

1917

“To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one’s program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives — these are the rules of the Fourth International.”

JOURNAL OF THE BOLSHEVIK TENDENCY

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WEST AFRICA

Smash Apartheid! Workers to Power!

South Africa’s bloody apartheid regime is staggering from a year and a half of massive upheavals by a disenfranchised black majority determined to end the white monopoly on economic and political power. The Botha regime has responded with a tiny carrot of insignificant “concessions” (intended primarily as a sop to foreign public opinion) and a very big stick. Over a thousand people, many of them children, have been brutally gunned down by the racist state in its unsuccessful attempts to quell the continuing protests.

The stakes are high for both the white rulers and the desperately oppressed black masses, but the outcome of the struggle will also have vast repercussions far beyond the borders of the apartheid state. The white supremacist regime in Pretoria is an integral component of what purports to be the “Free World.” South African capitalism

SL and the WRP Split ... pg. 14



Gold: lifeblood of South African bourgeoisie

IDAF

supplies the West with a variety of strategic minerals. It also acts as a regional imperialist gendarme and guards the vital sea-lanes to the Middle East. The prospect of unending turmoil and the discernible spectre of socialist revolution in the industrial powerhouse of Africa has compelled many of the leaders of the imperialist world to condemn the Botha regime's short-sighted refusal to act in its own best interests by "liberalizing" apartheid.

A substantial section of the South African capitalist class shares this criticism. They are frantically searching for a formula which will enable them to continue to super-exploit black labor with the political consent of significant sections of the Indian, Coloured and African populations (collectively called "blacks" by anti-apartheid activists in South Africa). But the insurmountable difficulties of "normalizing" bourgeois rule in South Africa today (i.e., of establishing a society in which the exploited and oppressed routinely vote for their own oppression as they do in most of the rest of the imperialist world) originate in the peculiar structure and development of South African capitalism.

The Roots of Apartheid

Apartheid—a system of legislated racial oppression—grew out of the requirements of British mining interests at the end of the last century. After grabbing the land of the indigenous African population (thereby destroying the basis of their pastoral, pre-capitalist economy) the colonialists consigned them to the role of migrant laborers hired only for short-term contracts and forbidden to settle in the vicinity of their jobs.

Administered by a complicated system of pass laws, these measures were designed to create a massive low-wage,

socially atomized and politically disenfranchised labor force. Cecil Rhodes, prime minister of Britain's Cape Colony in the 1890s, was quite blunt about the intent of the pass laws: "Either you have to receive them [African workers] on an equal footing as citizens or you call them a subject race. I have made up my mind that there must be class legislation, that there must be passlaws" (quoted in *Southern Africa after Soweto*, A. Callinicos, J. Rogers, 1977).

For decades apartheid proved to be an extremely profitable arrangement for South African capital. The white working class was converted into a super-privileged labor aristocracy, guaranteed a monopoly of skilled jobs and bribed by an artificially high standard of living at the expense of black labor. But the enormous expansion of the South African economy in the 1960s undermined the foundations of apartheid. White capital is today dependent on the labor of its six million black workers. The migrant labor system has become an impediment to the continued expansion of South African industry which requires a stable, skilled workforce.

This poses a profound contradiction for the South African ruling class. Historically they (and their international investors) have paid only a fraction of the labor costs of their competitors. Their rate of return on invested capital has been proportionally higher—even after deducting the military and administrative costs of running a police state. This differential represents the "secret" of the vitality and dynamism of South African capitalism. The rulers of this bestial system, who have profited from it for generations, are determined to retain their competitive advantage and are adamantly opposed to granting real equality to the black population. But they are deeply divided over how to best protect their privileged position.

Faced with the danger of losing everything, the liberal wing of the white ruling class is willing to put a few Bishop Tutus in the cabinet and get rid of the most flagrantly racist legislation. Even the ultra-reactionary Afrikaner secret society, the Broederbond, concluded in a 1982 study that "Because of the position of power that has been achieved by the Afrikaner since 1948 . . . 'legalized discrimination' is no longer necessary" (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, 12 May 1982). This is "reform" South African-style: apartheid *de facto* instead of *de jure*.

The big shareholders of the Johannesburg stock exchange are all too aware that the black population feels little commitment to the protection of the wealth accumulated by generations of apartheid slavery. Consequently, the corporate liberals are not proposing to enfranchise their victims. The most the "reformers" contemplate is some form of

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1917

Editorial Board: C. Nason, F. Riker, T. Riley

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Lenin and Krupskaya, 1919

Introducing 1917

The Necessity of Revolutionary Organization

"The whole history of the struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks is dotted with this little word 'process.' Lenin always formulated tasks and proposed corresponding methods. The Mensheviks agreed with the same 'aims' by and large, but left their realization to the historic process. There is nothing new under the sun."

—Leon Trotsky, "To Comrade Sneevliet on the IAG Conference," *Writings* (1934-35)

This is the first issue of *1917*, the political journal of the Bolshevik Tendency. We take our name from Year One of

the proletarian revolution, the year the Russian working class smashed the chain of world imperialism at its weakest link. The October Revolution was not primarily a Russian event in its significance—it was the beginning of the international struggle for power by the proletariat.

The bright promise of the early years of the revolution has been dimmed by six decades of Stalinist treachery and betrayal. Today the Kremlin is no longer the headquarters of the proletarian revolution but the domain of a national-

ist bureaucratic stratum which is a roadblock to socialism and which must be overthrown through workers political revolution. Nonetheless the lessons of the Russian Revolution retain all their significance for the revolutionary future of the working class and the defense of the social gains of 1917 remains a litmus test for demarcating authentic revolutionaries from the assorted social democrats of the "Third Camp."

We are partisans of 1917. We base ourselves on the program and strategy of the leadership of that revolution, Lenin and Trotsky. We stand on the documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International; on the struggle of the Left Opposition against the Stalinist political counterrevolution; on the founding documents of the Fourth International and the revolutionary traditions of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) led by James P. Cannon from the 1930s to the 1950s. The SWP leadership abandoned the struggle to build a Trotskyist vanguard in the early 1960s in favor of reliance on the objective process of history (personified, in the first instance, by Fidel Castro). The Revolutionary Tendency, the progenitor of the Spartacist League (SL) was born in the struggle against the liquidationist implications of the ersatz Castroism of the SWP majority. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the programmatic heritage of Trotskyism was represented by the Spartacist tendency. This tradition we claim as our own.

The founders of the Bolshevik Tendency are, for the most part, veterans of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) who were purged, along with dozens of other cadres, in the course of that organization's transformation from a Trotskyist propaganda group to a pseudo-revolutionary obedience cult. Initially organized outside the iSt as an "External Tendency," we decided that given our formal programmatic similarity it was appropriate to reapply for membership in the Spartacist tendency. We did so with the declared intent of crystallizing an opposition to the organization's accelerating political degeneration. The SL leadership (which at one point pretended to be interested in our reintegration) responded to our application with a barrage of slander and invective designed to slam the door shut once and for all. We have since succeeded in consolidating an organization which represents the continuity of the Trotskyist tradition which the SL had carried forward from the SWP two decades earlier.

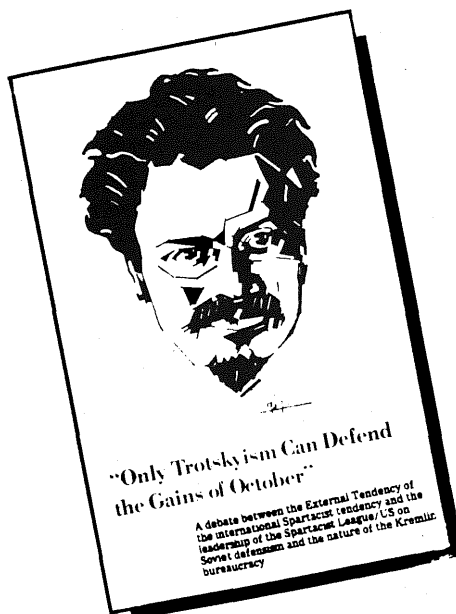
The Spartacist League can no longer be considered, in any sense, a revolutionary organization. An early indication of the SL's political break with its Trotskyist past was the leadership's decision to rip up the group's implantation in the industrial working class. It has been a wild ride since then. From apocalyptic proclamations of an incipient fascist coup in San Francisco in July 1984 to misogynist characterizations of black feminist opponents as "female doberman pinschers in heat," the SL is today one of the nuttier (and nastier) centrist outfits on the left. Theirs is a peculiar type of centrism—political banditry—in which the formal political positions of the group are subject to wild fluctuations according to the perceived exigencies of maintaining "the party" (in particular its organizational apparatus and other assets) and/or the whim of the "founder-leader," Jim Robertson. One of the articles of faith required of all those who take up residence in "Jimstown" is the paranoid delusion that virtually every other tendency on the left is involved in a gigantic web of police-sponsored

intrigue aimed at (what else?) the Spartacist League. This schema is referred to in *Workers Vanguard* as the "Big Lie Campaign" and it is used to "justify" SL exclusions and cop-baiting against its opponents on the left.

Program and Period

The current period in North America is characterized by a general rightward shift across the political spectrum and concomitant shrinking of the organized left. A wide variety of ostensibly "revolutionary" organizations, notably the once formidable Maoist currents, have simply closed up shop and gone out of business. Those which have survived, particularly among the ostensible Trotskyists, have shifted significantly to the right in search of a milieu within which to operate. This is perhaps most evident in the case of the adherents of Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat" of the Fourth International (Usec). Fifteen years ago young Mandelites were running around Paris and London waving the flag of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front and singing the praises of Ho Chi Minh. No more. In the past few years the Usec has embraced every anti-communist mass movement from Ayatollah Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution" to Lech Walsea's capitalist-restorationist Solidarnosc. The Mandelites capped their orientation to social democracy

Polemics on the Russian Question



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The "criticism of arms": St. Petersburg, 1917

with the formal adoption at their 1985 World Congress of "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" in which these illegitimate pretenders to the mantle of the Fourth International propound the "democratic socialism" of Karl Kautsky and the Second.

Revolutionists must take account of the political and social climate within which they exist. One must necessarily adapt the style of presentation to the existing level of class consciousness and experience of one's audience. But a revolutionary organization cannot adapt the *content* of its program without thereby ceasing to be revolutionary. The Marxian program represents the historic interests of the proletariat as a conscious factor in world politics—a "class for itself." As such it is necessarily counterposed to the existing, false consciousness of the class "in itself" in bourgeois society.

The Problem of Revisionism

1917 will be both partisan and polemical. A blunt knife draws no blood. To struggle for revolutionary Marxism in our time means above all to politically combat those fake-revolutionary formations which are the organizational embodiments of bourgeois ideology in the working class. The history of the Marxist movement is one of a continuing struggle against those currents, which, under the banner of "continuing," "deepening" or "extending" Marxism,

attempt to corrode (or revise) the fundamental tenets of the revolutionary program.

"Revisionism" at bottom reflects the pressure of bourgeois society upon those who seek to change it. The common denominator of all such currents is the "pragmatic" resignation to the immutability of the world as it is. The form of the political accommodation proposed varies according to circumstance but in general revisionist tendencies add little that is new—rather they tend to resuscitate schemes and impulses long discredited by the historical experience of the proletariat.

Revisionism in the Marxist movement rarely appears full-blown under its own colors. Initially, at least, it expresses itself in the terminology of Marxism. Rosa Luxemburg commented on this phenomenon in a polemic ("Reform or Revolution") written almost ninety years ago:

"To expect an opposition against scientific socialism at its very beginning, to express itself clearly, fully, and to the last consequence on the subject of its real content; to expect it to deny openly and bluntly the theoretic basis of the social democracy [i.e., the Marxist movement]—would amount to underrating the power of scientific socialism. Today he who wants to pass as a socialist and at the same time would declare war on Marxian doctrine . . . must begin . . . by seeking in Marx's own teachings the points of support for an attack on the latter, while he represents this attack as a further development of Marxian doctrine."

Careful attention to questions of program and theory



Leon Trotsky, Lenin's continuator

and the vigorous defense of the political acquisitions of the past is neither an exercise in Talmudic scholasticism, nor a form of ancestor worship, as is often imagined by the smug and cynical proponents of "non-sectarianism." What may appear to the novice or dilettante as pointless hair-splitting over minute nuances of a position often represents profound differences in political appetite with enormous implications in the future. Politics is a field in which a difference of one percent will often prove decisive.

The "Organizational Question"

From the origins of our tendency we have insisted that the organizational question is a political question of the first order for a revolutionary grouping. A revolutionary tendency need not always be correct—indeed it cannot always be correct—but it must always be correctible. Whether or not it is correctible is a function of the internal regime which prevails. This is not primarily a question of adherence to formulae but of the living reality of the internal life of the organization. James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism once observed that:

"It is perfectly possible for slick leaders to write ten constitutions guaranteeing freedom of criticism in a party and then create an atmosphere of moral terrorization whereby a young or inexperienced comrade doesn't want to open his mouth for fear he will be made a fool of, or sat on, or

accused of some political deviation he doesn't have in his mind at all."

— *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*

A vibrant and democratic internal political life in a revolutionary organization is not a desirable option but a vital necessity. It is simultaneously the only mechanism for the correction of errors by the leadership and the only framework within which revolutionary cadres can be created. Groupings like the SL of the late 1970s, in which the leadership is able to appropriate an effective monopoly of political expression internally, in the interests of "efficiency" (i.e., by short-circuiting the necessarily time-consuming and difficult process of settling political disputes through democratic internal struggle) prepare their own inevitable political degeneration.

The membership of a Leninist organization has the right to elect those individuals to positions of leadership in whom it has the most political confidence and to replace them as it sees fit. At the same time a revolutionary organization can only operate on the basis of strict centralization, with the leading bodies having full authority to determine the public political line of the organization as a whole and to direct the work of all subordinate party bodies as well as individual members. Protection of the right to dissent within the party (and particularly of the right of minorities to struggle to replace the leadership) and the political consciousness of the membership itself provide the only guarantees against the degeneration of the vanguard short of the victory of the proletarian revolution.

The Necessity of Revolutionary Organization

The revolutionary vanguard is distinguished above all by the fact that it is the bearer of the historically derived programmatic knowledge necessary to advance the struggle for workers power. This is not something which can be announced or proclaimed, it must be proven by the responses of the organization to the events of the class struggle. Centrists scoff at those who carefully check the historical record in evaluating an organization's revolutionary credentials. To them this is all so much "bookkeeping." But the best test of what an organization will do in the future is not what it promises today but rather what it did at critical junctures in the past.

The importance of a revolutionary organization in the workers movement in periods of ebb in the class struggle is primarily to serve as an ideological pole to which to recruit and train the cadres necessary to lead the inevitable struggles to come. A revolutionary vanguard cannot be improvised on the spur of the moment. It will not emerge spontaneously in the "process" of the class struggle. It must be forged in advance in political combat between revolutionary Marxism and the entire panoply of working-class misleaderships from social democrats to fake-Trotskyists. It is to this struggle that *1917* is dedicated.

"The decisive element in every situation is the force, permanently organized and pre-ordered over a long period, which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favourable (and it is favourable only to the extent to which such a force exists and is full of fighting ardour); therefore the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing this force, rendering it ever more homogeneous, compact, conscious of itself."

— Antonio Gramsci, "The Modern Prince"



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Pretoria's Praetorians

Notably absent from the coverage of the continuing upheavals in South Africa by the international "revolutionary" press is any serious consideration of exactly *how* the apartheid state apparatus, overwhelmingly drawn from the ranks of the privileged white minority, can be destroyed. This omission reflects the predisposition of most of what purports to represent Leninism in our time to leave such difficult questions up to the workings of the supposedly inexorably revolutionary "dynamic" of history.

Alex Callinicos, the foremost spokesman on southern Africa for the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), provided an example of such head-in-the-sand "Marxism" when he spoke in Toronto last October. He began by sharply criticizing the class-collaborationist schemes of the African National Congress and pointing to the necessity for workers revolution to smash apartheid. This was all very well, but in the discussion period which followed his presentation he off-handedly dismissed the proposition, put forward by a speaker for the Bolshevik Tendency, that a revolutionary party in South Africa would have to win the allegiance of at least an element of the white population to be able to defeat the South African Defense Force (SADF) in the inevitable military confrontation which would result from any attempted insurrection.

Callinicos suggested instead that the army could be split along race lines, with black soldiers turning their guns on the white officers and ranks at an opportune moment. Would that it were so easy; Callinicos, who has written several competent books on southern Africa, surely knows it is not. The reason he is not prepared to say as much is

that this unpleasant fact doesn't go down well in the radical/liberal "solidarity" milieu. The British SWP, which originated as a split from the Trotskyist movement under the pressure of the Korean War, has long been known for its willingness to tailor its politics to what it thinks will "sell."

The white rulers of apartheid have devoted enormous resources to constructing a powerful military apparatus. South Africa is one of the most militarized economies in the world, with "defense" consuming approximately one-sixth of total government expenditure. The SADF has some 84,000 men under arms, including 53,000 white conscripts. Counting reserves, the SADF can field a modern and well-equipped army of 400,000 on short notice. The SADF has been constructed for the express purpose of defending white supremacy, and its racial composition reflects this. According to one expert "The black component of the total SADF military personnel . . . appears to approach only 2 percent of the total Permanent and Citizen Forces" (K.W. Grundy, *Soldiers Without Politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces*, 1983).

By most estimates blacks make up nearly half of the police force, but they are almost entirely concentrated in the lower ranks. Black policemen have limited access to small arms (all arms are dispensed from white-controlled police stations) but heavy infantry weapons, armoured cars, riot trucks and police aircraft are accessible to whites only.

Those blacks who join the police (or the military) generally do so because of the relatively high wages. A black cop can expect to make four to eight times as much as a



Botha's hit-men

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black miner. In both the police and the military the regime carefully screens all applicants. More importantly, African, "Coloured" and Indian military personnel are traditionally assigned to support duties as drivers, guards, stretcher-bearers, cooks and storemen. One study of the South African military concluded that "non-Europeans form an infinitesimal part of the armed forces. They are given the most unattractive tasks (such as acting as trackers in territory where liberation forces are operating), but they do not have arms, nor do they operate in numbers which could in any way represent a risk to whites" (A. Eide in *The World Military Order: The Impact of Military Technology on the Third World*, 1979). In a potentially revolutionary situation the racist officer caste of the SADF is hardly likely to let black military personnel within sight of the Centurion tanks or Mirage F-1 fighter-bombers.

Paid at about half the rate of whites, frozen in the lower ranks, isolated in battalions that can be deployed far from the barricades, limited in training and access to arms, blacks in the SADF are a marginal component of the repressive apparatus of apartheid. The least that one could expect from any organization purporting to offer a Marxist strategy for the overthrow of the white laager is that it recognize reality. In the present situation—barring a massive and powerful military intervention from outside the borders of the apartheid slave state—the SADF can only be defeated with the active collaboration of at least a fragment of the white conscripts. And this can only be achieved by a revolutionary party built on a program of class struggle, in opposition to every variety of class-collaborationism and nationalism. ●

Apartheid...

(continued from page 2)

racial federalism in which the white ruling class would retain effective control. In the words of Gavin Relly, chairman of the Anglo American Corporation (South Africa's biggest conglomerate) and probably the preeminent bourgeois "reformer": "I'm not in favor of one-man, one-vote in South Africa. . . . It would be simply a formula for unadulterated chaos" (*New York Times*, 18 November 1985). Establishing a regime based on the democratic principle of "one-person, one-vote" means breaking the power of both the fanatical Afrikaners of the veld and the sophisticated liberals of the boardrooms. *Apartheid cannot be peacefully dismantled—it must be smashed!*

The willingness of sectors of the South African ruling class to conduct exploratory negotiations with the African National Congress (ANC) shows just how deeply their confidence has been shaken by the struggles of the last year and the resultant flight of foreign capital. The ANC's historic commitment to sharing power with the white ruling class, its deliberate refusal to put forward a socialist program despite the leftist verbiage of its leadership and its historic connection to the South African Communist Party (SACP), allows a section of the white bourgeoisie to consider the ANC as a possible last-ditch savior for South African capitalism. It is conceivable that the ANC could end up presiding over a South African popular front although the rabid hostility of the white laager and the pressure of the insurgent black masses—particularly the black proletariat—make such an outcome unlikely.

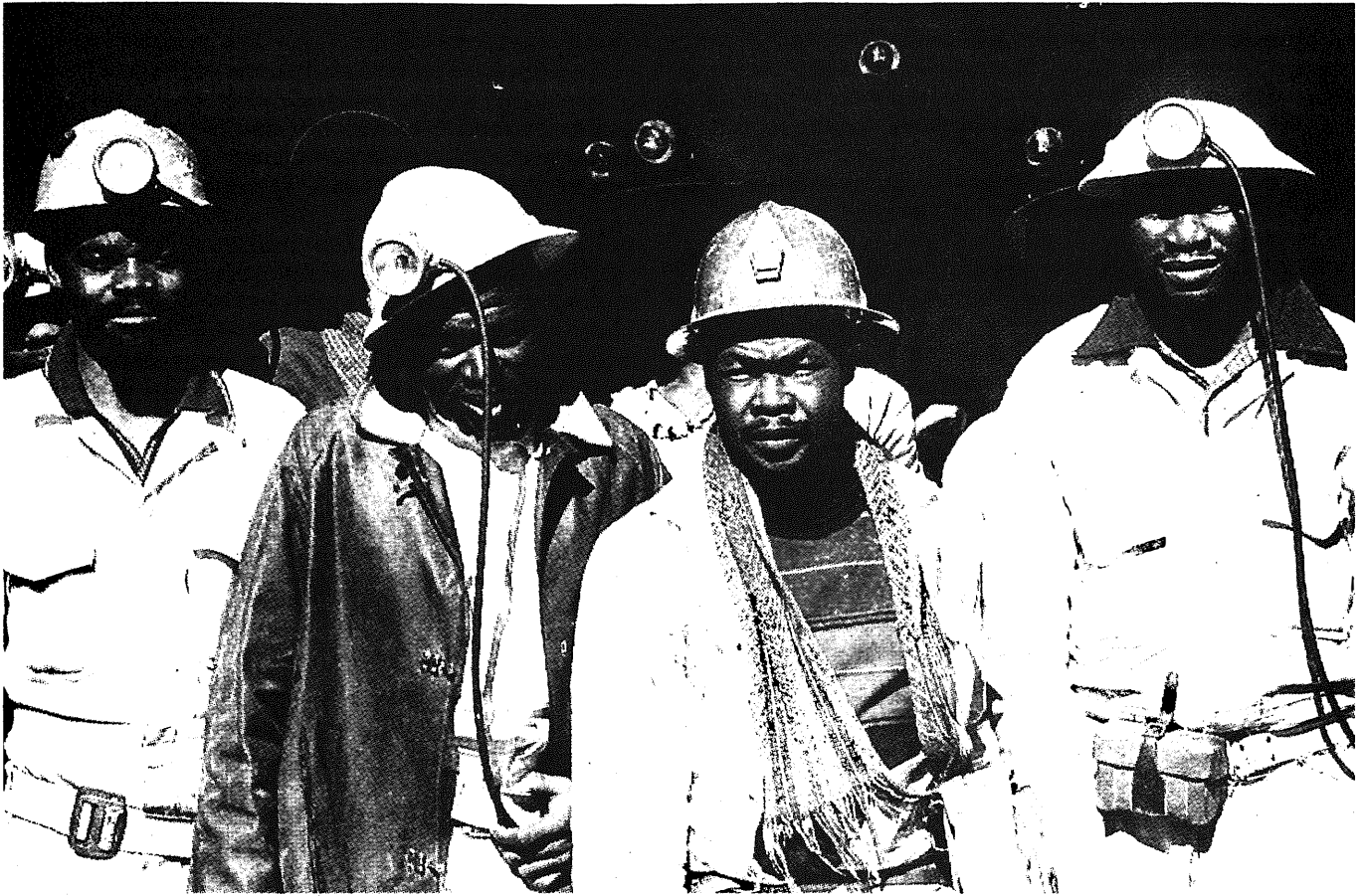
The hardliners among the white rulers are more inclined to "resolving" the current crisis by drowning the black rebellion in the blood of tens of thousands of martyrs. *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis observed on 21 October 1985 that: "President Botha and his Government have decided that it is no use trying to mollify discontent at home and criticism abroad with more talk of 'reform.' Instead they are going back to the historic strategy: beating the blacks into submission."

Pretoria's officer corps consists largely of Afrikaner fanatics who actually believe their insane Christian/masterrace ideology, and who are quite prepared to carry out a genocidal "scorched earth" policy in the black townships. Given the virtual monopoly of the means of violence in the hands of the state, the black population would currently be unable to effectively resist. There are enormous overheads associated with such a "resolution" for South African capitalism, but it remains an option for Botha.

Black Workers Revolution—The Only Road

South African capitalism provides a powerful vindication of Leon Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution: in the modern era the capitalist class has no historically progressive role to play anywhere on the planet, and the most elementary tasks of the bourgeois revolution can only be solved by the proletariat as part of its struggle for social emancipation. Racial exploitation is inextricably fused with the entire structure of South African capitalism.

The current struggle to end apartheid verges on civil war, which the more far-sighted South African capitalists



Black gold miners, apartheid's gravediggers

JORDAN/GAMMA-LIAISON

seek desperately to avert. In the 20th century such a conflict inevitably poses the question of which class shall rule—the question of “*amandla*” (power).

There are six million black workers in South Africa, and 700,000 of them are organized in independent black unions. This is where the social power to overturn apartheid lies—in the black proletariat on which the entire South African economy depends. Black workers wrested the right to unionize and to strike from a government which formerly banned black unions. While facing murderous repression these unions continue to grow and to lead economic and political strikes of tens of thousands of workers. The black proletariat has both the social weight and cohesion to organize production and run society on the basis of democratic workers councils. When black toilers rise against their exploiters, it must not be to put Tutu or any of the other pro-capitalist black “moderates” in the saddle, and not for a “Zimbabwean solution,” but rather to break the chains of apartheid once and for all by establishing their own class rule.

What's Wrong with the Divestment Strategy

In South Africa those seeking a multi-class alliance to pressure for “reformed” apartheid clash inevitably with those who instinctively recognize that racial oppression can only be ended by uprooting the entire social system which produces it. The anti-apartheid movement abroad mirrors the same division. Those who attempt to pressure

the banks, the corporations and the universities to divest their South African holdings appeal to the “morality” of an immoral social stratum—the big capitalists—which enriches itself from the blood-money sweated out of the victims of apartheid. The divestment strategy obscures the key question of class interest.

It is virtually impossible to seal off any particular sector of the international capitalist economy from the rest. For instance, if a university divests its stocks in all companies with South African holdings and refuses to deal with banks with outstanding loans to South Africa, it will still have its money in banks or trust funds which make loans and buy shares in Ford, Kodak, IBM, Johnson & Johnson or any of the hundreds of other multinationals which *do* have South African operations.

The divestment strategy appeals to students and others who see themselves as having little direct power to affect social change because it appears to present a means of actually doing something against apartheid. We respect the subjective impulses of the thousands of students at Berkeley, Columbia and dozens of other campuses who engaged in militant protests last spring in an attempt to force their universities to divest South African holdings. We joined the demonstrations at Berkeley despite our criticisms of divestment because the mass pickets effectively posed a referendum on apartheid.

Liberal politicians and union bureaucrats push divestment as a cheap way to refurbish their credentials as “progressives.” It obligates them to nothing. The divest-

ment demand reinforces the notion that those who seek to end apartheid can find friends in the corporate boardrooms and among Botha's imperialist allies. This is why it is promoted by every reformist "socialist" outfit from the Communist Party to Workers World—because it fits their strategy of class collaboration.

The bourgeoisie meanwhile has been divesting on its own terms, in response to the power of the black masses. The continuing wave of rebellion, the emergence of the black labor movement as a potential contender for power and the extent to which young militants have succeeded in making the "locations" ungovernable have led to a massive outflow of capital in recent months and to a reluctance by the international financial community to extend further short-term credits. This "divestment" is governed by the same laws as the earlier investment—it occurs because "the average return on foreign investment in South Africa has slid from 20% at the start of the decade to 5% today" (*Business Week*, 23 September 1985). Divestment is a strategy which can't work in the long run because it ignores one of the fundamental laws of the international capital market—money abhors a (profitable) vacuum. Whenever there is money to be made by investing in South Africa, the capital will be forthcoming.

For Labor Strikes Against Apartheid Terror!

The corporations and the coupon-clippers have a vested interest in the restablization of the rule of the apartheid exploiters. The international labor movement has exactly the *opposite* interest. It is urgently necessary that class-conscious trade unionists around the world take up the defense of their embattled brothers and sisters in South Africa through militant labor actions against apartheid.

In the fall of 1984 Howard Keylor, a longshore militant in San Francisco and a supporter of the Bolshevik Tendency, put this class-struggle perspective into action. He put up a motion (which passed in an amended form) that his union boycott the next ship arriving in San Francisco with South African cargo aboard. For ten days, beginning on 24 November 1984, hundreds of San Francisco longshoremen defied the companies and their arbitrators and refused to touch the blood-stained cargo aboard the *Nedlloyd Kimberley*, despite the highly ambivalent attitude of the local union bureaucrats.

This bold action electrified anti-apartheid activists throughout the Bay Area. Hundreds of people turned out at the pier in support. A wide variety of black organizations, community groups and even several black Democratic Party congressmen endorsed the boycott. Most of the Bay Area left and labor movement (with the significant exception of the Spartacist League, which tried to wreck the action out of petty organizational sectarianism) applauded the initiative of the militant dockers. On the eleventh day the waterfront bosses, armed with a federal injunction and backed by the San Francisco cops, finally got the South African cargo unloaded. In this they were aided by the union bureaucrats who voted to knuckle under without a fight. Still, the S.F. longshoremen's strike against apartheid stands as a tremendous example of the possibility of effective working-class solidarity with the oppressed black masses of Botha's racist state.

In recent months workers in Britain and Australia have also taken limited labor actions against apartheid. Such actions are important not only because of the material damage which they inflict, but also because they represent the *class answer* to the terror of the "free world" racists and their international allies. The outlawed South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which is controlled by the ANC, has called for an international labor boycott of South African goods. Workers in all unions affected by the SACTU call should fight to implement such an embargo. Students should seek to forge links with militants in these unions by trying to address union meetings, leafletting plant gates, etc. International labor solidarity can strike a powerful blow against the apartheid regime. The strategy of militant class struggle is starkly counterposed to the reformist approach of appealing to the "conscience" of Botha's friends in the *Fortune* 500.

The "White Question"

A key strategic question black workers in South Africa confront in their struggle for power is the "white question." In North America "white supremacy" is primarily a form of false consciousness with which the master class deludes white workers into imagining that the racist oppression of blacks is somehow in their interests. In South Africa however, the white population as a whole has substantially benefitted from over a century of white supremacy in a direct material fashion. Whites are the object of considerable generalized hatred by the oppressed black masses. Nonetheless a revolutionary leadership of black workers would seek to ensure that the social polarization which must accompany the struggle for power occurs as much as possible along *class* lines—not racial or national ones.

A workers state in South Africa must necessarily be blackcentered but it must also be non-racialist, with a place for all regardless of color. This is not only in keeping with the Marxist precept of opposition to notions of the "collec-

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Contact the Bolshevik Tendency

P.O. Box 31796
Oakland CA, 94604, USA
(415) 562-3308

P.O. Box 14158,
Cleveland OH, 44114, USA

P.O. Box 332,
Adelaide St. Station,
Toronto Ont., Canada
(416) 533-4255



MAWU strikers, Howick Township

NATAL WITNESS

South African Menshevism

In every capitalist society on the planet the Moscow-loyal Communist parties parrot the same line: “now is not the time for socialism, first we need unity with the progressive capitalists.” South Africa is no exception. This class-collaborationist theory of a “two-stage” road to socialism is borrowed directly from the arsenal of Menshevism. In Russia in 1917 the Mensheviks argued that the working class was too small and isolated to take power into its own hands, and regarded the October Revolution as a colossal blunder. Here the Stalinists have a small difference with their Menshevik teachers. As bogus claimants to the mantle of October—in reality Stalinism is the product of the bureaucratic strangulation of Lenin’s Bolshevik Party—they feel they have to exempt the Russian Revolution from their otherwise universal formula.

Bolshevism was distinguished from Menshevism in 1917 by its dynamic and internationalist conception of the possibilities of social revolution. The Bolsheviks did not believe that workers power had to await the magic moment when the flaccid Russian bourgeoisie had accumulated sufficient capital to employ 51 percent of the population as wage slaves. The fact that in Russia in 1917 the proletariat made up less than 10 percent of the population was, for Lenin, no reason to support the rule of the “enlightened” capitalists.

The Bolsheviks saw the seizure of power by the Russian workers as an opportunity to break the chain of imperialism at its weakest link and thereby give impetus to the international socialist revolution.

The South African Communist Party (SACP)’s calls for a two-stage revolution in P.W. Botha’s apartheid slave state can only be termed a grotesque caricature of the Menshevik strategy of alliance with (i.e., subordination to) the bourgeoisie. The Stalinists admit that it will be necessary to destroy the entire state machinery of white rule: the army, the police, the judiciary, etc. (Of course this doesn’t mean that the SACP and their allies in the African National Congress [ANC] may not go for some kind of partial franchise/coalition government sell-out in the future. It only means they consider that to come out for anything less than the total destruction of the apartheid state at this point would be to commit political suicide.)

The black working class in South Africa constitutes an absolute majority of the population. The Asian, Colored and African bourgeois and upper petty-bourgeois strata are an insignificant minority with neither real economic nor social power. The black petty bourgeoisie has demonstrated that in the main it is willing to follow the lead of the new independent unions in the struggle against the hated regime.

The SACP admits that the preconditions exist in South Africa for the construction of a collectivized economy. An article which appeared in the *African Communist*, the SACP's theoretical organ, observed that "There is no doubting that the material prerequisites for socialism exist in South Africa: a certain level of industrialisation, socio-economic contradictions and the force to carry out the revolution (the working class)" [reprinted in *International Viewpoint*, 30 September 1985].

Yet these South African Mensheviks insist that the central political task of the moment is to begin "consolidating the unity of all classes, strata and national groups among the oppressed Black majority." For Stalinists, "consolidating" a bloc between the black toilers and their would-be bosses means limiting the anti-apartheid struggle to a program which guarantees the "non-monopoly" sectors of the bourgeoisie a rosy future for exploitation. The ANC's Freedom Charter (which the SACP fulsomely endorses) is just such a program.

It would be naive to imagine that the "Freedom Charter" is a ruse for duping the gullible capitalists. The Stalinists have proven time and again their willingness to betray the interests of the workers on the altar of "all-class unity." In the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s; in France, Italy and Greece after the Second World War; in Indonesia in 1965; in Chile in 1973 and in other instances too numerous to mention, the Stalinist strategy of subordinating the workers to their class enemy has spelled disaster for those who have followed it. To use Trotsky's analogy, the popular front is a "bloc" between the capitalists and the workers in the same sense that a horseman is a "bloc" between a horse and a rider. In the SACP's "first stage" revolution the workers are expected to run all the risks and do all the bleeding while their would-be masters stand by, waiting to reap the rewards.

But there are indications that a Zimbabwe-style "first stage" is not so appealing to a significant layer of the more politically sophisticated black trade unionists. Moses Mayekiso, secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union in the Transvaal, expressed this sentiment in a recent interview:

"The [ANC's] Charter is a capitalist document. We need a workers' charter that will say clearly who will control the farms, presently owned by the capitalists, who will control the factories, the mines and so on. There must be a change of the whole society.

"Through the shop steward councils people are opposed to this idea that there will be two stages towards liberation: that we must clean up capitalism first, then socialism. It's a waste of time, a waste of energy and a waste of people's blood.

"Apartheid is just an appendage, a branch of the whole thing—the tree of oppression of capitalism. Then if you chop the branch the tree will still grow. You have to chop the stem, straight, once and for all. South Africa's economy is at an advanced stage, where the workers can take over and direct the whole thing."

—*Socialist Worker Review*, October 1985

The decisive contribution of Lenin to the victory of the Russian workers in 1917 was his adamant refusal to offer any political support to the popular front (i.e., multi-class) Kerensky government, the government of the "democratic revolution" of the Russian bourgeoisie. In this sense the South African revolution is indeed a revolution which, in the words of *Newsweek* correspondents Robert Cullen and Ray Wilkinson, "awaits its Lenin." ●

Apartheid...

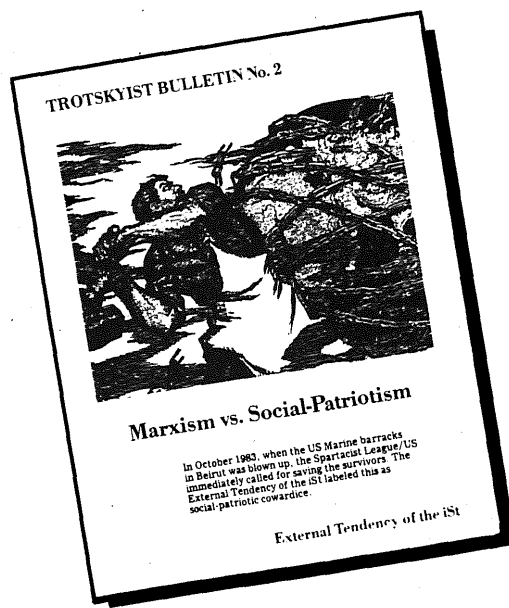
(continued from page 10)

tive guilt" of any people (including oppressor peoples), but it is also important for the future development of a South African workers state, as the white population represents a potentially valuable reservoir of technical capacity which must be utilized to the maximum in the construction of a collectivized economy. A revolutionary party must seek to demonstrate to the privileged white working class that a black-centered workers government would not seek to deprive them of their lives, the chance to earn a decent living nor even their right to participate in the political life of the country.

At this point it would be virtually impossible for the black workers to militarily defeat the forces of the apartheid state without first winning a fraction of active collaborators among the whites and politically neutralizing a larger section of that population. Otherwise the overwhelming technical/military superiority of the white minority will guarantee their capacity to inflict devastating losses on the insurgent blacks.

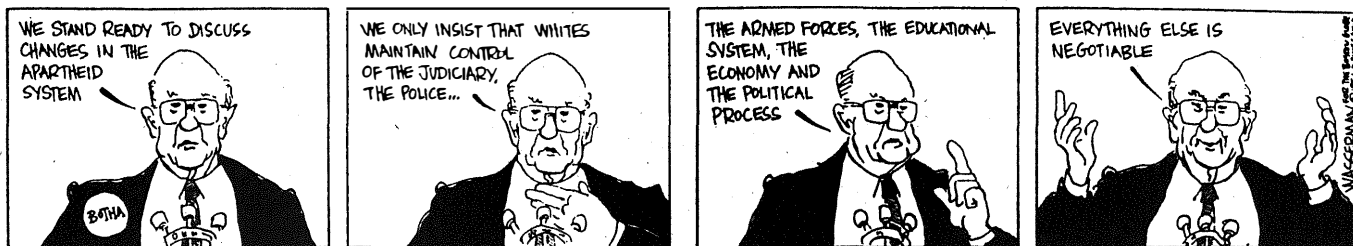
Historically there has been an element of serious anti-racist fighters among South African whites, from the cadres of the South African Communist Party to Neil Aggett, a white organizer for a black union who was brutally mur-

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dered by Botha's cops in 1982. As militant opposition to apartheid has increased, there are indications of growing resistance among young whites to Botha's strategy of repression. According to the "End Conscription Campaign," draft-dodging was up from 3,000 to 7,500 in 1985 (*Observer News Service*, 18 July 1985). While still a small minority, this sentiment represents something of potentially great strategic importance for the future. The demonstrations of white South African college students opposed to apartheid also suggests that there are opportunities for a serious revolutionary leadership to recruit a layer of whites willing to throw in their lot with the black workers.

As there are whites opposed to apartheid, so there are black collaborators. A number of black police and informers have recently received their just desserts at the hands of angry crowds. In addition, the murderous attacks launched by the Zulu tribalist Inkatha thugs of Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of the KwaZulu bantustan, on funeral processions of the United Democratic Front (UDF) as well as on Indians in Durban last August, underlines the necessity of a class, rather than a national, racial or tribal axis to the struggle against apartheid. One's politics, even in South Africa, cannot be automatically deduced from the color of one's skin.

The "Russian Question" and South Africa

The Soviet Union occupies an ambiguous position in the South African struggle. It is the number one target of international capitalism and the "free world" apartheid state is fanatically anti-communist. Over the years the Soviet Union has been the main supplier of arms to the ANC's guerrillas. In November 1975 Soviet-supported Cuban troops aided the Angolans in smashing a CIA/South African armored column driving towards Luanda in a bid to overthrow the MPLA "People's Republic." That defeat for the vaunted apartheid military is widely regarded as an important factor in sparking the black rebellion which broke out in Soweto seven months later.

The Soviet Union has degenerated a long way from its early years under Lenin and Trotsky when it promoted revolution around the world. The bureaucracy which came to power with Stalin is primarily concerned with maintaining its own privileged status through "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. As a degenerated workers state, the USSR has no intrinsic need to exploit Africa through the export of capital, but the ruling bureaucrats still play power politics in accordance with their narrow nationalist interests. Thus they turn support to leftist movements and national liberation struggles on and off at will.

Many of the radical black youth and rebellious workers

in Botha's racist hell-hole spontaneously identify with the banned SACP and defiantly hold high the flag of the USSR at funeral processions. Unfortunately this identification is tragically misplaced. The SACP and the ANC (in which the former has considerable influence) seek a partnership with the tiny black capitalist stratum and the "progressive" wing of the white bourgeoisie to institute a "democratic" capitalist South Africa. In keeping with this reformist perspective, the ANC, operating through the UDF, welcomed Teddy Kennedy's visit in January 1985, seeing this cynical imperialist politician as an ally in the struggle.

The ANC's more militant competitor, the avowedly socialist Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), spearheaded a series of protests against Kennedy's trip, which it labelled a "CIA-sponsored whitewash." Pointing out that Kennedy's visit was entirely paid for by the U.S. government, AZAPO concluded: "So much for differences between Reaganism and the Democratic Party" (*Frank Talk*, No.6). Yet AZAPO's black-nationalist ideology (what it calls a "race-class analysis") means that it generally refrains from criticizing black misleaders from Democrat Jesse Jackson to Gatsha Buthelezi. *Frank Talk* also defends anti-Semitic black demagogue Louis Farrakhan and openly identifies with "revolutionary" African bonapartists like Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Egypt's Gamal Nasser. At the same time, AZAPO, as a matter of principle, refuses to admit whites, regardless of their beliefs and activities. Clearly its "race-class analysis" is heavily weighted toward "race."

For South African Trotskyism!

Today in South Africa there are literally millions of heroic militants who are willing to lay down their lives in the struggle to smash apartheid. This is a necessary precondition for victory—but it is not sufficient. The key to success lies in the "conscious factor"—a revolutionary leadership capable of utilizing the myriad contradictions of this profoundly sick society to bring apartheid crashing to the ground, thereby breaking one of the key links in the chain of imperialist oppression and opening the road to social liberation for all the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa.

It is urgently necessary to assemble a nucleus of militants who have assimilated the painfully acquired experience of the international proletariat in its century-and-a-half struggle for liberation. A revolutionary party of the South African masses must be modelled on the only working class organization ever to successfully shatter the rule of the capitalists—the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. There is no other road. ●

—adapted from a Bolshevik Tendency leaflet, October 1985

“I Liked Gerry Healy...”

The Robertson School of Party Building



Healyite “stewards” bar the door at first post-split “public” meeting, November 1985

NEWSLINE (Banda)

The dust is just beginning to settle after the biggest (and dirtiest) explosion in recent memory among the international pretenders to Trotskyism: the spectacular rupture of the British Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP). Gerry Healy, “founder-leader” of the WRP, and Michael Banda, his long-time majordomo, had a rather nasty public falling out late last October. Banda got the bulk of the membership, the real estate and the printing plant; Healy kept the Redgraves (movie stars Vanessa and brother Corin) and

with them what’s left of the WRP’s main “industrial” fraction—in Actor’s Equity. They even split the satellites; the Americans opted for the mutineers, while the Greeks and Spaniards stayed on with the infallible leader.

The whole business began last July when Banda and Aileen Jennings, Healy’s personal secretary and “close personal companion,” initiated a palace coup with allegations that Healy’s sexual activities with 26 female party members represented a potential security risk for the organiza-



Michael Banda

DAILY MAIL



Gerry Healy

DAILY MAIL

tion. (This in itself is richly ironic as Healy has been for years one of the world's foremost practitioners of a bogus "security" fetishism as a means for smearing his political opponents.) Healy reportedly acquiesced and proffered his resignation from the group's active leadership, officially on the grounds of his long service and failing health.

He spent the first few weeks of his "retirement" lining up a majority of the WRP's Political Committee for a counter-attack. Banda appealed to the Central Committee (where he apparently still had a secure majority) and immediately expelled Healy. He followed this up by publishing a lurid account of Healy's allegedly abusive sexual exploits, and other bureaucratic misdeeds, in *Newsline*, the WRP's ex-daily. Healy's supporters regrouped and soon came out with their own *Newsline* which announced Banda's expulsion from Healy's WRP. As the polemic heated up both sides accused the other of "revisionism" and traded accusations of "subjective idealism," "pragmatism" and various other epithets from the lexicon of obscurantist pseudo-dialectics which have long been a WRP speciality. But there was really only one issue: who was to rule the roost at the WRP's Clapham headquarters.

Banda's spectacular revelations of Healy's sexual malfeasance received considerable play from Fleet Street and seems to have sparked interest in the goings-on in the WRP among many who don't normally pay much attention to such things. Sales of *Newsline* are reported to have tripled during the height of the mud-slinging. More surprisingly, a WRP candidate for president of the powerful Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers polled a whopping 15,000 votes during the week the scandal broke. Brian Behan, brother of the Irish author Brendan, and a former leading member of Healy's outfit who left in the early 1960s, wryly asked "What healthy Englishman would not want to join Healy's party, given its open attitude to promiscuity? I have been trying to contact him all week" (*Sunday Times*, 10 November 1985).

The WRP split can only be a good thing for the revolu-

tionary movement in Britain and everywhere else the Healyites operate. Banda's widely-publicized admission of that organization's long-standing practice of physical attacks on its critics, both internal and external, and its prostitution on behalf of Libya's Muammar el Qaddafi and various other reactionary Middle East bonapartists can only hasten the necessary and long-overdue disappearance of both wings of this foul and repulsive gang of cynics.

Healyism Sui Generis

The deep split in the Healyites has naturally been commented on by most of the world's ostensible Trotskyist tendencies. But none have paid so much attention as the American-based Spartacist League (SL) which rushed out a special 64-page issue of their English-language theoretical journal devoted to the subject. There are several reasons for this attention. The Spartacist grouping originated in the early 1960s as the left opposition within the rightward-moving Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., and looked to Healy's Socialist Labour League (SLL— forerunner of the WRP) as its international leadership. Healy early on (in 1962) gave his American supporters a taste of his "hard" organizational tactics when he split the tendency over the majority's refusal to perjure themselves at his command. Four years later, at the infamous "London Conference," the SL and the Healyites finally parted ways when SL leader James Robertson refused once again to submit to Healy's outrageously bureaucratic notions of "discipline" in his international.

So that is part of the reason that the SL has shown such intense interest in the wreck of the Healyites. But there is another, more compelling, reason for Robertson to treat the split in the WRP leadership so extensively. And that is to try to establish as much distance as possible between his style of political leadership and that of his one-time mentor. A wide spectrum of former cadres of Robertson's group

have remarked that the template of the abominable organizational practices attributed to the WRP in the pages of *Spartacist* fits the SL itself rather closely.

The Healy organization has long been infamous for its maintenance of "discipline" internally by means of beating up critics and opponents. This is something which the SL is not guilty of to our knowledge. We do note however that inside that organization intimations of such appetites are increasingly common. In a letter written after his resignation a former member of Robertson's British satellite noted the tendency to view opponents as class enemies:

"According to your National Treasurer [two former members] have 'gone over to the bourgeoisie.' Is this the position of the organisation? It would seem so. I believe your latest paranoid delusion consists of a 'quitters clique' hell-bent on the destruction of the SL/B [Spartacist League/Britain]. The idea that people disillusioned with the SL/B treadmill are active enemies of the organisation and therefore, by sleight-of-hand sectarian logic, agents of the bourgeoisie is both ludicrous and dangerous. Perhaps you could explain why Len told [a former member] to remember what the Provos do to 'people like him.' Or why Ed felt moved to tell [another member] that 'if we were in [another country] we would beat you up.' Off-the-cuff remarks in the heat of the moment? Maybe. But then all measures are in principle permissible against the class enemy, are they not? And what is meant concretely by 'going over to the bourgeoisie'?"

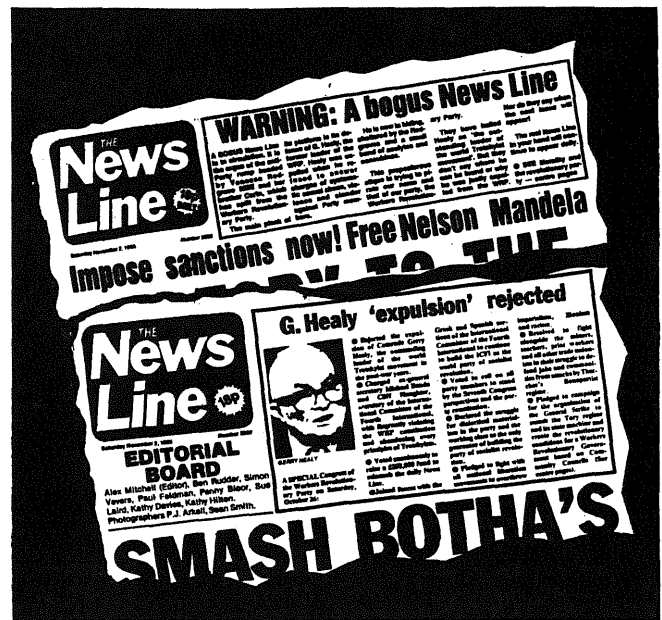
If the members, ex-members or leftist opponents of the SL are in fact "racists," "fascists," "Nazi-lovers," "scabs" and/or "COINTELPRO [FBI-type]" provocateurs (slanders which the SL has been hurling with increasing frequency against its perceived enemies, including ourselves, in recent years) then the question of what measures are permissible in doing battle with them is indeed only a "tactical question."

The SL came into existence as a separate and distinct grouping from the Healyites largely in *opposition* to the corrupt tactics of the SLL leadership. It has subsequently undergone a long evolution back to many of the very techniques which it once abjured. Today the SL stands as a qualitatively identical formation to the SLL of the late 1960s. It is worth noting that the SL's "discovery" that its ranks were riddled with racists, fascists and individuals with sinister connections to the police has been made only fairly recently. This is one of the decisive proofs of the SL leadership's final descent into political gangsterism.

Internal Life in the SL and WRP

One of the superficial distinctions which can be made between the SL and the Healyites is the function of the *luder maximo*. Whereas Healy has been prominently featured in the literature and public activity of the WRP for years, Robertson's status as the SL's idiosyncratic guru is mostly for internal consumption. Nonetheless the fundamentals of the "party question" have been the same in both groups for years. In both organizations all authority derives from the paramount leader, and devotion to the caliph is the most important political question.

Robertson refined and improved on Healy's techniques for suppressing internal dissent. In the SL it has been 18 years since the last faction fight. Joseph Seymour, Robertson's "above-the-battle intellectual," undertook in 1978 to offer a "Marxist" explanation for this peculiar phenomenon.



Rival News Lines

According to Seymour, the arid factional life inside the SL "is conditioned by the absence of objective circumstances which required major changes or breakthroughs in political line or unanticipated organizational turns . . ." It is now almost eight years since this was written and still nothing in the real world has had enough impact to produce any internal dissent in the SL. Just as Healy attempted to break Robertson in London in 1966, anyone who is thought capable of developing into a factional opponent in the SL is broken and/or otherwise disposed of long *before* they come up with any differences.

Unlike the Spartacist League, Healy's group has had a continuing series of political oppositions, some of which have at least been allowed to go through the motions of submitting documents and offering counterposed reports at party conferences. In 1971 the Blick-Jenkins grouping exited into the Labour Party when their international co-thinkers—Healy's erstwhile partners in the Organisation Communiste Internationale—broke relations with the SLL. (In the 6 December 1985 issue of the *New Statesman* Robin Blick recounted how he "was punched and had his head banged against a wall" on that occasion.) In 1974 Allan Thornett led more than a hundred people out of the WRP to found the centrist Workers Socialist League. Five years later a small factional opposition, led by Royston Bull, a former staff writer for *Newsline*, left the WRP. Bull, by his own account, had managed to survive for some four years as an occasional oppositionist before finally deciding to jump ship.

Bull's description of the internal regime of the WRP bears a striking resemblance to the SL today:

"a marked failing of the WRP is its inability to build up a stable and growing cadre of workers or youth to lead any section of the mass movement.

"The endless categorical instructionalism from the leadership creates inflexible doctrinaires who are unable to sense or react to changes in the mass movement. Since the mainspring of a WRP cadre's existence is his reliance on the centre for instructions, the very impulse that gives a

revolutionary cadre life, his dialectical party practice in the workers movement, involving making decisions on his own, correcting mistakes, leading struggles etc., is totally absent. This lifeless bureaucratic relationship between the party and its cadres strangles any chance of real growth and recruitment among workers and youth."

—“The Workers Party and the struggle to re-establish Bolshevik traditions,” October 1981

A former Spartacist, not presently associated with the Bolshevik Tendency, made some remarkably similar observations about life in Robertson's group:

“It is not accidental that the whole . . . membership is permeated by fear (of the leadership) and exhibits massive political confusion. The state of the membership reflects the rampant paranoia of the leadership. Unable to lay down any concrete perspective . . . the leadership increasingly turns its energies towards the ‘internal sorting out process’ . . .

“The membership is kept in a state of forcible ignorance. Deprived of education, formal or informal, run off its feet on an overloaded schedule (in large part servicing the cumbersome administration of the organization) the members are exhorted to accept the paper program of the SL (whether they understand it or not) or face denunciation. Do you realize . . . that virtually nobody discusses politics outside the formal meetings? Are you aware that much of the membership don't even read a daily paper let alone the [ostensibly revolutionary opponent] press?”

In a speech reprinted in the November 1985 issue of *Young Spartacus*, SL spokesman Ed Clarkson chastises the members of the Spartacus Youth League (the SL's youth group) for “insecurity based on ignorance.” Clarkson marvels at the fact that “what we tend to get in struggles in the youth are confessionals and denunciations, as opposed to clarifying fights.” Well, as they say in the computer biz: “garbage in, garbage out.”

Clarkson proceeds to lecture the youth that:

“If you're to develop in the way Lenin proposes, it requires on the level of the individual some capacity for self-assertion, which used to be the hallmark of youth, but which seems to have strangely disappeared in the past decade or so. That means you're supposed to act like you think you know what you're doing. In fact to be even rather arrogant in that regard, and maybe we'll have some good fights then.”

But the youth have seen too many “good fights” SL-style to want to be on the receiving end of one. The reason that the internal life of the Spartacus Youth League is one of “confessionals and denunciations” is because that is all they have learned. These days “fights” in Robertson's group are conducted along the lines of Chinese Red Guard “criticism/self-criticism” sessions—leadership initiated denunciations followed by confessions.

“Servile Hacks Devoid of Revolutionary Capacity”

The *Spartacist* account of the internal life of the WRP notes that it too consists chiefly of “confessionals and denunciations”:

“There was the systematic destruction of cadres: abusing them and then holding them up to scorn as weaklings, breaking down their self-respect by extorting false confessions, using their loyalty to the professed ideals of socialism to make them complicit in crimes against their comrades and the comrades of other groups.”

The Healyites have no monopoly on such techniques for destroying the moral fibre of cadres. Here is an eye-

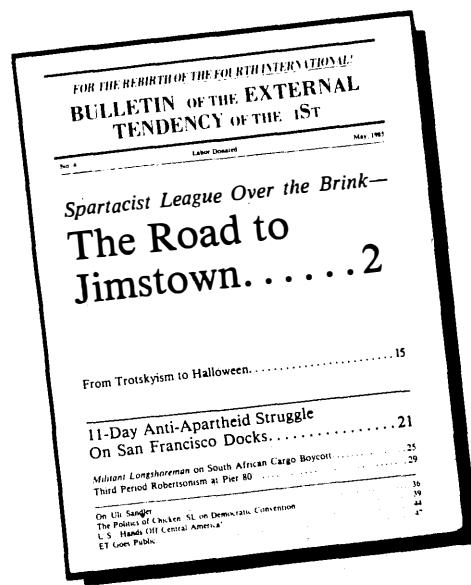
witness account of a typical bit of “party-building” in Robertson's British affiliate in the fall of 1982:

“ . . . the SL/B, according to the international leadership, ‘was in pretty good shape.’ This characterisation held good right up to the August 1982 national educational. Then a few weeks later all hell let loose. The SL/B leadership it turned out was guilty of racism. From a healthy section to racism in a few weeks—this should make even the most dull-witted observer a little suspicious!

“ . . . An enormous international delegation was flown in to ‘find out’ what was going on in Britain. . . . The power structure is to be broken, a new and very different CC is to be elected. Except that the old leadership is left intact with the addition of a few of the more abusive elements from the lower ranks. And David [the former leader] is reduced to an emotional wreck. I don't think I will ever forget the IEC [International Executive Committee] meeting that preceded the plenum. David got up to speak on the round. He stood at the front a pathetic figure, his movements strangely mechanical as he desperately tried to get a few words out of his mouth. The eerie silence was only broken by the sound of several leading IEC members swapping jokes and guffawing. When the laughter had subsided and all attention was focused on David, unable to speak he burst into tears and ran back towards his seat. As he passed down the aisle someone shouted out ‘write us a letter.’ ‘David . . . is in very poor emotional shape’ pronounced Jim Robertson. No doubt indifference to such events is the hallmark of a real SL/B ‘Bolshevik’ . . . Preservation of cadre, don't make me laugh.”

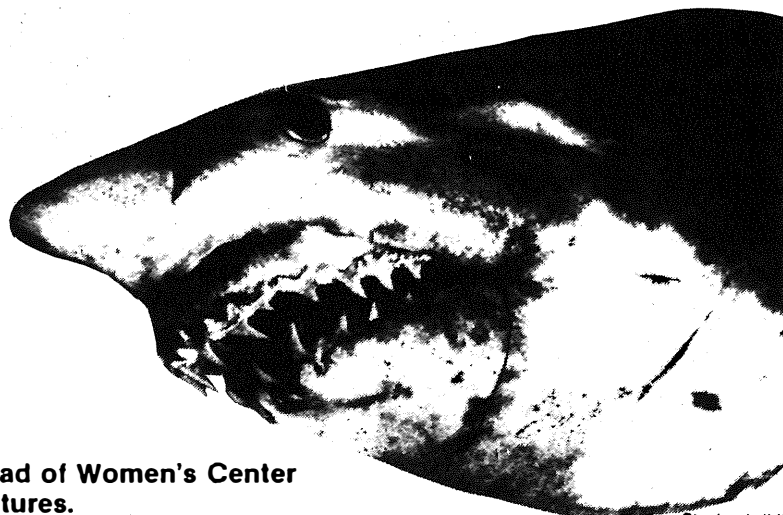
The international leadership has conducted similar “fights” in most of the rest of the nominally independent

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Young Spartacus

Judy Moore

Question: Which end of a female great white shark is the business end? Answer: It depends whether you're a horny male great white shark or a militant feminist skindiver.

Spartacist League's disgusting misogynist attack on black feminist, November 1984

sections of the international organization. This doesn't prevent *Spartacist* from waxing indignant over the bureaucratic centralism which prevailed in Healy's "international," nor from drawing the abstractly correct lessons from the history of the Comintern:

"The importance of the right of national sections, within the framework of a unitary international program, to make their own tactical decisions and select their own leaderships is demonstrated by the degeneration of the Communist International under Stalin, reducing national leaderships to incompetent, Kremlin-servile hacks devoid of revolutionary capacity."

The validity of this observation is demonstrated in the case of the iSt by the New York-centric activity of the dozen or so stagnating foreign locals of the SL/US (aka the "international Spartacist tendency"). Perhaps the most striking example of this occurred in Britain during the weeks of the Falklands/Malvinas conflict with Argentina in 1983, when the SL/B busied itself building a forum to discuss the situation in the New York transit union! When a former member suggested that the forum should be postponed in favor of one dealing with the imperialist military adventure going on in the South Atlantic, he was told that to do so would be "parochial"

Zig zags and Lurches

One distinguishing feature of the Healyite political bandits is their capacity for abrupt and disjointed political lurches. This pattern has become characteristic of the SL as well. In 1981, for example, after launching a recruitment drive on three bottom-line programmatic points (one of which was that "picket lines mean don't cross"), the SL leadership announced that the group's "internal" position on the life-and-death struggle between the American air traffic controllers (PATCO) and the Reagan administration was "fly, fly, fly." Those who objected to this policy

were hounded out of the group in short order. Flying during the strike became a means of demonstrating "loyalty to the party" and many comrades even booked flights for trips which they would ordinarily have made by car.

In July 1984 the SL's "uniquely correct" leadership announced the danger of an imminent fascist/Reaganite coup d'etat aimed at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco—and volunteered to send a dozen defense guards to prevent it! Ten months later, after winning an out-of-court settlement on the FBI's description of the Spartacist League, *Workers Vanguard* announced that all SL members would forthwith be issued with signed membership cards indicating the date they joined. Hardly an appropriate policy for a period in which the suppression of bourgeois democracy is an immediate danger.

A few months later Robertson had his cadres dress up in witches' hats, pigs' faces and Nazi regalia and run around a San Francisco campus as "Xandra's Red Avengers" to block a supposed plot by campus student council bureaucrats (and the FBI). All such turns are inevitably greeted in the Spartacist organization with a show of unanimous enthusiasm by those who wish to remain in the group. The membership has come to accept that social reality is whatever Robertson says it is.

Arbitrary and erratic pronouncements are characteristic of charismatic cults, including political ones. In an article in the 17 June 1983 issue of the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, Roy Wallis observed that in an attempt to forestall threats "to their free and untrammelled authority" *liders maximos* of various sorts frequently introduce:

"unpredictable changes and demands [on their followers]. These may take various forms—frequent change of environment, removing ties to stable external sources of support; undermining stable ties between pairs and groups within the movement, for example by breaking down exclusive sexual ties between members; undermining relation-



WORKERS PRESS

Dancing girls provide entertainment at launching of WRP, November 1973

ships of authority (*other* than those directly with the charismatic leader) which might compete for the loyalty of followers; introduction of new beliefs and practices which provide an opportunity for followers to display their commitment, or lack of it, to whatever issues from the leader's mouth. . . .

"The 'half-hearted' can be provoked into declaring themselves by constantly imposing new demands leading either to protest and exclusion for disloyalty, or to defection. Such periodic disruptions of routine produce among members who survive the change a sense of liberation, of new freedom, a sense of excitement and thus often of renewed enthusiasm and zeal, and, most important, of enhanced commitment to the leader. . . .

"The process thus tends to become self-reinforcing, leading towards and opening up ever darker recesses of the leader's *id*, releasing ever deeper primal desires, as the constraints upon their indulgence are removed. Undermining institutional structures and patterns not only constitutes change and eliminates the constraints upon further change, it also creates ambiguities and conflicts of policy and practice which leave the members without clear guidelines to action. Only by constantly watching the leader, subordinating themselves totally to his inspiration of the moment and being willing to humble themselves for their failure to follow that inspiration closely enough, can they remain among the favoured."

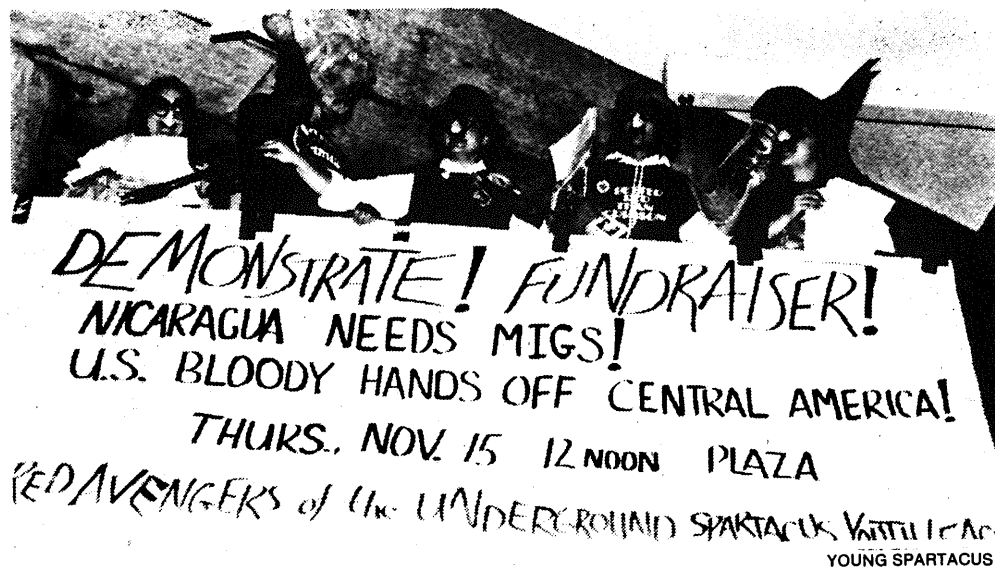
Sexual Abuse and Sexual Manipulation

Sex is always a good way to sell papers and the British gutter press has had a field day with the "Reds in bed" angle to the WRP split. "Randy Red Supremo Grabbed My Wife" and "Our Sex Nightmares By Red Gerry Girls" were typical of the headlines in the tabloid press. The fact that 73-year-old Healy had sex with 26 (or for that matter

260) female WRPer would in itself be no crime, Banda's prurient caterwauling about "revolutionary morality" notwithstanding. One British journalist pointed out that even if Healy had twice as many partners as Banda asserts, this would have been "little more than two a year, which for Casanova would be a quiet night in," *Sunday Times*, 10 November 1985). Banda's decision to go to the bourgeois press with his salacious tales of Healy's sex-life, which the *Times* characterized as "a highly unusual breach of Trotskyist etiquette" (2 November 1985) suggests that the "new" WRP stands firmly in the squalid tradition of the old. More importantly the Banda WRP seems to have kept its charges deliberately vague—combining revolting puritanical denunciation of Healy's alleged marital infidelities ("systematic debauchery") with allegations of coercion and "sexual assault." Banda's claim that "he had known Mr. Healy for 35 years but had only recently found out about the alleged misconduct" (*Times*, 30 October 1985) has to be taken with a rather large grain of salt.

The question of the consensual sexual activities of members of any organization is not *per se* a political question, but a private matter between the individuals involved. Nonetheless, as Sean Matgamna pointed out in his piece on the WRP split in *Socialist Organiser* (reprinted in *Workers Vanguard*, 15 November 1985), "It is as certain as anything is that in that organisation [the WRP] sexual exploitation, and where necessary harassment, intimidation, or worse, would be part of the great leader's way of life."

For those who live in a micro-social milieu in which it is impossible to disagree with the infallible leader without risking excommunication, where reality can only be interpreted by reference to his "uniquely correct" pronounce-



Spartacist League/
Spartacus Youth League
as "Red Avengers"--
November 1984

One of the questions touched on in the dispute in the WRP was money. In the case of the Healyites it centrally involves the totally corrupt practice of "hiring on" as publicists for various Middle East dictators, a practice which took the WRP out of the workers movement years ago. Matgama cites reports in the bourgeois press "that militants from Iraq who came to the WRP school were later turned over to the Iraqi regime, which killed them. Banda is quoted as saying that the motive was to get 'bags of money.'"

There is another angle to the financial question as it relates to the Healy regime besides where the money came from. That is, who spent how much for what and to whom they were accountable. The London *Times* reported on 30 October 1985 that "Mr. Banda's supporters . . . were yesterday said to be guilty of precipitating a financial crisis in the party by fabricating the accounts." Banda is alleged to have charged that Healy kept a 20,000 pound slush fund and to have purchased a 15,000 pound BMW for himself out of WRP money. The *Spartacist* article observes that "Our own experience also demonstrates that Healy has always been fixated on money." Et tu, J.R.?

The money question in a highly bureaucratized organization is inevitably a particularly sensitive one. The leadership jealously guards its monopoly on the purse strings and is usually extremely adverse to any suggestion that it render an accounting to the ranks. Anyone naive or impertinent enough to ask either Healy or Robertson to see the books would quickly learn that a) it is impossible for reasons of "security," and b) such a question implies a lack of trust in the leadership, i.e., an "anti-party attitude" (which is usually terminal).

In the special interview with Robertson on the 1966 London Conference one of his toady interlocutors asks "When did you develop the slogan, 'However Healy does it, do the opposite'?" This is indeed a bitter joke for those who have experienced first hand "anti-Healyism" SL-style. Robertson responds with a fulsome advertisement for his wonderfully compassionate regime. He contrasts the Healyite technique of doubling the workload on exhausted comrades with his own approach in such a situation: "Well, comrades, take some vacations now. Go and skin dive, or go to Portugal,

or do something. Pay as much of your own way as you can, and perhaps the party treasury can assist you."

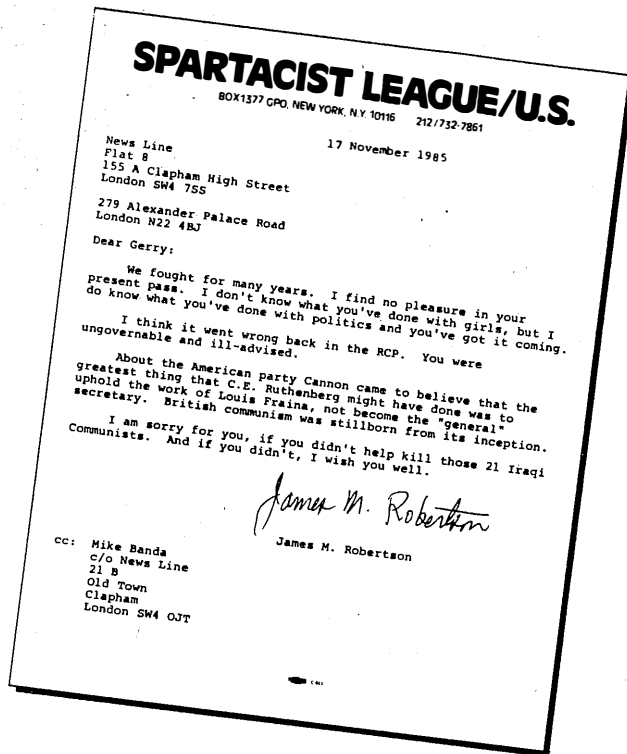
With the SL's extortionate pledge schedule most SL members can barely afford to run a car and keep clothes on their backs, let alone go on vacations. For those who, in the eyes of the leadership, are "doing well," it is a different matter. They may indeed get a holiday in Portugal courtesy of the party treasury. Robertson at last report kept a personal five-figure slush fund for just such contingencies. He has occasionally been known to dip into the party treasury to purchase expensive presents for his female friends.

Those who are "doing well" often get taken out to dinner. Some top leaders (like Robertson) even get expensive Manhattan lofts built for them with party funds and party labor. Comrades who can't afford to attend party functions or mobilizations are sometimes encouraged to take out loans. Those who are smiled on by the leadership can later have these written off. Others pay cash.

The SL's financial structure is designed to reduce the entire membership to penury. This generates substantial revenues for the party treasury and also tends to reinforce the membership's social dependence on the organization. Those on party payroll are doubly dependent on staying in the good graces of the leadership; punishment for running afoul of "the party" (i.e., J.R.) can range from a cut in their already paltry salary to being fired on the spot.

SL/WRP: The Regime Question as a Political Question

One of the new political points introduced in the *Spartacist* special on the WRP is an attempt to account for the fact that the degeneration of the SLL from "orthodox Trotskyism" to political banditry was first evidenced in its bureaucratic internal practices. This is a point of considerable importance to the SL leadership which has maintained as an article of faith the following neat syllogistic "defense" of its own internally bureaucratic practices: a) the superstructure or regime of a political organization is derived from its political program, and therefore b) a group with a revolutionary program cannot by definition be bureaucratic. According to the SL tops the regime question is



"Dear Gerry..."

not an independent "political" question and anyone who raises organizational criticisms without having a fully counterposed "political" program is an unprincipled Abernite wrecker.

Yet there was always a disparity between this position and the conclusions which the SL drew from its experience with Healy at the 1966 London Conference: "the Healy-Banda machine subordinates real political issues of agreement and disagreement to the exigencies of organizational issues and personal prestige politics. That organizational tendency is itself a political issue of the first order" (*Spartacist*, June-July 1966).

The SL leadership attempts to resolve this contradiction in its special issue on the Healyites with the brazen assertion that the Healy organization was never a revolutionary grouping—although for ten years it was the foremost international exponent of authentic Trotskyism.

Robertson announces rather flippantly in his interview in *Spartacist*: "insofar as I encountered the Healy organization, there was nothing top to bottom that I found appetizing, in accordance with my understanding of a communist organization. And the Healyites did indeed march to a different drummer." Later Robertson offers his personal assessment of the SLL's *lider maximo*: "Let's be clear: I liked Gerry Healy, I got on very well with him, we saw eye to eye on all kinds of questions, gossip, nuances, tactics, like a couple of fairly hard-bitten communists who'd been through some mills."

Apparently Robertson *still* likes Gerry Healy. In his 17 November 1985 letter of condolence to "Gerry," Robertson asserts: "I find no pleasure in your present pass. . . . I am sorry for you, if you didn't help kill those 21 Iraqi Communists. And if you didn't, I wish you well." Robertson's

affection for Healy is rooted in the professional identification of one caudillo with another—after all they were both in the same business, even if "Gerry" did overdo it a bit now and again. Unlike Robertson we certainly don't wish Healy well whether or not the murder of the Iraqi leftists should also be "credited" to his account. It's hard to imagine that the victims of what the *Spartacist* article refers to elsewhere as "hideous physical violence against members and of concrete, bloody crimes against the international working class" do so either.

Spartacist begs the question of how the Healyites went from a group which could produce the 1961 "World Prospect for Socialism" (a document which Robertson in his interview describes as "the clearest and most pristine expression of the program of international Trotskyism that we've seen in a long time") to a political bandit cult. The explanation which is offered is hardly convincing:

"We were put off track by their literary side for several years because of Healy's success in winning over significant sections of the trade-union and educational apparatus of the British CP to an ostensibly Trotskyist position. They wrote very powerfully. And it took a little while for Gerry to work through that and use it up, and to create some kind of nasty, shabby, deepening and evolving cult."

How was it that Healy was able to win over several hundred sophisticated Communist Party cadres to "ostensible" Trotskyism? And how were these "ostensible" Trotskyists able to produce "perhaps the best restatement of the Trotskyist purpose in English since the death of Trotsky" (SL preface to the second edition of "What is Revolutionary Leadership?", 1970)? If it was all a fraud and a facade from the beginning then why did it take a while to "work through" them and "create" a cult?

The answer is that the program of a revolutionary organization is the *totality* of its practice in the world—not just its formal written propaganda. This necessarily includes the internal organizational mechanism which shapes the group's response to developments in the class struggle, i.e., the "regime question."

The characterization of the Spartacist League circa 1982 which we made in our founding declaration could be applied with equal validity to the Healyites of the mid-1960s. It too was "an organization with a deep contradiction between a coherent, rational, Marxist world-view and program and an increasingly abusive (and irrational) internal regime. And the process through which this contradiction [would] be resolved [was] incomplete." In neither the SL of the early 1980s nor the Healyites two decades earlier was the group's internal regime an automatic product of its formally correct program. In both cases it was in *contradiction* to the organization's declared politics.

As we noted in "The Road to Jimstown" in the final issue of the *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iSt* (No. 4): "Bureaucratism is *ultimately* counterposed to the revolutionary program and must eventually express itself politically. But formal programmatic departures need not necessarily *precede* bureaucratic degeneration." Today the SL has departed systematically and repeatedly from the Trotskyist orthodoxy which it once upheld, just as Healy did in the late 1960s. "Hailing" the pro-Vietnamese Cambodian Stalinists as "Real Communists"; "fly, fly, fly"-ing throughout the PATCO strike; slandering opponents and critics as "Nazi-lovers" and police agents; calling for saving the colo-

nial gendarmes of U.S. imperialism—these and other departures from Trotskyism, all of which occurred without significant internal resistance, were first prepared by the atrophy of internal democracy in the group and the consequent loss of capacity for correction through internal political struggle.

What Robertson et al seek to deny with their assertion that Healy's was *never* a revolutionary group is the living connection between the "regime question" and the paper program which an organization purports to represent. But the history of the SL—just as that of the SLL/WRP before it—proves just the opposite.

Like the WRP, the SL's:

"... posture of 'Trotskyism,' utterly fraudulent though it is, is not without meaning for many members. And [Robertson]'s organization has frequently done a competent job in exposing the reformist scum and centrist confusionists who people the [international] left; hence, the [SL] is widely

seen as the 'hard Trotskyists,' the alternative to class-collaborationist betrayal."

But the Spartacist tendency today is only the latest in a long line of once-revolutionary organizations which, under the pressures of isolation and failure, were transformed into something entirely different than what they originated as. Like the Healy group from which it broke some twenty years ago, the SL stands as an example that the degeneration of small revolutionary propaganda groups can sometimes take a strange and unpredictable course. Just as the SL carried forward the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, despite Healy's attempted wrecking job at the 1966 London Conference, so today the Bolshevik Tendency intends to ensure that the continuity of authentic Trotskyism, including the contributions of the Robertson group, survives that organization's transformation into a political bandit obedience cult.●

SL's Cop-Baiting Celebrity

'Powerful Testimony' ..to the Police

Last summer in the aftermath of the brutal incineration of eleven black people in a MOVE commune in Philadelphia, the Spartacist League (SL) sponsored a forum in New York featuring two relatives of the victims. One of the featured speakers, LaVerne Sims, used the opportunity to quote from the deranged rantings of MOVE's founder, John Africa. The New York local of the SL sat attentively in their chairs as Sims quoted John Africa to the effect that "Guilt is the agent of plague to this system, and the section is you all's tools to get around you all's disasters."

In its capacity as convenor of a memorial meeting for the MOVE victims the SL thought it impolitic to differ with its guests. Accordingly SL speakers confined their remarks to denouncing the authors of the hideous massacre on Osage Avenue and advocating the struggle for socialism via construction of a mass-based Spartacist League.

The convivial atmosphere was spoiled by a representative of the small Shachtmanite League for a Revolutionary Party (LRP) who raised a few (mainly erroneous) political criticisms of the SL. He also suggested that the SL was opportunistically covering up its differences with MOVE. Spartacist spokesman Ed Kartsen indignantly replied that the SL had in fact "openly and freely" discussed its differences with MOVE—in private.

LaVerne Sims responded to the LRP intervention in her summary with a vicious cop-baiting smear:

"... we were taught by John Africa that when a person gets up in those demonstrations and they're saying something different than what we're saying, that oftentimes they are plants. And they are planted there to cause dissension among the people who are trying to do what is right. To the [LRP] gentleman up there, you know, I can recognize the signs when I see them. . . . I really would like to know why you are here. More to the point, we had a MOVE brother, so-called, who was in the MOVE organization, calling himself our brother, who turned informant against John Africa. So we already know about people and what

they will and won't do."

— *Workers Vanguard (WV)*, 26 July 1985

After the meeting, by *WV*'s own account, the LRPer "incredibly came back in demanding that we uphold his purported honor as a socialist" against Sims' attack. "He wanted us to have to escort him out, which we did" the SL concluded smugly. The LRPer in question is a long-time leftist well known to the SL. He is what the Spartacist League used to designate as an "honest revisionist." The fact that *WV* finds it "incredible" that he expected the SL to have the decency to disavow Sims' cop-baiting (and even brags about ejecting him from the premises) should tell an unprejudiced observer plenty about the brand of "Trotskyism" being retailed from the headquarters on Warren Street these days.

In an obvious attempt to deflect mounting criticism of his role in the grisly terror-bombing last May, Philadelphia's black mayor Wilson Goode set up a commission to "investigate" it. LaVerne Sims was among those who testified on the third day of the hearings. The 11 October *New York Times* reported that:

"In a July 1984 meeting with Mayor Goode, Mrs. Sims said she 'begged and pleaded' that he order the police to take MOVE members and their children into custody while they were on the street.

"'I saw that as a solution to wither down the force,' said Mrs. Sims. . . ."

WV covered the follow-up to the Philadelphia massacre and even reported on "the powerful testimony of Louise James and her sister LaVerne Sims" at Goode's hearings (1 November 1985). Curiously there was no mention of Sims' "powerful" pleas to have the cops round up MOVE members. Maybe the *WV* ed board missed the *Times* that day. Or perhaps this too is something which the SL thinks is best raised privately. We suspect that John Africa would have been more forthright.●

Nicaragua...

(continued from page 32)

was halved in the first year. Government health care programs cut infant mortality by 40 percent, virtually eliminated polio and vastly reduced the incidence of measles, malaria and other contagious diseases. A massive educational drive reduced illiteracy from over 50 to 12 percent. Per capita food consumption rose substantially in the early years of the revolution. (It has since declined somewhat as a result of the war with the contras and the consequent fall in real wages, but it remains considerably higher than it was under Somoza.) The urban masses benefited from a 50 percent rent reduction as well as subsidized food, transportation, medical care and education.

The FSLN's Agrarian Reform

One of the slogans which the FSLN used to mobilize the rural masses for the insurrection was "Land to Whoever Works It." In a number of cases the FSLN's Farm Workers Association (ATC) organized land seizures. But once in power the Sandinistas hesitated to antagonize the big landowners for fear that they would cease planting and thereby endanger the foreign exchange dollars earned by coffee, cotton and sugar exports. The large farms depended on the availability of cheap agricultural labor and "the fear that, once people could make a decent living from their own land, they would no longer seek wage labor in the export harvests, helped slow the pace of the land reform" (Joseph Collins, *What Difference Could a Revolution Make?*, 1985). Thus the government began to use the ATC to actively discourage further takeovers.

The FSLN initiated a program of easy credit which the agricultural capitalists responded to by massive decapitalization. Money borrowed for seed, farm equipment, etc. was used to buy dollars on the black market which were then deposited in Miami banks for safekeeping. Many owners with heavy equipment simply drove it across the border into Costa Rica or Honduras and sold it. Nicaraguan beef herds also began to "disappear" as Honduran beef exports suddenly increased by 20 percent.

The agricultural workers, seasonal laborers and peasants sounded the alarm. The ATC led a march of 30,000 campesinos on Managua in February 1980 demanding that "not one single inch of land be returned." They also demanded a crackdown on landowners who refused to produce, pay the minimum wage or abide by the recently legislated improvements in working conditions. This mobilization coincided with a series of demonstrations and plant occupations by factory workers pressing similar demands. Under massive pressure, the Sandinistas announced an agrarian policy the next month which guaranteed, for the first time, that land already seized (mostly in the course of the revolution) would remain in the public domain. But at the same time the FSLN pledged to actively discourage any further expropriations of "productive" landowners.

The Sandinista Agrarian Reform Law of 1981 is extremely conservative. "Virtually unique among land reforms, it places no ceiling on land ownership and emphatically reiterates the state's guarantee to protect the right to private property" (ibid). It explicitly forbids land seizures by work-

ers and peasants. As of July 1984 twenty government employees were doing time in jail for "abusive confiscations" among other things.

With the stepping up of contra attacks and the consequent food shortages the FSLN accelerated the previously sluggish pace of land redistribution. "In the *three* weeks leading up to the revolution's fifth anniversary [July 1984], as many families received property titles as in the first two years of the land reform" (ibid). In all, some 20 percent of the country's farmland has been titled over to some 60,000 beneficiaries either as individual family owners or through co-ops. But the recent redistributions have been conducted in a craven and deliberately non-revolutionary fashion. The FSLN has mostly been parceling out state-owned land, much of it from the holdings of Somoza. These were among the most highly mechanized and most productive farms in the country. Breaking up these lands, rather than making further inroads on the holdings of the big agrarian capitalists, is *counterposed* to the interests of the workers and poor peasants.

Nicaragua and the Permanent Revolution

The impasse which the Nicaraguan revolution finds itself in today stands as a negative confirmation of Leon Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution, i.e., that even purely democratic questions, like breaking up semi-feudal land ownership, cannot be solved short of the conquest of power by the working class. The notion that socialist revolution would be "premature," and that it is therefore necessary to locate a "patriotic" section of the bourgeoisie to ally with, is as fallacious in Nicaragua as it was in Allende's Chile, Chiang's China or Kerensky's Russia. The Nicaraguan capitalist class is intimately bound up with the landowners and thus opposes the classical bourgeois-democratic solution to the agrarian question ("land to the tiller") and opts for U.S. dominance and contra terror.

The FSLN took power convinced that with a monopoly of arms it could control the bourgeoisie. Jaime Wheelock, a former leader of the FSLN's Proletarian Tendency (which in the late 1970s had opposed the majority's popular-frontist strategy in favor of an independent working class orientation), explained the "strategy" to exiled Chilean journalist Marta Harnecker in 1983:

"Here what has to be posed theoretically is whether it is possible that the bourgeoisie simply produce, without power, that they limit themselves as a class to a productive role. That is, that they limit themselves to exploiting their means of production and use these means of production to live, not as instruments of power, of imposition.

"I think it is possible in Nicaragua."

—*Nicaragua: The Sandinista Peoples Revolution*, 1985

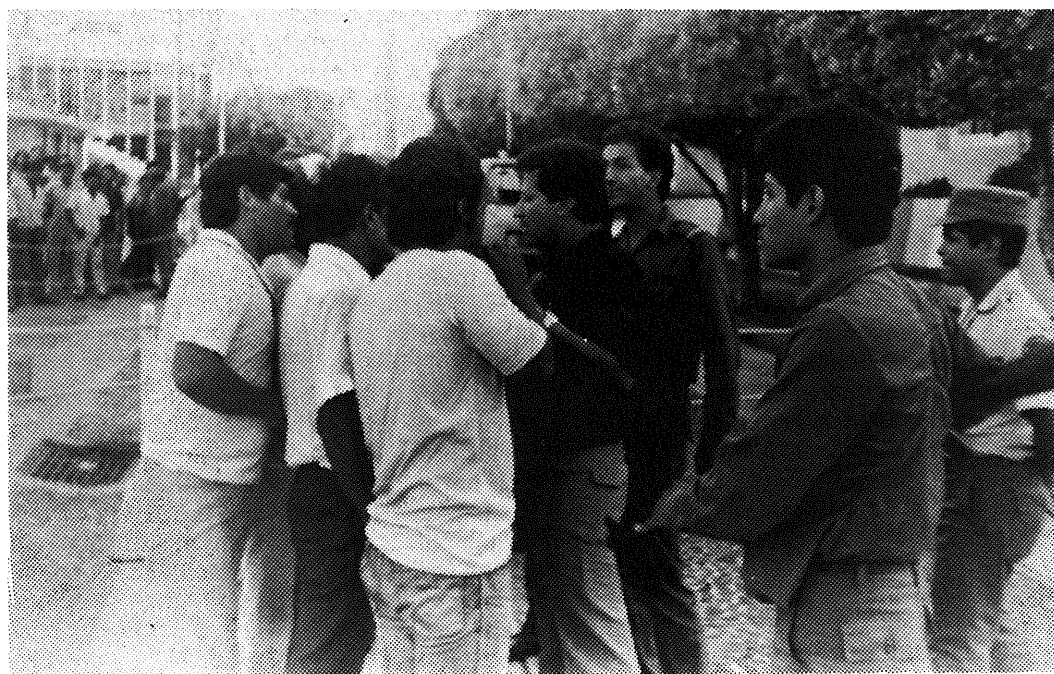
Events have proved that it is not.

Tomas Borge took a rather different tack in his 1982 May Day address:

"... in Nicaragua, the power of imperialism and of the bourgeoisie has been decapitated..."

"There are some workers who believe that the main enemy of the working class is the bourgeoisie. But the bourgeoisie as a class has been mortally wounded in this country, and the dying have never been dangerous enemies. The main enemy of the working class is the division of the working class."

—ibid



October 1985:
Armed Sandinista
soldiers at National
Palace hold back
workers protesting
falling living standards.
Shortly after these
photos were taken,
the FSLN declared a
State of Emergency
and banned all
such demonstrations.

Borge has since discovered that the “dying,” like Mao’s famous “paper tiger,” can be very dangerous indeed. If in 1982 he wasn’t worried about the “mortally wounded” bourgeoisie and its backers, by 1985 he was singing a different tune:

“The Sandinista revolution took place in a certain geopolitical area, in the United States’ backyard. . . . This geopolitical factor forced us, independent of our own will, to encourage political pluralism and a mixed economy. The development of this tactic became transformed into a strategy and today the mixed economy, for example, is no longer an operational choice or a camouflage, it is a strategy.”

—*International Viewpoint*, 14 October 1985

But the “strategy” of endless concessions to the capitalists is not at all “independent of [the FSLN’s] will” — it is a conscious policy, deliberately chosen. It is a policy which can only end in defeat with the best militants of the FSLN,

the unions and the workers movement dead or in jail, and the leadership of the urban and rural working class crushed.

Nicaragua and the Cuban Model

The situation in Nicaragua today is similar, in its essentials, to that in Cuba *before* the definitive expropriation of the capitalists. In both countries a patriotic petty-bourgeois radical formation, repulsed by the effects of imperialism, insurrected with the intention of establishing a society in which the grotesque inequities of neo-colonial development would be eliminated and everyone could live happily ever after—a kind of non-exploitative capitalism.

With the victory of the insurrection the radicals find that although they have a more or less complete monopoly of the means of repression, they are far from being in control of social relations. The workers and landless peasants, taking the rhetoric of the new regime as good coin, and



Tomas Borge

NACLA

mobilized in the course of the insurrection, begin to demand that the changes they fought for be implemented. The capitalists and large landowners, frightened that their "executive committee" has been deposed, attempt initially to co-opt the new regime. The radicals, attempting to balance between these two conflicting pressures, procrastinate. U.S. imperialism, fearing that things may be getting out of hand, begins to put pressure on the new regime to get-along and go-along. If the radicals resist, Washington starts to turn the economic (and military) screws.

At this point, in both the Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutions, the insurrectionary armed force is faced with a decision. It can either decide to "play ball" with the domestic capitalists and their imperialist backers—and turn on their plebian base—or it must expropriate the holdings of the propertied class and establish a collectivized economy. In other words, it must decide the class nature of the state which it is trying to consolidate, i.e., determine the property forms which it will defend. Until they cross this Rubicon there is *no state* in the Marxist sense of a body of armed men who defend a particular set of property relations.

In Cuba this whole process was settled in the first two years of the revolution. Faced with the refusal of U.S. oil monopolies to refine Soviet oil and the cancellation of the traditional sugar quota by the Eisenhower administration, the Castro regime responded by wholesale expropriation of American property in Cuba. Ultimately the Cubans went on to expropriate all the major holdings of the Cuban bourgeoisie—right down to the movie houses. In doing so the Fidelistas established a deformed workers state, not qualitatively different from those of Eastern Europe, China or Vietnam. In all these states capitalist property has been uprooted and the means of production collectivized (thus

establishing the working class as the dominant class economically) without establishing the direct political rule of the proletariat.

FSLN Expropriations

The Sandinistas' expropriations have thus far been limited to the properties of Somoza and his immediate circle. While this included the banks, mines, textiles, plastics, metal working, foodstuffs and other industries, it still amounted to only a quarter of the country's industrial enterprises. In agriculture, which dominates the Nicaraguan economy, less than 20 percent was in the state sector in 1981. Some 60 percent of the economy remains in private hands today (*NACLA Report on the Americas*, May/June 1985).

The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie was not overly concerned that the Sandinistas proposed to run Somoza's holdings as state enterprises. Nor did they make much fuss about the nationalization of the banking system, particularly as the state bank was flat broke and many of the capitalists traditionally depended on it for credit. Furthermore the heads of the two major banking groups had already been expelled from the main employers' federation (Superior Council of the Private Sector—COSEP) for their ties to the Somocistas.

Similarly, the FSLN's move to control exports (and its subsequent attempts to regulate imports) is characteristic of many dependent Third World economies. By consolidating the marketing of the products of a given industry or economic sector it is often possible for the state to obtain better terms of trade (and therefore higher profits for the individual capitalists) than if the atomized producers, each with a small amount to sell, attempt to compete directly on the international market.

The sort of planning and economic control exercised by the Nicaraguan government over capital accumulation, investment priorities, corporate organization and even the rate of profit is not at all incompatible with the continued existence of a market economy. Nor is the degree of state intervention in the Nicaraguan economy at all exceptional in contemporary Latin America. As Sandinista commandante Henry Ruiz explained: "The term mixed economy belongs to capitalist economics. Here, a modern capitalism exists in which the state is not afraid to be a property owner. In our case, the state owns less property than in Bolivia, in Allende's Chile, or even in Mexico, Venezuela or Costa Rica" (*Barricada Internacional*, 30 April 1984).

But the fact that the FSLN intends to create a rationalized capitalist economy does not endear it to the bourgeoisie. It is not theirs, and they know it! It is a radical populist government with "socialist" pretensions which in many instances checks their profiteering. *It* controls the arms, the courts and the jails, not COSEP. The FSLN in power reflects the massive inroads on bourgeois rule made by the workers, peasants and urban poor since the July 1979 insurrection. Like the bourgeoisie under the Spanish Republic in 1936, the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie is currently forced to rely on the Sandinistas to prevent the masses from completing the revolution. But they don't trust the FSLN, so just as the Spanish capitalists financed Franco to guarantee their dominance, the far weaker Nicaraguan propertied class looks, albeit with misgivings, to the U.S.-funded contras to restore its dominance.

The contra/U.S. military encirclement, the reluctance

of the Soviets to subsidize another impoverished Latin American country and, above all, the absence of a revolutionary party in Nicaragua to polarize and therefore decide the issue, has prevented a definitive resolution to the crisis. At this point Nicaragua could still go either way. What is certain is that the Sandinistas' plan for national liberation in this century and socialism in the next is pure fantasy. The conflict of social forces dictates that the issue must be resolved in favor of one of the two fundamental social classes: the working class or the bourgeoisie.

The Sandinistas have proven their willingness to defend the radical egalitarianism of the revolution against the armed forces of the old, neo-colonial bourgeois order. It is not yet clear that in a decisive showdown the FSLN would turn the full force of its armed might against the workers to guarantee the property of the capitalists. While the FSLN has not hesitated to harass and even jail its working class opponents, there is a big difference between the police actions which have occurred so far and the type of force the Spanish Popular Front used in Barcelona in May 1937 to crush the workers revolution. Given the Sandinistas' contradictory history and ideology such a move could very well result in a deep split. The successful application of such force against the proletariat would mark the definitive consolidation of a bourgeois state.

The Nicaraguan Revolution: A Mass Urban Insurrection

One important difference between the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions was the extent of mass participation in the insurrection. The central irony of the Nicaraguan revolution is that it was far more sweeping in its insurrectionary scope than the 1958-59 Cuban revolution and yet it has to date resulted in qualitatively less social change. Where the Cuban rebel army inflicted the decisive military defeats on Batista's armies in the field, the crucial battles in Nicaragua were the urban insurrections in Managua, Esteli, Leon and Masaya. Workers and the urban poor organized themselves in neighborhood Civil Defense Committees (CDCs) from the unsuccessful September 1978 uprising to the final conquest of power in July 1979. In Cuba, by contrast, the urban CDCs were only established in the *aftermath* of the revolution.

Women's organizations also played a key role in the Nicaraguan revolution. They took root in the early 1970s in the urban struggle to save the lives of political prisoners, as well as in campaigns for purified water and for electricity in the barrios. Women accounted for almost 30 percent of all Nicaraguan wage earners and thus played a significant role in workplace organizations as well. During the insurrection women's organizations played key coordinating functions and women participated in large numbers in actual combat. This too far outstripped the Cuban model.

Most importantly the workers themselves formed Workers Fighting Committees (CLTs) beginning as early as 1977. These incipient factory councils cut across party lines and drew new layers of the class into the struggle. Under the leadership of the FSLN's Proletarian Tendency, which had recruited a significant number of Socialist Party industrial cadres in the early 1970s, armed detachments of workers harassed Somoza's National Guard in a number of urban areas. In the course of the final uprising the working class

played a key role. The insurrection in Managua began with a general strike which was 90 percent effective from day one. The strike forced Somoza to send a quarter of his troops into that city at a moment when they were under attack on several other fronts. The armed uprising began on the sixth day of the strike.

Despite its small size (in 1979 there were 90,000 workers in industry and construction and another 230,000 employed in commerce and the service sectors) the urban proletariat has proven its combativity. The active role played by thousands of workers in the victorious 1979 insurrection is a potentially highly significant factor for the future of the revolution. The political passivity of the working class, due to Stalinist misleadership and historic defeats, which characterized the Cuban, Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions, was an essential precondition for the monopolization of political power by parasitic nationalist bureaucracies.

The FSLN and the Working Class

Almost from the day it took power the FSLN has been in conflict with the working class. The Sandinistas see themselves as a vanguard organization "at the service" of the workers but with a higher consciousness than the class. They openly justify the suppression of working class dissent on the grounds that the workers often act against their own best interests. In December 1979, while the government was providing easy credit to the bourgeoisie, it called on the working class to give up its *treceavo mes*, or "thirteenth month" of pay, to create jobs for the country's 200,000 unemployed. (The *treceavo mes* was a bonus payment instituted by Somoza to placate the workers after a major strikewave shook the regime in early 1978.) Faced with the nearly unanimous opposition of the unions, the Sandinistas were forced to back down. Shortly thereafter the government tried to cut the working hours and wages of the construction workers organized by the SCASS—ostensibly to create jobs. When they struck in response, the FSLN publicly criticized itself and again backed down.

In February 1980, seven months after the insurrection, a wave of militant strikes and factory seizures swept the country. The workers raised two demands: opposition to decapitalization by the employers and calls for improved working conditions and higher wages. The government responded to the factory takeovers against decapitalization much as it had to the land takeovers: it appealed to the bourgeoisie to act patriotically, warned them they risked confiscation if decapitalization persisted and occasionally sanctioned union demands to open the books. In some cases where the workers had seized, reorganized and were operating factories deserted by their owners, the government paid up to a quarter of the wage bill until the enterprise began to break even. In other factories it was left to the ingenuity of the employees and the solidarity of other unions in the same industry to get things operating again. In most cases these plants still function under workers management.

But when the Communist Party-affiliated Federation of Trade Union Action and Unity (CAUS) led a strike over wages at FABRITEX, a textile plant which is 48 percent government controlled, the labor minister threatened to outlaw the strike. After much public debate and harassment, the strikers went back to work, but the government hadn't

The Parallel Economy



(The following remarks were made to a Bolshevik Tendency gathering last summer by a comrade who had recently returned from a trip to Nicaragua.)

"The crisis in Managua is so apparent. You go into a supermarket and in the entire supermarket the only thing that's there is a few mouldy heads of lettuce, some soap and some toilet paper. I stood in line for two hours to buy a roll of toilet paper and I paid a buck for it. That's a dollar American, most of the stores won't even take cordobas. . . .

"Anyway, the point is that it can't last, it's never going to last another four years, I'll tell you that . . . All you do is leave the supermarket and you go to the flea markets (mercados), there are flea markets all over Managua. You go into the flea markets and anything you want is there, at premium prices. Anything that is available in a supermarket in the United States is available in the flea markets. It all comes across the border illegally. And everything is sold for dollars, American dollars. The American dollars go from your pocket to the blackmarketeer, across the border to Honduras to the supplier and back again. It never goes through the government. So in other words the Sandinistas never get their hands on any of this foreign exchange. An economy that is completely outside of their control. And it undermines everything. . . . The crisis is very serious and it can't last."

finished—it turned a 50,000-strong demonstration against the CIA into a demonstration against the CAUS. CAUS headquarters were seized in both Leon and Managua.

The Situation Today

Today the FSLN once again finds itself locked in conflict with the Nicaraguan proletariat. It is simply not possible for the government to continue to subsidize the capitalist

parasites, and provide the necessities of life for the plebian masses while it is forced to drain the treasury to finance the war against the contras. Something has to give, and thus far the commandantes in Managua have decided that it will be working-class living standards. Last winter the government announced "a credit policy that will provide incentives to businessmen and an end to subsidies on basic goods" for the population (*Barricada Internacional*, 21 February 1985). This resulted in the price of milk, for example, going up by 50 percent. Meanwhile hard-currency (dollar) subsidies have been resumed for large capitalist livestock producers as well as cotton growers.

Last May the FSLN announced that wage supplements in kind (which enabled workers to barter some of the products they produced for the necessities of life which their wages didn't cover) were to be abolished. The regime is now attempting to tie future wage hikes directly to increases in productivity, a policy which U.S. corporations bent on concessions often employ. A form of piecework has also been introduced, partially disguised as a guaranteed hourly wage. Under new "equal pay" provisions, wages for new-hires in certain job categories have been slashed.

The consequence of these measures is that the economic situation of the FSLN's plebian base is deteriorating rapidly. According to the 5 March 1984 issue of *Barricada Internacional*, "Since May 1981, real wages have fallen about 35 percent due to Washington's war against Nicaragua, higher import costs and increased demand among previously impoverished sectors without a corresponding increase in production." *International Viewpoint* (14 October 1985), the organ of the Sandinista boosters of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat, reported that "In May, the minimum wage went from 3,000 cordobas to 4,500 cordobas, while the rise in prices is estimated at around 100%. Thus, the decline in buying power has been about 50%." As a consequence increasing numbers of Nicaraguans are forced to engage in activity in the "parallel" economy. It is estimated that over half of Managua's economically active population is engaged in retailing or production of goods and services for the underground economy which operates outside the control of the regime (see box). *International Viewpoint* reports that: "The gap between this sector and the productive workers has so widened that today the minimum income of an ice-cream vendor is at least three times the minimum wage of a productive worker."

The working class has responded to the offensive on its living standards with a series of strikes. These have been met with a wave of CIA-baiting, a tactic which the FSLN also used in response to the 1979-80 strike wave. Justifying the state of emergency Daniel Ortega was quoted in the 19 October *New York Times* as saying that the U.S. was "rebuilding its mercenary army with the goal of launching new aggressions in the northern part of the country. . . . To coincide with this offensive, the United States is planning to develop an internal front, using leftist and rightist political parties, the Catholic Church and some news media." Clearly the intent of the CIA-baiting is to isolate those sections of the working class who are resisting the government's attempt to depress their living standards in pursuit of the chimera of "unity" with COSEP.

Since the FSLN's unity declaration of December 1978 which stated explicitly that the projected insurrection was to be the first step toward socialism, the FSLN has virtu-

ally disappeared its programmatic commitment to socialism. Its 1984 election program entirely omitted any mention of socialism, even as a perspective for the remote future. The document also conspicuously omits the "right to strike" from its list of "Human Rights and Public Liberties." The section entitled "Workers, trade unions and jobs" emphasized that:

"The Sandinista front has promoted the unity of the working class and will go on doing so, in a constant struggle against divisionism, opportunism, low productivity, indiscipline, and work inefficiency. All these are vices that the agents of imperialism and capitalism try to preserve among the most backward sectors of the working class. It will be necessary to combat them energetically."

In contrast to this, the mass meetings of the Sandinista Trade Union Confederation (CST) in Managua last summer reflected widespread discontent with mismanagement (government and private) and lack of response to workers proposals for technical innovations to replace the spare parts made unavailable by the U.S. embargo. According to the 19 August 1985 issue of *Barricada*, CST members "called for a review of the workers wages and for a rapid solution to pending cases. In the application of the austerity and economy measures, they have found resistance from the administrators, and they demand that these measures be applied not just to the workers but to all sectors."

The Contra War: Bleeding the Revolution Slowly

The contras wage war openly and directly on the gains of the revolution, with scarcely a pretense of trying to win the loyalties of the population. The Nicaraguan working people hate the contra/National Guard forces with a passion born of decades of murderous repression and memories of the 50,000 who died during the revolution. The contras have been unable to seize and hold a single town in the entire country. Their strategy is one of attrition through terror and sabotage.

The toll in the war with the contras has been staggering. Daniel Ortega told the U.N. last fall that 11,000 citizens had been killed, 5,000 had been wounded and another 5,000 had been kidnapped. Two hundred and fifty thousand people have been forced to relocate. Contra attacks on grain storage facilities, agricultural exports, oil depots, and the country's transportation network have done enormous damage to the economy. To sap morale, the contras have also targeted schools and health care facilities, and their personnel—which in many cases the government has been unable to replace.

To date the dominant sections of the U.S. bourgeoisie have contented themselves with bleeding the revolution slowly with the contra war. But the Sandinistas in power serve as a daily reminder to the impoverished masses throughout Latin America that U.S.-backed dictatorships can be overthrown. The Reaganites would prefer a blitz-rape Nicaraguan "solution" on the model of Grenada in 1983 or the Dominican Republic in 1965. Several considerations have so far stayed Reagan's itchy trigger finger.

The Nicaraguan people are armed and ready to take on a U.S. invasion. The masses of the population still firmly support the revolution and lay the blame for its problems primarily at the feet of U.S. imperialism and the contras. This was demonstrated by the turnout of 500,000 at the 19

July anniversary celebration last summer. The Sandinistas have widely advertised their intention to defend Managua street by street and then carry out a protracted guerrilla resistance designed to bloody U.S. occupation forces and provoke opposition domestically.

The Pentagon is acutely aware that it has only a narrow "window" of popular support for a Rambo-style adventure in Nicaragua. They know that they will have to win quickly or else risk becoming bogged down in another unpopular and politically costly Vietnam-style quagmire. One widely circulated scenario done by former high-ranking U.S. officers projected American casualties at 1,950 dead and almost 10,000 wounded in the first four weeks of fighting with a total of 4,000 killed after the first four years (*Village Voice*, 25 June 1985).

Memories of Vietnam, together with high unemployment, slashed social services, union-busting and a general decline in living standards contribute to widespread mistrust of the government and its intentions in Central America. Some polls have indicated that as many as four out of five Americans oppose military intervention in the region. If Reagan were to go ahead with a military assault on Nicaragua it is virtually certain that he would have to contend with significant domestic opposition almost from the outset. A combination of respect for the military capabilities of the Sandinistas and fear of the domestic "Vietnam syndrome" as well as the potential repercussions in the rest of Latin America and in Europe has led important elements in the American ruling class to counsel caution.

The *Wall Street Journal* observed on 2 October 1985 that "Most Western allies and the nations of Central and South America, which were receptive to President Kennedy's embargo of Cuba in the early 1960s, aren't going along on this one [i.e., Reagan's embargo]. Some are even boosting trade with Nicaragua." America's imperialist allies and regional semi-vassals chose instead to put their faith in the now-defunct "Contadora process" to "promote regional democracy and contain Nicaragua's Marxist regime" (*New York Times*, 8 January). They seek to coax the Sandinistas into consolidating a "radical" neo-colonial bourgeois state (as happened in Algeria) and fear that Washington's belligerent posture could push Nicaragua down the Cuban road.

The hesitancy of the American rulers to pursue the military option poses an important, if limited, opportunity for the left and the workers movement in the U.S. to prepare to respond to a Yankee invasion. The American working class has the power to stop an invasion dead in its tracks. The 1984 San Francisco longshoremen's 10-day boycott of South African cargo points the way forward. Similar political strikes, on a far larger scale, would give a massive boost to the battle against intervention.

Expropriate the Fifth Column! Extend the Revolution Throughout Central America!

The gains which the Nicaraguan revolution has achieved to date are threatened by the FSLN's attempts to placate the COSEP fifth column. After a meeting with COSEP representatives and other businessmen last winter FSLN head of state Daniel Ortega "acknowledged that, despite their differences, all the participants share 'a patriotic spirit, a sentiment of national unity and of being Nicaraguan.' And it is to this spirit that the government is appealing"

For Labor Strikes to Defend Nicaragua!

(The following resolution, submitted by Bolshevik Tendency supporter, Howard Keylor, was passed by the San Francisco local of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union in March 1985.)

WHEREAS: *The U.S. Navy is maintaining a continuing presence off the coasts of Nicaragua; and*

WHEREAS: *The U.S. invaded and occupied Grenada; and*

WHEREAS: *The CIA is funding and organizing attempts to overthrow the Sandinistas; and*

WHEREAS: *Reagan recently escalated his sabre-rattling at Nicaragua, coming closer than ever to directly threatening the overthrow of the Sandinistas; and*

WHEREAS: *U.S. military advisers, arms and economic aid are maintaining the bloody El Salvadoran junta; THEREFORE BE IT*

RESOLVED: *That if Reagan launches direct air, naval or land actions against Nicaragua, Cuba or the El Salvador leftists, the entire ILWU will conduct a 48-hour protest strike, and will call on other unions on this continent and abroad to join in this protest strike.*

(*Barricada Internacional*, 28 February 1985). But there can be no "unity" between the exploiters and their victims. The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie is actively involved in economic sabotage and political subversion. The attempt to find a "third road" for Nicaragua between integration in the imperialist world market and a centrally planned collectivized economy has proved to be impossible. The socialist expropriation of the bourgeoisie is the only program which can resume the forward march of the Nicaraguan revolution.

It is conceivable that in the event of a wholesale invasion by the U.S., the Sandinistas themselves could move to expropriate the bourgeoisie. Like Salvador Allende's decision to pick up a sub-machine gun on 11 September 1973, it may well then be too late. In any case a decision by the FSLN to establish collectivized property forms would only, in the best case, result in a deformed workers state on the Cuban model run by a nationalist bureaucratic caste inimicably hostile to the political rule of the working masses.

Expropriation of the capitalists would represent a tremendous leap forward for Nicaragua, but even this cannot by itself eliminate backwardness. In the early years of the Russian revolution Lenin and Trotsky constantly stressed

that the survival of the revolution ultimately depended on its extension into the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe. The need to spread the revolution is posed even more sharply in tiny underdeveloped Nicaragua than it was in Bolshevik Russia. Yet the Sandinistas are moving in the opposite direction. In the name of "preserving" their revolution the FSLN has adopted the self-defeating—indeed suicidal—policy of cutting off aid to revolutionary struggles elsewhere, in an attempt to reach a *modus vivendi* with imperialism.

The FSLN has maintained ties to the rest of the Central American and Mexican left and periodically threatens that a U.S. invasion will be the signal for insurrectionary uprisings in neighboring states. But revolution cannot be turned on and off like a faucet. The left is on the defensive in Guatemala and Honduras, while the civil war in El Salvador may be reaching a critical phase. The conservative British *Economist* noted with satisfaction in its 30 November 1985 issue that "The one solid thing the Americans have achieved in Central America has been to limit the spread of the revolutionary fire that started in Nicaragua in 1978-79 and at one stage threatened to burn up El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and singe Mexico. That firefighting exercise has been a success."

So far perhaps, but most of the capitalist regimes in Latin America are balancing precariously on the edge of a \$350 billion debt volcano. In one country after another the governments, at the instruction of the imperialist International Monetary Fund (IMF), have remorselessly ground down wages and living standards even as economic recession has thrown hundreds of thousands of workers onto the scrap heap of the unemployed. A revolutionary regime in Managua which broke its connection with the imperialist world by eliminating capitalist exploitation once and for all would serve as a beacon of hope for the region's combative and desperately oppressed workers movement. Such a government could take the offensive in spreading the revolution to earthquake-devastated Mexico and south by raising a call to cancel the debt payments to the Wall Street bloodsuckers. A wave of strikes to reverse the IMF-ordered cuts in real wages and for a shorter workweek to combat unemployment (as opposed to the impotent Castro-initiated strategy of mass marches) could ignite a conflagration which would singe the imperialist colossus north of the Rio Grande and unite the victorious Nicaraguan proletariat with the workers of the more developed countries of the region.

For a Trotskyist Party in Nicaragua!

Nicaragua is today on the front line of the international struggle against imperialism. A victory for Reagan over the courageous and embattled Nicaraguan masses would only embolden the imperialists in their attempts to roll back the gains won by working people around the world, and would fuel the drive toward war against the U.S.S.R., the first country in which the proletariat successfully seized power.

The workers and poor peasants of Nicaragua are caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand the contras and their imperialist backers and domestic fifth column intend to reverse all the gains achieved to date by the overthrow of Somoza. On the other, the ruling Sandinista



Truck destroyed by contras

junta itself, in a desperate and futile attempt to placate COSEP and its friends in the CIA, pursues a policy of driving down working-class living standards.

In this situation isolated strike actions are no answer. What is urgently necessary is the construction of a broadly authoritative organization which can unite the Nicaraguan toilers across political, provincial, trade-union and craft divisions. Such a workers council composed of directly elected and recallable delegates from every workplace must be completely organizationally independent from the FSLN junta (while being open to representatives from CST unions and other FSLN mass plebian organizations). In revolutionary Russia such workers councils were called "soviets." Leon Trotsky referred to these as the "highest form of the united front." In Nicaragua, as in Russia in 1917, these organizations could constitute the framework of a workers and peasants government. In order to function as such they must be organizationally flexible enough to draw in all sectors of the working class and its allies. The workers must actively reach out and incorporate representatives of tenants groups, rank-and-file soldiers committees, women's organizations, poor peasants councils and other mass plebian organizations into a broadly based and democratic national soviet which would unite the oppressed against their capitalist masters.

Mobilizing and drawing into active political life the mass of Nicaragua's oppressed and exploited (exactly the opposite of what the FSLN is doing with its across-the-board ban on strikes and demonstrations) would give enormous impetus to the struggle against the contras and their backers. The workers councils would naturally establish organs of self-defense. These workers militias would participate in the struggle against the contras and capitalist sabotage. A national network of workers councils would also serve as an effective mechanism to block the economic sabotage of COSEP and to ensure that the productive resources of the country are used to benefit the working masses—not to pad Miami bank accounts.

The decisive precondition for such a soviet to displace the vacillating and increasingly anti-working class FSLN and proceed to the creation of a workers and peasants government based on the expropriation of the capitalists and big landowners is the formation of a revolutionary leadership. As Trotsky noted in *Lessons of October*, his classic study of the conditions which enabled the Russian workers to successfully seize power in 1917: "Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer."

A revolutionary party in Nicaragua would struggle to shatter the illusions of the masses in the FSLN, to polarize and split the Sandinista mass organizations into their class components and to mobilize the workers, soldiers and peasants to break the power of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie once and for all. A Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard can only be forged by regrouping left-wing militants from the unions, the leftist organizations and the FSLN itself on a program of hard opposition to the Sandinista project of class collaboration and a recognition that the only way to defend the revolution is to complete it and extend it internationally.

Defend the Right of the Working Class to Organize Itself Independently of the FSLN!

For Workers, and Poor Peasants Councils! For Elected Rank and File Soldiers Committees Linked to the Workers Movement! For Workers Militias!

Smash the Contras! Break With the Bourgeoisie! For a Workers and Peasants Government to Complete the Revolution by Expropriating COSEP and the Big Landowners! For a Trotskyist Party in Nicaragua!

Extend the Revolution Throughout Central America! Forward to the Socialist Federation of Latin America!



Time Running Out for Sandinistas **Nicaragua At the Crossroads**

"When one makes a Revolution, one cannot mark time; one must always go forward—or go back."

—V.I. Lenin, quoted in *Ten Days That Shook the World*

The Nicaraguan revolution today stands at a crossroads. Time is running out for the Sandinistas' utopian dream of "peaceful coexistence" with the domestic bourgeoisie and its imperialist backers. The economy is strained to the breaking point by the necessity to divert thousands of urban and agricultural workers and 40 percent of government expenditure to the war against the CIA-funded contra terrorists. Hoarding and black market speculation fuel steep inflation, as working-class living standards plummet and the country's gross national product contracts for the second year in a row. Meanwhile the Sandinista rulers squander precious resources futilely trying to conciliate the contras' fifth column, the Nicaraguan capitalist class.

Last October the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) junta declared a "state of emergency"—directed primarily at the left and workers movement. The entire leadership of the left-wing ex-Maoist Popular Action Movement, which in the past has led strikes of several thousand workers and is the FSLN's largest leftist opposition in Nicaragua, was briefly arrested and taken in for questioning. The right to strike and even the right to demonstrate were indefinitely suspended, including for the FSLN's own mass organizations. Leaders of the big bourgeoisie's "Democratic Coordinator" (which is openly linked to the contras) and counter-revolutionary Roman Catholic primate Cardinal Obando y Bravo got slapped on the wrist—"lectured" according to the *New York Times*—while Alejandro Solorzano, leader of the 10,000-member Carpenters, Bricklayers, Fitters and Related Workers Union (SCASS), was thrown in jail for two days. Solorzano's "crime" was that he had been on a hunger strike to protest the Sandinistas' decision to subsidize the capitalists at the expense of the workers.

This response is typical of the bonapartist balancing act which the FSLN has been engaged in since it took power. The Sandinistas' commitment to preserving the property of Nicaragua's capitalists has repeatedly brought it into conflict with the urban working class, rural proletariat and poor peasantry. At the same time it is not trusted by the big capitalists, who resent the curbs which the new government has imposed on their "right" to exploit.

The 1979 revolution which overthrew U.S.-supported dictator Anastasio Somoza effected real improvements for the workers and peasants of Nicaragua. Unemployment



(continued on page 24)