organize a demonstration against the Klan. But when a militant presented the following motion, it was killed by referring it back to the committee:

"That we organize a rally around the slogans 'Mobilize labor to stop the Klan' and 'No reliance on the bosses' courts and cops' inviting the participation of all trade unions, minority and socialist organizations; and that the demonstration be held on or about November 5 in commemoration of the first anniversary of the Greensboro massacre when 5 anti-Klan demonstrators were gunned down by Klansmen in broad daylight; and that it be held in Allan Gardens or comparable location."

It's clear there is not only sentiment in the working class against the Klan, but a real desire to do something about them and that the labor bureaucrats

choose to stand in the way.

This sentiment however doesn't seem to be shared by the fading ex-Trotskyists of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) who have printed not one article on the KKK in Socialist Voice. This isn't surprising, though, since their American sister section, the Socialist Workers Party, is notorious for defending the "right" of free speech for fascist scum. The RWL's pacifist, civil libertarian, oh-so-respectable touching concern for the democratic "rights" of the mortal enemies of the trade unions, minorities and leftists is beneath contempt.

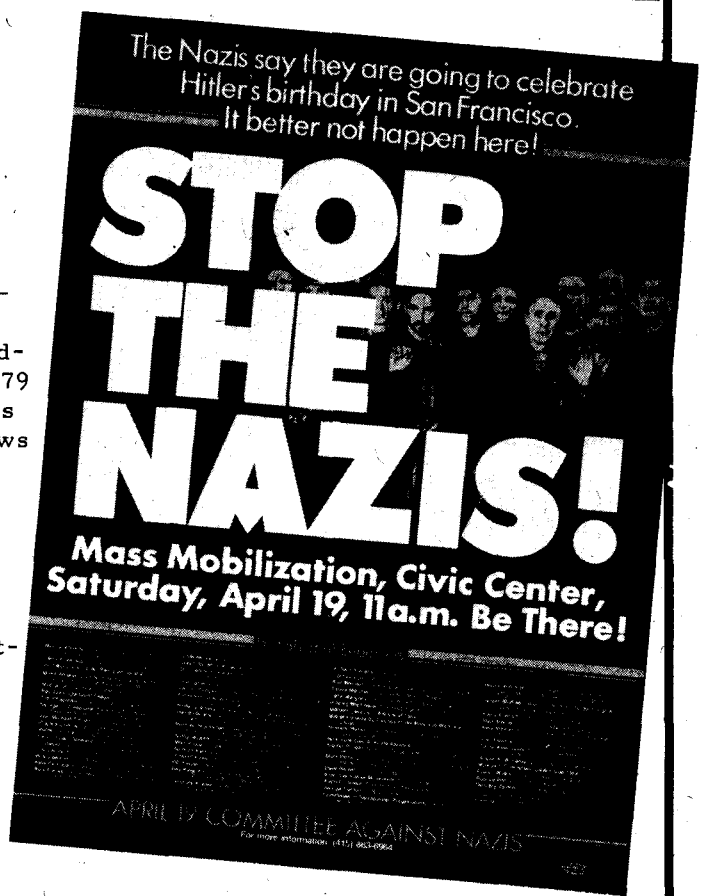
The befuddled ex-Maoist New Leftists of In Struggle! (IS!) appear to want to fight the Klan, but they are saddled, as on so many other issues, with the reformist legacy of Stalinism. In a Toronto leaflet issued on Labor Day entitled "Smash the Klan!" the IS! castigates "politicians... [for] refusing to ban such racist and violent organizations." For all their condemnations of "revisionism," the IS! sounds like nothing but a warmed-over version of the CP and left-talking NDPers.

The Detroit and ANCAN actions point the way forward for militants who want to stop the Klan. Neither crazed adventurist confrontations with the fascists and their cop protectors nor illusory and dangerous calls on the state to "Ban the Klan" can crush the fascists in the egg. For massive labor-centered mobilizations to stop the Klan! ■

## Videos: Anti-Fascist Rallies

Two video documentaries demonstrating the Trotskyist program of mobilizing labor, black and white, to smash fascist terror are now available. The first video shows the rally held in Detroit on 10 November 1979 in response to the KKK massacre of five anti-fascists in Greensboro, North Carolina and contains interviews with black auto workers and speeches from trade unionists and spokesmen from the Spartacist League which heavily built for the rally. The second film is of the demonstration organized by the April 19 Committee Against Nazis which mobilized 1,200 demonstrators in San Francisco to stop the Nazis celebrating Hitler's birthday. This Spartacist League-initiated rally reasserted that "San Francisco is a labor town," and stopped the Nazis from showing their faces that day.

Copies available from the Trotskyist League,  
Box 7198, Station A, Toronto  
53-4138



## Why We Joined . . .

(continued from page 17)

a bit. Needless to say these classes did not materialize; until the February 1980 election the executive spent most of its time planning socials. A few months of reading *Workers Vanguard* and some of the Spartacist League's pamphlets, and a class series on social democracy dealt the death-blow to the remains of my NDP loyalty. I resigned from my position on the executive in February 1980, unwilling to commit any more time to a party or candidate whose politics I no longer supported.

The TLC's positions which initially attracted me were on feminism and Iran. The first RWL intervention I attended confirmed my gut feeling that there was nothing progressive, much less revolutionary, about the takeover by the mullahs. The stonings of homosexuals and prostitutes, and the jailing of leftists--in fact, the RWL's own Iranian comrades in the HKE [Socialist Workers Party, Iranian USec section] --is dramatic evidence of this. . . . That the TLC refused to tail the rest of the left in hailing this semi-feudal theocracy and counterposed instead the perspective of proletarian revolution made sense to me.

The feminist ideology has never attracted me because, in drawing the sex line before the class line, it has no program for human liberation, much less for the liberation of oppressed and working class women. Most feminists/self-styled socialists do not recognize that capitalism, not men, is the source of women's oppression. The veil is not progressive: it is a form of oppression and imprisonment. And it was the woman question which finally provoked the Afghan rebels into action. . . .

The Spartacist League National Conference was extremely valuable for a prospective member, especially one from Vancouver, where there has been no local. The main lesson in the conference. . . : those who leave the party do have a programmatic difference which revolves around the party question, in spite of their stated agreement with Trotskyist politics. It is not possible to mobilize the working class without a Leninist vanguard party. Although I came to the conference with the intention of joining the TLC, these discussions underscored the importance of membership. My decision to join the party has not been made lightly. . . .

Comradely,  
Miriam

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## TL Conference . . .

(continued from page 14)

the resolution passed by last year's international Conference of the iSt:

"All of the sections outside of the U.S. face, to one degree or another, the problems of cohering a stable leadership collective. Such developments seldom take place by linear progression. A study of the history of how such a leadership was cohered in the SL/U.S. reveals the importance of faction fights, anti-clique fights and the necessary political struggles which accompany adapting tasks to changing conditions. . . . It was these fights and over a decade of common work that gave the SL/U.S. cadre its cohesion. Other sections should not necessarily expect the cohesion of their leaderships to come less painfully or more rapidly."

--Spartacist No. 27-28, Winter 1979-80

With the assistance and intervention of comrades from several sections of the iSt and in collaboration with the international leadership of our tendency the majority of the TL fought to go forward. They fought against those who had come to the belief that it is possible to be a Leninist without struggling to build the party, i.e., without fighting to determine and implement the party program. The spirit of the Conference was summed up in the Tasks and Perspectives document adopted unanimously:

"We have one central task: recruit! The recolonization of Vancouver, aggressive opponents' work, selected trade union and student work and the establishment of an interventionist press as the collective organizer of our work, all are directed at this goal." ■

## PSAC . . .

(continued from page 7)

especially the drivers who faced the threat of firing for their refusal to scab. According to one postal militant it has been reported that PSAC president Stewart even paid a visit to LCUC national president Robert McGarry and offered to put in writing his request that LCUC members cross the PSAC lines!

Since its inception in 1966 PSAC has been the government's "sweetheart" union. When the postal workers wildcatted in the late 1960s to win the right to strike for all government workers, the PSAC tops, acting as responsible "labor statesmen," continued to argue for compulsory arbitration and attempted to block the formation of the CUPW. Today this heritage is carried on by the PSAC leader-

ship. As an ex-local president of PSAC put it, Andy Stewart is of the same breed of pro-government sellouts as the founders of the union.

In contrast the membership has demonstrated that it has had enough of bowing and scraping before the government. Many of the strikers who admitted to having repeatedly crossed CUPW and LCUC picket lines under the encouragement of the PSAC leadership vowed never again to scab. Several old-timers on the picket lines said it was time to throw off the tradition of company unionism and stand up and fight.

The solidarity of the CUPW and LCUC with the PSAC strikers--despite the historical animosity between the unions--is an expression of the growing sentiment among postal workers for a merger into one industrial union. A motion favoring merger was passed at this year's CUPW convention, and more recently the drivers in LCUC Local 1 have been pushing for a united union.

Postal workers have begun to learn the lesson driven home by the massive defeat of the 1978 CUPW strike: a continuing series of isolated postal strikes will not beat the government. All government workers are today paying for this defeat in the continual erosion of jobs, living and working conditions. And the union leadership is simply swallowing it.

Until the PSAC walkout, 1980 had been the year of "labor peace" in the post office. Both the leadership of the LCUC and the CUPW railroaded through sellout contracts without a strike--a truce designed to pave the way for the transition of the post office into a Crown Corporation. The call for a Crown Corporation, which has been the centerpiece of the postal union bureaucrats' strategy for years, will do nothing to improve the situation for postal workers. Under a similar structure in the U.S. 100,000 jobs were eliminated over seven years and service drastically cut back.

The sentiment within the ranks for one industrial union in the post office must be translated into action! A PSAC strike is still in the cards. If the postal administrative clerks hit the bricks the LCUC and CUPW should use it as an opportunity to rip up their own rotten contracts and wage a common contract fight that would lay the basis for the merger of all the postal unions. The tight-fisted Treasury Board has refused to budge from its offer of a measly 18 percent wage increase for the federal clerks. A united struggle is the key to winning demands that answer to the needs of all postal workers: a hefty wage increase, a full cost-of-living allowance and a shorter workweek at no loss in pay. ■

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## Houdaille ...

(continued from page 24)

But United Auto Worker tops kept this sit-down strike under wraps. At a UAW area council meeting in June, International vice president and Canadian director of the UAW Bob White threatened that he would respond to the mass layoffs with sit-down strikes and was just looking for the right opportunity. A week later a dozen union officials took White at his word and climbed a fence to occupy the Windsor Bendix plant that had been shut down. The UAW leadership rammed through a settlement in six hours!

Windsor, which has borne the brunt of the mass layoffs and where the sit-down tactic could spread like wildfire to angry auto workers across the river in Detroit, just wasn't the "right opportunity." A plant occupation there would sound like Solidarity House meant business. Instead White chose the marginal Houdaille bumper production plant with its aging workforce, located in Oshawa where employment at the large GM plant has remained relatively stable.

From the start the sitdown was portrayed as a "peaceful occupation" by a loyal workforce that hadn't waged a strike in 32 years. So compelling was the plight of the workers, many of whom had put in over three decades and were to be thrown penniless onto the street, that editorialists of Toronto's Globe and Mail, one of Canada's major big business newspapers, shed crocodile tears over the plant closing. The strike demands were just and supportable, if limited. The 200 who occupied the factory were all that was left after the original workforce of 600 was systematically slashed over the past year. But the demand for jobs was never raised and the plant shutdown never challenged. UAW leaders argued like a condemned man pleading for the least painful form of execution.

The sitdown ended on August 21 with acceptance of an offer of pensions for the 30-year-and-over men when they reach 55, and a meager increase in severance pay to \$250 for every year of service (less than half what management employees will receive). The mood of the Houdaille workers, who accepted the settlement by a vote of 177 to 14, was not one of jubilation; everyone realized that although they would be getting a few dollars more, they would still be jobless.

But even the very limited gains from an isolated UAW sit-down strike is an indictment of UAW International president Doug Fraser, who has allowed a number of major auto plants to be shut down without a peep of organized resistance. Canadian UAW officials are no better--they simply tailor their betrayal to maple leaf social democracy, expressed by the reformist New Democratic Party (NDP).

Thus the NDP came out in support of the Houdaille sitdown, not to spark a powerful working-class fight to establish a workers government, but to channel workers' discontent into Canadian nationalism. NDP leader Ed Broadbent, member of Parliament from Oshawa, told Houdaille workers that he would "support them to the end of this." Broadbent's prescription, however, turned out to be the poison of protectionism as he declared, "Trudeau and [Ontario] premier Davis have a responsibility to act in the interests of Canadian workers just as the American and Japanese governments act in the interests of their workers"!

Here Broadbent is merely following in the steps of Fraser and White. The UAW tops' answer to auto layoffs is to "demand" fewer Toyotas and more millions in tax dollars for the Chrysler bosses. But, unlike the U.S. where Fraser & Co. occasionally trot out the social-democratic rhetoric of Reuther, i. e., the demand to bail out Chrysler, the UAW in Canada is a bastion of social democracy. The UAW is the backbone of the NDP in the industrial centers of southern Ontario. The call for nationalizations and government seizures are an integral part of the official union bureaucracy's rhetoric. Thus, today White appeals to the Tory provincial government to "seize the assets" of companies which close their plants without "justification." But piecemeal nationalization of marginal bankrupt plants combined with import quotas means inflation, unemployment and ultimately war. Canadian nationalism or any other kind of nationalism cannot save workers' jobs. Neither will the bureaucrats' schemes for government intervention. Even if implemented, such gimmicks would be paid for by the workers through wage controls, layoffs and speed-up. The Houdaille workers' plant occupation, in contrast, suggests a strategy for auto workers to wage a real fight for jobs.

The Forge, paper of the Workers Communist Party (WCP), wrote that "the top UAW leaders... were at first taken by surprise by the occupation... (15 August). But it was the WCP and the rest of the fake left which were "taken by surprise"-- the

### MARXIST LITERATURE

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UAW tops and the NDP had outflanked them all. In the rearguard of social democracy and the UAW bureaucracy suddenly all of the left is now talking up sit-down strikes as if they were some kind of innovative tactic, never ever considered much less used before the Houdaille occupation.

The UAW was built through sitdown strikes in the 1930s and today it is the Trotskyist League and its supporters in the UAW who have consistently fought to revive the militant traditions of the union. From Oakville to Mahwah to Detroit, UAW militants have fought for sitdowns and an industry-wide strike against mass layoffs and plant closures. This says that it is possible to fight against the boom-bust capitalist system and its never-ending cycle of speed-up and layoffs. But for that you need a new, combative leadership of the labor movement--not the belly-crawling class-collaboration of the Frasers, Broadbents and Whites but some old-fashioned get-off-your-knees class struggle.

--adapted from Workers Vanguard,  
5 September 1980

## As We Go to Press ...

At the September 21 meeting of United Auto Workers Local 707 the local passed, by a large majority, a motion opposing the "vicious new Tory anti-labor law" Bill 89. The amendment to the Labour Code which became law in June with the support of the NDP, allows scabs to vote on strikes and contracts and brings the government into the very heart of the union movement in exchange for making the dues checkoff mandatory in Ontario. NDP MPP and labor critic Bob Mackenzie attended

the Local 707 meeting in an attempt to defend the NDP's treasonous support for this union-busting bill. Despite Mackenzie's efforts the local passed the motion put forward by union militants Gary Snider and Peter Hoult upholding "the closed shop and union hiring hall as key demands" for the defense of the labor movement, condemning Bill 89 and demanding that the Ontario Federation of Labour "mobilize its ranks immediately to defeat this legislation through militant labor action...."

The Trotskyist League welcomes the position taken by Local 707 which represents a step forward in the struggle to defeat the latest attacks by the government and companies on labor. Equally important it serves notice to the NDP labor fakers that they cannot continue to keep the union-busting Tories in power without losing a section of their base.■

## Solidarity

Trotskyist League of Canada

Local 222 UAW  
45 Bond Street East  
Oshawa, Ontario

Brothers:

Fully support your occupation of Houdaille. Sit-down strikes built UAW. Your action points the way forward to fight layoffs. Victory to Houdaille occupation. For sit-down strikes against layoffs.

Trotskyist League

## UE Workers Seize Plant, Beat Company

Wagner Brake and Lighting Products' bosses wouldn't give an inch after three weeks of picketing for better severance pay by United Electrical Workers Local 513, so 20 UE members took over the Brampton plant and barricaded themselves in on September 9. Just three days later Wagner caved in, and coughed up tens of thousands of dollars for workers who were axed as part of the company's plan to transform the factory into a warehouse. For the second time in a month, the sit-down tactic had won.

But the capitalists aren't simply going to continue sitting idly by as small groups of workers occupy marginal plants. No sooner had the sit-down started at Wagner than an armed contingent of Peel Regional Police surrounded the plant, waiting for the order to charge. Phone lines into the plant were cut and the company vowed to starve the strikers out. The cops crawled over the grounds, taking photos and videotapes and searched anyone going into the factory. The dan-

gers were real--one picketer had to be hospitalized several weeks earlier after being beaten by scabs. But the occupiers, two-thirds of them women, refused to budge, and Wagner backed down.

The trade-union bureaucrats' "selective" sit-downs at single plants is an open invitation to the bosses, their courts and cops to take a handful of isolated workers by storm. The sitdowns at Houdaille and Wagner won the unions' demands, but these limited gains can at best only ease the pain of being thrown on the scrap heap. Plant occupations are the key to fighting layoffs and sparking a massive working-class mobilization against the profit-hungry, job-slashing bosses.

It took the 1937 sit-down strikes in Flint, Michigan--the heart of GM production--to establish the UAW. Today it is sit-down strikes at plants threatened with closure or hit with mass layoffs, backed by industry-wide strikes and the solidarity of the entire labor movement that is needed to launch a real fight for jobs.

## Sit-down Tactic Wins

# UAW Occupation at Houdaille



SC Photo

Class struggle not Canadian nationalism beat Houdaille bosses.

"It's ours so we took it!" This was the comment of one of 200 auto workers who occupied the Houdaille bumper plant in Oshawa, Ontario August 8 to protest the bosses' plan to shut down the plant. With the bottom dropping out of the North American car market, the company decided to cut its losses and throw workers with 18 and 37 years seniority out on the street with nothing to show for a lifetime of work but a few dollars' severance pay.

For close to two weeks the Houdaille workers revived the fighting tradition that built the United Auto Workers (UAW)--the sit-down strike. They brought in sleeping bags and bedded down in the lunchroom; a kitchen was kept running and the plant perimeter was patrolled by workers with walkie-talkies. In front of the plant there were placed placards reading "Till Hell Freezes Over," listing each day of the occupation. The sitdown grabbed front-page coverage across Canada and even made it into the Detroit News under the headline: "Unions Use 30's Ploy: A Sit-Down." Telegrams and letters of support from unions and socialists poured into the offices of UAW Local 222--even the mayor of Oshawa felt constrained

to promise the workers that their homes would not be seized if they fell behind in their taxes.

Auto workers in southern Ontario plants followed the Houdaille strike closely and stood ready to come to the sitdowners' aid if company or cops tried to get them out of the plant. The Houdaille plant, an independent parts supplier primarily to the Chrysler Corporation, is small and the demands were limited to pensions for workers with over 30 years seniority, better medical benefits and severance pay. But the Houdaille workers are casualties of the general economic crisis in auto which has thrown nearly 30,000 Canadian Big Three workers out of their jobs (in addition to half a million jobless auto and parts plant workers in the U.S.). This sit-down strike points the way forward for hundreds of thousands of UAW members facing mass layoffs and plant closings.

The call for factory occupations has been heard elsewhere in Canadian auto as well. At the Ford Oakville (Ontario) plant, where 1,400 workers lost their jobs when the company axed an entire shift this summer, union militants Gary Snider and Peter Hoult distributed a leaflet last May to a meeting of UAW Local 707 arguing:

"A plant occupation is very effective because it hits the bosses where they live--their private property which they claim gives them the 'right' to throw us out of work. The International should be organizing such militant actions in the scores of plants hit by mass layoffs and closings, fighting for our jobs and demanding unlimited unemployment benefits for laid-off workers, full recall rights and government/corporation financing of the bankrupt SUB funds. A determined battle could create jobs by winning a shorter workweek with no loss in pay."

Plant occupations and national strike action are what is needed to wage a real fight against the layoffs that have ripped through auto in the last year.

(continued on page 22)