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# Exchange with *Revolutionary History*

The following letter from the Prometheus Research Library to the journal *Revolutionary History* was published in its 2005 issue (Vol. 9, No. 1) with the reply reprinted below. The PRL is the central reference archive of the Spartacist League/U.S. Our review of *Dog Days* appeared in *Spartacist* No. 57, Winter 2002-03.

10 February 2005

To the Editors,

In his review of our book, *Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933*, Al Richardson accused us of repeating "the long-discredited lie" that it was James P. Cannon and Maurice Spector who smuggled out of the Soviet Union in 1928 two out of three sections of Trotsky's Critique of the Draft Program of the Communist International. Richardson (*Revolutionary History*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2004) insisted instead that "It is well known that it was George Weston" who smuggled out the partial document which had been distributed in numbered copies to members of the Program Commission (including Cannon and Spector) at the 1928 Sixth World Congress of the Communist International.

What we actually wrote in our introduction to *Dog Days* was, "Resolving to fight for Trotsky's views they [Cannon and Spector] smuggled out of Moscow the partial copy of Trotsky's Critique." In accusing us of purveying a "long-discredited lie," Richardson qualitatively escalated the complaint, made in his review of our earlier book, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* that, "The editors are still reluctant to accept the fact that the Critique in question was smuggled out of Moscow, not by Cannon, but by George Weston (p64), although this is fully confirmed by Harry Wicks' recently published memoirs (*Keeping My Head*, p158)." (*Revolutionary History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 [Autumn 1993])

In *Keeping My Head* (London: Socialist Platform Ltd, 1992), Wicks described George Weston as an early British CP member who was assigned to work with the Interna-

tional Red Aid in Moscow, where he lived in 1928 with his wife. Elsewhere Weston has been described as Irish (see *Revolutionary History* Vol. 6, No. 2/3, Summer 1996). Wicks was also in Moscow in the late 1920s, attending the Lenin School, and he wrote about the experience in his memoirs, which were unfinished at the time of his 1989 death. Wicks knew the Westons and reported that Weston was a supporter of Trotsky before Cannon arrived in Moscow for the Sixth CI Congress. Wicks recounted:

"When I met Weston's widow at Tamara Deutscher's flat during the early 1970s (in the presence of a tape recorder brought by a comrade called Ken Tarbuck), we discussed our Moscow Years. By the time I first met the Westons, they already had a daughter and, while I was still in Moscow, their son Vladimir was born. As Weston's job ended with that World Congress, he and his family returned to Britain at about this time. Mrs. Weston remembers this Critique being inserted into Vladimir's teddy bear. This was how it reached the Fischer-Urbahns group in Berlin. I do not know whether Weston's copy was Cannon's or someone else's."

Wicks claimed no first hand knowledge of how the document was smuggled out of Moscow. His account is a second-hand retailing of Mrs. Weston's memory, many years after the fact. He did not know whether Weston smuggled out the document for Fischer-Urbahns (supporters of Zinoviev) or for Cannon. Hardly, as Richardson implies, definitive.

In his contribution to the book *James P. Cannon as We Knew Him* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), Sam Gordon, an early member of the Communist League of America who was personally close to Cannon and who lived after WWII in Britain, also told the story of how the document was smuggled out of the USSR in Weston's son's teddy bear. Gordon wrote that he got the story from Wicks and Mrs. Weston.

In a 1963 interview with the Columbia University Oral History project, Max Shachtman, who was one of Cannon's closest personal and political collaborators in 1928, claimed that Cannon and Spector had stolen a copy of the document from an Australian delegate, and that it was Spector himself who smuggled it out in his baggage (p.153-54). Like Wicks' version, this is a second-hand account, told many years after the fact. Cannon himself never spoke publicly or wrote on the subject, even in later years. All of which led us to write, in the introduction to *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism*, "It is unclear how Cannon and Spector managed to get a copy out of the Soviet Union."

The actual physical means by which the document was gotten out of the USSR is hardly the main point. Cannon and Spector, who were senior leaders of two of the Comintern's sections, understood the crucial importance of Trotsky's document. They resolved that Trotsky's fight was their fight, and orchestrated getting Trotsky's Critique, which was in effect the founding document of world Trotskyism, out of the country. Believing it was the complete version, the Communist League of America published the partial document, first serialized in the *Militant* and then in 1929 in pamphlet form. When the CIA obtained a copy of the middle section, "Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch," this was published separately in 1930 as "The Strategy of World Revolution." The complete document was published by the American Trotskyists in 1936 in a new and better translation as *The Third International After Lenin*. According

English Edition

# SPARTACIST



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# The Founding of the Trotskyist Group of Greece

## For a Leninist Party in Greece! For a Socialist Federation of the Balkans!

*The following was published in Greek in November 2004 and first printed in English in Workers Vanguard No. 838, 10 December 2004.*

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is pleased to announce the founding of the Trotskyist Group of Greece as a sympathizing section. The Greek comrades were won to the program of the ICL over a period of time through debate over programmatic differences and testing our agreement in common work.

The first contact with the ICL was made in 1995 by Spiros, a leader of the Socialist Workingmen's Organization (SOE), which split in 1994 from the Stalinophobic fake-Trotskyist Morenoite tendency. In 1996 the majority of the SOE founded the Revolutionary Workers Communist Organization (KOEE). In January 1999, Spiros resigned from the KOEE and began to correspond with the ICL, which had been sending literature to the KOEE since 1998. In May-June 1999, the KOEE leadership purged elements perceived as sympathetic to the ICL when our principled opposition to imperialist war against Serbia found a hearing among some members. Some of those thus expelled undertook to study the ICL program and in March 2000 formed an informal discussion group. In January 2001 the members of this study circle wrote to a group of ex-members of the Communist League-Workers Power (KSEE), a 1995 split-off from the SOE, and in

March 2001 constituted a discussion group with these ex-KSEE members.

The Trotskyist Group of Greece was founded by comrades who fought on the question of women's oppression in Greece and split from Spiros primarily over the need to champion the rights of Greece's oppressed minorities, a crucial question for a Leninist-Trotskyist organization in a Balkan country.

The ICL's record of fighting against counterrevolution in the DDR [East Germany] was central to the recruitment of the TGG comrades. In the "Agreement for Common Work" printed below, we make clear that we stand counterposed to organizations like the Socialist Workers Party (SEK—affiliated to the British SWP), International Workers Left (DEA—ISO) and the Taaffeite *Xekinima*, which backed Yeltsin's counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-1992 and, in the latter case, even had supporters present on Yeltsin's barricades. While preparing for a class on capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe, one of the Greek comrades wrote in June 2000:

"I studied anew Trotsky's books *The Class Nature of the Soviet Union*, *The Revolution Betrayed* and the 'Declaration of Principles' of the ICL. Thereafter, together with our own discussions I consider that the positions of the ICL on the question of Afghanistan are consistent with our ideology and I agree with them on the basis of the defense of a bureaucratically

*continued on page 52*

to Louis Sinclair's definitive bibliography of Trotsky's writings, Trotsky's Critique was not published in any version in Britain until 1954.

Richardson himself used to acknowledge that Cannon had a role in the smuggling. In *Against the Stream, A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1924-38* (London: Socialist Platform Ltd, 1986), Richardson and his collaborator Sam Bornstein wrote that the Critique was "smuggled out of the country by Weston and Cannon and published in the United States early the following year" (p. 37). Why did Richardson insist almost 20 years later that to write that Cannon had a role in getting the document out of the USSR is to retail a "long-discredited lie"? Presumably this slander is in purpose of his thesis that hard communist cadre like Cannon were just Zinovievite hacks. According to Richardson the real Trotskyists were those who quickly fell away from the Left Opposition: Ludwig Lore, who defended not only Trotsky but Paul Levi and Serrati; Boris Souvarine, whom Trotsky condemned as a petty-bourgeois dilettante; Kurt Landau, who put personal ties and organizational posi-

tion above program; and Alfred Rosmer who proved constitutionally incapable of fighting the internal political battles necessary to forge an international Trotskyist organization. It was Richardson's privilege (as it is that of any reviewer) to not like our book. He abused this privilege by wrongly accusing us of lying.

Emily Turnbull, James Robertson  
for the Prometheus Research Library

cc: *Spartacist*, theoretical journal of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)  
Spartacist League/Britain

### **RH Editorial Board replies:**

The late comrade Richardson is unable to speak for himself. As far as the Editorial Board of *Revolutionary History* is aware, all the inconclusive evidence of how the Critique was smuggled out of the USSR is as stated in the above letter. If anyone has any further information about this incident we would be delighted to publish it. ■

Our comrade Elizabeth King Robertson died at home on October 12 after a six-year battle with cancer. Over the course of more than 30 years as a professional revolutionist, Lizzy excelled as an organizer, propagandist and editor. A patient mentor and inspiration for younger comrades, Lizzy provided a vital link in the fight to preserve our revolutionary heritage going back to Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International. At the time of her death, she was a full member of the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee and of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League. Her loss is incalculable both to our party internationally and to her family—Jim Robertson, Martha and Martha's children Rachel, Sarah and Kenneth—as well as her father Henry and mother Mary King and the rest of the King family.

Lizzy grew up in a large family in New York City. Following the death of her mother, Barbara, her father Henry King, a successful corporate lawyer, remarried. Mary King raised Lizzy as her own daughter, and for Lizzy she became "mom." Lizzy attended Brearley private

school for girls in New York. She always valued the education she received there and many of the friendships made at Brearley endured until the end of her life. As a teenager she was sent to Miss Porter's, an exclusive finishing school for "old money" society girls. Her first-hand experience of anti-Semitism and class snobbery there played a role in her becoming a passionate fighter against racism and inequality.

Lizzy first encountered the Spartacist League in the early 1970s while a student at Boston University. Under the impact of the Vietnam War, Boston campuses were a hotbed of New Left radicalism. Lizzy was active in the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee, a group trying to defend working-class families from being pushed out of their homes as the universities expanded. She was recruited to Trotskyism, joining the Revolutionary Communist Youth, the SL's youth group, in 1973. For many students, the brush with radical activism was just an episode of youthful rebellion on the road to an eventual comfortable career. But Lizzy's recruitment to the fight for international socialist revolution was for keeps.

Lizzy was accepted into party membership in July 1974. She had by then transferred to Detroit, where the SL was seeking to intervene among the largely black proletariat of the auto factories. She impressed comrades as the youth organizer as well as by her participation in the lively debates that took place as the party began to get more experience in trade-union work. Here she also began the difficult training to become a

# Elizabeth King Robertson 1951-2005



legal stenographic reporter, a profession in which she was active until her debilitation by cancer.

Around 1976 she transferred to New York in order to be part of the national leadership of the youth organization (renamed the Spartacus Youth League). Lizzy was elected to the SYL National Bureau in July 1976 and was a member of the editorial board of the monthly *Young Spartacus* from October 1976 through September 1978. She served for a year as the SYL National Organizational Secretary. Her experience as youth organizer and leader was crucial to Lizzy's understanding of the importance of a youth organization in the training of party cadre.

In August 1978, she resigned her leading positions in the youth organization in order to take on the job of secretary of the Political Bureau. Not only did Lizzy fulfill the demanding assignment of getting out regular and accurate minutes throughout her years in New York, but she turned the job of PB secretary into a nexus for organizing political discussions. Her close personal association with SL national chair-

man James Robertson began at this time, and she remained his loving companion and closest party collaborator until her death. After serving on the party Central Committee as a representative of the SYL, Lizzy was co-opted in her own right in 1979 and elected a full CC member at the August 1983 national conference. She also took charge of the subject indexing for the bound volumes of our press, which are the documentary record of our political line and our work. Lizzy transferred to the San Francisco Bay Area at the beginning of the 1990s. She tirelessly guided the local leadership, was secretary of the West Coast CC group and also took continuous responsibility for our local in Los Angeles.

Lizzy's strength was in tackling the intersection of political principle with concrete social reality, coming up with tactics and slogans to express our program. She closely followed the work of Spartacist supporters in the trade unions and her counsel was highly valued by those involved in such work. She was a longtime member of the Bay Area Local executive committee and fought to remain on this body despite her many other responsibilities because she understood so well that making political decisions real means daily choices of "what to betray" in order to focus on the most important things; it means finding the right comrades for the concrete tasks and preparing them politically to carry out those tasks.

Lizzy was unsurpassed as a Leninist political organizer. After a party gathering, she was inevitably involved in figur-

ing out how to shift personnel or assignments to make the political priorities just established actually happen. She had a profound understanding of how our organizational functioning corresponds to our revolutionary purpose. For decades, Lizzy was one of a handful of comrades who took initiative in formulating, refining and codifying our internal norms and practices as the party came across new situations or as problems were seen with the existing rules.

At the ICL's Third International Conference in 1998, she gave a presentation, "On the Origins and Development of Leninist Organizational Practices." Published in *Spartacist* No. 54 (Spring 1998) along with our revised "Organizational Rules and Guidelines," Lizzy's presentation educated both young comrades and experienced cadres by providing the historical background, beginning with the first Marxist organizations founded by Karl Marx himself, to enable the conference delegates to consider the Rules. In this presentation, she explained: "Living organizational rules are one of perhaps a half-dozen elements that characterize an organization; in that sense, they are political. But they are not determinate. A sound set of organizational rules is not a guard against political departures, although departures from our organizational norms are generally a signal of political problems. In the absence of Bolshevik practices, an organization is necessarily amorphous, that is, Menshevik."

Though she rarely raised her voice, Lizzy was a powerful speaker at party gatherings. Her astute judgment and forthrightness made her a uniquely authoritative voice in the deliberations through which the party selects a leadership. Numerous times she was chosen to chair the nominating commission charged with recommending a slate of candidates to the party conference that elects the leading body (the CC in the SL or the IEC in the ICL). Lizzy was clear-eyed in seeing the weaknesses as well as the strengths of comrades, including her closest friends, and she was renowned for her fairness. This ability is crucial in a Leninist party, which aims to build its leadership as a collective that is stronger than the sum of its individual parts.

Lizzy was also her own harshest critic. Although in great pain, she authored a document on October 7 addressing her role in a political fight in the Los Angeles Local that had been marred by extreme characterizations of comrades and bureaucratic practices. Her purpose was not a *mea culpa* but a statement of conscientious regard for clarity, drawing the political lessons necessary to strengthen the party.

Beginning in early 1979, Lizzy was a mainstay of the editorial board of *Women and Revolution*, the journal of the SL CC Commission for Work Among Women, for which she often wrote under the last name Kendall. Lizzy particularly enjoyed this assignment, and she excelled at it, as it brought to the fore her acute understanding of Marxist materialism. She authored or co-authored articles on the most sensitive subjects, defending human sexuality and exposing the barbarous cruelty of the bourgeois state as it destroys the lives of people whose only "crime" is that their sexual proclivities and needs vary from the repressive, religion-based strictures of hypocritical bourgeois moralism. Her area of expertise was the thorny issue of human sexuality in its diversity, articles like "Something About Incest," "The Uses of Abuse" and "The 'Date Rape' Issue." She once explained:

"The reason that we talk about questions of sexuality is that often these questions are politicized, usually not by us but by

the bourgeoisie, by some element of society, that takes questions that are normally of a secondary interest and makes them political questions that we not only *can* comment on but, in certain circumstances, *must* comment on and must take a position on."

When publication of *W&R* was suspended after the Spring 1996 issue, Lizzy continued to contribute to the articles published under the *W&R* masthead in the press of the national sections of the ICL, including *Workers Vanguard*, and in *Spartacist*. During the last weeks of her life, Lizzy was intensely involved in editing, in collaboration with *W&R* pages editor Amy Rath, "The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women," which appears in this issue of *Spartacist*.

The final undoing of the October Revolution in 1991-92 was a historic defeat for the workers of the world, ushering in a difficult period for revolutionists. Our difficulties in coming to grips with the new period have been expressed in political disorientation and corresponding internal difficulties (see "Spartacist League 12th National Conference—A Hard Look at Recent Party Work and Current Tasks," *WV* No. 841, 4 February 2005). Nobody has been immune to these problems, but comrade Lizzy played a forward role in trying to get the party out of this morass. Several times during the past five or six years, our internal bulletins have featured a document by Lizzy, submitted early in the discussion, often less than one page in length, which became a touchstone for subsequent contributions. Often her document would begin from a concrete, seemingly tactical question of a particular projected intervention somewhere, and would proceed logically to illuminate programmatic and principled issues.

After Lizzy's cancer was diagnosed, she undertook surgery, chemotherapy and, finally, radiation. Her father ensured that she obtained high-quality care, which was ultimately unavailing. She continued to do her biweekly sales and other public political activity. In April 2003, she was wounded by a "non-lethal projectile" fired from a cop shotgun during the vicious police attack on antiwar protesters, longshoremen and port truckers at the Port of Oakland.

Memorial meetings for comrade Lizzy were held around the world, including in New York City on November 12 and Oakland, California, on November 20. The New York meeting was attended by more than 20 members of her family, as well as former schoolmates from Brearley. Elsewhere, as is the custom in the communist movement, comrades gathered at memorials to past revolutionaries—Karl Marx in London, Rosa Luxemburg in East Berlin, Leon Trotsky in Coyoacán, heroic Soviet spies Richard Sorge and Ozaki Hotsumi in Tokyo—to lay wreaths or raise a glass in Lizzy's honor.

Her comrades, family and friends will miss Lizzy's presence in our lives for as long as we have consciousness. We will miss her fine mind, her humor, her warmth and compassion. We will always remember her beauty and courage. Even in the midst of our grief, we celebrate her life and find comfort in knowing that she lived as she chose to and never wavered in her belief that fighting for the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed was the right way for her to live. For us, she has been a very strong link in the chain of continuity that goes all the way back to Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, and Cannon. We resolve to honor our beloved comrade Lizzy by carrying on her struggle. ■

## Russian Archives Refute Anarchist Lies, Again

# Kronstadt 1921: Bolshevism vs. Counterrevolution



Novosti

Red Army units crossing the ice on 17 March 1921 to put down Kronstadt mutiny.

In March 1921, the garrison of the Baltic island fortress of Kronstadt, gateway to revolutionary Petrograd, revolted against the Bolshevik government. The mutineers held Kronstadt for two weeks, until the Soviet regime finally retook it by a direct assault across the ice, at a cost of many lives on both sides. The rebels claimed to be fighting to restore a purified Soviet power freed from the monopoly of the Communists. The Bolsheviks charged that the revolt was a counter-revolutionary mutiny: whatever the sailors' intentions, it could only aid the forces of capitalist restoration—ranging from avowed democrats to outright monarchists—united behind the White standard of clerical/tsarist reaction. Though militarily repulsed by the Soviet Red Army after nearly three years of civil war, the White Guards and their imperialist patrons remained intent on reversing the Bolshevik-led October Revolution of 1917 and crushing the young Soviet workers state.

Nearly 73 years later, on 10 January 1994, self-selected White Guard heir Boris Yeltsin, president of a now-capitalist Russia, placed his double-headed-eagle seal of approval on the Kronstadt revolt (see "Kronstadt and Counterrevolution:

Then and Now," *Workers Vanguard* No. 595, 4 March 1994). The fact that Yeltsin, who had led the 1991-92 overturn of the Bolshevik Revolution, "rehabilitated" the Kronstadt mutineers simply confirmed once again whose class interests were served by the 1921 uprising. The Kronstadt mutiny is the center of a great myth, assiduously propagated by anarchists but seized upon by a whole array of anti-revolutionary forces ranging from social democrats to tsarist restorationists. The principal aim of the "hue and cry over Kronstadt" has always been to discredit the Marxists' struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, and in particular to smear Trotskyism, the contemporary embodiment of authentic Leninism.

According to anarchist myth, Kronstadt was the "third toilers' revolution"—a continuation of the February and October revolutions of 1917—its suppression proof positive of the anti-working-class character of the Bolshevik government of Lenin and Trotsky, and of Marxism in general. To wield Kronstadt as an ideological club against Leninism, the anarchists have to insist, against all known facts, that the

mutineers of 1921 were the same sailors who had played a vanguard role in 1917 and that they were not linked to the White reactionaries. Yeltsin unwittingly helped drive a nail in the coffin of the Kronstadt myth when, in blessing the mutineers, he also opened the archives for study of the mutiny. This led to the 1999 publication of a huge collection of Russian historical materials by ROSSPEN, the main publishing house associated with the Federal Archival Agency of Russia. The documents in *Kronstadttskaia tragediia 1921 goda, dokumenty v dvukh knigakh* (The 1921 Kronstadt Tragedy, Documents in Two Volumes) (Moscow: Russian Political Encyclopedia, 1999) confirm beyond doubt the counterrevolutionary nature of the Kronstadt rising.

### Lenin and Trotsky Told the Truth

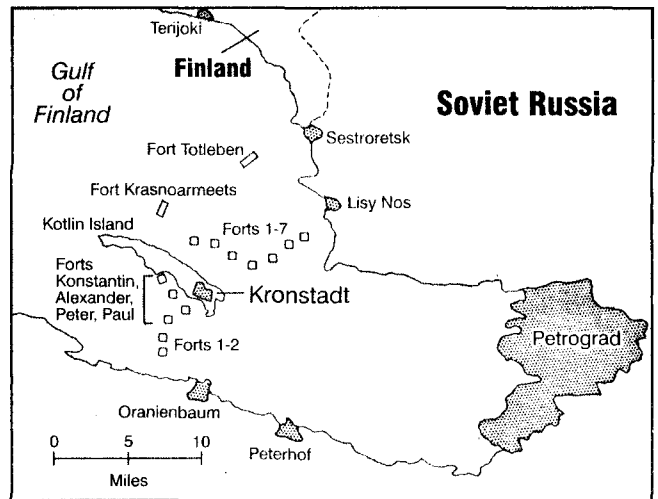
Right from the start, the anarchists made common cause with open counterrevolutionaries over Kronstadt. Prominent American anarchist Alexander Berkman's 1922 pamphlet, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*, was based largely on a spurious 1921 account entitled *The Truth About Kronstadt* published by the Social Revolutionaries (SR), bitter opponents of the October Revolution. In 1938, the Kronstadt lie machine was rolled out again—in the form of Ida Mett's *The Kronstadt Commune*—this time in an effort to deflect Trotsky's devastating critique of the role of the CNT anarchist union leaders (in league with the Stalinists) in derailing the Spanish workers revolution. (For more on the Spanish Revolution, see Felix Morrow, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Spain* [New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1938].) Shortly before his death in 1945, Voline (V. M. Eichenbaum), a leading Russian anarchist in 1917-21, added his authority to the anti-Bolshevik frame-up with an indictment that relied on the mutineers' own lying proclamations (Voline, *The Unknown Revolution [Kronstadt 1921 Ukraine 1918-21]* [New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1955]). Today, a resurgent anarchist trend again seizes on alleged atrocities by Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks in Kronstadt to inflame anti-communist prejudices among young activists in the post-Soviet era.

Right from the start, Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolshevik spokesmen pointed out that the uprising had been embraced with alacrity and even publicly forecast by the counterrevolution in exile; that former tsarist officers in the Kronstadt garrison like General A.N. Kozlovsky figured prominently in the mutiny; that the Kronstadt sailors of 1921 were no longer the "pride and glory" of the workers revolution, as Trotsky had called them in 1917, but a relatively privileged and demoralized layer tied to the peasant villages. In 1938, as he exposed the perfidy of the anarchist misleaders in Spain, Trotsky also shot down the recycled Kronstadt slanders, writing "Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt" and "More on the Suppression of Kronstadt." He wrote scathingly:

"The Spanish government of the 'People's Front' stifles the socialist revolution and shoots revolutionists. The Anarchists participate in this government, or, when they are driven out, continue to support the executioners. And their foreign allies and lawyers occupy themselves meanwhile with a defense...of the Kronstadt mutiny against the harsh Bolsheviks. What a travesty!"

—"Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt," 15 January 1938

Trotsky also urged his supporters to undertake a more detailed work. The result was "The Truth About Kronstadt" by John G. Wright of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), first published in the SWP's *New International* (February 1938) and then in a longer version in an educa-



Spartacist map, adapted from Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*

tional bulletin in 1939. Marshaling the historical evidence then available, including the testimony of "the very people who engineered and led and attempted to extend the mutiny," Wright methodically demonstrated how the Whites supported the uprising and how the sailors were politically driven by their petty-bourgeois class interests and manipulated by the forces of open counterrevolution. (The longer version of Wright's article can be found in the collection *Kronstadt by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky* [New York: Pathfinder, 1979].)

Every serious piece of historical research since has vindicated the Bolsheviks. Notably, this includes pro-anarchist historian Paul Avrich's *Kronstadt 1921* (Princeton: Princeton



L. Ya. Leonidov

Lenin and Trotsky with Tenth Party Congress delegates who participated in suppression of Kronstadt revolt, March 1921.



University Press, 1970). In our review, we recommended the book as the work of a conscientious researcher, who was compelled to conclude that he could "sympathize with the rebels and still concede that the Bolsheviks were justified in subduing them" ("Anarcho-Libertarian Myths Exposed: Kronstadt and Counterrevolution," *WV* Nos. 195 and 203, 3 March and 28 April 1978).

Avrich's research showed that the principal leader of the revolt, a seaman named Stepan Petrichenko, had earlier attempted to join the Whites, then helped turn a mass protest meeting into a decisive break with the Bolshevik government. After the uprising, Petrichenko fled to Finland, which was under the iron rule of former tsarist general and White Guard butcher Baron Mannerheim. Petrichenko openly joined forces with the émigré White Guards concentrated there and endorsed plans for a "temporary military dictatorship" to replace Bolshevik rule. Avrich also discovered a White Guard "Memorandum on the Question of Organizing an Uprising in Kronstadt" that detailed the military and political situation inside the fortress and spoke of having recruited a group of Kronstadt sailors who were preparing to take an active role in a forthcoming uprising there. Nonetheless, Avrich asserted that there was no evidence of links between the Whites and the sailors before the revolt and echoed the common refrain that had the revolt been planned, it would have been launched a few weeks later, after the ice melted and made a Bolshevik ground assault impossible.

The documents assembled in *Kronstadt Tragedy* definitively put these objections to rest. The collection contains 829 original documents (with an additional 276, in whole or excerpted, in the footnotes), most never before published. These include firsthand accounts by participants in the uprising, among them mutinous sailors and visiting White Guard emissaries, and secret White reports; memoirs and articles by some of the 8,000 mutineers who fled to Finland after the Bolsheviks retook Kronstadt; and records of interrogation of arrested mutineers by the Soviet Cheka, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage. Contemporary Soviet accounts include Baltic Fleet commissar Nikolai Kuzmin's 25 March 1921 report to the Petrograd Soviet and the first official report on the Cheka investigation, by Special Commissioner Yakov S. Agranov, submitted on 5 April 1921. It is particularly valuable now to be able to see how extensively the accounts of the mutineers who escaped coincide as to the facts with those who confessed while in Soviet hands.

An extensive introduction by Russian historian Yuri Shchetinov, who has done earlier research on Kronstadt, is quite useful, pointing to disputed questions and summarizing relevant archival findings. The documents were culled from a range of Soviet, White Guard, imperialist, Menshevik, Social Revolutionary and anarchist sources and compiled by researchers from nine Russian archives, including the Russian State Military Archive, the Russian State Archive for Socio-Political History and the Central Archive of the Federal Security Services (FSB), the political police. The chief researcher for the collection, I.I. Kudryavtsev, helped prepare materials from the FSB archive and was responsible for the footnotes, indices and bibliography. The name index entry for Trotsky



**Mutiny leader Stepan Petrichenko (in sailor's cap) welcomed by White reactionaries in Finland after fleeing Kronstadt.**

claims he was a "member of French Masonic Lodge, expelled apparently in 1916." This ludicrous libel, reflective of a counterrevolutionary hatred of the Bolshevik leader, flies in the face of Trotsky's struggle to root out the pernicious influence of Freemasonry in the young French Communist Party, a historic problem in the French workers movement.

A new book by French historian Jean-Jacques Marie, of Pierre Lambert's Parti des Travailleurs (PT), seizes on this libel to impugn the collection as a whole, asserting that the "compilation is endowed with an abundant body of footnotes, which bears the imprint of the political police, the FSB (the former KGB), and is marked by an obsession, rampant among the Russian nationalists, with a supposed Masonic plot" (Jean-Jacques Marie, *Kronstadt* [Paris: Fayard, 2005]). Yet Marie relies on this compilation for the bulk of his own citations! While the FSB is steeped in Great Russian chauvinism, the libel of Trotsky in *Kronstadt Tragedy* is singular and is not representative of the collection's editorial work. Marie's inordinate concern over a non-existent Masonic obsession in *Kronstadt Tragedy* says more about the Lambertist PT, whose connections with Freemasonry have long been an open secret on the French left. Among these are the close ties between Lambert, long an official in the Force Ouvrière (FO) trade-union federation, and former FO leader Marc Blondel, an open Mason.

For their part, various anarchist Web sites and 'zines, confronted with the mass of new evidence in *Kronstadt Tragedy*, have turned to a secondhand commentary by Hebrew University academic Israel Getzler ("The Communist Leaders' Role in the Kronstadt Tragedy of 1921 in the Light of Recently Published Archival Documents," *Revolutionary Russia*, June 2002). Getzler elevates the Agranov report to "pride of place," though it was rushed out only days after the mutiny and without access to any of the ringleaders nor to many of the documents in the present compilation. Getzler then extracts from this initial report one isolated passage in order to claim that Agranov found "that the sailors' protest was 'entirely spontaneous'" and that his "findings flatly contradict the official line." This is sophistry, not scholarship!



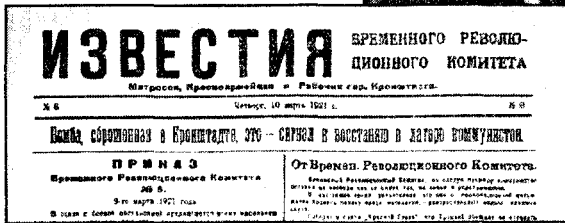


B. N. Kozlovsky Archive

**Kronstadt mutineers' *Izvestia* (below) served same interests as open counterrevolutionaries, Generals Kozlovsky (above) and Wrangel.**



State Archive of the Russian Federation



The Bolsheviks' "official line" was not that Kronstadt was a White Guard/imperialist conspiracy from start to finish and top to bottom, but rather that it served the interests of and was fully embraced by the counterrevolution. Even the brief passage Getzler cites from Agranov corroborates this, asserting that "the uprising took on a systematic character and was led by the experienced hand of the old generals" (Agranov, Report to Cheka Presidium, 5 April 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy* [our translation]).

In fact, as we shall see, the many documents in *Kronstadt Tragedy* studiously ignored by Getzler do indeed show that, far from being "entirely spontaneous," there was a counter-revolutionary conspiracy at the heart of the Kronstadt "toilers' revolution." They flesh out, in unambiguous detail, the scale and scope of organized White Guard activity in and around Kronstadt, meshing with the anonymous memorandum uncovered by Avrich. Indeed, one of the newly published documents is by the prominent White agent believed by Avrich to have authored that memorandum, counter-revolutionary National Center operative G. F. Tseidler, who boasts how right-wing émigrés from Finland (cloaked as a Red Cross delegation) were welcomed to Kronstadt by Petrichenko and other mutiny leaders. Another report, by a leading White agent resident in Finland, General G. E. Elvengren, not only credits a White Guard organization in Kronstadt with fomenting the uprising but explains why it was launched earlier than planned. Of particular interest in demonstrating a hidden hand behind the uprising are the numerous firsthand accounts that testify to the systematic deception employed by Petrichenko and his allies in order to bring a section of the garrison out with them.

In preparing this article, we also studied a number of other Russian-language materials, including both primary and sec-

ondary sources. Among these is a series of articles on the Kronstadt mutiny published throughout 1930-31 in the Leningrad historical journal *Krasnaia Letopis'*, including an analysis by Soviet historian A. S. Pukhov of how the social composition of the Kronstadt garrison changed between 1917 and 1921. We also consulted with Yuri Shchetinov, who wrote the introduction to *Kronstadt Tragedy*, and obtained from him excerpts of his earlier book, *Kronshtadt, mart 1921 g.* (Kronstadt, March 1921), whose publication was halted in 1992 after Yeltsin took the reins of power. All translations from *Kronstadt Tragedy* and other Russian-language sources are ours.

### The Class Character of the Kronstadt Mutiny

In "The Truth About Kronstadt," Trotskyist John G. Wright punctured the anarchist fairy tale that the Kronstadt rebels were just a mass of undifferentiated toilers fighting selflessly for the ideal of "free soviets." This notion obscures the distinct—and, at times, opposed—class forces operating. Rejecting a materialist class understanding, anarchists divide the world into powerful and powerless, rich and poor, lumping the peasant small-property holder and the urban factory worker together into a classless "people." But the peasant is not inherently collectivist and anti-capitalist; rather he is essentially a primitive small businessman who wants low prices on the things he

buys and high prices on the things he sells. As Wright observed:

"The supposition that soldiers and sailors could venture upon an insurrection under an abstract political slogan of 'free soviets' is absurd in itself.... These people could have been moved to an insurrection only by profound economic needs and interests. These were the needs and interests of the fathers and brothers of these sailors and soldiers, that is, of peasants as traders in food products and raw materials. In other words the mutiny was the expression of the petty bourgeoisie's reaction against the difficulties and privations imposed by the proletarian revolution."

— Wright, "The Truth About Kronstadt"

The workers revolution in Russia took place in a backward, overwhelmingly peasant country, creating, in Trotsky's words, a dictatorship of the proletariat resting on the poor peasantry. The long-term existence of Soviet Russia could only be assured through the spread of socialist revolution to the advanced industrial powers of West Europe and the rest of the world. In the meantime, the support or neutrality of the peasant masses was key to safeguarding the revolution. This meant winning over the poorer peasants with consumer goods, tractors and other manufactured products, ultimately laying the basis for a rural proletariat based on large-scale, collectivized farming.

But in the winter of 1920-21, Soviet Russia lay in ruins after seven years of imperialist war and civil war. The armies of 14 capitalist states had invaded revolutionary Russia. These provided assistance to capitalist-restorationist armies led by former tsarist military commanders Denikin, Kolchak, Wrangel, Yudenich and others, who ravaged the country and systematically massacred Jews and Communists, as well as militant workers and recalcitrant peasants. Industry and transport were paralyzed and major cities depopulated, as the starving foraged for food. In the countryside, famine and

pestilence on a scale not seen in centuries had driven the villages to the point of cannibalism. All this was exacerbated by an imperialist economic blockade. The policies the Bolsheviks improvised to cope with these calamities were dubbed "War Communism." At their core was seizure of grain from the peasantry in order to feed the cities and provision the Red Army. Throughout the Civil War, the mass of the peasantry accepted this as a lesser evil than the return of the White army.

By the fall of 1920, the main White and imperialist forces had finally been routed. But White troops still occupied the shores of the Black Sea near Georgia; the Japanese army remained in Russia's Far East until the end of 1922, and Wrangel still commanded up to 80,000 men under arms in Turkey. Then peasant resentment exploded. Shchetinov

## Возстающая Украина.



УКРАИНСКИЙ КРЕСТЬЯНИНЪ. — Вы требуете мой хлѣбъ?... Такъ есть же вамъ хлѣбъ!.

Hoover Library

Cartoon of "Insurgent Ukraine" at time of Makhno revolt depicts peasant hostility to grain requisition: "You demand my bread?... Then here's bread for you."

notes, "Towards the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921, armed uprisings flared up in the Tambov and Voronezh gubernias, in the Central Volga region, in the Don Basin, the Kuban, and in Western Siberia. Anti-Bolshevik rebels numbered at that time over 200,000" (Shchetinov, Introduction to *Kronstadt Tragedy*). These included some among the more than two million soldiers who had been demobilized from the Red Army with the end of the Civil War. In the Ukraine a substantial peasant partisan army, gathered around the anarchist adventurer Nestor Makhno, was now in revolt against Soviet power. As Trotsky observed:

"Only an entirely superficial person can see in Makhno's bands or in the Kronstadt revolt a struggle between the abstract principles of Anarchism and 'state socialism.' Actually these movements were convulsions of the peasant petty bourgeoisie which desired, of course, to liberate itself from capital but which at the same time did not consent to subordinate itself to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The petty bourgeoisie does not know concretely what it wants, and by virtue of its position cannot know."

—"Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt"

These peasant stirrings and revolts provided fertile soil for organized counterrevolutionary agitation and conspiracies.

These conditions directly influenced developments in Kronstadt. While the tsarist army had been overwhelmingly peasant in composition, the Baltic Fleet—with its reliance on engineering and technical skills—had a slim working-class majority in 1917. But as the most class-conscious fighters went off to the front lines of the Civil War or to take over administrative and command positions in the apparatus of the new workers state, they were replaced by more backward and more heavily peasant layers—including, by 1920-21, a sizable number of peasant recruits from the rebellious parts of the Ukraine.

Another factor affecting Kronstadt was the deep division within the Communist Party over where to go from "War Communism" and how to reinvigorate the *smychka*, the alliance of the peasantry with the workers state. In the months before the mutiny, a sharp dispute broke out pitting Trotsky against Lenin in the so-called "trade-union debate." Seizing on Trotsky's wrong-headedness, Zinoviev mobilized his own base in the Petrograd-Kronstadt area against Trotsky, whom he saw as a rival within the party leadership. Zinoviev opened the floodgates of the Kronstadt party organization to backward recruits while encouraging a poisonous atmosphere in the inner-party dispute. The rot in the Kronstadt Communist Party organization was a critical factor in allowing the mutiny to proceed, as Agranov noted in his Cheka report.

## Kronstadt Erupts

The Kronstadt revolt began in the wake of workers' protests that started in Petrograd on February 20 when a fuel crisis forced the closure of major factories. Through a combination of concessions to the workers and arrests of key Menshevik agitators, the government quickly quelled the protests without any bloodshed. But rumors of workers being shot and factories bombarded nonetheless made their way to Kronstadt on February 25.

Delegations of sailors from the warships *Petropavlovsk* and *Sevastopol* went to Petrograd and saw that these rumors were false. When they returned to Kronstadt on February 27, they did not, however, dispel the lies. Instead, fresh lies were heaped on—including that thousands of sailors in Petrograd had been arrested. Arms were distributed to the Kronstadt sailors. Shipboard meetings on February 28 were quickly followed by a March 1 mass meeting in Kronstadt's Anchor Square, which adopted a program of demands, and a delegated meeting on March 2 to discuss new elections to the local soviet. Communist speakers at these meetings were cut off.

Baltic Fleet commissar Kuzmin and two other Communist leaders were arrested at the March 2 meeting—supposedly to ensure "true freedom" for the elections! When the delegates balked at a proposal to arrest all other Communists at the meeting, this was met with a dramatic—and utterly baseless—announcement that armed Communist detachments were about to surround the hall and arrest all the participants. What ensued is vividly described in a Communist eyewitness account quoted by Shchetinov:

"In the panicked commotion a vote on something was rushed through. A few minutes later the chair of the meeting, Petrichenko, quieting down the meeting, announced that 'The Revolutionary Committee, formed of the presidium and elected by you, declares: "All Communists present are to be seized and not to be released until the situation is clarified." In two, three minutes, all Communists present were seized by armed sailors."

—quoted in Shchetinov,

Introduction to *Kronstadt Tragedy*

In fact, the "Provisional Revolutionary Committee" (PRC) had already "elected" itself and sent messages to the various Kronstadt posts *the night before*, declaring: "In view of the situation in Kronstadt at this time, the Communist Party is removed from power. The Provisional Revolutionary Committee is in charge. We ask that non-party comrades take control into their hands" ("To All Posts of Kronstadt," 2 March 1921, 1:35 a.m.; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*). Here was an early taste of "free soviets," anarchist-style!

Once the mutiny was under way, over 300 Communists were imprisoned; hundreds more fled. Agranov pointed out:

"The repression carried out by the PRC against those Communists who remained faithful to the communist revolution fully refutes the supposedly peaceful intentions of the rebels. Virtually all the minutes of the PRC sessions indicate that the struggle against the Communists still at large, and against those still in prison, remained an unrelenting focus of their attention. At the last phase, they even resorted to threats of field courts martial, in spite of their declared repeal of the death penalty."

—Agranov, Report to Cheka Presidium, 5 April 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*

It was the commandant of the prison, none other than an *anarchist* named Stanislav Shustov, who proposed shooting the leading Communists. In his report to the 25 March 1921 session of the Petrograd Soviet, fleet commissar Kuzmin described how the threat of mass executions was nearly carried out. Early on the morning of March 18, Shustov set up a machine gun outside the cell, which contained 23 prisoners. He was prevented from slaughtering the Communists only by the advance of the Red Army across the ice.

### A Program of Counterrevolution

As Lenin noted, "There was very little that was clear, definite and fully shaped" about the Kronstadt demands ("The Tax in Kind," 21 April 1921). They included new elections to the soviets; no restrictions on the anarchist and left socialist parties; no controls on trade-union or peasant organizations; freeing Menshevik and SR prisoners and those arrested in recent rural and urban unrest; equalization of rations; and pivotally, the demand to "grant the peasants full freedom of action on all land as they wish, and the right to own cattle, which they should tend to themselves, i.e., without the use of hired labour" (March 1 Resolution; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*). Had this petty-bourgeois program of unrestricted trade and opposition to any economic planning actually been carried out, it would have rapidly generated a new capitalist class from among the most successful peasants, artisans and enterprise managers and opened the door to a return of the old capitalists and the imperialists.

The program was carefully crafted with the peasant prejudices of the sailors in mind. The mutineers demanded the abolition of the political departments and Communist fighting detachments in all military units, and of Communist patrols in the factories. The call for "all power to the soviets and not the parties" was simply petty-bourgeois demagoguery designed to swindle the masses of sailors into supporting counterrevolution. In practice, it meant "Down with the Communists!" The more far-sighted adherents of counterrevolution understood that if the Communists were driven from power, whatever the slogans, it would be a short step to restoring capitalist rule. In the pages of his Paris-based newspaper, Constitutional Democrat (Kadet) leader Pavel Miliukov counseled his fellow reactionaries to accept the call,



ITAR-TASS

**Kadet leader Pavel Miliukov (left) with anarchist Peter Kropotkin at reactionary August 1917 State Conference in Moscow.**

"Down with the Bolsheviks! Long live the Soviets!" As this would likely mean only a temporary passing of power to "the moderate Socialists," argued the shrewd bourgeois Miliukov, "not only the Monarchists but other candidates for power living abroad have no rhyme or reason for being in a hurry" (*Poslednie Novosti*, 11-March 1921; quoted in Wright, "The Truth About Kronstadt").

What could the demand for "free soviets" mean in the context of Soviet Russia in 1921? Many of the most advanced workers had fought in the Red Army and perished or been drafted into important administrative posts. With the factories decimated and deprived of their best elements, the soviets atrophied. The regime of workers democracy was preserved by the layer of cadre in the Communist Party.

The revolutionary-minded elements of all the socialist and anarchist tendencies had gone over to the Bolsheviks, either individually or in regroupments. In 1917, the anarchists had briefly enjoyed some influence among the more volatile elements of the Petrograd proletariat and garrison because of their militant posture against the capitalist Provisional Government. After the October Revolution, the best of the anarcho-syndicalists, like Bill Shatov, a Russian American who had been a prominent Wobbly in the U.S., sided with the Bolsheviks in defense of the workers revolution. Those who didn't turned to criminality and terror against the workers state, from staging armed robberies to bombing Moscow Communist Party headquarters in 1919. The "socialist" parties that had joined the Provisional Government, the Mensheviks and Right SRs, were by 1921 empty shells and lackeys of counterrevolution. The Left SRs, after briefly serving in the Soviet government, joined in 1918 in underground terror against the workers state. The Mensheviks' posture of abiding by Soviet legality was dropped at every chance of a capitalist overthrow of the Soviet republic.

In Petrograd the remnants of the SRs, Mensheviks and various anarchists banded together in an "Assembly of Plenipotentiaries of the Factories and Shops of Petrograd." This shadowy, unelected bloc collaborated with the newly formed monarchist Petrograd Combat Organization (PCO), as the PCO itself asserted (PCO Report to Helsinki Department of National Center, no earlier than 28 March 1921;

reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*). The PCO even printed the Mensheviks' leaflets! On March 14, the Assembly issued a leaflet in solidarity with Kronstadt that said not one word about socialism or soviets, but instead called for an uprising against "the bloody communist regime" in the name of "all power to the people" ("Appeal to All Citizens, Workers, Red Army Soldiers and Sailors," 14 March 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*).

Despite lies spun by the press of the mutineers claiming mass uprisings in Petrograd and Moscow, even Menshevik leader Fyodor Dan admitted in a 1922 book that "There were no plenipotentiaries" and that "the Kronstadt mutiny was not supported by the Petersburg workers in any way" (quoted in "The Mensheviks in the Kronstadt Mutiny," *Krasnaia Letopis'*, 1931, No. 2). "The workers immediately felt that the Kronstadt mutineers stood on the opposite side of the barricades—and they supported the Soviet power," explained Trotsky ("Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt," 15 January 1938). It is noteworthy that even the wing of the Communist Party that most zealously sought to champion the immediate economic interests of the workers, the semi-syndicalist Workers Opposition, participated in the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising.

### Duplicity and Deception

The Agranov report noted that "all participants of the mutiny carefully hid their party physiognomy under the flag of being non-party" (Agranov, Report to Cheka Presidium). The mutiny leaders skillfully felt their way. For example, PRC chief Petrichenko pulled back after his proposed call to enfranchise all socialist parties was met with an angry rebuff from sailors at a March 1 meeting preceding the Anchor Square rally. According to Kuzmin, the crowd shouted at Petrichenko: "That's freedom for the right SRs and Mensheviks! No! No way!... We know all about their Constituent Assemblies! We don't need that!" (Kuzmin Report, Stenographic Report of Petrograd Soviet, 25 March 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*). Petrichenko's duplicity in calling for "free soviets" was already demonstrated in Avrich's *Kronstadt 1921*. Other PRC members were also opponents of soviet power: two were Mensheviks; a third was a member of the bourgeois Kadets, while the chief editor of the rebels' newspaper, *Izvestia of the PRC*, Sergei Putilin had been a long-time Kadet supporter. One of the Mensheviks, Vladislav Valk, openly advocated the Constituent Assembly, i.e., a bourgeois parliament. The Kadet on the PRC, Ivan Oreshin, captured the cynicism with which the leaders manipulated the sailors. Writing in an émigré newspaper shortly after the mutiny, he commented:

"The Kronstadt uprising broke out under the pretext of replacing the old Soviet, whose mandate had run out, with a new one based on secret balloting. The question of universal suffrage, extending the vote also to the bourgeoisie, was carefully avoided by the orators at the [March 1] demonstration. They did not want to evoke opposition among the insurgents themselves that the Bolsheviks could make use of.... They did not speak of the Constituent Assembly, but the assumption was that it could be arrived at gradually, via freely elected soviets."

—Oreshin, *Volia Rossii* (April-May 1921); quoted in Shchetinov, Introduction to *Kronstadt Tragedy*

The stench of White Guard reaction wafted ever more openly through Kronstadt as the mutiny progressed and the bid to draw in the Petrograd workers with talk of "free soviets" failed. Already on March 4, the commander of the *Sevas-*

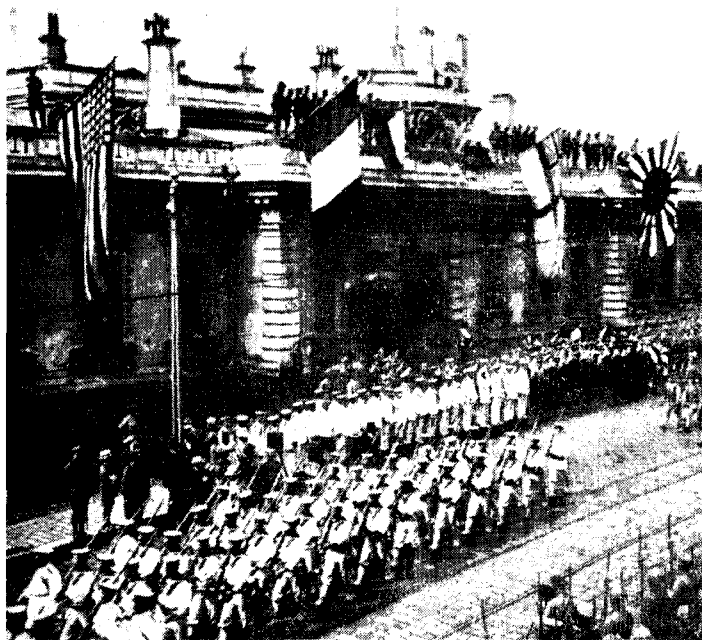
*topol* issued a written order that spoke of "long-suffering, tortured and dismembered Russia" and duty "to the motherland and the Russian people" (quoted in Agranov, Report to Cheka Presidium, 5 April 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*). By March 15, such language appeared in an official PRC appeal. Addressed above all to the White émigré "Russian people who have been ripped away from a Russia that lies torn from limb to limb," the appeal stated: "We fight now for the overthrow of the yoke of the party, for genuine soviet power, and then, let the free will of the people decide how it wants to govern itself" ("Appeal by Kronstadters," 15 March 1921; reprinted in *ibid.*). The appeal tellingly concluded with talk not of "free soviets" but of the "holy cause of the Russian toilers" in "the building of a free Russia." This was unambiguously a call for "democratic" counterrevolution. On March 21, three days after its dispersal, the PRC in exile issued an even more blatant appeal proclaiming: "Down With the Party Dictatorship, Long Live Free Russia, Long Live the Power Elected by the Whole of the Russian People!" ("To the Oppressed Peasants and Workers of Russia," 21 March 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*).

Notably, the March 15 appeal was issued by Petrichenko in direct response to the general staff's demands that the PRC secure outside aid. That same day, the PRC secretly dispatched two members to Finland to seek aid. When, on March 17, Petrichenko and the PRC tried to enforce the officers' decision that the crews of the *Petrovavlovsk* and *Sevastopol* abandon ship, blow up their artillery and flee to Finland, this was the last straw. The vast majority of the crews rose up, saved the vessels and arrested all the officers and PRC members they could get their hands on (cited in Agranov, Report to Cheka Presidium).

### Imperialists, Tsarist Officers and the PRC

If the Kronstadt mutiny was a "revolution," it was a very strange one, indeed—supported by the imperialists, the Russian monarchists and capitalists and their Menshevik and SR lackeys! The revolt, observed Trotsky in a 23 March 1921 article, led to an immediate rise on the Paris and Brussels stock exchanges, particularly in Russian securities ("Kronstadt and the Stock Exchange," *Kronstadt by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky*). The defeated White émigré forces hurriedly patched together combat units. A former member of General Denikin's entourage, N.N. Chebyshev, recalled in a 23 August 1924 article in the émigré press: "White officers roused themselves and started seeking ways to get to the fight in Kronstadt. Nobody was interested in who was there—SRs, Mensheviks or Bolsheviks who had become disenchanted with communism, but who still stood for the Soviets. The spark flew among the émigrés. Everybody's spirit was lifted by it" (quoted in Shchetinov, Introduction to *ibid.*).

Émigré leaders, whose appeals to West European states had earlier fallen on deaf ears, were now embraced. While accepting that France might have given some aid, Avrich argued in *Kronstadt 1921* that the Whites were basically spurned, checked by Western diplomatic obstacles. In fact, while France and Britain held back from open participation, they encouraged the small states bordering Russia to assist the mutiny. British foreign minister Lord Curzon wired his representative in Helsinki on March 11 stating: "His Majesty's Government are not prepared themselves to intervene in any way to assist the revolutionaries. Very confidential: There is



Boni and Liveright

**Imperialist troops march through Vladivostok under U.S., French, British and Japanese flags during Civil War.**

no reason, however, why you should advise the Finnish Government to take a similar course or to prevent any private societies or individuals from helping if they wish to do so" (*Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* [London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961]). Suffice it to say that deliveries of food supplies to Kronstadt were allowed to proceed without serious interference, as was the concentration of White expeditionary forces in Finland.

In his 1921 Cheka report, Agranov documented the authoritative role played by General Kozlovsky and other bourgeois officers on the general staff. The anarchists have long argued that these officers simply functioned in an advisory capacity, and had been, in any case, appointed as military specialists by the Bolshevik government. Viewed by the mass of sailors with extreme suspicion, the officers certainly kept a low profile. But where they had earlier served under the strict supervision of Communist commissars, now the commissars were in jail, and the generals were on top. Kozlovsky sneered as he seized control from the commissar of the Kronstadt Fortress (V.P. Gromov) at a March 2 meeting, "Your time is past. Now I shall do what has to be done" (quoted in A.S. Pukhov, "Kronstadt Under the Power of the Enemies of the Revolution," *Krasnaia Letopis'*, 1931, No. 1). A senior officer arrested in the wake of the mutiny further testified that in daily operational matters, "The Chairman of the PRC [Petrichenko] typically subordinated himself to the decision of the Chief of Defense [tsarist fort commander Solovianov] and did not raise objections to the latter's operational activities" (Minutes of Cheka Interrogation of P.A. Zelenoi, 26 March 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*).

Officers like Kozlovsky provided an invaluable connection to the White émigré forces with whom they had served in the tsarist army. Among the latter was Baron P.V. Vilken, the former commander of the *Sevastopol*, who was tied to the London-based Naval Organization, a White Guard spy nest closely monitored by the Soviet Cheka Foreign Department. Russian intelligence services have now published the moni-

tored Naval Organization correspondence and money transfers. The first of a series of telegrams described as "proposing necessary measures in support of the Kronstadt mutiny in Russia," sent on 25 February 1921, instructed an agent to receive "400 Pounds Sterling and send it via two checks to Helsinki, which needs the money in the beginning of March" (*Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia 20-x—40-x godov* [The Russian Military Emigration 1920s-1940s], Volume One [Moscow: Geya, 1998]).

While "left" apologists for the mutiny have no choice but to acknowledge that the imperialists hailed the uprising, they claim that the mutineers themselves had nothing to do with the imperialists or the Whites. Anarchists love to cite the 6 March 1921 editorial in *Izvestia of the PRC* that struck a pose of vigilant opposition to the Whites: "Look sharp. Do not let wolves in sheep's clothing approach the helmsman's bridge" (quoted in Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*). But we now know that two days after this editorial appeared, the PRC, behind the backs of the sailors, welcomed a whole pack of these wolves—including a courier from the SR Administrative Center; one Finnish Special Services agent; two representatives of the monarchist Petrograd Combat Organization; and four White Guard officers, including Vilken.

Vilken and another officer, General Yavit, were formally there as part of a three-man "Red Cross" delegation sent from Finland by National Center operative G.F. Tseidler. According to a detailed report by Tseidler to Russian Red Cross headquarters, a front for the Whites, the delegation was immediately invited to a joint session of the PRC and the general staff officers, where an agreement was reached for the provisioning of Kronstadt. When, Tseidler relates, one PRC member questioned "whether the PRC had the right to accept the proposed aid without first consulting the public that elected them," as it could be seen as proof of "selling out to the bourgeoisie," he was overruled with the line that "we cannot have continuous mass meetings" (Tseidler, *Red Cross Activity in Organizing Provisions Aid to Kronstadt*, 25 April 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*).

Further evidence of right-wing machinations behind the backs of the sailors comes from a 1922 article in an émigré newspaper in Finland by disillusioned PRC member Alexander Kupolov. This article caused a furor in White Guard Finland; Kupolov subsequently returned to Soviet Russia, where he was arrested and then released after agreeing to work for the Cheka. Kupolov writes:

"The PRC, seeing that Kronstadt was filling up with agents of a monarchist organization, issued a declaration that it would not enter into negotiations with, nor accept any aid from, any non-socialist parties.

"But if the PRC issued this declaration, Petrichenko and the General Staff secretly worked in connection with the monarchists and prepared the ground for an overthrow of the committee...."

—Kupolov, "Kronstadt and the Russian Counter-revolutionaries in Finland: From the Notes of a Former Member of the PRC," *Put'*, 4 January 1922; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*

According to Kupolov, Vilken also offered "an armed force of 800 men"—which the PRC, "taking into account the mood of the garrison, decided by a majority to decline."

Another PRC member, an anarchist named Perepelkin, told his Cheka interrogator that he had been upset by



Moscow State Historical Museum



Aurora-Kunstverlag, Leningrad

Baltic Fleet sailors who joined in storming Winter Palace during October Revolution. Kronstadt's social composition changed after revolution, as garrison attracted many looking to escape rigors of Civil War. Right: Detail of 1921 Boris Kustodiev painting, "Sailor with His Girlfriend."

Vilken's prominence in the mutiny. According to Cheka Petrograd regional chairman N. P. Komarov, Perepelkin said:

"And here I saw the former commander of the *Sevastopol*, Baron Vilken, with whom I had earlier sailed. And it is he who is now acknowledged by the PRC to be the representative of the delegation that is offering us aid. I was outraged by this. I called together all the members of the PRC and said, so that's the situation we're in, that's who we're forced to talk to. Petrichenko and the others jumped on me, saying, 'When we don't have food or medicine—it's all going to run out on March 21—are we really supposed to surrender to the conquerors? There was no other way out,' they said. I stopped arguing and said I would accept the proposal. And on the second day we received 400 poods of food and cigarettes. Those who agreed to mutual friendship with the White Guard baron yesterday shouted that they were for Soviet power."

—Komarov Report, Stenographic Report of Petrograd Soviet, 25 March 1921; reprinted in *ibid.*

Vilken urged the PRC to come out for the Constituent Assembly. Komarov reports asking Perepelkin: "And if on the day after, the baron had demanded of you not just the demand for a Constituent Assembly, but for a military dictatorship? Then how would you have dealt with the question?" Perepelkin replied, "I admit it, I can now frankly state that we would have adopted that as well—we had no other way out." This was the "third revolution"!

Vilken was to remain at Kronstadt, essentially part of the operational leadership along with Petrichenko and the general staff, until the end. He was even invited to address a special crew meeting on his former command, the *Sevastopol*, on March 11. Tseidler himself (along with General Wrangel's political representative in Finland, Professor Grimm) was mandated to represent Kronstadt as the government of the liberated territory of Russia. One of the first acts of the "Independent Republic of Kronstadt" was a radiogram, whose interception was reported into a March 9 session of the Bolshevik Tenth Party Congress then meeting in Moscow, congratulating Warren G. Harding upon his inauguration as U.S. president (cited in Shchetinov, Introduction to *Kronstadt Tragedy*!).

Writing in 1938, Trotsky stated: "The logic of the struggle would have given predominance in the fortress to the extremists, that is, to the most counterrevolutionary elements. The

need for supplies would have made the fortress directly dependent upon the foreign bourgeoisie and their agents, the White émigrés. All the necessary preparations towards this end were already being made" (Trotsky, "Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt"). The archives completely vindicate Trotsky.

### The Anarchist School of Falsification

As we have noted, current anarchist apologists for Kronstadt make much of the work of Israeli academic Israel Getzler. The Infoshop Web site, for example, features an exhaustively anti-Leninist 100-plus-page tract on Kronstadt that claims, "Anarchist accounts have been validated by later research while Trotskyist assertions have been exploded time and time again" ("What Was the Kronstadt Rebellion?", [www.infoshop.org](http://www.infoshop.org), undated). Let us see. Getzler pompously declaims that "the question of the spontaneity of the revolt, which has bedevilled the historiography of the Kronstadt movement for six decades, [is] now settled—at least to my satisfaction" ("The Communist Leaders' Role in the Kronstadt Tragedy of 1921 in the Light of Recently Published Archival Documents," *Revolutionary Russia*, June 2002). All this because Cheka commissioner Agranov wrote, on the basis of the very limited evidence available in the days immediately after the mutiny, that "this investigation failed to show that the outbreak of the mutiny was preceded by the activity of any counterrevolutionary organization at work among the fortress's command or that it was the work of [imperialist] *Entente* spies" (Agranov, Report to Cheka Presidium, 5 April 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*).

To read Getzler's article, you would not know that *Kronstadt Tragedy* also includes a crucial White Guard report that did not even exist at the time of the initial Cheka investigation. In it, General G. E. Elvengren, Wrangel's military representative in Finland, categorically asserts that there was an organized White operation at Kronstadt and explains why the mutiny was launched before the ice had melted:

"The key is that the Kronstadt sailors (the local organization connected with the broader organization), upon learning of the beginning of the movement in Petrograd and of its scale, took it for a general rising. Not wanting to passively remain on the sidelines, they decided, despite the agreed upon timetable, to



go to Petrograd on the icebreaker *Ermak*, and take their place alongside those who had already come out. In Petrograd they immediately got oriented and saw that things were not as they expected. They had to quickly return to Kronstadt. The movement in Petrograd had died down, all was quiet, but they—the sailors—who were now compromised before the Commissars, knew that they would be repressed, and decided to take the next step and use the isolation of Kronstadt to announce their break from soviet power and to independently drive ahead their rising that they were thus compelled to begin.”

—Elvengren, Report to Russian Evacuation Committee in Poland, no later than 18 April 1921; reprinted in *ibid.*

While ignoring the Elvengren document, Getzler quotes a few isolated snippets on spontaneity from the testimony of participants. These are, to say the least, highly selective. Getzler cites Anatoly Lamanov, an editor of *Izvestia of the PRC*. Lamanov was an important front for the mutiny because he had been chairman of the 1917 Kronstadt Soviet and thus embodied the supposed continuity with Red Kronstadt. After his arrest, Lamanov told the Cheka: “The Kronstadt mutiny came as a surprise to me. I viewed the mutiny as a spontaneous movement” (Minutes of Cheka Interrogation of Anatoly Lamanov, 19 March 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*). This statement Getzler cites. What Getzler does *not* quote is Lamanov’s admission, a few sentences from the above, that after a March 11 delegated meeting in which Vilken participated:

“I changed my mind about the movement, and from that point no longer considered it to be spontaneous. Up until the seizure of Kronstadt by Soviet troops I thought the movement had been organized by the Left SRs. After I became convinced that the movement was not spontaneous, I no longer sympathized with it. I continued to take part in the *Izvestia* only because of my fears that the movement would lurch to the right....  
“Now I am firmly convinced, that, without a doubt, White Guards, both Russian and foreign, took part in the movement. The escape to Finland convinced me of this. Now I consider my participation in this movement to have been an unforgivable, stupid mistake.”

—Minutes of Cheka Interrogation of Anatoly Lamanov, 19 March 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*

Before “settling”—to his satisfaction—the question of the mutiny’s spontaneity, in 1983 Getzler similarly trumpeted “hard statistical data” disproving Bolshevik assertions that the social composition of the Kronstadt garrison had changed drastically between 1917 and 1921 (Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983]). The Infoshop article claims that Getzler’s “findings are conclusive.” How conclusive? In a footnote, Getzler cites the following source for his evidence:

“See Pukhov, ‘Kronshtadt i baltiiskii flot pered miatezhom’ [Kronstadt and the Baltic Fleet Before the Mutiny] for data referring to the year of birth (rather than that of enlistment) of sailors serving in the Baltic Fleet as of 1 January 1921, which suggest that at least some 80% were veterans of the 1917 revolution.”

—Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921*

We examined Pukhov’s article. Pukhov did *not* infer from the sailors’ ages that they had been in Kronstadt in 1917—just the opposite. Pukhov concluded:

“Over the course of barely two years the Baltic Fleet was systematically re-staffed with wayward, dissembling, déclassé elements, which to a powerful degree determined the process of the degeneration of the personnel and the transformation of its social and political profile to the point that, by the beginning of 1921, it was unrecognizable.”

—A.S. Pukhov, “Kronstadt and the Baltic Fleet Before the 1921 Mutiny,” *Krasnaia Letopis*, 1930, No. 6

Pukhov explained that the proletarian elements of the

Baltic Fleet provided a steady “reserve of firm fighters who fought with exceptional courage at all the most difficult stages of the victorious revolution,” sent to “the most dangerous fronts of the Civil War and to the most demanding outposts” of the new state administration. But this reserve had limits, and those who came as replacements were drawn to Kronstadt precisely because it was *not* near the front lines and offered better food and clothing than did the Red Army. Beginning in 1918, “reinforcements for the fleet were recruited on a volunteer basis, through a special Hiring Bureau and also through hiring campaigns organized directly by the ship committees:

“Free access of volunteers to the fleet and the partisan-clique mentality in which the Ship Committees assembled their crews, ultimately led to alien class elements seeping into the fleet.... Together with young workers and old sailors who were rooted in dedication to the fleet and eager to labor for the strengthening of a red, socialist fleet, there frequently also entered high-school and trade-school students, just plain mama’s boys from among the former nobility, the children of speculators, characters with a shady past, and so forth. It is typical of this period that S. Petrichenko, the future ‘leader’ of the Kronstadt mutiny, came to ‘serve’ as a clerk.”

—*Ibid.*

When the fleet shifted over to conscription, “The older sailors who were now re-conscripted [originally drafted under tsarism] came, in their overwhelming majority, from the villages, where they had already managed to get ‘peasantized’” (*ibid.*). Finally, as crew shortages climbed to 60 percent in late 1920, the Baltic Fleet began receiving “skilled” reinforcements from the Red Army:

“Consciously or not, the Red Army sent disreputable soldiers. Notable among them were former deserters, the undisciplined, and so forth. That is, the Red Army sent those who were useless to it and unwanted from among the reserve units. And the

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fleet was obliged to take in these 'skilled' reinforcements, because they had a crying need for them."

—*Ibid.*

Getzler also asserts, again to hosannas from Infoshop, that of the 2,028 *Petropavlovsk* and *Sevastopol* crew members whose years of enlistment are known, "Only some 137 sailors or 6.8% were recruited in the years 1918-21, including three who were conscripted in 1921, and they were the only ones who had not been there during the 1917 revolution." Getzler's only proof for this is February 1921 crew lists cited in S. N. Semanov's *Likvidatsiia antisovetskogo Kronshadtskogo myatezha 1921 goda* (The Suppression of the 1921 Anti-Soviet Kronstadt Mutiny; originally published in *Voprosy istorii*, 1971, No. 3). We examined Semanov's lists as well; they indicated *when* the sailors enlisted, but not *where* they had served in 1917. The evidence indicates that the 1921 crews were overwhelmingly not veterans of Kronstadt 1917. For example, in his unpublished *Kronstadt, March 1921*, Yuri Shchetinov shows that the crew of the *Petropavlovsk* was reduced from nearly 1,400 to just 200 by late 1918; the majority of the replacements were not veteran Kronstadters but conscripts—former crewmen of navy, merchant marine and river vessels—who had *quit* after the revolution rather than serve voluntarily in the newly constituted Red Navy: "Among those mobilized were not a few sailors who had served in the Black Sea and Northern Fleets, where, by comparison to the Baltic Fleet, the influence of SRs and anarchists was notably greater" (Shchetinov. *Kronstadt, March 1921*).

In the Introduction to *Kronstadt Tragedy*, Shchetinov states categorically: "In the year of 1920 alone, 10,000 sailors and Red Army soldiers, out of a force of 17,000, were replaced by draftees." And no less an authority than Kadet PRC member Ivan Oreshin, in a 1924 article in an émigré journal, confirmed the "official Bolshevik line" (as Getzler would put it):

"The sailors were already not like those of 1917-1918. The revolutionary lustre had long been gone. They had become lazy and had lost that reckless enthusiasm with which they

had dispersed the Constituent Assembly. Many had visited home to the village and had seen with their own eyes the ruinous conditions that the Bolsheviks had brought about. They turned against their own power."

—"The Kronstadt Uprising and Its Meaning,"  
6 June 1924; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*

Finally, we have Paul Avrich making it clear that the mutineers of 1921 were not the red Kronstadters of 1917: "Although the rebels...denied any anti-Semitic prejudice, there is no question that feelings against the Jews ran high among the Baltic sailors, many of whom came from the Ukraine and the western borderlands, the classic regions of virulent anti-Semitism in Russia" (Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*). *Izvestia* editor Lamanov admitted that anti-Semitic poison about the Jews having "murdered Russia" was so rife—and that "quite often authors would bring in writings of this sort"—that he made it his job "to block anti-Semitic propaganda" (Further Minutes of Questioning of Anatoly Lamanov, 25 March 1921; reprinted in *Kronstadt Tragedy*). These sanitized *Izvestia* articles were then held up as "proof" of the mutineers' revolutionary intentions by Voline and other anarchist apologists who, to use Trotsky's words, "quote the proclamations of the insurgents like pious preachers quoting Holy Scriptures" ("Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt").

### Trotsky's Role During the Kronstadt Crisis

Well before Kronstadt erupted, it was clear to the Bolshevik leaders that the regime of War Communism had run its course. After months of discussion, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was formally adopted at the Tenth Party Congress, which met as the mutiny raged. Already in February 1920, Trotsky had proposed replacing forcible grain requisitions with a tax that the government would collect in the form of agricultural products—a "tax in kind"—the core of the NEP. His proposal was then rejected, and Trotsky responded by seeking to implement and extend War Communism with heightened military-administrative zeal, advocating in a fac-

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tional fashion that the Soviet trade unions merge with the state apparatus to run the economy. Behind this proposal lay the assumption that in a workers state, basic organizations of working-class defense like unions were at best superfluous, and at worst levers for the kind of retrograde economic and bureaucratic resistance he had contended with as commander of the Red Army during the Civil War.

Thus did Trotsky initiate the trade-union fight that rent the party on the eve of the Tenth Congress. Lenin took the fight against Trotsky and his allies into a broader party discussion. As we wrote:

"Lenin was correct to insist that in the concrete conditions then prevailing in Soviet Russia, the trade unions were necessary organs for the defense of the working class, not just in counterposition to the peasant majority with whom it was allied, but also against real bureaucratic abuse by the Soviet state itself...."

"It appeared to Lenin that Trotsky, with his previous factional zeal and indifference to protecting the non-party masses against the nascent bureaucracy, was putting himself forward as the spokesman for the growing bureaucratic layer."

—"Trotsky and the Russian Left Opposition,"  
*Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001

Trotsky lost a lot of authority, making himself vulnerable to internal opponents like Zinoviev (and Stalin).

In his July 1938 article on Kronstadt, Trotsky addressed the repeated smear that he personally waded in the blood of the mutineers. Trotsky recalled that he had come to Moscow for the congress and stayed there throughout the Kronstadt events. In fact, Trotsky did leave Moscow for Petrograd for four days beginning on March 5. That day he issued an ultimatum ordering the sailors to surrender unconditionally. He also organized a new command under Mikhail Tukhachevsky for the suppression of the revolt. After Tukhachevsky's first assault on Kronstadt on March 7-8 failed, Trotsky rushed back to Moscow to rouse the congress delegates. That was the extent of his direct role in putting down the mutiny. Trotsky explained:

"The truth of the matter is that *I personally did not participate in the least in the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion, nor in the repressions following the suppression.* In my eyes this very fact is of no political significance. I was a member of the government, I considered the quelling of the rebellion necessary and therefore bear responsibility for the suppression...."

"How did it happen that I did not go personally to Kronstadt? The reason was of a political nature. The rebellion broke out during the discussion on the so-called 'trade union' question. The political work in Kronstadt was wholly in the hands of the Petrograd committee, at the head of which stood Zinoviev. The same Zinoviev was the chief, most untiring, and most passionate leader in the struggle against me in the discussion."

—Trotsky, "More on the Suppression of Kronstadt,"  
6 July 1938

Zinoviev demagogically exploited Trotsky's wrong position on the trade-union question to inflame sentiment against Trotsky and his allies—among them Baltic Fleet commander F.F. Raskolnikov. On 19 January 1921, Trotsky participated in a public debate on the trade-union dispute before 3,500 Baltic Fleet sailors. "The commanding personnel of the fleet was isolated and terrified," Trotsky recalled (*ibid.*). The "dandified and well-fed sailors, Communists in name only" voted by some 90 percent for Zinoviev's resolution. Trotsky continued:

"The overwhelming majority of the sailor 'Communists' who supported Zinoviev's resolution took part in the rebellion. I considered, and the Political Bureau made no objections, that negotiations with the sailors and, in case of necessity, their pacification, should be placed with those leaders who only

yesterday enjoyed the political confidence of these sailors. Otherwise, the Kronstadters would consider the matter as though I had come to take 'revenge' upon them for their voting against me during the party discussion."

—*Ibid.*

In "The Truth About Kronstadt," John G. Wright acknowledges that insofar as the Zinovievite fleet commissar Kuzmin and the other local Communist leaders were blind to the full extent of the danger brewing at Kronstadt, they "facilitated the counterrevolutionists' work of utilizing the objective difficulties to attain their ends." But Wright stresses that what was at play was the fundamental counterposition of two class camps: "All other questions can be only of a secondary importance. That the Bolsheviks may have committed errors of a general or concrete character cannot alter the fact that they defended the acquisitions of the proletarian revolution against the bourgeois (and petty-bourgeois) reaction" ("The Truth About Kronstadt").

## Revolution vs. Counterrevolution

The great crime of the Bolsheviks, from the viewpoint of their "democratic" critics, is that they *won*. For the first time in history, a propertyless, oppressed class took and held power, proving in practice that the proletariat can indeed rule. That is what the "hue and cry about Kronstadt" has always been about.

The Infoshop anarchists sneer at the "'Leninist principle' ('inviolable for every Bolshevik') that 'the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can be realized only through the dictatorship of the party'" ("What Was the Kronstadt Rebellion?"). Instead they put forth the Kronstadt slogan, "All power to the Soviets and not to the parties." This attempt to counterpose the interests of the class, organized in soviets, to that of its revolutionary vanguard, organized in a Leninist party, is typical of the crude anti-leadership prejudices of the anarchists. If there was ever an example that proved that workers rule depended on the firm leadership of the communist vanguard—"the dictatorship of the party," if you will—it was Kronstadt in 1921. The simple fact is that *every other tendency in the workers movement, whether Menshevik or anarchist, supported counterrevolution!*

In a stable workers state Leninists favor full democratic rights for all political tendencies that do not seek the forcible overthrow of the proletarian dictatorship. That includes recognizing the possibility of the Communists losing a vote in soviet bodies. But the embattled Russian workers republic of 1918-22 was anything but stable, and had the Bolsheviks stepped down to be replaced by social-democratic, populist or anarchist elements, then very soon both the Leninists and their petty-bourgeois opponents would have found themselves facing the White firing squads.

The suppression of Kronstadt gained time for the beleaguered Soviet workers state to revitalize the economy and the working class—and thus recreate the conditions for a vibrant soviet democracy—and to fight for the proletarian revolution to conquer elsewhere. Had the revolutionary opportunity in industrialized Germany two years later resulted in a proletarian victory, this would have been of decisive significance for the future not only of Soviet Russia but of the world socialist revolution (see "Rearming Bolshevism: A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern," *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001). Feeding off the defeat in Germany, a bureaucratic layer in the Soviet party and state apparatus usurped

political power from the proletariat and its Bolshevik vanguard.

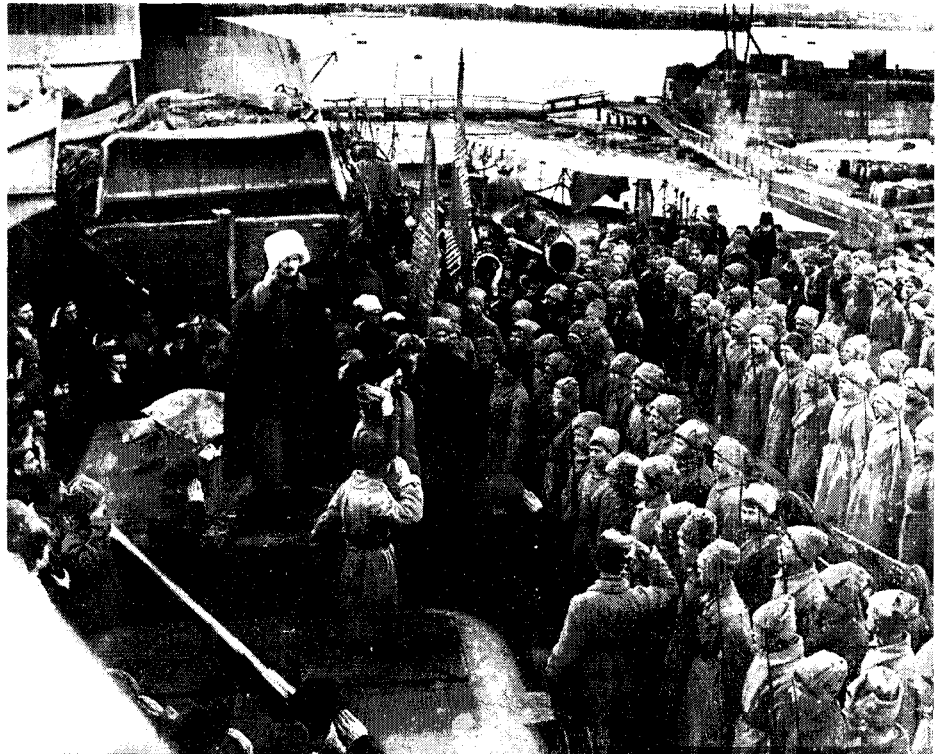
The international character of the proletarian revolution is alien to the petty-bourgeois provincialist mindset of anarchism. In his 1945 diatribe, the Russian anarchist Voline *condemns* the Bolshevik regime for dispatching the red Kronstadters of 1918 "wherever the internal situation became uncertain, threatening or dangerous" and for mobilizing them "to preach to the peasants the idea of solidarity and revolutionary duty, and, in particular, the necessity for feeding the cities" (*The Unknown Revolution*). This, cries Voline, constituted a "Machiavellian scheme" to "weaken, impoverish and exhaust" Kronstadt. Voline's subordination of the interests of the all-Russia—much less, the world—revolution to the supposed integrity of Kronstadt underlines the idiot parochialism inherent in the anarchists' conception of autonomous "federated communes."

In our review of Avrich's *Kronstadt 1921*, we asked: "What is the anarchist answer to the Allied blockade, flooded coal mines, torn-up railroads and blasted bridges, etc., with the consequence that there was nothing to trade the peasantry in exchange for its grain?" (*WV* No. 195, 3 March 1978). The imperialists and Whites sought to drive a wedge between the workers government and the vast peasant masses. The Bolsheviks, possessing limited means and no functional large-scale industry, had to make concessions to the peasantry and to small-scale commodity production and trade. But the NEP could only be a temporary retreat—it had its own dangers, as became clear when the emboldened kulaks, the wealthier peasants, rebelled a few years later.

As liberal idealists, the anarchists are masters at evading the concrete material conditions that the workers revolution had to deal with. The Infoshop authors acknowledge, at least on paper, the dire situation facing revolutionary Russia at the time. They glibly assert that the key to rebuilding the country was the participation of the working class and peasantry in "free class organizations like freely elected soviets and unions" ("What Was the Kronstadt Rebellion?"). We have seen already what the anarchists' "free soviets" would have meant in practice—a return to White rule and a "temporary military dictatorship."

In "The Tax in Kind," Lenin exposed the blindness of the left Menshevik Julius Martov:

"Martov showed himself to be nothing but a philistine Narcissus when he declared in his Berlin journal that Kronstadt not only adopted Menshevik slogans but also proved that there could be an anti-Bolshevik movement which did not entirely serve the interests of the whiteguards, the capitalists and the landowners. He says in effect: 'Let us shut our eyes to the fact that all the genuine whiteguards hailed the Kronstadt mutineers and collected funds in aid of Kronstadt through the banks!' Compared with the Chernovs and Mar-



RGAKFD

**Bolshevik commander A.I. Sedyakin at the salute aboard battleship *Petrovlovsk* after suppression of mutiny.**

tovs, Milyukov is right, for he is revealing the *true* tactics of the *real* whiteguard force, the force of the capitalists and landowners. He declares: 'It does not matter whom we support, be they anarchists or any sort of Soviet government, *as long as the Bolsheviks are overthrown, as long as there is a shift in power...* As for the rest—'we,' the Milyukovs, 'we,' the capitalists and landowners, will do the rest 'ourselves'; we shall slap down the anarchist pygmies, the Chernovs and the Martovs.'

—Lenin, "The Tax in Kind," 21 April 1921

Lenin's trenchant analysis is complemented by a grudging confirmation from the other side of the class line, Wrangel's front man General A. A. Von Lampe. Not blinkered by Martov's petty-bourgeois mystifications, this class-conscious bourgeois sarcastically noted in his diary how the SRs' *The Truth About Kronstadt*, was "full of justifications to dispel the thought, God forbid, that the sailors were under the influence of former officers" (quoted in Shechetinov, Introduction to *Kronstadt Tragedy*). "The SRs don't understand that in such a struggle, what are needed are severe and determined measures," he said, concluding: "It seems that, like it or not, one has to come to Lenin's conclusion that in Russia there can be only one of two powers: monarchist or Communist."

What the bourgeoisie and their hacks, from the Mensheviks to Infoshop, cannot forgive is that Lenin and Trotsky did apply determined measures against the Kronstadt mutiny. The proletariat owes an eternal debt to the 1,385 Red Army soldiers and commanders who gave their lives, and the 2,577 who were wounded, to defend the young Soviet workers state. The fresh historical evidence collected in *Kronstadt Tragedy* offers a compelling indictment of the lackeys of counterrevolution who smeared those revolutionary martyrs. ■

**Empire, Multitude and the "Death of Communism"**

# The Senile Dementia of Post-Marxism

The November 1999 "battle of Seattle" protests against the World Trade Organization made "anti-globalization" a household word. The publication shortly thereafter of *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) turned its authors, a young American academic named Michael Hardt and his mentor, veteran Italian New Left intellectual Antonio Negri, into self-appointed media spokesmen for anti-globalization activists. Loaded with arcane post-modernist jargon and paragraph-length sentences, this dense, often impenetrable opus was far more widely talked about than read. But its promise of providing some theoretical coherence to a disparate protest movement made *Empire* and its sequel, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), a focal point in a larger debate about globalization, class and social change in the post-Soviet era.

In *Empire* and *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri seemed to synthesize the ideas of a layer of "post-Marxist" intellectuals who maintain that the structure and functioning of world capitalism has changed fundamentally over the past few decades. Because we now live in a "post-industrial, information-based" economy, they argue, the industrial proletariat is no longer the uniquely revolutionary social force that traditional Marxist doctrine holds it to be. Transnational corporations

and banks have effected a complete globalization of production. States and other forms of centrally organized power have been superseded by an intangible network of global interconnections, "Empire." Hardt and Negri conclude:

"The current global recomposition of social classes, the hegemony of immaterial labor, and the forms of decision-making based on network structures all radically change the conditions of any revolutionary process. The traditional modern conception of insurrection, for example, which was defined primarily in the numerous episodes from the Paris Commune to the October Revolution, was characterized by a movement from the insurrectional activity of the masses to the creation of political vanguards, from civil war to the building of a revolutionary government, from the construction of organizations of counterpower to the conquest of state power, and from opening the constituent process to establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such sequences of revolutionary activity are unimaginable today."

—*Multitude*

Claiming to update Marx, Hardt and Negri jettison the programmatic core of Marxism: *proletarian revolution to overthrow the capitalist system*. They dismiss the lessons distilled from the 1871 Paris Commune, the first proletarian insurrection, and the subsequent history of the revolutionary workers movement. They deride class war and proletarian power as "old, tired and faded" notions (*ibid.*). But far from



Seattle, November 1999. Antonio Negri (featured in Argentine *Clarín*) spins "theories" to bolster anti-Marxist prejudices of petty-bourgeois radicals.

proposing anything new, Hardt and Negri offer up an amalgam of anarchistic lifestyle radicalism and utopian reformism reminiscent of the “counterculture” trend in the 1960s New Left: “As we will argue in the course of this book, resistance, exodus, the emptying out of the enemy’s power, and the multitude’s construction of a new society are one and the same process” (*ibid.*).

Noting that Negri “has learned nothing and forgotten nothing” since the 1970s, reviewer Tony Judt captured something of the dreary quality of *Empire* and *Multitude* in his “Dreams of Empire”:

“This is globalization for the politically challenged. In the place of the boring old class struggle we have the voracious imperial nexus now facing a challenger of its own creation, the decentered multitudinous commonality: Alien versus Predator.... With the American left reading *Multitude*, Dick Cheney can sleep easy.”

—*New York Review of Books*, 4 November 2004

After some 900 tortuous pages of *Empire* and its sequel, Hardt and Negri allow that they cannot, in a “philosophical book like this,...evaluate whether the time of revolutionary political decision is imminent,” adding: “A book like this is not the place either to answer the question ‘What is to be done?’” (*Multitude*). This frankly know-nothing conclusion corresponds to the vaunted diversity of what’s called a “movement of movements,” of “one no and a million yeses.”

As Marxists and Leninists we do know what is to be done. We are fighting for new October Revolutions: the overthrow of the capitalist system by the proletariat, allied with other sections of the exploited and oppressed. The victory of the proletariat on a world scale would place unimagined material abundance at the service of human needs, lay the basis for the elimination of classes, the eradication of social inequality based on sex and the very abolition of the social significance of race, nation and ethnicity. For the first time mankind will grasp the reins of history and control its own creation, society, resulting in an undreamed-of emancipation of human potential.

In the late 1930s, following the victory of fascism in Germany and the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky observed: “As always during epochs of reaction and decay, quacks and charlatans appear on all sides, desirous of revising the whole course of revolutionary thought” (Transitional Program [1938]). The triumph of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe in the early 1990s has nurtured a new generation of ideological quacks and charlatans. Hardt and Negri peddle their ideological wares to young leftists who, having no sense of the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, accept the subjective outlook that a new world will be won not by uprooting the material reality of oppression but by changing the ideas in people’s heads.

It is therefore necessary to reassert the basic premises of historical materialism and the corresponding programmatic principles of Marxism. In doing so, we recall the example of Friedrich Engels’ polemic against a charlatan of his day, *Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (1877-78). Engels actively collaborated with Marx in writing this work, which is commonly known as *Anti-Dühring* (sections of which were later published in abridged form as *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* [1880]). Engels derided Dühring for excelling in “bumptious pseudo-science” and “sublime nonsense” and charged him guilty of “mental incompetence due to megalomania.” But he also methodically dissected Dühring’s argu-



W. Hall



**Friedrich Engels’ *Anti-Dühring*, first published in book form in 1878.**

ments and his idealist philosophical outlook, producing a powerful exposition of the materialist conception of history.

### **For a Materialist Understanding of Class Society**

Hardt and Negri toss sand in the eyes of young leftist activists outraged by the manifold horrors of the world capitalist system—the destitution of the masses in the “global South,” racist terror, imperialist war—by providing obscure, confusionist and demonstrably false “theoretical” justifications for prevailing anti-communist prejudices. They solace the largely petty-bourgeois anti-globalization milieu with the false belief that it is itself a force for social change, denying the need for would-be revolutionaries to ally with the social power of the proletariat. They mangle precise Marxist terms like “class” and promote an “anti-capitalist” movement, centered on the World Social Forum, that is funded by and relies on capitalist foundations and even capitalist governments. Throughout, they make absolutely no attempt to analyze reality or provide hard facts to back up their impressionistic claims.

Contrast the meticulously researched historical and statistical documentation to be found in Marx’s *Capital* or Lenin’s *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* with how Hardt and Negri spin economic and political theories that the reader must accept, like religion, on faith. A review of *Multitude* by Tom Nairn, long associated with *New Left Review*, takes note of Hardt and Negri’s rejection of both Marxism and capitalist neoliberalism in favor of an essentially spiritual approach. Citing the authors’ fixation with 17th-century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, a precursor to 18th-century Enlightenment rationalism, Nairn comments: “Many readers will sense something odd about such reliance on a vision predating not only David Hume and Adam Smith, but Darwin, Freud, Marx and Durkheim, from an age when genes and the structure of human DNA were undreamt of” (“Make for the Boondocks,” *London Review of Books*, 5 May 2005). A more recent post-Marxist discourse by Malcolm Bull, citing Cicero, Aristotle and Thomas Hobbes among others, argues that Hardt and Negri misconstrue poor Spinoza, whose concept of “multitude” in any case provides no framework for discussion of

contemporary politics ("The Limits of Multitude," *New Left Review*, September-October 2005).

Hardt and Negri are representative of what we have described as a profound retrogression in political consciousness—especially pronounced among the leftist intelligentsia—which prepared and was in turn deepened by the final overturn of the October Revolution and imperialist triumphalism over the supposed "death of communism." This is an era truly awash in bumptious pseudoscience, in which increasingly influential Christian fundamentalist forces in the corridors of power of the world's most powerful state try to palm off the biblical creation myth as the last word in "science."

Most young leftists now consider not only proletarian socialism but any form of programmatically defined revolutionary strategy off the agenda. Much of the pseudo-Marxist left disavows even nominal adherence to the Marxist aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat—the replacement of capitalist class rule by the revolutionary rule of the working class. In a short polemic against post-modern idealism titled "In Defence of History," historian Eric Hobsbawm commented:

"Most intellectuals who became Marxists from the 1880s on, including historians, did so because they wanted to change the world in association with the labour and socialist movements. The motivation remained strong until the 1970s, before a massive political and ideological reaction against Marxism began. Its main effect has been to destroy the belief that the success of a particular way of organising human societies can be predicted and assisted by historical analysis."

—*Guardian* [London], 15 January 2005

Marxism took the struggle for an egalitarian society out of the realm of a spiritual or philosophical ideal and rooted it in a scientific, materialist analysis of the historical development of human society. "The final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange," wrote Engels in *Anti-Dühring*. Poverty, oppression, exploitation and war are not caused by bad ideas, greed, power-lust or other presumed traits of a supposedly unchanging "human nature."

The course of human history has been shaped by an ongoing struggle to secure enough food, clothing and shelter to provide for survival and propagation.

For many thousands of years, humans lived in small kinship groups, sharing what they got through hunting and gathering, on the basis of a rough communism of distribution. The invention of agriculture allowed for the production of a surplus beyond that necessary for immediate survival, opening the road to further development of the means of production and posing the question of who would appropriate that surplus and how. The development of private property and the division of society into classes also brought the rise of the family, the chief institution for the oppression of women (and youth), as a way of handing down privately appropriated wealth to the next generation. All history since has been the history of class struggle: "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman,

in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes" (Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* [1848]).

### Capitalism, Imperialism and the Nation-State

Capitalism was historically progressive because it enormously raised the productive forces of society—so much so, that for the first time there was a material basis for envisioning an end to scarcity and class divisions altogether: "Only the immense increase of the productive forces attained by modern industry has made it possible to distribute labour among all members of society without exception, and thereby to limit the labour-time of each individual member to such an extent that all have enough free time left to take part in the general—both theoretical and practical—affairs of society" (*Anti-Dühring*).

At the same time, private ownership of the means of production increasingly became a barrier to the continued development of the productive forces. Engels explained:

"Both the productive forces created by the modern capitalist mode of production and the system of distribution of goods established by it have come into crying contradiction with that mode of production itself, and in fact to such a degree that, if the whole of modern society is not to perish, a revolution in the mode of production and distribution must take place, a revolution which will put an end to all class distinctions. On this tangible, material fact, which is impressing itself in a more or less clear form, but with insuperable necessity, on the minds of the exploited proletarians—on this fact, and not on the conceptions of justice and injustice held by any armchair philosopher, is modern socialism's confidence in victory founded."

—*Ibid.*

The emergence of modern imperialism at the end of the 19th century marked the onset of an epoch of global capitalist decay. The nation-state system, which had served as a crucible for the rise to power of a modern capitalist class, came ever more sharply into conflict with the needs of the *international* economic order that capitalism had itself brought about. The capitalist Great Powers, having divided the world



Bengiveno/NY Times

**New York transit workers at pre-strike rally, 13 December 2005. Strike forcefully reaffirmed social power of proletariat, crippling center of world finance and costing NYC business \$1 billion in two days.**





Viktor Bulla



V. Deni and M. Cheremnykh

Early Soviet government was based on workers democracy, revolutionary internationalism. Workers assembly for 1920 Soviet election at Petrograd's Putilov factory. 1920 poster shows Lenin sweeping the world clean of kings, capitalists and priests.

through bloody imperial conquest, embarked on a series of wars to redivide it, seeking to expand their colonial holdings and spheres of influence at the expense of their rivals.

The gory barbarism of World War I—described by Trotsky as a “furious pogrom of human culture” (*Terrorism and Communism* [1920])—was followed by barely two decades of “peace” before the imperialist powers embarked on a second global conflagration. World War II saw the epitome of capitalist barbarism with the Nazi Holocaust of European Jewry—which ended only with the Soviet Red Army’s liberation of Nazi-occupied East Europe—and the incineration of some 200,000 Japanese civilians by U.S. atom bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A future interimperialist world war will likely be fought with nuclear weapons on all sides, threatening the annihilation of all humanity.

Under the modern imperialist system, a handful of advanced capitalist states in North America, Europe and Japan exploit and oppress the downtrodden colonial and semicolonial masses in Asia, Africa and Latin America, arresting the all-round socioeconomic and cultural modernization of the vast majority of humanity. A just, egalitarian and harmonious society requires the overcoming of economic scarcity on a global scale through an internationally planned, socialist economy. Yet many Greens and anarchists regard large-scale technology as inherently evil (though few would personally give up modern medicine, communication and transport for a life where survival itself is a daily scramble). For their part, Hardt and Negri “rebut” Marxist materialism by simply *conjuring* scarcity away:

“The notion of a foundational war of all against all is based on an economy of private property and scarce resources. Material property, such as land or water or a car, cannot be in two places at once: my having and using it negates your having and using it. Immaterial property, however, such as an idea or an image or a form of communication, is infinitely reproducible.... Some resources do remain scarce today, but many, in fact, particularly the newest elements of the economy, do not operate on a logic of scarcity.”

—*Multitude*

Our pioneering post-Marxist professors are neither very original nor radical. Charles Leadbeater, an admirer of and highly praised freelance adviser to Tony Blair’s Labour government in Britain, wrote two years before *Empire*:

“There is no better way of conveying the economic value of knowledge transformation than to think about the home economics of food. Think of the world as divided up into chocolate cakes and chocolate-cake recipes.... We can all use the same chocolate-cake recipe, at the same time, without anyone being worse off. It is quite unlike a piece of cake.”

—Leadbeater, *Living on Thin Air: The New Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 1999)

Shortly before the French Revolution of 1789, the queen, Marie Antoinette, upon being told that the poor people of Paris had no bread, reputedly replied: “Then let them eat cake.” Leadbeater has gone Marie Antoinette one better. To the impoverished masses of the “global South,” he says: Let them eat cake recipes! As Engels said of Herr Dühring: “Such is the ease with which the living force of the hocus-copus of the philosophy of reality surmounts the most impassable obstacles” (*Anti-Dühring*).

The response to Hurricane Katrina showed vividly how the “logic of scarcity” continues to dominate even in the richest capitalist country on earth. The contempt of the venal American ruling class for the black poor of New Orleans—left to the mercies of the flood waters because they did not have the means to get out of town—was evident to horrified TV viewers around the world.

Hardt and Negri’s conceptual meanderings are not to be taken any more seriously than computer-generated special effects in Hollywood films like *The Matrix*. In the virtual reality world of *Empire*, Hardt and Negri call for “global citizenship” and a universal social wage. To realize a universal social wage based on even the U.S. legal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour would require an annual outlay greater than the current (2004) gross national income of the whole world. To achieve this goal would entail an enormous leap forward in human productivity, not to mention a revolution in the mode of production and distribution. Yet Hardt and Negri



reject the perspective of an international planned economy and deny even that material scarcity remains a central problem facing humanity.

### Red October, the Soviet Union and Its Fate

The so-called "failure of the Soviet experiment" is held up by both pseudo-leftists and open right-wingers as irrefutable proof that any attempt to replace capitalism with a "hegemonic system" or "hierarchical socialism" is doomed to collapse under the weight of its necessarily "totalitarian" aims. Echoing the common wisdom of imperialist ideologues and tabloid trash regarding the collapse of the Soviet Union, Hardt and Negri intone: "Resistance to the bureaucratic dictatorship is what drove the crisis" (*Empire*). And what of the aftermath? Hardt and Negri make no mention at all of the catastrophic and historically unprecedented social and economic collapse of post-Soviet Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. The immiseration of much of the population of East Europe and the former USSR would seem to be immaterial to these self-proclaimed prophets of the future.

The October Revolution gave flesh and blood to Marx and Engels' teachings. The workers, leading behind them the impoverished peasant masses, took state power, replacing the class dictatorship of capital with a dictatorship of the proletariat—a necessary step on the road to a global, classless, egalitarian society in which the state as an instrument of repression has completely withered away. A government based on democratically elected councils (soviets) of workers and peasants expropriated the capitalists and landlords, broke their resistance and set about organizing a planned economy based not on profit but on the needs of society. Despite unimaginable poverty and backwardness, Soviet Russia was in the vanguard of all forms of social liberation (see "The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women," page 56).

It spoke to the proletariat's unique role as the agency of social revolution in this epoch that the workers could seize and retain state power in a backward country in which they, themselves by and large only a generation or two removed from their peasant origins, were a small minority compared to the peasantry. This understanding had been elaborated by Trotsky in *Results and Prospects* (1906) as part of his theory of permanent revolution, which asserted that the outstanding democratic tasks in backward, tsarist Russia, such as the agrarian and national questions, could only be resolved in the context of proletarian power. But the permanent revolution was premised on victorious proletarian revolutions in the industrial powers of West Europe. The mass of Russia's workers, not only the Bolshevik leaders, saw the October Revolution as the beginning of the world socialist revolution. Red Russia helped to inspire millions of workers around the globe with revolutionary consciousness. Revolutionary turbulence did engulf much of Europe, centrally Germany, after World War I. However, in no other country did the working class come to power. This was mainly the result of the counterrevolutionary policies of the workers' social-democratic misleaders and the absence of authoritative vanguard parties like the Bolshevik Party that Lenin had built in tsarist Russia.

Thus Soviet Russia emerged from seven years of imperialist war and civil war internationally isolated and economically devastated, its proletariat physically decimated and politically exhausted, its huge peasantry (particularly the better-off lay-

ers) beginning to assert its own petty-bourgeois class interests. (For further discussion on the latter, see "Kronstadt 1921: Bolshevism vs. Counterrevolution," page 6.) These conditions allowed for the growth of a bureaucratic layer in the governing apparatus of the Soviet state and ruling Communist Party. Seizing on widespread demoralization following the failure of yet another revolutionary opportunity in Germany in 1923, the bureaucracy asserted its political control. While maintaining the social foundations put in place by Red October, this *political counterrevolution* marked a qualitative transformation in how and for what purposes the Soviet Union was governed.

The bureaucracy became increasingly hostile to the fight for socialist revolution in the capitalist countries. In late 1924 Stalin promulgated the ridiculous dogma that socialism could be built in the Soviet Union alone, if only the imperialists could be kept from militarily attacking it. Communist parties around the world were transformed into tools of Soviet diplomacy in the search for "peaceful coexistence." Trotsky, at the head of the Left Opposition (LO), fought against the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution in both the Soviet Communist Party and the Communist International. The LO fought to maintain the internationalist program of extending the gains of the Russian Revolution to

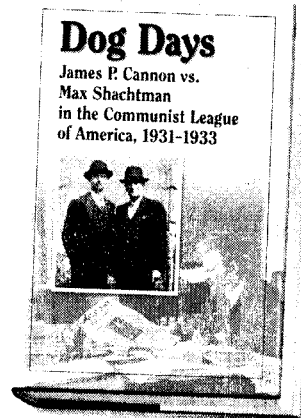
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other countries, the program that had animated the Soviet state and party in the early years of the revolution.

Because of the economic devastation caused by the Civil War and the extreme backwardness of the rural economy, the Bolshevik regime had been forced in 1921 to allow for a limited private market in grain and consumer goods. The LO understood that the layer of better-off peasants (kulaks) and small merchants represented a potential danger to the collectivized property on which the workers state was based. While the growing bureaucratic caste increasingly conciliated the kulaks, the LO advocated a tax on the agricultural surplus to help fund planned industrial development, as well as a policy of material incentives for the poorer peasants to voluntarily collectivize their lands. As the kulaks systematically hoarded grain to drive up prices in 1928, threatening to starve the cities, the bureaucracy was forced, in a deformed way, to implement part of the LO's program. In typically brutal and bureaucratic fashion, Stalin forcibly collectivized the peasantry. This turn foreclosed the immediate threat of capitalist restoration in the USSR. The accompanying policy of planned industrial development, while rife with tremendous bureaucratic distortions and mismanagement, enabled the Soviet Union to construct a modern, industrial society in which the working class had access to medicine, science, education and culture.

It is not Marxism that failed in the Soviet Union, but the Stalinist perversion expressed in the dogmas of "socialism in one country" and "peaceful coexistence." Trotsky insisted that the Soviet Union, despite its economic successes, could not in the historical long run survive in a world dominated by capitalist-imperialist states. Central planning can only function effectively under a regime of soviet democracy, which allows for the necessary participation of the workers themselves in regulating and implementing the plan. Nonetheless, as Trotsky wrote in his incisive analysis of Stalinism:

"Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory, not on the pages of *Das Kapital*, but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth part of the earth's surface—not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement and electricity. Even if the Soviet Union, as a result of internal difficulties,

external blows and the mistakes of its leadership, were to collapse—which we firmly hope will not happen—there would remain as an earnest of the future this indestructible fact, that thanks solely to a proletarian revolution a backward country has achieved in less than ten years successes unexampled in history."

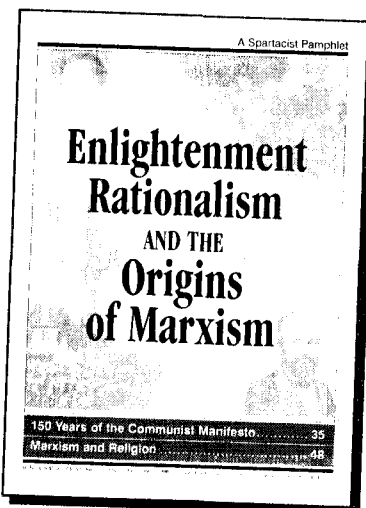
—*The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

Throughout the 1930s, the collectivized Soviet economy expanded rapidly even as the capitalist world was mired in depression. Rebuilt after the devastation of the Second World War, by the late 1950s Soviet technological development was such that it could send a man into space. From 1960 to 1980, a massive construction campaign was undertaken, aimed at providing every urban family with an apartment for a nominal rent. This was considered a right of Soviet citizenship—as was the right to a job, public education and free health care. These were historic achievements of the planned economy, despite the terrible bureaucratic overhead of Stalinist misrule, which engendered a dull grayness throughout society, from the slipshod quality of consumer goods to the stifling of intellectual life.

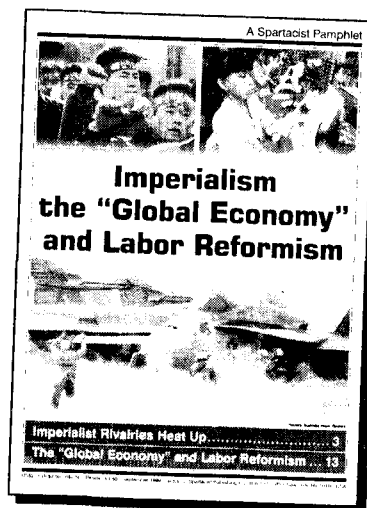
And now? In the six years after counterrevolution, the gross domestic product of post-Soviet Russia fell by **80 percent**. Real wages plummeted by a similar amount. Much of the urban population was forced to grow food on small urban garden plots to survive. Today millions in Russia and the other former Soviet republics are on the edge of starvation, while homelessness is rampant.

Hardt, Negri and other worshippers of the accomplished fact proclaim that the collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable. In fact, had a revolutionary-internationalist program prevailed, the outcome could have been far different. The decades after the October Revolution saw numerous opportunities for proletarian revolutions in advanced capitalist countries, which would have broken the isolation of the world's first workers state, shattered the stranglehold of the nationalist bureaucracy and revived the revolutionary consciousness of the Soviet proletariat. Trotsky and the Left Opposition waged an unrelenting struggle to defend the revolutionary gains against both external and internal threats.

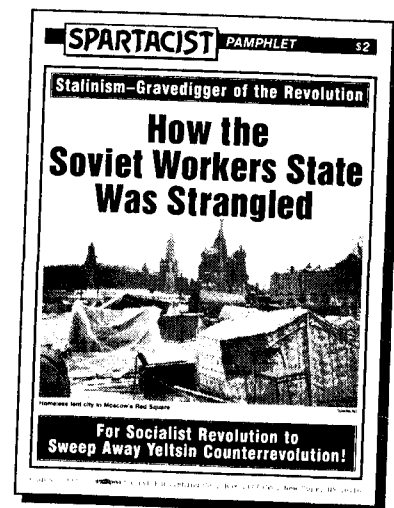
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Despite the destruction of the USSR, about a quarter of the world's population still lives in countries over which the capitalist exploiters do not exercise direct dominion—the remaining deformed workers states of Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and above all China, the most populous country in the world. Yet China barely merits a mention in *Empire* and *Multitude*, much less any indication that it is a society with anything worth defend-

ing. In this as well, Hardt and Negri take their cues from the imperialist rulers who, echoed by the anti-Communist labor and social-democratic misleaders, portray China as a giant “slave labor” camp. This was evident at the 1999 Seattle protests where, behind the cute images of “Teamsters and turtles united” lauded by Hardt, Negri and other anti-globalization ideologues, there was a sinister drumbeat by the American AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy for Washington to take stiffer action against China.

The ICL, in contrast, fights for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialism and capitalist counter-revolution. China today remains what it has been since the 1949 Revolution: a bureaucratically ruled workers state structurally similar to the former Soviet Union. Despite major inroads by both foreign and indigenous capitalism, the core elements of its economy are collectivized. At a time when almost all advanced capitalist countries are practicing fiscal austerity, China's government has launched mammoth infrastructural projects such as dams and canals. State ownership of the banking system has to date insulated China from volatile flows of short-term speculative capital, which periodically wreak havoc on the economies of neocolonial capitalist countries in East Asia and also Latin America.

To the extent that they police the vast “free-trade zones” for offshore Chinese and foreign capital, the Beijing bureaucrats have in a sense become labor contractors for the imperialists. But the capitalist powers will not rest until China is fully under the thumb of the imperialist world market. The U.S. has been building bases in Central Asia, attempting to surround China with American military installations, and recently consummated a pact with Japan to defend the offshore capitalist bastion of Taiwan. Sooner or later, the explosive social tensions in Chinese society will shatter the ruling bureaucracy. Then the question will be starkly posed: proletarian political revolution to open the road to socialism or capitalist enslavement and imperialist subjugation. Working people and leftist youth all over the world have a stake in this struggle. Capitalist counterrevolution would be devastating for China's workers, women and rural poor, and would



Combier

1871 Paris Commune, first example in history of dictatorship of proletariat.

embolden the capitalists internationally to launch more savage attacks on workers, rural toilers, women, minorities and immigrants. It would also intensify competition among the imperialist powers, especially the U.S. and Japan, and lead to further imperialist military adventures against the semi-colonial countries around the globe.

### “New Economy” Nonsense and Petty-Bourgeois Arrogance

It was a tremendous step forward when Marx and Engels realized that the class struggle was the road to the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society, and that the proletariat was the revolutionary class of the modern epoch. When they joined the League of the Just in 1847, it became the Communist League and its slogan changed from “All men are brothers” to “Workers of the world, unite!” Hardt and Negri travel this road in reverse, rejecting the class struggle and dissolving the working class into a supposedly classless “people.”

At the core of *Empire* and *Multitude*'s arguments is the claim that the proletariat has been subsumed in the “multitude,” an amorphous term encompassing almost everybody on the planet—industrial worker and peasant smallholder, engineer and janitor, homeless beggar and corporate manager, prisoner and prison guard. With the labor movement weaker than at any time since the 1920s, at least in the United States, most young leftist activists view the working class as irrelevant or, at most, simply one more victim of oppression. Hardt and Negri serve up a “theory” to justify and reinforce this impressionism among the university-educated intellectuals they speak to and glorify. This is nothing new. Pioneer American Trotskyist James P. Cannon put it well in a 1966 speech (though the Socialist Workers Party he had founded had by the early '60s abandoned a revolutionary perspective):

“You have now a new phenomenon in the American radical movement which I hear is called ‘The New Left.’ This is a broad title given to an assemblage of people who state they don't like the situation the way it is and something ought to be done about it—but we mustn't take anything from the experiences of the past; nothing from the ‘Old Left’ or any of its ideas or traditions are any good....

"We have a definite orientation whereas the New Left says the working class is dead. The working class was crossed off by the wisecracks in the twenties. There was a long boom in the 1920s. The workers not only didn't gain any victories, they lost ground. The trade unions actually declined in number. In all the basic industries, where you now see great flourishing industrial unions—the auto workers, aircraft, steel, rubber, electrical, transportation, maritime—the unions did not exist, just a scattering here and there.... It took a semi-revolutionary uprising in the mid-thirties to break that up and install real unions."

—Cannon, "Reasons for the Survival of the SWP and for Its New Vitality in the 1960s," 6 September 1966, reprinted in *Spartacist* No. 38-39, Summer 1986

It took the May 1968 French general strike to break a layer of West European and North American leftists from New Left nonsense about the demise of the working class. The incipient workers revolution in France reaffirmed in real life the Marxist understanding of the revolutionary potential of the proletariat. Exposing the charlatanism of an earlier generation of "post-Marxist" ideologues, it laid the basis for new layers of youth to be won to revolutionary Marxism.

Notwithstanding various changes in industrial technique and in the world economy, the proletariat remains central to a revolutionary perspective today—because it continues to occupy a unique role at the heart of the process of production. It is through the exploitation of the working class that the capitalist derives profit. Concentrating workers in large factories and great urban centers, the capitalists have created the instrument of their own destruction as an exploiting class. Furthermore, for the working class to emancipate itself from the yoke of capitalism on a global scale it must abolish *all* exploitation, leading to a society in which there are no class distinctions.

Intermediate between the two basic classes in capitalist society, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, is the petty bourgeoisie. In neither *Empire* nor *Multitude* is there any discussion or even mention of the social role of this heterogeneous layer, which ranges from impoverished peasants, small shopkeepers and fast-food branch managers to the university-educated administrative, technical and cultural cadre of the capitalist system and highflying Wall Street brokers. The petty bourgeoisie has no definite relation to the large-scale means of production under capitalism and therefore no independent social power; as a result, though the petty bourgeoisie (or sectors of it) can veer from one political extreme to another, it cannot play an independent role in the class struggle.

The petty bourgeoisie's social role in turn determines its social outlook. While workers can improve their economic conditions only through *collective struggle* against the capitalist employers and their state, members of corporate and government bureaucracies seek to increase their incomes and improve their social status by *individual competition* with one another. A bank loan officer strives to become manager of the branch. The manager of the branch strives to become head of the bank's regional division, and so on.

Hardt and Negri legitimize petty-bourgeois elitism and contempt for the working class through the notion of a supposedly post-industrial, information-based economy in which it is no longer the proletariat but the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia that plays a pivotal role. They assert that capitalism has passed from "the domination of industry to that of services and information, a process of economic *postmodernization*, or better, *informatization*" (*Empire* [emphasis in original]). Evoking a Joe Six-Pack image of "the male mass factory

worker," they contend: "Today that working class has all but disappeared from view" (*ibid.*). In the sequel to *Empire*, Hardt and Negri drop this absurd claim in favor of a no less false argument:

"Agricultural labor remains, as it has for centuries, dominant in quantitative terms, and industrial labor has not declined in terms of numbers globally. Immaterial labor constitutes a minority of global labor, and it is concentrated in some of the dominant regions of the globe. Our claim, rather, is that immaterial labor has become *hegemonic in qualitative terms*." [emphasis in original]

—*Multitude*

Hardt and Negri's vision of immaterial reality reads like a particularly demented editorial from *Wired* magazine, or a Silicon Valley venture capitalist out to draw in a new round of funding for the latest "next big" Web site. Likewise, Blairite huckster Charles Leadbeater waxes eloquent: "Our children will not have to toil in dark factories, descend into pits or suffocate in mills, to hew raw materials and turn them into manufactured products. They will make their livings through their creativity, ingenuity and imagination" (*Living on Thin Air*).

Again, this is nothing new. A 1964 statement signed by a host of left-liberal luminaries—including James Boggs, Todd Gitlin, Michael Harrington, Tom Hayden, Gunnar Myrdal and Linus Pauling—argued:

"A new era of production has begun. Its principles of organization are as different from those of the industrial era as those of the industrial era were different from the agricultural. The cybernation revolution has been brought about by the combination of the computer and the automated self-regulating machine. This results in a system of almost unlimited productive capacity which requires progressively less human labor.... "The cybernation revolution proffers an existence qualitatively richer in democratic as well as material values."

—"The Triple Revolution," *International Socialist Review*, Summer 1964

But for its clarity, this statement could have been lifted from *Empire* or *Multitude*.

## Proletarian Centrality and Revolutionary Consciousness

The myth of a new networked world where everyone is an independent producer behind a touch screen can only be invented and purveyed by intellectuals who don't have a clue about conditions of labor in the real world. *Somebody* produces the clothes our post-modern thinkers wear, the cars they drive, the computers on which they cruise the information superhighway, and the electricity on which those computers (and a lot else, besides) run. Computers may manage inventory control in transport operations, but the cargo containers still have to be taken on and off ships by longshoremen and transported by truck drivers and rail workers. Moreover, if it means greater profit, as in the low-wage garment industry, capitalists will readily *revert* from automated, capital-intensive methods to labor-intensive sweatshops that look much as they did a century ago. Proletarian labor remains repetitive, backbreaking and often dangerous. In 2003, for example, the injury rate in U.S. auto plants was roughly 15 times that in financial and insurance offices.

It is certainly true, as shown by the Midwest rust bowl that engulfed what had been America's industrial heartland, that there have been significant changes in the U.S. and world economies. Capital continually seeks out the highest rate of profit and, correspondingly, the lowest cost of production, both within and (in the absence of major protectionist barriers) across national borders. Beginning in the late 1970s,



Robert Altman

Top: Hippie commune in Taos, New Mexico, 1969. Covers of *Wired* magazine, voice of "Internet revolution." Hardt and Negri promote cyberspace update of New Left "counterculture" subjectivism.

American capital increasingly shifted manufacturing operations to the non-union U.S. South, then Mexico and now even lower-wage countries in Asia. This shift has occurred through direct investment, subcontracting, outsourcing and similar mechanisms—a development greatly accelerated by the international retreat and subsequent collapse of Soviet power. At the same time, the "market reforms" carried out by the Beijing Stalinist regime opened China to large-scale investment, concentrated in light manufacturing, by Western, Japanese and offshore Chinese capital. With a labor force of 160 million employed in manufacturing, China's working class has become a very important component of the industrial proletariat on an international scale.

In 1970, 33 percent of the non-agricultural labor force in the U.S. was employed in the goods-producing sector (manufacturing, construction and mining) and another 6 percent in transport and utilities (U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1971*). By 2003, the fraction of the labor force employed in goods production had declined to 20 percent, with 5 percent employed in transport and utilities (*Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2004-2005*). Simultaneously, the proportion of the U.S. labor force employed in wholesale and retail trade, banks, securities outfits, insurance companies, real estate agencies, etc. has grown to some 22 percent.

But this hardly proves the "hegemony of immaterial labor" even in the "dominant regions of the globe." (Hardt and Negri could not be more blatant in their appeal to the relatively privileged, university-educated petty bourgeoisie of the "First World"; they do not even take note of the prole-

tariat in China and parts of the semicolonial Third World.) The notion of a "new economy" revolutionized by information technology is no less a myth today than it was in the 1960s. The use of carrier pigeons to speedily transmit news in the days before the telegraph in the early 1800s gave the Rothschild family an enormous edge over their competitors in building a Europe-wide banking empire. But it hardly heralded an economic revolution. Even before the Internet boom of the 1990s went bust, one economist noted:

"Most of the initial applications of main-frame and personal computers have encountered the rapid onset of diminishing returns. Much of the use of the Internet represents a substitution from one type of entertainment or information-gathering for another."

—Robert J. Gordon, "Does the 'New Economy' Measure Up to the Great Inventions of the Past?", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Fall 2000

Nor has the service sector become dominant over industry. The conventional division of the economy into a goods-producing and a service sector obscures the *primacy of the former over the latter*. Without buildings there can be no real estate and property insurance companies. Without automobiles there can be no auto dealerships and auto insurance companies. And fast-food places are actually the final phase of the food-processing industry: workers at McDonald's et al. transform frozen meat patties and frozen French fries into edi-

ble (sort of) food. Moreover, a huge part of the service sector is directly integrated in the manufacturing process. A rare quantitative survey in this regard in the 1980s showed that an estimated 25 percent of the total U.S. gross domestic product consisted of "services" (e.g., accounting, lawyers, advertising, property insurance, employee health insurance) purchased by manufacturing firms and incorporated into the market price of their products (Stephen S. Cohen and John Zysman, *Manufacturing Matters: The Myth of the Post-Industrial Economy* [New York: Basic Books, 1987]).

Pointing to Toyota-style "production teams" in some auto plants and far-flung global operations based on "just-in-time" inventory and production policies, Hardt and Negri also trumpet grandiose claims of a fundamental shift in industry from "Fordism" and "Taylorism"—i.e., assembly-line production in large, concentrated plants—to "post-Fordist" methods. To the extent that manufacturers have extended their production operations globally, it underscores the need for international labor solidarity, but it hardly makes labor struggle passé. In 1998, a walkout against threatened layoffs by several thousand workers at a General Motors stamping plant in Flint, Michigan soon brought to a halt practically the entire GM empire in the United States, Canada and Mexico. In an attempt to break the strike, GM moved the stamping dies from Flint to one of its Canadian operations. But the Canadian auto workers refused to touch them—a powerful example of international labor solidarity. Lasting almost two months, the strike cost GM \$12 billion in sales and \$3 billion in profits. It was the costliest walkout ever for what was then the world's largest industrial corporation.

The GM strike underscored in a rather dramatic way that the current prostration of the labor movement is the result not of structural changes in capitalism but of the pro-capitalist policies of the bureaucratic misleadership of the trade unions. With GM on its knees, the United Auto Workers bureaucracy corralled the strikers back to work on the basis of a compromise that settled nothing. We wrote at the time:

“By the mere fact of withdrawing their labor power, GM workers demonstrated the potential power of the working class that lies in its numbers, organization and discipline, and most decisively in the fact that it is labor that makes the wheels of profit turn in capitalist society. But the Flint strike also showed how the power of labor is sapped and undermined by the labor bureaucracy, which preaches an identity of interests between the workers and their capitalist exploiters.... “To take on and roll back the war on organized labor requires a leadership with the understanding that the interests of labor and capital are *counterposed*, that any serious mobilization of union power threatens the capitalists and will bring the working class into a head-on confrontation with the bourgeois state, whether under a Republican or Democratic administration, and that the working class must therefore vigilantly guard its independence—organizational and political—from the bourgeoisie, its state and its political parties.”

—“For a Class-Struggle Fight Against GM Job Slashing!” *Workers Vanguard* No. 696, 11 September 1998

The bureaucratic misleaders of the trade unions and of the Labour, social-democratic and other reformist parties outside the U.S. constitute a petty-bourgeois layer within the workers movement, aptly characterized by American Marxist Daniel De Leon as the “labor lieutenants of capital.” While claiming to speak on behalf of the working class, they are in fact loyal to the capitalist system, and are duly compensated for their services. Throughout the latter half of the 19th century, Marx and his followers believed that the influence of reformism—a program of collaboration with the bourgeoisie and piecemeal reform of capitalism—was rooted in the immaturity of the working class. From this, it followed that as the proletariat grew in size and power, such dangerous illusions would be transcended. However, with the advent of the imperialist epoch, Lenin realized that the situation had fundamentally changed. There now existed a strong objective basis for buying off a small section of the working class in the imperialist countries with the super-profits derived from exploitation of the colonial world. The essence of Leninism is the understanding that a party that genuinely represents the interests of the working class must be politically and organizationally counterposed to the John Sweeneys, the Tony Blairs and the Gerhard Schröders.

For the working class to move from being a class *in itself*—defined simply by its objective relationship to the means of production—to a class *for itself*, fully conscious of its historic task to overthrow the capitalist order, requires revolutionary leadership. Absent this, the workers’ consciousness is determined to varying degrees by bourgeois (and pre-bourgeois) ideology—nationalism, racism, sexism, religion, illusions in parliamentary reformism, etc.—leading them to see capitalist society as fixed and immutable. The bourgeoisie has in its hands not only enormous wealth and control over the means of information but a vast repressive apparatus—the army, police, etc.—that is centralized at the highest levels. To take on and defeat that power requires a countervailing power that is no less organized and centralized. When the bourgeoisie was a rising class in the late feudal epoch, it gradually acquired increasing social and economic dominance through the expansion of its property and

wealth relative to that of the landed nobility. But the proletariat is not a propertied class and is therefore unable to construct the institutions of a new society within the framework of capitalism. In its struggle for state power, the proletariat must rely exclusively on its organization and consciousness, expressed at the highest level in the construction of a democratic-centralist vanguard party whose leadership, tactics and strategy are determined through full internal democracy and implemented on the basis of iron centralism.

### Old Reformism in Post-Modern Jargon

Rejecting the proletariat under Leninist leadership as the agency for revolutionary change, Hardt and Negri present the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia as the new vanguard: “Network struggle, again, like post-Fordist production, does not rely on discipline in the same way: creativity, communication, and self-organized cooperation are its primary value.... No longer is ‘the people’ assumed as basis and no longer is taking power of the sovereign state structure the goal. The democratic elements of the guerrilla struggle are pushed further in the network form, and the organization becomes less a means and more an end in itself” (*Multitude*).

This harks back to the classic expression of social-democratic revisionism by Eduard Bernstein. The executor of Engels’ writings, Bernstein wrote a series of articles in the two years after Engels’ death in 1895 advancing a frankly reformist view. He declared: “I confess openly I have extraordinarily little interest or taste for what is generally called the ‘final goal of Socialism.’ This aim, whatever it be, is nothing to me, *the movement everything*” (emphasis in original). “By movement,” he continued, “I understand not only the general movement of society, that is, social progress, but political and economic agitation and organization for effecting this progress” (quoted in Peter Gay, *The Dilemmas of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein’s Challenge to Marx* [New York: Collier Books, 1962]).

Though he peddled the illusion that socialism could be attained by a gradual process of reform—an illusion of ever deepening historical progress that was ripped apart by the horrible carnage of World War I—at least Bernstein looked to the organized working class to transform society. Hardt and Negri instead counsel petty-bourgeois youth that they can change the world without either having or desiring social power.

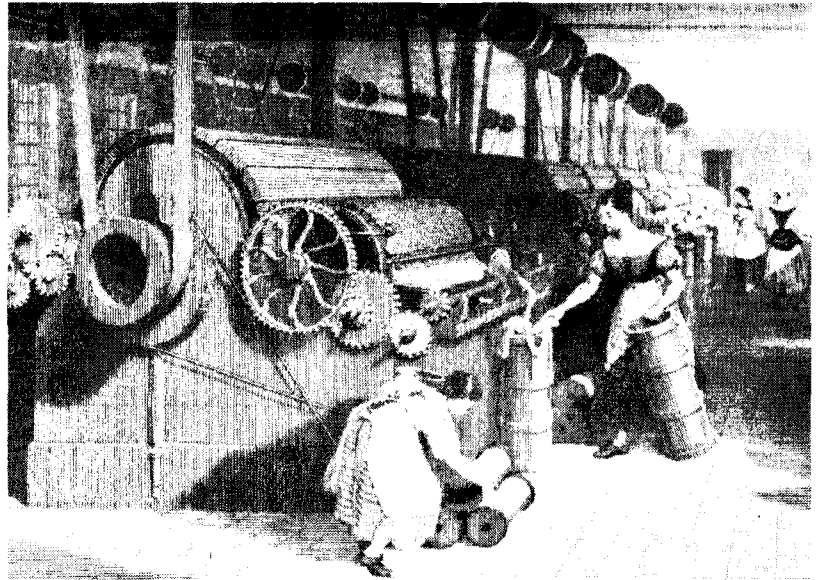
They trumpet a “new militancy” of the post-Soviet era, which “does not simply repeat the organizational formulas of the old revolutionary working class.... This militancy makes resistance into counterpower and makes rebellion into a project of love” (*Multitude*). Another post-Marxist icon, John Holloway, argues explicitly: “The fall of the Soviet Union not only meant disillusionment for millions; it also brought the liberation of revolutionary thought, the liberation from the identification of revolution with the conquest of power” (*Change the World Without Taking Power* [London: Pluto Press, 2002]).

Hardt and Negri promote petty-bourgeois schemes like “desertion,” “dropping out” and carving out autonomous “spaces” within capitalist society. The latter include the 1970s “counterculture” communes in the U.S. and, Negri’s particular pride and joy, the “autonomous” social centers—often state-funded—set up in Italy after the struggles of the ’60s and ’70s. Low-level community organizing and other forms of “horizontal” activism; trashing Starbucks windows or tearing down fences outside World Bank gatherings; creat-





Howard Bloom



Dietz Verlag Berlin

Illustrations show how development of productivity has shaped human history: Late Stone Age people using sickle 11,000 years ago (left); textile looms in England in 1830s.

ing nooks and crannies of “liberated spaces” that exist at the sufferance of the state: such activities may be morally satisfying, and may even occasionally inconvenience the capitalist rulers. But none of this brings us even a millimeter nearer to burying capitalist exploitation and oppression; for that, it is necessary for the workers to seize and wield power.

At bottom, Hardt and Negri preach an essentially religious notion that political activists can change the world through moral example, by showing how a new world of peace, love and democracy will look in the mirror of existing “non-hierarchical” forms of organization. A popular model for this is the peasant-based Mexican Zapatistas, who are revered by many young leftist radicals in West Europe and the U.S. Holloway’s book is dedicated to the Zapatistas. Hardt and Negri similarly enthuse that the Zapatistas’ “goal has never been to defeat the state and claim sovereign authority but rather to change the world without taking power” (*Multitude*).

The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) originated in the early 1990s as a guerrilla movement based among the impoverished Indian peasant smallholders in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. When the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was introduced in 1994, the EZLN led a brief revolt of the desperate peasants, who knew that they would be further pauperized and driven off the land as a result of this imperialist “free trade” rape of Mexico. But despite Subcomandante Marcos’ facile command of post-modern jargon and Internet communiqués, there is nothing new about the Zapatistas. They are simply a current manifestation of traditional Latin American populist nationalism, a movement led by declassed intellectuals with a certain base among the peasantry.

The Zapatistas have not changed the world much even within the confines of Chiapas. Notwithstanding the EZLN’s brief episode of armed struggle, Chiapas remains a police state with 70,000 government troops, as well as the landlords’ own private paramilitary killers. The economy in EZLN-controlled regions remains largely subsistence-level farming reminiscent of the traditional communal *ejido*, but without the meager state subsidies the *ejidos* got for a period

of time. While the “*caracoles*,” the liberated jungle areas, feature “self-managed” schools and even a people’s cyber café, medical care is poor and often continues to utilize relatively ineffective herbal remedies. Social and political leadership is patriarchal, resting to a large extent in the hands of male elders. Furthermore, even this impoverished autonomy is untenable in the long run in the midst of a capitalist world where the drive for profit will inevitably lead to uprooting prior social forms in the interest of expanded access to resources, markets and production.

**Hoary Myths of Capitalist “Democracy”...**

*Multitude* is subtitled “War and Democracy in the Age of Empire.” Negri at least is thoroughly familiar with the Marxist doctrine that contemporary parliamentary governments represent the actual political domination of the bourgeoisie. In a blatantly dishonest manner, the book does not address the Marxist position on this key question, either to repudiate or endorse it. Throughout *Multitude* “democracy” is promiscuously acclaimed as the be-all and end-all of political activism but is almost never defined in concrete institutional terms. However, toward the end of *Multitude* Hardt and Negri give the game away, proposing a “global parliament”:

“Imagine, for example, that the global voting population of approximately 4 billion (excluding minors from the total global population of more than 6 billion) would be divided into four hundred districts of 10 million people each. North Americans would thus elect about twenty representatives, and the Europeans and Indonesians another twenty each, whereas the Chinese and Indians would elect about one hundred and eighty.”

Imagine, then, Wall Street and the Pentagon sharing wealth and power with India and Indonesia because of a democratic vote! Hardt and Negri’s fantastical proposal to replicate the U.S. Congress or the British “mother of parliaments” on an international scale underlines not only their bourgeois-democratic outlook but also the unreal, idiot utopianism of their whole anti-Empire schema.

Bourgeois electoralism politically reduces the working class to atomized individuals. The bourgeoisie can manipulate the electorate through its control of the media, the



education system and the other institutions shaping public opinion. In all capitalist “democracies,” government officials, elected and unelected, are bought and paid for by the banks and large corporations. As Lenin explained in his classic polemic against the German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky:

“Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the ‘democracy’ of the capitalists and the thousands of *real* limitations and subtleties which turn the proletarians into *wage-slaves*....

“Under bourgeois democracy the capitalists, by thousands of tricks—which are the more artful and effective the more ‘pure’ democracy is developed—*drive* the people away from administrative work, from freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc.... The working people are *barred* from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they *never decide* important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles, and the workers know and feel, see and realise perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions *alien* to them.” [emphasis in original]

—*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918)

An object lesson in this regard is the aftermath of the courageous, decades-long struggle against the apartheid regime of repulsive segregation and naked police-state terror in South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) assured the embattled masses that black majority rule would mean a radical redistribution of income and wealth from the affluent white elite to the impoverished nonwhite toilers. But that is *not* what happened when the ANC replaced the white-supremacists in wielding governmental power after the 1994 elections. Rather a small black elite managed to make it onto the “gravy train” and into the white-dominated ruling class, while the economic conditions of the black workers, urban poor and rural toilers have in important ways actually deteriorated.

The big capitalists and landowners will not countenance a serious threat to their profits or property if they are not deprived of their power. Illusions to the contrary are bred by the parliamentary democracy that partly masks the dictatorship of capital, especially in the wealthier industrial countries. Even there, cherished “inalienable” rights will, aside from the right to property, be alienated whenever the bourgeoisie feels threatened. Trotsky put it well in his polemical defense of the proletarian dictatorship against Kautsky:

“The capitalist bourgeois calculates: ‘while I have in my hands lands, factories, workshops, banks; while I possess newspapers, universities, schools; while—and this most important of all—I retain control of the army: the apparatus of democracy, however you reconstruct it, will remain obedient to my will....’

“To this the revolutionary proletarian replies: ‘Consequently, the first condition of salvation is to tear the weapons of domination out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is hopeless to think of a peaceful arrival to power while the bourgeoisie retains in its hands all the apparatus of power. Three times over hopeless is the idea of coming to power by the path which the bourgeoisie itself indicates and, at the same time, barricades—the path of parliamentary democracy.’”

—*Terrorism and Communism*

### ...and of “Progressive” Imperialism

Revolution “without taking power” is not revolution but, at best, superficial reform of the existing system under the powers that be. Behind the fashionable talk of “horizontalism” and “alliance-building” as supposed alternatives to the struggle for a Leninist party and proletarian state power is a very old, tired and faded notion, indeed: that poverty, oppres-

sion and war can be ended by bringing together people of good will of all classes against a small, greedy, neoliberal, warmongering elite.

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri asserted: “What used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and postimperialist.” This was a crude expression of the widespread view among anti-globalization ideologues that the nation-state system had been supplanted by “transnational” corporations and supranational institutions like the IMF, WTO and World Bank. We extensively refuted such ideas in a 1999 Spartacist pamphlet, *Imperialism, the “Global Economy” and Labor Reformism*, noting that they had much in common with the theory of “ultra-imperialism” propounded by Kautsky as a justification for repudiating the need for international proletarian revolution at the time of World War I. Drawing on Lenin’s *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), which includes polemics against Kautsky, we argued that “transnational” corporations and banks remained dependent on the military power of their nation-states to protect and expand their foreign investments:

“So-called property rights—whether in the form of loans, direct investments or trade agreements—are just pieces of paper unless they are backed by military force....

“The top managers of Exxon know damn well that without the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force their oil fields in the Persian Gulf would not be theirs for very long.”

—*Imperialism, the “Global Economy” and Labor Reformism*

Hardt and Negri claimed, “In this smooth space of Empire there is no *place* of power—it is both everywhere and nowhere” (*Empire* [emphasis in original]). Try telling the people of Baghdad today that they live in a postcolonial and post-imperialist order in which there is no place of power! Disdaining the post-modern subtleties of *Empire* in favor of old-fashioned “America *über alles*” power politics, George W. Bush launched an effectively unilateral (aside from Blair’s Britain) invasion of Iraq in 2003. As anti-globalization protests were supplanted by much larger antiwar marches, overwhelmingly focused by their reformist organizers on the Bush administration’s policies, Hardt and Negri effected a corresponding shift from *Empire* to *Multitude*. Now they speak of “a unilateral, or ‘monarchical,’ arrangement of the global order, centered on the military, political, and economic dictation of the United States,” and argue for an “alliance” between the “multitude” and Europe’s ruling “aristocracies” against the American imperial “monarch” (*Multitude*).

Hardt and Negri’s idiocy that there is no “place of power” is really meant to assert that there is no place for revolution. The real world consists of capitalist states that are not neutral, benign or irrelevant, that cannot be circumvented, reformed or made to serve the interests of the exploited and oppressed. The bourgeois state is an instrument of organized violence for enforcing the exploitation of the working class by capital. It must be smashed in the course of a thoroughgoing socialist revolution and replaced by the class rule of the workers.

“Multitude” vs. “Empire” is but the latest incarnation of the politically bankrupt notion of uniting “the people” against “monopoly” (or war, fascism, ad nauseam). What Hardt and Negri propose is a classic example of what Marx-



Simone Bruno

**He who pays the piper calls the tune: some Social Forum sponsors. Above: Brazilian social-democratic president Lula, enforcer of IMF austerity, addresses 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre.**

Workers Hammer Graphic

ists call class collaborationism: the subordination of the left and workers movement to a “progressive” wing of the bourgeois rulers in order to achieve reform of the existing system. Such reliance on representatives of the enemy class, long promoted by the Stalinists as the “popular front,” has brought only disaster for workers and the oppressed.

In practice, the sanctimonious anti-power idealism preached by Hardt, Negri & Co. degenerates into the grubby politics of “lesser evil” capitalism. American armchair anarchist Noam Chomsky and Canadian anti-globalization publicist Naomi Klein (who found *Multitude* “inspiring”) supported Democrat John Kerry in the 2004 U.S. election as a more palatable enforcer of global sweatshop democracy, “war on terror” and American Empire. For his part, Negri embraces the supposedly more benign European imperialists against the U.S. This appears to be one of the few concepts in his books that Negri has actually tried to implement. In early 2005, he campaigned for the constitution of the European Union, which is headed by a consortium of imperialist powers committed to driving down wages and benefits for Europe’s workers and bolting shut the gates of Fortress Europe to non-white immigrants and asylum-seekers.

Then there is the World Social Forum (WSF), organizer of the large-scale gatherings against “neoliberalism” that have been held in Brazil and elsewhere over the past several years. In a foreword to a collection of WSF documents, Hardt and Negri claim the WSF “provides an opportunity to reconstitute the Left in each country and internationally” and could herald “the beginning of the democracy of the multitude” (*Another World Is Possible*, ed. Ponniah and Fisher [London: Zed Books, 2003]). The WSF was set up in the wake of the Seattle protests as a means of defusing street confrontations by providing an ostensibly non-parliamentary milieu for anti-globalization activists. The WSF and its regional counterparts are crystalline expressions of class collaboration, tying workers and ostensible leftists to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois organizations on the basis of a bourgeois program and under the direct auspices of capitalist institutions, politicians and governments. The 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre, for example, received \$2.5 million in financing from Brazil’s federal government, which is currently waging savage IMF austerity attacks against workers and the poor, and over \$2 million from NGOs like the Ford Foundation, long a conduit for CIA funding. (See “Social Forum Con Game,” *Workers Hammer* No. 191, Summer 2005, for more details.)

The first European Social Forum (ESF), held in Florence in 2002, was heavily funded by the local and regional gov-

ernments. It was also strongly promoted by Negri’s followers in the Italian “white overalls,” or *disobedienti*. Among the pronouncements issued preparatory to this event was a shameless appeal to the imperialist rulers of Europe to oppose the then imminent U.S. war on Iraq: “We call on all the European heads of state to publicly stand against this war, whether it has UN backing or not, and to demand that George Bush abandon his war plans” (*Liberazione*, 13 September 2002). This grotesque statement of pacifist chauvinism—promoting the butchers of Auschwitz and Algeria as more benevolent and progressive than their U.S. rivals—could only buttress the hold of the European capitalists over “their” working masses. Of course, that is entirely in line with Hardt and Negri’s call to ally with the European “aristocracies” against the American “monarch.”

Pseudo-Marxist groups like the United Secretariat (USec), the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Workers Power (WP) have published sometimes extensive critiques of *Empire* and *Multitude*, debunking various of Hardt and Negri’s inconsistencies and idiocies, especially at an academic level. But in the real world these groups share a common starting point with the post-Marxist charlatans. Erasing the class line in order to “build the movement,” they too peddle myths that there can be a “progressive,” “social” capitalism. The SWP, WP and the USec’s flagship French section are all prominent builders of the popular-frontist Social Forums. They all signed onto the appeal to the European imperialist rulers issued around the Florence ESF.

Whatever their formal analytical stances concerning the former Soviet Union, these groups all allied with the forces of capitalist reaction against the gains of the 1917 workers revolution, and they all agree today that it is good that the USSR is dead and buried. Regarding China, they falsely claim that it is already capitalist in order to abandon defense of the bureaucratically deformed workers state against imperialism and counterrevolution. Like Hardt and Negri, these groups reject in practice the fundamental lesson of the October Revolution: the necessity to make the proletariat conscious of its revolutionary tasks, to forge a vanguard party



Reuters



Gerretsen/Gamma



Workers Vanguard

Chilean general Augusto Pinochet (far left) with Unidad Popular (UP) president Salvador Allende, August 1973, one month before Pinochet-led coup (center). UP popular front disarmed combative Chilean proletariat, paved way for rightist bloodbath. Right: New York City protest on third anniversary of coup.

and overturn the capitalist state to open the road to socialism.

The SWP's Alex Callinicos, a prominent spokesman on the Social Forum circuit, has written a lengthy pamphlet, *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2003), that manages to avoid any discussion of soviets, workers revolution, the revolutionary party or the positive significance of the Russian Revolution. The much smaller WP and its League for the Fifth International (L5I) use more radical rhetoric in an L5I pamphlet titled *Anti-Capitalism: Summit Sieges & Social Forums* (2005), attacking *Empire's* "minimum reformist programme" while arguing for the "anti-capitalist movement" represented by the Social Forums to be organized on a more "democratic" and "revolutionary" basis. But what this amounts to is a call for a return to Seattle-style street demonstrations:

"For five years our movement has besieged the summits of the rich and powerful....

"It must take to the streets again, and show through mass direct action its intent; to build a world without classes, oppression, racism, war and imperialism."

—*Ibid.*

"Direct action" based on the popular-front politics embodied in the Social Forums is just class collaboration with a militant face. Yet it is on the basis of such cross-class unity that the L5I proposes to build not only a "movement" but a "revolutionary" party: "The anticapitalist movement, the workers' movement, the movements of the racially and nationally oppressed, youth, women, all must be brought together to create a new International—a world party of socialist revolution" (*ibid.*).

Trotsky condemned the popular front as the greatest crime against the proletariat. To suggest today that a revolutionary and proletarian party be built in alliance with other classes is a parody of a travesty. Indeed, insofar as they argue, against Hardt, Negri and the anarchists, that it is necessary to "take power" away from the "neoliberal" capitalists, today's pseudo-Marxists look not to the model of Lenin's Bolsheviks but to pro-capitalist social democrats and even outright bourgeois forces. The USec, for example, backed "anti-fascist" French president Jacques Chirac's re-election in 2002, and has a "comrade" minister in Brazil's capitalist government.

A particular hero of these outfits is Venezuela's populist strongman Hugo Chávez, whose speech at the 2005 WSF endorsing a vague "socialism" was cheered by thousands.

Aided by windfall profits from high oil prices, Chávez has instituted some social reforms and postures as an "anti-imperialist" in America's backyard. But Chávez is a bourgeois nationalist who rules for capitalism in Venezuela. Though the Bush neocons backed a military coup against him in 2002, more rational representatives of imperialism recognize that he can be trusted to protect their investments while co-opting the discontented masses through populist demagoguery. Yet an extensive polemic against *Empire* in the British USec's theoretical journal touts the Chávez regime as an example of "winning the battle for power," claiming that "Chávez and his supporters have politically organised among the masses and helped to strengthen their self-activity" (*Socialist Outlook*, Winter 2003).

Even more crudely, the L5I titles a chapter of its adulatory *Anti-Capitalism* pamphlet, "Hugo Chávez: A New Leader for the Anticapitalist Movement?" While chiding Chávez for "unwillingness" to destroy elements of the Venezuelan state that "frustrate progress," they positively contrast him to the Zapatistas: "Chávez at least shows that genuine reforms cannot come by pleading, which has brought the precious few results for the Mexican peasants, but rather come from seeking to take hold of power." What a false "choice" for workers and radical youth: either the utterly ineffectual road of "changing the world" without taking power, or promoting the need to "take hold of power" by pointing to bourgeois politicians managing the capitalist state! This is the epitome of social-democratic reformism—the notion that the bourgeois state need not be smashed on the anvil of proletarian revolution but can be reformed into serving as an instrument of social transformation. In sharp contrast to the fake-Marxists who echo Hardt, Negri et al. in pushing global class collaboration, the International Communist League fights to forge a revolutionary international party rooted in class opposition to the bourgeois rulers of every country.

### Forward to a Communist Future!

Hardt and Negri throw around the word "freedom" almost as much as does George Bush. Freedom is not some transcendental absolute toward which humans naturally gravitate; it has always been freedom from some particular constraint, or to carry out some particular act. Man's actions are constrained

by material necessity and the laws of nature. Through scientific investigation, technological innovation and social transformation, humans attain progressively greater knowledge of and control over the conditions of their existence. But what is "freedom" in the abstract? As Marx and Engels wrote: "By freedom is meant, under the present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying. But if selling and buying disappears, free selling and buying disappears also" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*).

In popular parlance, freedom is used as a synonym for liberal democracy. Appropriately, a section of *Multitude* is entitled "Back to the Eighteenth Century!" In particular, Hardt and Negri pay homage to the political wisdom of James Madison, the principal author of the American Constitution:

"The destruction of sovereignty must be organized to go hand in hand with the constitution of new democratic institutional structures based on existing conditions. The writings of James Madison in the *Federalist Papers* provide a method for such a constitutional project, organized through the pessimism of the will—creating a system of checks and balances, rights and guarantees."

—*Multitude*

Like his political mentor Thomas Jefferson, James Madison was the owner of a Virginia plantation worked by black chattel slaves (a biographical fact Hardt and Negri evidently consider too insignificant to mention). Jefferson and Madison insisted on a property qualification even for suffrage for the free white male citizens of the new American republic (another fact ignored by Hardt and Negri). Even the most radical and egalitarian manifestations of 18th-century bourgeois thought (Rousseau) envisioned a society based on economically independent small proprietors—farmers, artisans, shopkeepers.

Classic liberalism was the ideological expression of the rising bourgeoisie in its struggle against the fetters of the late feudal order. Trotsky summarized this doctrinal outlook, which claimed the authority of "natural law": "The individual is absolute; all persons have the right of expressing their thoughts in speech and print; every man must enjoy equal electoral rights. As a battle cry against feudalism, the demand for democracy had a progressive character" (*Terrorism and Communism*). However, with the subsequent development of industrial capitalism and therefore of the proletariat, liberal individualism and its political cognate, "pure" democracy, became a potent ideological weapon to suppress the class antagonisms of bourgeois society. The doctrine that all men are equal before the law and have an equal right in determining the fate of the nation masked the actual dictatorship of capital over the exploited and propertyless class that now produced society's wealth.

Hardt and Negri's call for a return to 18th-century political thought, i.e., to liberal individualism and "pure" democracy, leads in practice to a capitulation to the savagery of imperialist capitalism, which is the natural offspring of the bourgeois republic of the 18th century. This is but a logical consequence of their rejection of the revolutionary capacity of the only progressive class in the present-day world: the international proletariat.

Only the proletariat has both the social power and social need to reorganize society, eliminating economic scarcity and the defor-

mations of human character conditioned by material want and the resulting competitive struggle. Freedom for the oppressed of the world is not a subjective declaration but requires breaking the material chains of poverty, exploitation and oppression. It is not merely in workers and other toilers taking increasing control of their particular aspects of the productive process that a revolution will occur. Rather, the proletariat must come to recognize that the destructive anarchy of the capitalist mode of production, will, if not overthrown, plunge all humanity into barbarism or nuclear annihilation. It must realize that social control of production means dismantling the capitalist state apparatus of cops, courts, armies and prisons, and founding a workers state in their place. In short, it requires a proletarian revolution.

This alone can lay the basis for a planned, socialized economy on a global scale, the essential precondition for human emancipation from privation and inequality. As Engels wrote in his powerful reassertion of the essentials of Marxist materialism:

"The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of nature, because he has now become master of his own social organisation. The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of nature foreign to, and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him. Man's own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action. The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, with full consciousness, make his own history—only from that time will the social causes set in movement by him have, in the main and in a constantly growing measure, the results intended by him. It is humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom."

"To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism."

—*Anti-Dühring* ■



Spartacist  
ICL raised banner of Trotsky's Fourth International at Moscow Revolution Day march, November 1991. We fight for new October Revolutions!

## Russian Revolution...

(continued from page 56)

landed nobility were abolished and the land nationalized; industry was soon collectivized. The new workers state took the first steps toward planning the economy in the interests of the toilers. This brought enormous gains to working women. The Russian Revolution sought to bring women into full participation in economic, social and political life.

Since the counterrevolution that restored capitalism in 1991-92, women in the ex-Soviet Union face vastly worse conditions somewhat akin to the Third World. Massive unemployment, a plummeting life expectancy, and a resurgence of religious backwardness—both Russian Orthodox and Muslim—are just three examples. From 1991 to 1997 gross domestic product fell by over 80 percent; according to official (understated) statistics, capital investment dropped over 90 percent. By the middle of the decade, 40 percent of the population of the Russian Federation was living below the official poverty line and a further 36 percent only a little above it. Millions were starving.

### Women's Liberation and World Socialist Revolution

The Bolsheviks recognized that without qualitative economic development, the liberation of women was a utopian

fantasy. Working to maximize the resources at hand, the early Bolshevik regime did all it could to implement the promise of women's emancipation, including the formation of a party department that addressed women's needs, the Zhenotdel. But at every step their efforts were confronted with the fact that short of a massive infusion of resources, the results were limited on all sides. Leon Trotsky, the leader together with V. I. Lenin of the Russian Revolution, explained that from the beginning the Bolsheviks recognized that

"The real resources of the state did not correspond to the plans and intentions of the Communist Party. You cannot 'abolish' the family; you have to replace it. The actual liberation of women is unrealizable on a basis of 'generalized want.' Experience soon proved this austere truth which Marx had formulated eighty years before."

—*The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

The grim poverty of the world's first workers state began with the economic and social backwardness inherited from the old tsarist empire. Foreign investment had built modern factories in the major cities, creating a compact, powerful proletariat that was able to make the revolution in a majority-peasant country. The revolutionary workers were, in most cases, only one or two generations removed from the peasantry. The workers supported their cousins in the countryside when they seized the landed estates and divided up the land among those who worked it. The alliance (*smychka*) between the workers and peasants was key to the success of the revolution. But the mass of peasant smallholders was also a reservoir of social and economic backwardness. The devastation wrought by World War I was compounded by the bloody Civil War (1918-1920) that the Bolshevik government had to fight against the armies of counterrevolution and imperialist intervention, throwing the country's economy back decades. The imperialists also instituted an economic blockade, isolating the Soviet Union from the world economy and world division of labor.

Marxists have always understood that the material abundance necessary to uproot class society and its attendant oppressions can only come from the highest level of technology and science based on an internationally planned economy. The economic devastation and isolation of the Soviet workers state led to strong material pressures toward bureaucratization. In the last years of his life, Lenin, often in alliance with Trotsky, waged a series of battles in the party against the political manifestations of the bureaucratic pressures. The Bolsheviks knew that socialism could only be built on a worldwide basis, and they fought to extend the revolution internationally, especially to the advanced capitalist economies of Europe; the idea that socialism could be built in a single country was a later perversion introduced as part of the justification for the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution.

In early 1924 a bureaucratic caste



Victoria and Albert Museum

**Pre-revolutionary Russia was awash in patriarchal peasant backwardness. Gathering of village elders, 1910. Below: Peasant women harnessed like oxen to pull river barge.**



RGAKFD



under Stalin came to dominate the Soviet Communist Party and state. Thus, the equality of women as envisioned by the Bolsheviks never fully came about. The Stalinist bureaucracy abandoned the fight for international revolution and so besmirched the great ideals of communism with bureaucratic distortions and lies that, in the end in 1991-92, the working class did not fight against the revolution's undoing and the restoration of capitalism under Boris Yeltsin.

The Russian Revolution marked the beginning of a great wave of revolutionary struggle that swept the world in opposition to the carnage of WWI. The October Revolution was a powerful inspiration to the working class internationally. Germany, the most powerful and most advanced capitalist country in Europe, was thrown into a revolutionary situation in 1918-19; much of the rest of the continent was in turmoil. The Bolsheviks threw a good deal of the Soviet state's resources into the fight for world socialist revolution, creating the Communist International (CI) for this purpose. But the young parties of the CI in Europe had only recently broken from the reformist leadership of the mass workers organizations that had supported their own bourgeois governments in WWI and were not able to act as revolutionary vanguard parties comparable to the Bolsheviks. The reformist, pro-capitalist and deeply chauvinist leadership of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was able to suppress the proletarian revolutionary opportunity in Germany in 1918-19, with the active collaboration of the military/police forces.

Social-democratic parties like the German SPD and the British Labour Party bear central historical responsibility for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. Yet they howl along with their capitalist masters that the early Bolshevik regime under Lenin inevitably led to Stalinist despotism, that communism has failed and that capitalist "democracy" is infinitely preferable to communism. They are echoed by many of today's leftist-minded youth, who equate communism with the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet workers



Yevgeny Khaldei

**Students doing laboratory work at Uzbekistan State University in Tashkent, 1958. Collectivized planned economy laid basis for great strides forward for women, especially in Soviet Central Asia.**

state. Anarchist-influenced youth hold that hierarchy is inherently oppressive, that small-scale production, decentralization and "living liberated" on an individual basis offer a way forward. This is a dead end.

Despite the triumph of the bureaucratic caste in 1924 and the consequent degeneration of the Russian Revolution, the central gains of the revolution—embodied in the overthrow of capitalist property relations and the establishment of a planned economy—remained. These gains were apparent, for example,

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Zhenshchiny Russkoi Revoliutsii

**Bolshevik women leaders in 1920 (from left): Inessa Armand, shortly before her death; Elena Stasova, with Lenin; Konkordiiia Samoiloiva.**

in the material position of women. That is why we of the International Communist League, standing on the heritage of Trotsky's Left Opposition, which fought against Stalin and the degeneration of the revolution, stood for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack and an intransigent fight against all threats of capitalist counter-revolution, internal or external. At the same time we understood that the bureaucratic caste at the top was a mortal threat to the continued existence of the workers state. We called for a political revolution in the USSR to oust the bureaucracy, to restore soviet workers democracy and to pursue the fight for the international proletarian revolution necessary to build socialism.

### Heritage of Bolshevik Work Among Women

A host of books published over the last decade and a half speak to the enormous gains made by women in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks immediately began to put into place civil law that swept away centuries of property law and male privilege. Wendy Goldman's valuable *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) focuses on the three Family Codes of 1918, 1926 and 1936 as turning points in Soviet policy, serving as markers for the party and state program on the woman question. The 1918 Code, the "most progressive family legislation the world had ever seen," gave way to the 1926 Code, which came into effect in a period of intense political struggle between the Stalinist bureaucracy and oppositional currents arrayed against it, centrally Trotsky's Left Opposition. The 1936 Family Code, which rehabilitated the family in official Stalinist ideology and made abortion illegal, codified the wholesale retreat under Stalin in the struggle for women's equality.



**Armand's memorial portrait is at center of 1923 display of *Kommunistka* editorial board in 1920 (clockwise from top): Krupskaya, Bukharin, Kollontai, Vinogradskaja, Nikolaeva, Olminsky.**

Goldman's book is only one among many publications since 1991 that have profited from the increased access to archives of the former Soviet Union. Another, Barbara Evans Clements' *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) is a group biography, centering on selected longtime party members. Clements has assembled a database of several hundred Old Bolshevik (party members before 1917) women cadre, which she analyzes for trends in origins, education and party activity.

*Bolshevik Women* focuses on prominent party members such as Elena Stasova, a Central Committee member and the CC secretary in Petrograd in 1917. Another is Evgeniia Bosh, described by Victor Serge (a one-time member of the Left Opposition who later broke with Trotsky) as one of "the most capable military leaders to emerge at this early stage" of the Civil War (quoted in Clements, *Bolshevik Women*). Bosh committed suicide in January 1925 when the

Stalin faction purged Trotsky as People's Commissar for War. Yet another was Lenin's close friend and collaborator, Inessa Armand, the first head of the Zhenotdel until her death in 1920.

Less well known are Konkordiiia Samoiloiva, another longtime party cadre, whose work after 1917 focused on Zhenotdel field activities; Klavdiia Nikolaeva, removed as head of the Zhenotdel in 1925 due to her support to the anti-bureaucratic Opposition; Rozaliia Zemliachka, who became a stalwart bureaucrat and the only woman to sit on the Council of People's Commissars under Stalin; and Alexandra Artiukhina, who headed the Zhenotdel from 1925 until its liquidation by Stalin in 1930.

The International Communist League's work among women stands on the traditions established by Lenin's Bolsheviks. Some of the earliest issues of *Women and Revolution* published original research on the Russian Revo-



lution and Bolshevik work among women by Dale Ross, *W&R's* first editor, based on her PhD dissertation, *The Role of the Women of Petrograd in War, Revolution and Counter-Revolution, 1914-1921* (1973). The second and third issues of *W&R* (September-October 1971 and May 1972) published in two parts the Bolsheviks' "Methods of Work Among the Women of the Communist Party" from the Third Congress of the Communist International (1921). The new information available has further confirmed and enriched our solidarity with the Bolshevik road to the emancipation of women.

Subsequent issues of *W&R* explored other aspects of the fight for women's liberation in the USSR. Of special significance is "Early Bolshevik Work Among Women of the Soviet East" (*W&R* No. 12, Summer 1976). This article detailed the heroic efforts of the Bolshevik government to transform conditions for the hideously oppressed women of Muslim Central Asia, where Zhenotdel activists themselves took to the veil in order to reach these secluded women. It is beyond the scope of the present article to deal with this important subject.

**Marxism vs. Feminism**

For Marxists, the special oppression of women originates in class society itself and can only be rooted out through the destruction of private property in the means of production. The entry of women into the proletariat opens the way to liberation: their position at the point of production gives them the social power, along with their male co-workers, to change the capitalist system and lay the basis for women's social independence from the confines of the institution of the family. Marxism differs from feminism centrally over the question of the main division in society: feminists hold that it is men vs. women; for Marxists, it is class, that is, exploiter vs. exploited. A working woman has more in common with her male co-workers than with a female boss, and the emancipation of women is the task of the working class as a whole.

The Marxist view of the family as the main source of the oppression of women dates from *The German Ideology*, where Marx and Engels first formulated the concept that the family was not an immutable, timeless institution, but a social relation subject to historical change. In the classic *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), Engels (working with the material available at the time) traced the origin of the institution of the family and the state to the divi-

sion of society into classes. With the rise of a social surplus beyond basic subsistence, a leisured, ruling class could develop based on a private appropriation of that surplus, thus moving human society away from the primitive egalitarianism of the Stone Age. The centrality of the family flowed from its role in the inheritance of property, which required women's sexual monogamy and social subordination. Engels termed this "the world historical defeat of the female sex."

A collectivized, planned economy seeks to productively employ all adults with the goal of maximizing the wealth, including leisure time, available to all. In contrast, in the boom-bust cycle of a capitalist economy, each capitalist enterprise seeks to maximize its rate of profit. Inevitably, capitalist firms seek to reduce costs (and increase profits) by reducing both wages and jobs, leading to an impoverished working class, a pool of chronically unemployed workers and long hours for those who do work. Isolated in the family, women make up a large component of the reserve army of the unemployed, hired during economic booms and sent "back to the kitchen" during hard times. When women are drawn into the workforce in great numbers, the capitalists then try to reduce real wages for men, so that it takes the income of two working adults to raise a family.

The necessary role of the family—the function that must be replaced and cannot be abolished—is the rearing of the next generation. Under capitalism, the masses of youth are slated for wage slavery and service as cannon fodder in the bourgeois army, and the family plays an important role in training them to obey authority. It is also a major source for inculcating religious backwardness as an ideological brake on social consciousness.

While many aspects of the capitalist system serve to undermine and erode the family (the employment of women and public education are two examples), capitalism cannot provide a systematic solution to the double burden women shoulder, and must seek to bolster its weakened institution. Bourgeois feminists, whose quarrel with the capitalist system is their own subordinate status within it, address this by arguing for a redivision of household tasks within the family, increasing men's share of domestic responsibilities. Marxists seek to transfer housework altogether to the public sphere. As the Bolshevik leader Evgeny Preobrazhensky (later allied with Trotsky) said, "Our task does not consist



Kevin Mulhern photos  
**Alexandra Kollontai (above) addressing participants at First All-Russian Women Workers Congress, November 1918, seen gathered at left.**



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RSFSR Artist

1926 gathering of Zhenotdel activists in Dagestan in the Caucasus. 1920 poster depicting social and political gains reads: "What the October Revolution Gave to Women Workers and Peasants."

of striving for justice in the division of labor between the sexes. Our task is to free men and women from petty household labor" (quoted in Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*). Thus one of the tasks of the socialist revolution is the full replacement of the institution of the family with communal childcare, dining halls and laundries, and paid maternity leave, free health care, and special efforts to draw women fully into social and political life.

In Russia, the feminist movement was part of a broader bourgeois-democratic current that opposed tsarism and wanted to modernize Russia as an industrial capitalist society. For example, in 1906 amid the continuing ferment of the first Russian Revolution, the three main feminist organizations, the Women's Equal Rights Union, the Women's Progressive Party and the Women's Mutual Philanthropic Society, directed their efforts toward the passage of equal rights and woman suffrage bills in the newly established Duma (parliament). When the predominantly liberal First and Second Dumas were dissolved by the autocracy, the Russian feminist movement went into decline.

In 1917 the main "women's issue" in the eyes of the working woman was opposition to the bloody imperialist war that had been raging for three years. The war sparked the February revolt, which began with the mass outpouring of women on International Women's Day. After the abdication of the Tsar and the establishment of the bourgeois-democratic Provisional Government, most of the ostensible parties of the left and of reform—including the Russian feminists—considered the main goals of the revolution to have been accomplished. Therefore, they abandoned their opposition to the war and supported the renewal of the imperialist slaughter in the name of "democracy."

The Bolsheviks fought for the soviets of workers and peasants deputies to become organs of the rule of the exploited and oppressed, *including* women, and to end the war immediately without annexations of other countries. The best fighters for women's liberation were the Bolsheviks, who understood that the liberation of women cannot be isolated from the liberation of the working class as a whole. Nor can it be fully achieved, least of all in a back-

ward country—even one with a revolutionary government—in political, social and economic isolation from the rest of the world.

### Early Bolshevik Work Among Women

Russian society was permeated with the grossest anti-woman bigotry. In 1917 peasants barely 50 years out of serfdom made up some 85 percent of the population. They lived under a village system with a rigid patriarchal hierarchy, without even a rudimentary modern infrastructure, lacking centralized sewage, electricity or paved roads. Ignorance and illiteracy were the norm and superstition was endemic. The ancient institutions of the household (*dvor*) and the communal village determined land ownership and livelihood and enforced the degradation of women. This extreme oppression was the inevitable corollary of the low productivity of Russian agriculture, which used centuries-old techniques. Peasant women were drudges; for example, a *batrachka* was a laborer hired for a season as a "wife" and then thrown out upon pregnancy. One peasant woman described her life: "In the countryside they look at a woman like a work horse. You work all your life for your husband and his entire family, endure beatings and every kind of humiliation, but it doesn't matter, you have nowhere to go—you are bound in marriage" (quoted in *ibid.*).

However, by 1914 women made up one-third of Russia's small but powerful industrial labor force. The Bolshevik program addressed their felt needs through such demands as equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leave and childcare facilities at factories, the lack of which had a severe impact on infant mortality. As many as two-thirds of the babies of women factory workers died in their first year. The party made efforts to defend working women from abuse and wife-beating, and opposed all instances of discrimination and oppression wherever they appeared, acting as the tribune of the people according to the Leninist concept put forward in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902). This included taking up a fight after the February Revolution within the trade unions against a proposal to address unemployment by first laying off married women whose husbands were working.

Such a policy was applied in the Putilov munitions works and the Vyborg iron works, among other enterprises, and was opposed by the Bolsheviks as a threat to the political unity of the proletariat. Hundreds of women were members of the Bolshevik Party before the revolution, and they participated in all aspects of party work, both legal and underground, serving as officers in local party committees, couriers, agitators and writers.

Confined to the home and family, many women are isolated from social and political interaction and thus can be a reservoir of backward consciousness. But as Clara Zetkin said at the 1921 Congress of the Communist International, "Either the revolution will have the masses of women, or the counterrevolution will have them" (*Protokoll des III. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale* [Minutes of the Third World Congress of the Communist International]) (our translation). Before World War I the Social Democrats in Germany pioneered in building a women's "transitional organization"—a special body, linked to the party through its most conscious cadre, that took up the fight for women's rights and other key political questions, conducted education, and published a newspaper. The Russian Bolsheviks stood on the shoulders of their German comrades, most importantly carrying party work among women into the factories. Building transitional organizations, founding the newspaper *Rabotnitsa* (The Woman Worker), and, after the October Revolution, the Zhenotdel, the Bolsheviks successfully mobilized masses of women in the working class as well as the peasantry whom the party could not have otherwise reached.

*Rabotnitsa* called mass meetings and demonstrations in Petrograd in opposition to the war and to rising prices, the two main issues galvanizing working women. The First All-City Conference of Petrograd Working Women, called by *Rabotnitsa* for October 1917, adjourned early so that the delegates could join the insurrection; it later reconvened. Among its achievements were resolutions for a standardized workday of



Arkady Shaikhet

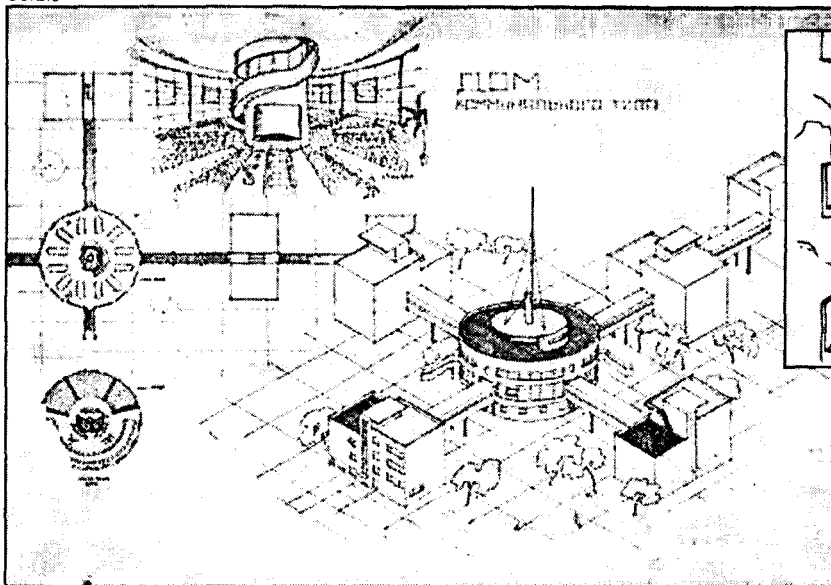
Soviet childcare facility in the 1920s.

eight hours and for banning labor for children under the age of 16. One of the aims of the conference was to mobilize non-party working women for the uprising and to win them to the goals that the Soviet government planned to pursue after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

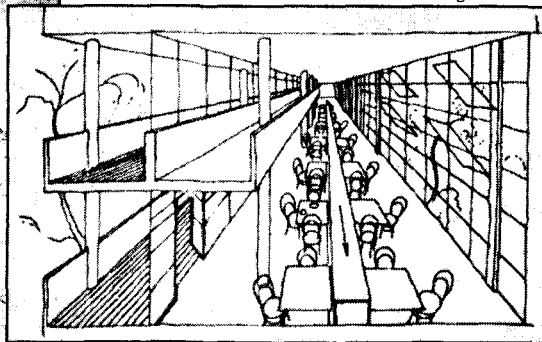
The revolutionary beginnings in Russia took hold in no small measure due to the political awakening of the toiling women of the city and village to this historic mission. Even the most bitter political opponents of the October Revolution, such as the Russian Menshevik "socialist" proponents of a return to capitalist rule, grudgingly recognized the Bolsheviks' success. The Menshevik leader Yuri Martov wrote to his comrade Pavel Axelrod, demonstrating as well his own contempt for the proletarian masses:

"It would be hard for you to imagine how in the recent past (just before my departure) there was a strong, genuine Bolshevik *fanaticism*, with an adoration of Lenin and Trotsky and a hysterical hatred of us, among a significant mass of Moscow women workers, in both the factories and workshops. This is to

Corbis



George Braziller



Architecture as a tool of social transformation. Sketches of projected collective living and dining facilities, late 1920s.



Women being instructed for their jobs as railway workers, 1923. Entry of women into workforce opened road to liberation.

a notable degree explained by the fact that the Russian woman proletariat, due to its illiteracy and helplessness, in its mass could only have been drawn into 'politics' by means of the state mechanism (endless educational courses and 'cultural'-agitational institutions, official celebrations and demonstrations, and—last not least [original in English]—by means of material privileges). Thus the words that one runs across in letters from women workers to *Pravda*, such as, 'only after the October overthrow did we women workers see the sun,' are not empty phrases."

—"Letter to P. B. Axelrod, 5 April 1921," Yu. O. Martov, *Letters 1916-1922* (Benson, Vermont: Chalidze Publications, 1990) (our translation)

### The Early Soviet Government and the 1918 Family Code

The revolution released a burst of optimism and expectations for a society built on socialist principles. Discussions raged among young people on sexual relations, child rearing and the nature of the family in the transition to socialism. Creative energy gripped cultural fields as well, where priorities and tasks changed to reflect the widely held view that the family would soon wither away (see "Planning for Collective Living in the Early Soviet Union: Architecture as a Tool of Social Transformation," *W&R* No. 11, Spring 1976).

Soviet legislation at that time gave to women in Russia a level of equality and freedom that has yet to be attained by the most economically advanced "democratic" capitalist countries today. But there was a problem, succinctly addressed by A. T. Stelmakhovich, chairman of the Moscow provincial courts: "The liberation of women...without an economic base guaranteeing every worker full material independence, is a myth" (quoted in Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*).

Just over a month after the revolution, two decrees established civil marriage and allowed for divorce at the request of either partner, accomplishing far more than the pre-revolutionary Ministry of Justice, progressive journalists, feminists and the Duma had ever even attempted. Divorces soared in the following period. A complete Code on Marriage, the Family and Guardianship, ratified in October 1918 by the state governing body, the Central Executive Committee (CEC), swept away centuries of patriarchal and ecclesiastical power, and established a new doctrine based on individual rights and the equality of the sexes.

The Bolsheviks also abolished all laws against homosexual acts and other consensual sexual activity. The Bolshevik position was explained in a pamphlet by Grigorii Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia* (1923):

"Soviet legislation bases itself on the following principle: *"It declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured, and no one's interests are encroached upon."*

—quoted in John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* (New York: Times Change Press, 1974)

To draft the new Family Code a committee was established in August 1918, headed by A. G. Goikhbarg, a former Menshevik law professor. Jurists described the Code as "not socialist legislation, but legislation of the transitional time," just as the Soviet state itself, as the dictatorship of the proletariat, was a preparatory regime transitional from capitalism to socialism (quoted in Goldman, *op. cit.*)

The Bolsheviks anticipated the ability to "eliminate the need for certain registrations, for example, marriage registration, for the family will soon be replaced by a more reasonable, more rational differentiation based on separate individuals," as Goikhbarg said, rather too optimistically. He added, "Proletarian power constructs its codes and all of its laws dialectically, so that every day of their existence undermines the need for their existence." When "the fetters of husband and wife" have become "obsolete," the family will wither away, replaced by revolutionary social relations based on women's equality. Not until then, in the words of Soviet sociologist S. Ia. Volfson, would the duration of marriage "be defined exclusively by the mutual inclination of the spouses" (quoted in *ibid.*). Divorce would be accomplished by the locking of a door, as Soviet architect L. Sabsovich envisaged it.

The new marriage and divorce laws were very popular. However, given women's traditional responsibilities for children and their greater difficulties in finding and maintaining employment, for them divorce often proved more problematic than for men. For this reason the alimony provision was established for the disabled poor of both sexes, necessary due to the inability of the state at that time to guarantee jobs for all. The 1918 Code eliminated the distinction between "legiti-

mate” and “illegitimate” children, using instead the carefully considered wording “children of parents who are not in a registered marriage.” Thus, women could claim child support from men to whom they were not married.

The Code also established the right of all children to parental support until age 18 and the right of each spouse to his or her own property. In implementing the Code’s measures, judges were biased in favor of women and children, on the grounds that establishing support for the child took priority over protecting the financial interests of the male defendant. In one case, a judge split child support three ways, because the mother had been sleeping with three different men.

During the debate on the draft, Goikhbarg had to defend it against critics who wanted to abolish marriage altogether. For example, N. A. Roslavets, a Ukrainian woman delegate, recommended that the CEC reject the marriage section of the Code, arguing that it would represent a step away “from the freedom of marriage relations as one of the conditions of individual freedom.” “I cannot understand why this Code establishes compulsory monogamy,” she said; she also opposed the (very limited) alimony provision as “nothing other than a payment for love” (quoted in *ibid.*).

Goikhbarg later recounted, “They screamed at us: ‘Registration of marriage, formal marriage, what kind of socialism is this?’” His main argument was that civil marriage registration was crucial to the struggle against the medieval grip of the Russian Orthodox church. Without civil marriage, the population would resort to religious ceremonies and the church would flourish. He characterized Roslavets’ criticisms as “radical in words” but “reactionary in deed.” Goikhbarg pointed out that alimony was limited to the disabled poor, and that it was impossible to abolish everything at once. He argued, “We must accept this [code] knowing that it is not a socialist measure, because socialist legislation will hardly exist. Only limited norms will remain” (quoted in *ibid.*).

**Uneven and Combined Development**

The October Revolution put power in the hands of a working class that was numerically small in a country that was relatively backward. The Bolsheviks thus faced problems that Marx and Engels, who had projected that the

proletarian revolution would occur first in more industrialized countries, could not have anticipated. It was envisioned by the Bolsheviks that the Russian Revolution would inspire workers in the economically advanced European countries to overthrow their bourgeoisies, and these new revolutions would in turn come to the aid of the Russian proletariat. These workers states would not usher in socialist societies but would be transitional regimes that would lay the foundations for socialism based on an internationally planned economy in which there would be no more class distinctions and the state itself would wither away.

The seizure of power in Russia followed three years of world war, which had disrupted the food supply, causing widespread hunger in the cities. By the end of the Civil War, the country lay in ruins. The transport system collapsed, and oil and coal no longer reached the urban areas. Homeless and starving children, the *besprizorniki*, roamed the countryside and cities in gangs. In the brutal Russian winter, the writer Viktor Shklovsky wrote that, because of the lack of fuel, “People who lived in housing with central heating died in droves. They froze to death—whole apartments of them” (quoted in *ibid.*).

The collapse of the productive forces surpassed anything of the kind that history had ever seen. The country and its government were at the very edge of the abyss. Although the Bolsheviks won the Civil War, Russia’s national income had dropped to only one-third and industrial output to less than one-fifth of the prewar levels. By 1921 Moscow had lost half its population; Petrograd, two-thirds. Then the country was hit with two straight years of drought, and a sandstorm and locust invasion that brought famine to the southern and western regions. In those areas, 90 to 95 percent of the children under three years old died; surviving children were abandoned as one or both parents died, leaving them starving and homeless. There were incidents of cannibalism.

The toll on all layers of society was terrible. Of the Bolshevik women cadre in Clements’ study, 13 percent died between 1917 and 1921, most of infectious disease. Among them were Inessa Armand, head of the Zhenotdel, and Samoilova, both of whom died of cholera. Samoilova contracted the disease as a party activist on the Volga River.



Marxist Internet Archive



Boris Ignatovich

**Left: *Besprizorniki* during Civil War. Heroic efforts were undertaken by Soviet state to address massive problem of child homelessness, which had been considerably alleviated by the time of 1927 photo (right) showing *besprizorniki* marching with Young Pioneers on May Day.**





Alexander Staritsin Archive

**Women workers elected as *delegatki*, Moscow, May 1924. Delegate meetings served as schools of politics and liberation.**

Horrified by the conditions on the delta, she spent her last days rousing the local party committee to take action.

As Marx put it, "Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural level which this determines" ("Critique of the Gotha Program," 1875). The Bolsheviks knew that, given centuries of oppression and the devastation of the country, even the most democratic laws could not protect the most vulnerable, the working-class and especially peasant women, who continued to suffer misery and degradation. Until the family was fully replaced by communal living and childcare, laws addressing the actual social conditions were a necessary part of the political struggle for a new society.

### The Protection of Motherhood

Immediately after the revolution the government launched a drive to provide social and cultural facilities and communal services for women workers and to draw them into training and educational programs. The 1918 Labor Code provided a paid 30-minute break at least every three hours to feed a baby. For their protection, pregnant women and nursing mothers were banned from night work and overtime. This entailed a constant struggle with some state managers, who viewed these measures as an extra financial burden.

The crowning legislative achievement for women workers was the 1918 maternity insurance program designed and pushed by Alexandra Kollontai, the first People's Commissar for Social Welfare and head of the Zhenotdel from 1920 to 1922. The law provided for a fully paid maternity leave of eight weeks, nursing breaks and factory rest facilities, free pre- and post-natal care, and cash allowances. It was administered through a Commission for the Protection of Mothers and Infants—attached to the Health Commissariat—and headed by a Bolshevik doctor, Vera Lebedeva. With its networks of maternity clinics, consultation offices, feeding stations, nurseries, and mother and infant homes, this program was perhaps the single most popular innovation of the Soviet regime among Russian women.

In the 1920s and 1930s women were commonly allowed a few days' release from paid labor in the form of menstrual leave. In the history of protection of women workers, the

USSR was probably unique in this. Specialists also conducted research on the effects of heavy labor on women. One scholar wrote, "The maintenance of the health of workers appears to have been a central concern in the research into labour protection in this period" (Melanie Ilic, *Women Workers in the Soviet Interwar Economy: From "Protection" to "Equality"* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999]). Strenuous labor could lead to disruption or delay of menstrual cycles among peasant women especially. The resolution of this problem—machine technology that limits to the greatest possible extent the stress and potential danger of industrial and agricultural labor for all workers, men and women—was beyond the capability of the Soviet economy at that time.

### Abortion: Free and on Demand

In 1920 the Soviet government issued a decree overturning criminal penalties for abortion—the first government in the world to do so:

"As long as the remnants of the past and the difficult economic conditions of the present compel some women to undergo an abortion, the People's Commissariat of Health and Social Welfare and the People's Commissariat of Justice regard the use of penal measures as inappropriate and therefore, to preserve women's health and protect the race against ignorant or self-seeking profiteers, it is resolved:

"I. Free abortion, interrupting pregnancy by artificial means, shall be performed in state hospitals, where women are assured maximum safety in the operation."

—"Decree of the People's Commissariat of Health and Social Welfare and the People's Commissariat of Justice in Soviet Russia," translated from *Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale* (Communist Women's International, April 1921), in *W&R* No. 34, Spring 1988

In carrying out this decree, again inadequate resources clashed with the huge demand, and because of the shortage of anesthetic, abortions, horribly enough, were generally performed without it. The law required that all abortions be performed by a doctor in a hospital, but the country lacked adequate facilities. Working women received first priority. In the countryside, many women had no access to state facilities. As a result, unsafe abortions continued to be performed, especially by midwives, and thousands were treated in the hospitals for the effects of these dangerous procedures.



Doctors and public health officials argued that there was an urgent need for quality contraception, which in backward Russia was generally unavailable. In the mid 1920s, the Commission for the Protection of Mothers and Infants officially proclaimed that birth control information should be dispensed in all consultation offices and gynecological stations. The shortage of contraception was in part due to the lack of access to raw materials like rubber—a direct result of the imperialist blockade against Soviet Russia.

While acknowledging that the Soviet Union was the first country in the world to grant women legal, free abortion, Goldman claims that the Bolsheviks never recognized abortion as a woman's right, but only as a public health necessity. Certainly the reference elsewhere in the decree to abortion as "this evil" sounds strange to 21st-century ears, accustomed to hearing such language only from religious bigots. However, abortion was much more dangerous in the 1920s, before the development of antibiotics and in a country where basic hygiene remained a serious problem. The Bolsheviks were concerned about improving the protection of mothers and children, which they viewed as the responsibility of the proletarian state and a central purpose of the replacement of the family with communal methods.

Goldman's claim is undermined by Trotsky's statement that, on the contrary, abortion is one of woman's "most important civil, political and cultural rights." He blasted the vile Stalinist bureaucracy for its 1936 criminalization of abortion, which showed "the philosophy of a priest endowed also with the powers of a gendarme":

"These gentlemen have, it seems, completely forgotten that socialism was to remove the cause which impels woman to abortion, and not force her into the 'joys of motherhood' with the help of a foul police interference in what is to every woman the most intimate sphere of life."

—*The Revolution Betrayed*

**The Zhenotdel Mobilizes the Masses of Women**

The Zhenotdel, founded in 1919, infused energy into the party's frail and disparate women's commissions. It played a

major part in the mobilization of women behind the struggle for socialism in Russia. In 1920 Samoilova reported that people were describing a "second October Revolution" among women (quoted in Carol Eubanks Hayden, *Feminism and Bolshevism: The Zhenotdel and the Politics of Women's Emancipation in Russia, 1917-1930*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979). The Zhenotdel's fundamental organizing precept was "agitation by the deed." Historian Richard Stites described it as "the deliberate, painstaking effort of hundreds of already 'released' women injecting their beliefs and programs and their self-confidence into the bloodstream of rural and proletarian Russia" (Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*). That so many women became members of the Soviet government and of the party illustrates the extraordinary social mobility the party was encouraging.

A major vehicle for this work was the system of "delegate meetings" developed by the Zhenotdel and designed as a school in politics and liberation. Elections would be held in a factory for women workers to choose one of their ranks as delegate to the Zhenotdel for a period of three to six months. The election itself was a step forward in consciousness. The *delegatka*, wearing a red scarf as her badge of office, served as an observer-apprentice in various branches of public activity such as the factory, soviet, trade union, schools, hospital or catering center. After her sojourn in the world of practical politics, she would report back to the Zhenotdel and to her co-workers about what she had learned in the process of acting as an elected politician, administrator, propagandist and critic. One observer described the *delegatki* as "a menace to bureaucrats, drunkards, kulaks, sub-kulaks, and all who opposed Soviet laws" (quoted in *ibid.*).

In addition to the journal *Kommunistka*, which carried articles on major theoretical and practical aspects of the woman question, the Zhenotdel published women's pages (*stranichki*) in many national and local party newspapers. Working-class women were encouraged to become correspondents, sending reports and letters to the press. Conferences and congresses brought women of different regions together in great number

Corbis



Zhenotdel's Russian Revolutionist

**Far left: Women joined men in military training, Moscow, 1918. Soviet women military leaders included Elena Rozmirovich (left), member of 1917 Bolshevik CC Military Organization, and Evgeniia Bosh (below), prominent Civil War commander, seen here in 1925.**

Nezakonechnoe Pis'mo



and variety. The last important meeting was the 1927 Congress of Women Deputies to the Soviets, a massive witness to the work that had been done in the preceding ten years where women displayed "a sense of power and achievement" (*ibid.*).

### Communal Living: Replacing the Household Pot

Early measures to institute communal living in Soviet Russia were heavily influenced by the Civil War. In the effort to mobilize the population to fight the war, the Bolsheviks instituted "war communism," which included state rationing, public dining halls, free food for children and wages in kind. By January 1920 Petrograd was serving one million people in public cafeterias; in Moscow, 93 percent of the population was served in this way. Meals were of poor quality, but in the revolutionary optimism of the time this was seen as a temporary problem. In later years, many expressed nostalgia for the idealistic future promised by communal living under "war communism" as opposed to the harsh reality that was to come. Party leader I. Stepanov captured it:

"All we adults were insanely and dreadfully hungry, but we could justly say to the whole world: The children are the first privileged citizens of our republic. We could say that we were moving toward the realization of freeing love...from economics and women from household slavery."

—quoted in Goldman, *op. cit.*

A key component of freeing women from the household prison was the socialization of child rearing. The Bolshevik program rested on a concept that all individuals should have full access to all the cultural and social benefits of society, as opposed to restrictions dictated by social and economic status. An All-Russian Congress for the Protection of Childhood was convened in 1919. The delegates debated theories of childcare and the degree of state vs. parental involvement with the upbringing of the very young. The words of one of the members of the Presidium of the Congress, Anna Elizarova, captured the general understanding of the majority: "There must be no wretched children who don't belong to anyone. All children are the children of the state" (quoted in *ibid.*).

A provision of the Family Code put forward the year before had banned adoption altogether in favor of the state's assuming care for orphans. This measure was especially important



Private produce market under NEP.

Marxist Internet Archive

because adoption in Russia was notoriously used by peasants as a source of cheap labor. Instead, the government would take on the task of a quality upbringing for all children.

But the enormous contradiction between aspiration and reality remained. The state was unable to care for the millions of homeless orphans in Russia, the *besprizorniki*. This problem predated the revolution, and seven years of war followed by famine brought the numbers up to an estimated 7.5 million by 1922. The government authorized free food for all children under 16; kitchens and homes were set up, and the estates of the ex-nobility were turned into homes for orphans, with partial success. Goldman caught the vicious circle caused by the lack of resources to meet the need: "Without daycare, many single mothers were unable to search for work, and without work, they were unable to support their children, who in turn ran away from impoverished homes to join the *besprizorniki* on the streets" (*ibid.*). Although the numbers shrank in the decade after the famine of 1921, the *besprizorniki* remained a problem for the Soviet government well into the 1930s.

### Temporary Retreat: the New Economic Policy

As the Civil War drew to a close in late 1920, the limits of the policy of "war communism" became clear. Industry had virtually collapsed. The most politically advanced workers had been killed in the Civil War or drawn into state and party administration; many of the remaining workers had gone back to the countryside to eke out a living from the land. Peasants in the south began rebelling against forcible requisitioning of grain (see "Kronstadt 1921: Bolshevism vs. Counterrevolution," page 6).

To revive production and maintain the alliance with the peasantry, in early 1921 Lenin proposed the New Economic Policy (NEP), in which the forcible requisitioning of grain was replaced by a tax on agricultural products, with the peasantry now allowed to sell much of their grain on the open market. The government sought to stabilize the currency; rationing of food and scarce consumer goods was ended and small-scale production and distribution of consumer goods for profit was allowed. While these concessions to market forces revived the economy to a great extent, they also tended to exacerbate the existing imbalances, with heavy industry getting little or no investment, and the pre-existing layer of better-off peasants (*kulaks*) becoming richer at the expense of the poorer layers in the villages. A tier of newly rich small producers and traders (*NEPmen*) flourished.

As would be expected, the NEP had a negative impact on conditions for women and children. Women suffered a general rise in unemployment through 1927, and were pushed back into "traditional" sectors such as textiles and light industry. "Free market" practices meant discrimination against women in hiring and firing—especially given the expenses of paid maternity leave and on-the-job protection for pregnant and nursing mothers. Charges were instituted for previously free public services, such as communal meals. Half the childcare centers and homes for single mothers were forced to close, undermining any attempt to liberate women: mothers had little opportunity to study, get skills or participate in social and political life.

Perhaps the most tragic consequence of the NEP for women was the re-emergence of prostitution. Prostitution was not illegal in Soviet Russia. Rather, the government sought to "return the prostitute to productive work, find her a place in the social economy," in the words of Lenin as reported by

Zetkin ("My Recollections of Lenin," in *The Emancipation of Women* [1934]). A 1921 government commission reaffirmed opposition to state interference in private matters:

"In fighting against prostitution, the government by no means intends to intrude into the sphere of sexual relations, for in that area all forced, regulated influence will lead only to distortion of the sexual self-determination of free and independent economic citizens."

—quoted in Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997)

Unemployed women and *besprizorniki* were the largest groups of urban prostitutes during the years of the NEP.

Goldman notes that delegates to a 1922 meeting on female labor angrily called attention to "the catastrophic position of services designed to protect mothers and infants due to state budgeting pressures under NEP" (Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*). Delegates stressed that women's problems were "closely connected to the overall position of the working class and under no condition should be considered apart from the proletarian state." The government tried to replace the lost resources through voluntary contributions and labor, and the commissariats issued decrees aimed at stopping anti-woman discrimination.

But these measures had little effect. In early 1923 a debate over whether further measures should be taken to address these problems broke out among leading women cadre, including Vera Golubeva and Alexandra Kollontai, who argued that the scope of the party's work among women should be widened. Golubeva, the deputy director of the Zhenotdel, argued that with the increasing unemployment among women, the party had to extend its reach into sectors of the population beyond the working class, drawing unemployed and peasant women into special ("transitional") bodies of work linked to the party. The question was discussed at the April 1923 party congress.

In the end the Soviet government had no other choice but to resort to the NEP. The alternative, to maintain the policies of war communism in the conditions of social collapse, would have led to massive peasant revolt and counterrevolution. But the NEP brought its own dangers of that kind. As Trotsky said, "With the transfer to the NEP bourgeois tendencies received a more copious field of action" (*The Revolution Betrayed*). Even within the constraints imposed by national isolation and economic weakness, however, the degradation of women's status was not preordained but was rather determined by a political struggle over *changeable* government policies.

In fact, the broader policies advocated by the Left Opposition could have opened the road to a real improvement in the situation of women even within the framework of the existing material conditions. The implementation of a systematic plan of industrialization as laid out by the Opposition in 1923 would have undercut the bourgeois tendencies fueled by the NEP, while greatly increasing the employment of women in industry and changing the functioning of factory managers. Discrimination against women workers in wages and employment was a manifestation of bureaucratic degeneration within the industrial managerial apparatus that could have been fought and reversed.

### The "Sea of Peasant Stagnation"

The most intense conflicts between the goals of the Bolshevik Revolution for the liberation of women and the actual conditions of Russian society occurred in the coun-



Dietz Verlag Berlin photos

**Soviet children collecting solidarity funds for hungry children in Germany, late 1923 or early 1924. Below: General strike against Cuno government, Berlin, in August at peak of 1923 revolutionary ferment.**



tryside. The 1922 Land Code abolished private ownership of land, water, forests and minerals and placed all land in the hands of the state. By law all citizens regardless of sex, religion, or nationality had rights to the land, and each adult was to have a voice in the *skhod* or village assembly. The Family Code granted individuals the right to live apart from a spouse, to divorce, and to receive alimony and child support. Extreme poverty exacerbated the gap between law and life, making it almost impossible for many peasant households to pay women their legal due. As long as the family remained the basic unit of production, as long as patriarchy determined the institutions of village life, neither peasant women nor men could realize the individual freedom promised by Soviet civil law.

The contradictions could not be resolved by law; the problem was inherent in the very nature of the Russian Revolution. The relatively small proletariat was able to carry out its revolutionary dictatorship because it embraced the fight of the peasantry against feudal barbarism. But once in power the proletariat had to go beyond the bourgeois-democratic tasks posed by the abolition of tsarist absolutism. As Trotsky predicted even before the outbreak of the 1905 Revolution, in addressing such questions as the length of the working day, unemployment, and protection of the agricultural proletariat, "the antagonism between the component sections will grow in proportion as the policy of the workers' government

defines itself, ceasing to be a general-democratic and becoming a class policy" (*Results and Prospects* [1906]). The deepgoing process of uprooting feudalistic social relations in the countryside required a huge investment of resources to build the necessary infrastructure of schools, roads and hospitals, as well as the mechanization of agriculture. The Bolsheviks looked to workers revolution in the advanced European countries, which could provide the technological resources to enable the Russian proletariat to prove the benefits of collectivized agriculture to the peasant masses.

The Commissariat of Justice set up several commissions to investigate the tangled problems facing women and children in the countryside. The jurists upheld their commitment to equal rights in the face of powerful peasant opposition. For example, land ownership was based on the male-dominated family unit (*dvor*), and alimony was awarded based on family assets. Faced with a demand for alimony, peasants developed ruses for avoiding payments by creating a fictitious division of the family unit, thus reducing the extent of property that the court could award a divorced woman. Officials in the Commissariats of Land and Justice repeatedly refused to accede to peasant demands to abolish divorce and alimony, and continued to support the rights of the vulnerable, the weak, and the landless peasant woman. The Land and Family Codes established rights for women that could result in smaller farm plots and decreased production, at a time when increasing grain production was a state priority. The Moscow commission declared: "To agree that the *dvor* should bear no responsibility for alimony means to flood our Soviet law in a sea of peasant stagnation" (quoted in Goldman, *op. cit.*).

Despite the difficulties, the laws, enforced by the Soviet state, did have an impact. Melnikova, an impoverished *batrachka* thrown out of her husband's *dvor*, came to the judge saying, "I heard in the village that now there was this law that they could no longer insult women in this way" (quoted in *ibid.*). While there was often much resistance based on fear, ignorance and the inertia of tradition, once they were functioning, the institutions and changes in daily life throughout the early and middle 1920s gained the increasing support of the peasantry, especially the women.

A small but significant minority of peasant women found their lives transformed by the party's educational efforts, the activities of the Zhenotdel and their new legal rights. Delegates at one women's congress spoke proudly of their struggle as single women to retain their share of the land, to attend meetings of the *skhod*, and to organize agricultural cooperatives for women. Mothers of illegitimate children and divorced peasant women defied centuries of patriarchal tradition to fight the household in court for the right to child support and alimony.

### Problems of Everyday Life

In 1923, a discussion developed within the Bolshevik Party on the question of how to improve the quality of *byt* (daily life). This seemingly mundane issue cuts to the heart of the struggle to create wholly new economic and social relations. At its core is the question of the emancipation of women, which is the political prism for "everyday relations" in a broader social sense. No other question reaches so far into the daily life of the masses, weighed down by centuries of custom, habits of social deference and religious reaction, especially in a backward, impoverished country as was Russia in the early 20th century—comparable to Iran or India today. As Trotsky said two years later, "The most accurate



**Culture of the Transitional Period, Volume 21 of Trotsky's Collected Works, includes writings published in English in *Problems of Everyday Life*.**

way of measuring our advance is by the practical measures which are being carried out for the improvement of the position of mother and child.... The depth of the question of the mother is expressed in the fact that she is, in essence, a living point where all the decisive strands of economic and cultural work intersect" ("To Build Socialism Means to Emancipate Women and Protect Mothers," December 1925, *Women and the Family*).

Even party members, shamefully, sometimes derided the Zhenotdel as "bab-kom" or "tsentro-baba" (*baba* is a derogatory term for woman). Zetkin recalls Lenin saying:

"Our communist work among the masses of women, and our political work in general, involves considerable educational work among the men. We must root out the old slave-owner's point of view, both in the Party and among the masses. That is one of our political tasks, a task just as urgently necessary as the formation of a staff composed of comrades, men and women, with thorough theoretical and practical training for Party work among working women."

—Zetkin, "My Recollections of Lenin"

Neither the social reorganization nor the material conditions yet existed to inaugurate a new and higher order of family life, which in any case would require some generations to evolve. Indeed, the equality of women, in a social sense, may well be the last emancipation to be fully achieved in a classless society, just as women's oppression was the first non-class social subordination in history.

Trotsky began to write a series of essays on the question of *byt*, such as "From the Old Family to the New" and "Vodka, the Church, and the Cinema" (both dated July 1923), later collected in one volume as *Problems of Everyday Life*. Of course, he emphasized the importance of material abundance in the achievement of "culture," which he defined not in the narrow sense of literature and art, but as all fields of human endeavor. Only in an advanced communist society can one truly speak of "choice" and "freedom." Meanwhile, however, Trotsky advocated the encouragement of voluntary initiatives in daily life.

Trotsky's writings provoked a sharp rebuttal from Polina Vinogradskaia, a member of the Zhenotdel, who argued that the problem could be reduced to lack of initiative from the government and opposed opening a wider discussion on *byt*. But Trotsky insisted that such a discussion was a necessary part of social development:

"The material foundations inherited from the past are part of our way of life, but so is a new psychological attitude. The culinary-domestic aspect of things is part of the concept of the family, but so are the mutual relationships between husband, wife, and child as they are taking shape in the circumstances of Soviet society—with new tasks, goals, rights, and obligations for the husbands and children...."

"The object of acquiring conscious knowledge of everyday life is precisely so as to be able to disclose graphically, concretely, and cogently before the eyes of the working masses themselves the contradictions between the outgrown material shell of the way of life and the new relationships and needs which have arisen."

—"Against Bureaucracy, Progressive and Unprogressive," August 1923, *Problems of Everyday Life*

In the revolutionary process the working masses were not simply passive objects, but necessary actors. Trotsky suggested, for example, that more forward-looking people "group themselves even now into collective house-keeping units," posing this as "the first, still very incomplete approximations to a communist way of life" ("From the Old Family to the New"). While such pro-socialist initiatives were not central in the political struggle against the Stalinist degeneration of the party and state, they were entirely possible within the difficult reality of Soviet Russia in the 1920s.

**The Degeneration of the Revolution**

These 1923 debates on how to deal with the excruciating contradiction between the communist program for women's liberation and the terrible material want in the country took place on the cusp of the decisive battle over the degeneration of the revolution. The poverty of the country created strong pressures toward bureaucratic deformations. Social inequalities under the NEP only exacerbated the pressures. As Trotsky later explained in his seminal work on the Stalinist degeneration:

"The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there is little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. Such is the starting point of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. It 'knows' who is to get something and who has to wait."

—*The Revolution Betrayed*

Eventually and inevitably, these material pressures found expression within the Bolshevik Party itself. Stalin, who was appointed General Secretary of the party in March 1922, substantially increased the wages, benefits and material privileges of party officials, and became the exponent of the interests of the new bureaucratic layer. Soon after Stalin's appointment, Lenin suffered a major stroke; he returned to work for only a few months in late 1922, when he urged Trotsky to wage a resolute struggle against the influence of the growing bureaucratic layer within the party (see "A Critical Balance Sheet: Trotsky and the Russian Left Opposition," *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001). A series of strokes beginning in December left Lenin incapacitated until his death in January 1924.

Stalin joined with fellow Political Bureau members Leon Kamenev and Gregory Zinoviev in a secret "triumvirate" within the Soviet leadership, working assiduously to block the ascension of Trotsky. Trotsky understood that the alliance between the workers and peasants would remain fragile as long as the Soviet regime could not provide industrial and consumer goods to the peasants at low cost. Thus he advocated increased investment in heavy industry and centralized government planning. The bureaucracy resisted this, preferring to let the NEP run its course, and increasingly bending to the economic pressures of the kulaks and NEPmen.

In the summer of 1923 growing economic discontent erupted in strikes in Moscow and Petrograd. In a series of letters to the Central Committee, Trotsky demanded that the party open an immediate campaign against bureaucratism, and that it develop a plan for industrial investment. Forty-six leading party members (including the woman military leader Evgeniia Bosh) signed a declaration along similar lines. There was an outpouring of support for the loose, anti-bureaucratic opposition and the proposed "New Course" in the pages of the party newspaper, *Pravda*.

At the same time a revolutionary crisis in Germany held out the possibility of a workers revolution there, giving hope that the isolation of the Soviet workers state would soon end. When Zinoviev's Communist International leadership and the German Communist Party failed to seize the revolutionary opportunity that opened up in the summer of 1923

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**Left Oppositionists in Siberian exile demonstrate in 1928 on anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution. Banners read: "Turn the Fire to the Right, Against Kulak, NEPman and Bureaucrat, Not in Words But in Deeds" and "Long Live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!"**





Introduction of rapid industrialization brought large numbers of women into social production. Women coal miners in Ukraine, 1930.

1931 poster reads: "Down With Kitchen Slavery! We Demand a New Life."



and ignominiously called off a planned insurrection in late October, demoralization swept Russia (see "A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern," *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001).

In the ensuing party discussion, the triumvirate pulled out every stop to destroy the Opposition. The elections to the 13th Party Conference, held in January 1924, were so rigged that, despite strong support from party organizations in Petrograd, Moscow and some smaller towns, Trotsky and his supporters won just three out of 124 delegates. The triumvirate's victory at this conference marked the decisive point in the degeneration of the revolution. After Lenin's death that same month, the triumvirate opened a mass membership campaign (the "Lenin levy"), allowing politically backward workers, assorted careerists, NEPmen and other unsuitable elements into the party. This began the process that would transform the party from a conscious proletarian vanguard into a capricious bureaucratic apparatus at the top of the Soviet state.

At the end of 1924, the bureaucratic victory took programmatic shape as Stalin promulgated the absurd idea that the USSR could build socialism on its own, without revolutions in other countries. Over the next decade and a half, the Soviet bureaucracy zigzagged between outright conciliation of the various imperialist powers and heedless adventurism bound for defeat, but the theory of "socialism in one country" was the mainstay of evolving Stalinist dogma. The Communist International was transformed from a party seeking international workers revolution into one acting as a tool of Kremlin diplomacy.

Within the USSR itself, the bureaucracy began to relax the original NEP legislation which, while allowing free trade in agricultural produce, had severely *restricted* the hiring of labor and acquisition of land. Socialism was to be built in the USSR "at a snail's pace," in the words of Nikolai Bukharin, now allied with Stalin. The conciliation of the NEP petty traders and backward peasant *dvor* had serious and detrimental consequences for Soviet women and children. In April 1924 an order to place teenagers in agriculture was promulgated. The provision against adoption was reversed in practice. In 1926, some 19,000 homeless children were expelled from state-funded children's homes and placed in extended peasant households to plow with a centuries-old wooden plow, and to reap with a sickle and scythe.

From mid 1926 to late 1927, Trotsky joined with Zino-

viev and Kamenev, who, responding to their proletarian bases in Leningrad (formerly Petrograd) and Moscow, had broken with Stalin. The United Opposition (UO) fought against the policies of "socialism in one country" and for a perspective of international revolution. Along with a tax on the kulaks to fund investment in heavy industry, the UO fought for a policy of voluntary collectivization of the peasantry and "the systematic and gradual introduction of this most numerous peasant group [the middle peasants] to the benefits of large-scale, mechanized, collective agriculture" ("The Platform of the Opposition," September 1927, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition [1926-27]* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980]).

From 1924 on, the Zhenotdel was directly involved in party factional struggles; many prominent activists supported the Opposition, including Zhenotdel head Klavdiia Nikolaeva. She was replaced in 1925 by Stalin supporter Alexandra Artiukhina. During the fight against Zinoviev and his Leningrad organization, Artiukhina mobilized Zhenotdel workers for the Stalin faction in order to keep a "united, solid, disciplined Leninist Party" (quoted in Hayden, *op. cit.*). Artiukhina asserted that from the slogan "equality" women workers might get the idea that they should receive the same wages as more highly skilled male workers, and argued that the Zhenotdel should undertake to explain to them why wage differentials were necessary. In sharp contrast, the United Opposition's platform called for women workers to receive "equal pay for equal work" and for "provision to be made for women workers to learn skilled trades" ("The Platform of the Opposition").

Stalin's firm control of the party and state apparatus allowed him to vilify and then crush the UO, most of whose leading members were expelled from the party in late 1927. While Zinoviev and Kamenev capitulated to Stalin, Trotsky and many other leading UO members were sent into internal exile. The bureaucratization of internal party life had a demoralizing effect on the Zhenotdel. As of 1927, attendance at delegate meetings dropped off sharply—as low as 40 to 60 percent of potential attendees compared to 80 to 95 percent previously.

### The Family Code of 1926

The bureaucratization of the Soviet party and state was not a swift, unitary process. It took years for the bureaucracy to fully stifle revolutionary consciousness, which also weak-



ened in the face of the devastation of the country. The passionate debate over the Family Code of 1926 is just one example of the intensive public discussion that was still taking place in some sectors of Soviet political life. The Bolsheviks recognized that social relations would continue to evolve after the revolution. Drafted deliberately as a transitional set of laws, the 1918 Family Code was never considered to be definitive. Debate and discussion on family policy continued to simmer throughout the period of the Civil War and NEP. In 1923 a committee was formed to draft a new code. In October 1925, after a number of drafts and intense public debate, a draft was presented to the CEC. There followed another year of nationwide discussion.

The 1926 Family Code marks a midpoint in the degeneration of Soviet family policy from the liberating ferment of the early revolutionary years to the Stalinist rehabilitation of the institution of the family in 1936. By 1925-26, arguments for the abolition of all marriage codes had ebbed. Instead, proponents of looser policies such as recognizing "de facto" (common law) marriage clashed with more conservative forces. Predominantly from the peasantry, the advocates of a stricter civil code also included some working-class women who spoke for the vulnerability of women and children in a society where the full replacement of the family with socialized methods was not yet possible.

Changes from the 1918 law in the 1926 Family Code included extending alimony payments to the able-bodied unemployed, as opposed to the disabled only, and adding joint rights for property acquired in the course of marriage, as opposed to the earlier stipulation that spouses retain only their own property. The 1926 Code also made divorce even easier: the "postcard divorce" was the simple filing of the

wish to dissolve the marriage on the part of one of the parties; the requirement of an appearance in court was dropped. The greatest controversy was provoked over government recognition of de facto marriage, that is, to grant the same legal status to people living together in unregistered relationships as to officially married couples.

The juridical difficulty centered on the problem of defining marriage, outside of the civil registration of same, because, naturally, once you got into the courtroom, a man and a woman could well disagree on whether a marriage existed. Forty-five percent of alimony suits were brought by unmarried women abandoned at pregnancy.

For many women, less skilled, less educated, and less able to command a decent wage or even a job, easy divorce too often meant abandonment to poverty and misery for themselves and their children by a husband exercising his right to "free union." Their condition of dependency could not be resolved by easy divorce laws in the absence of jobs, education and decent, state-supported childcare facilities. As one explained in a *Rabotnitsa* article, "Women, in the majority of cases, are more backward, less qualified, and therefore less independent than men.... To marry, to bear children, to be enslaved by the kitchen, and then to be thrown aside by your husband—this is very painful for women. This is why I am against easy divorce." Another noted, "We need to struggle for the preservation of the family. Alimony is necessary as long as the state cannot take all children under its protection" (quoted in Wendy Z. Goldman, "Working-Class Women and the 'Withering Away' of the Family," in *Russia in the Era of NEP*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Rabinowitch and Stites [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991]). These excruciating contradictions underline the stark truth that the family must be *replaced* and cannot be simply abolished.

While the differences over the proposed Code were not clearly between the Right and Left, the discussion paralleled the general debates in the party and similarly reflected the pressures of class forces. Those opposed to the draft Code tended to reflect the influence of the peasantry, which adamantly opposed recognition of de facto marriage and easy divorce as a threat to the stability and economic unity of the household and a product of "conniving females," "social and moral chaos," and "debauchery" (Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*).

The United Opposition did not have a formal position on the Code, as far as we know; but Oppositionists took part in the debate. Alexander Beloborodov, who was expelled from the party with Trotsky in 1927, had many reservations about the Code; he was particularly concerned about the effect of family instability on children "in so far as we are unable to arrange for community education for children and demand that the children be brought up in the family" (quoted in Rudolph Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the U.S.S.R.* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949]). Trotsky himself denounced opposition to the recognition of de facto marriage in a 7 December 1925 speech to the Third All-Union Conference on Protection of Mothers and Children:

"Comrades, this [opposition] is so monstrous that it makes you wonder: Are we really in a society transforming itself in a socialist manner...? Here the attitude to woman is not only not communist, but reactionary and philistine in the worst sense of the word. Who could think that the rights of woman, who has to bear the consequences of every marital union, however transitory, could be *too* zealously guarded in our country?... It is symptomatic and bears witness to the fact that,

Stalin's glorification of family included "Glory of Motherhood" medal for childbearing. Below: Kazakh woman with ten children honored as "mother-heroine."

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**Faces of capitalist counterrevolution:**  
**Left: Chechen woman grieves over victims of murderous Russian occupation, 1995. Above: homeless child in capitalist Russia.**

in our traditional views, concepts and customs, there is much that is truly thick-headed and that needs to be smashed with a battering ram."

—Trotsky, "The Protection of Motherhood and the Struggle for Culture," *Women and the Family*

### Forced Collectivization and the Five Year Plan

By 1928, the bureaucracy's policies of encouraging the kulaks to "enrich" themselves had brought the disaster predicted by the Opposition: the wealthy peasants had begun hoarding grain, having no incentive to sell to the state since there was nothing much they could buy with the proceeds. Unable to feed the cities, Stalin did an about-face. He turned on his ally Bukharin and forcibly collectivized half the peasants in the country in the space of four months. The peasants responded by sabotage, killing farm animals, including more than 50 percent of the horses in the country. During the ensuing social upheaval through the early 1930s more than three million people died.

At the same time, Stalin abandoned the policy of building socialism "at a snail's pace" and adopted a desperately needed plan for industrialization, albeit accelerated to a reckless and murderous pace. The resulting economic development brought about a qualitative change in the conditions of working women. To enable them to work, child-care centers and cafeterias sprang up overnight in neighborhoods and factories. "Down with the kitchen!" cried one propagandist:

"We shall destroy this little penitentiary! We shall free millions of women from house-keeping. They want to work like the rest of us. In a factory-kitchen, one person can prepare from fifty to one hundred dinners a day. We shall force machines to peel potatoes, wash the dishes, cut the bread, stir the soup, make ice cream."

"The saucepan is the enemy of the party cell" and "Away with pots and pans" became party watchwords (quoted in Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*).

However, economic planning in the USSR was not based on the democratic input of the workers, but on bureaucratic fiat. While the gains of industrialization were enormous, they were at the cost of quality of goods and with great bureaucratic inefficiency. Despite these problems, the Soviet Union was the only country in the 20th century to develop from a backward, overwhelmingly peasant country to an advanced industrial power. This is confirmation of the tremendous impetus to human well-being—not least the status of

women—that results from the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a collectivized, planned economy, even in a single country. It was only because of this industrial development that the USSR was able to beat back the assault of Hitler's armies in World War II, though at the cost of 27 million Soviet lives. At the same time the bureaucracy clogged society's every pore, leading to waste, repression and caprice, while working to prevent the international extension of the revolution, which could be the only real, long-term defense of the gains of October.

Despite the real strides forward made by women through industrialization, the bureaucracy had abandoned the communist commitment to fight for women's liberation. It used the rhetorical adventurism of the period to cover its retreat. Grotesquely, the government announced in 1930 that the woman question had been officially resolved. At the same time the Zhenotdel was liquidated; the prelude to this had been the abolition in 1926 of the International Women's Secretariat, which was downgraded to the women's department of the Comintern Executive Committee. The Zhenotdel's liquidation was put forward in the guise of a party "reorganization" in 1929, with the claim that work among women would become the work of the party as a whole. But these words, borrowed from the revolutionary years, were now only a cover for inaction and retreat.

### 1936 and the Triumph of the "Socialist Family"

In 1929 the Communist Party was still calling for the withering away of the family. By 1936-37, when the Russian CP's degeneration was complete, Stalinist doctrine pronounced this a "crude mistake" and called for a "reconstruction of the family on a new socialist basis." The third Family Code, which became law in 1936, also made divorce more difficult, requiring an appearance in court, increased fees and the registration of the divorce on the divorcees' internal passports, to prevent "a criminally irresponsible use of this right, which disorganizes socialist community life" (Schlesinger, *The Family in the U.S.S.R.*).

The official glorification of family life and the retreat from Bolshevik policies on divorce and abortion were an integral part of the political counterrevolution that usurped political power from the working class. Trotsky addressed this at length:

"The triumphal rehabilitation of the family, taking place simultaneously—what a providential coincidence!—with the

rehabilitation of the ruble, is caused by the material and cultural bankruptcy of the state. Instead of openly saying, 'We have proven still too poor and ignorant for the creation of socialist relations among men, our children and grandchildren will realize this aim,' the leaders are forcing people to glue together again the shell of the broken family, and not only that, but to consider it, under threat of extreme penalties, the sacred nucleus of triumphant socialism. It is hard to measure with the eye the scope of this retreat."

—*The Revolution Betrayed*

Repudiating the Bolshevik commitment to noninterference in people's personal lives, the theory of the "extinction of family" was declared as leading to sexual debauchery, while praise of "good housewives" began to appear in the Soviet press by the mid 1930s. A 1936 *Pravda* editorial denounced a housing plan without individual kitchens as a "left deviation" and an attempt to "artificially introduce communal living." As Trotsky said, "The retreat not only assumes forms of disgusting hypocrisy, but also is going infinitely farther than the iron economic necessity demands."

To the great hardship of Soviet women, the 1936 Family Code criminalized abortion, and the death rate from abortions soared. At the same time, the government began to issue "heroine awards" to women with large numbers of children, while officials decreed that in the Soviet Union "life is happy" and only selfishness impels women to abortion. The 1944 Family Code withdrew the recognition of de facto marriage, restored the humiliating concept of "legitimacy," abolished coeducation in the schools and banned paternity suits. Only in 1955 did abortion again become legal in the USSR.

**1991-92: Capitalist Counterrevolution Tramples on Women**

In the 1930s Trotsky predicted that the Kremlin bureaucracy would reach an impasse on the economic front when it became necessary to shift from crude quantitative increases to improvement in quality, from extensive to intensive growth. He called for "a revision of *planned economy* from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers" (Transitional Program, 1938). Reflecting in large part the unrelenting pressure of world imperialism on the Soviet workers state, these economic problems came to a head in the 1970s and 1980s.

Taking over where the moderate Mikhail Gorbachev shrank from the necessarily harsh measures of restoring a fully capitalist economy, Boris Yeltsin seized power in

August 1991. Over the next year, in the absence of working-class resistance, capitalist counterrevolution triumphed in Russia, a world-historic defeat for the proletarian revolution. The USSR was broken up into mutually hostile nationalist regimes. Since then things have gotten far worse for everyone except a tiny minority at the top—but for women and children most of all. The vast majority of the population has been driven into dire poverty and chronic unemployment. The extensive system of childcare and help for mothers is gone, the *besprizorniki* are back, prostitution flourishes, and women in Central Asia have been thrown back centuries.

The International Communist League recognizes the harsh reality that political consciousness has retreated in the face of these unprecedented defeats. One of our key tasks is to struggle to explain and clarify the Marxist program, freeing it from the filth of Stalinist betrayals and the lies of capitalist ideologues. This study of the Bolshevik fight for the emancipation of women, showing how much could be achieved in spite of the poverty, imperialist strangulation and later Stalinist degeneration of the USSR, is a testimony to the promise that a world collective planned economy, born of new October Revolutions, holds out to the exploited and oppressed of the world. The breadth of our long-term historical view of the socialist future, a new way of life that can evolve only after ripping out the entrenched inequality and oppression bred by capitalist exploitation, was addressed by Trotsky:

"Marxism sets out from the development of technique as the fundamental spring of progress, and constructs the communist program upon the dynamic of the productive forces. If you conceive that some cosmic catastrophe is going to destroy our planet in the fairly near future, then you must, of course, reject the communist perspective along with much else. Except for this as yet problematic danger, however, there is not the slightest scientific ground for setting any limit in advance to our technical productive and cultural possibilities. Marxism is saturated with the optimism of progress, and that alone, by the way, makes it irreconcilably opposed to religion.

"The material premise of communism should be so high a development of the economic powers of man that productive labor, having ceased to be a burden, will not require any goad, and the distribution of life's goods, existing in continual abundance, will not demand—as it does not now in any well-off family or 'decent' boardinghouse—any control except that of education, habit and social opinion."

—*The Revolution Betrayed* ■

**ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program**

The Declaration of Principles of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a concrete expression of our purpose: to build national sections of a democratic-centralist international which can lead the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution.

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**Now Out in Tagalog!**

The image shows the cover of the Tagalog edition of Spartacist magazine. At the top, the word "SPARTACIST" is written in a bold, stylized font with a flag icon to its right. Below it, smaller text reads "NUMBER 34 ENGLISH EDITION SPRING 2006". The main headline on the cover is "For New October Revolutions! Third International Conference of the ICL". Below this, it says "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)". At the bottom, there is a table of contents in Tagalog, listing various articles and their page numbers. A black banner at the bottom of the cover reads "Now Out in Tagalog!".

# Greece...

(continued from page 3)

degenerated workers state against the threat of the bourgeois counterrevolution.

"In regard to the question of China, what I consider applies is what Trotsky maintained in 1933, when he fought against the conception that the bureaucracy had already destroyed the Soviet workers state: Trotskyists judge that situation as dangerous but not desperate and they consider it an act of cowardice to announce that the revolutionary fight has been lost before the fight and without a fight."

In November 2000, another comrade left the KSEE after fighting in that organization for the position of defending China as a deformed workers state.

## On the National Question

The Balkan peninsula is a region with myriad interpenetrated peoples and oppressed minorities. An equitable resolution of the national question in the Balkans requires a socialist federation. The ICL recognizes that the question of Macedonia is a test of the authenticity of any group claiming to be internationalist in Greece. The TGG defends the national rights of the Macedonian minority in Greece, including their right to set up their own state or unite with the existing state of Macedonia. *For full democratic rights for national minorities in Greece! For a Balkan socialist federation!*

On this basis we were won to the ICL's program, strongly opposing Greek national chauvinism, following in Trotsky's footsteps in his discussion with the Archio-Marxists on the Macedonian question:

"It's not our task to organize nationalist uprisings. We merely say that if the Macedonians want it, we will then side with them, that they should be allowed to decide, and we will also support their decision. What disturbs me is not so much the question of the *Macedonian peasants*, but rather whether there isn't a touch of chauvinist poison in *Greek workers*. That is very dangerous. For us, who are for a Balkan federation of soviet states, it is all the same if Macedonia belongs to this federation as an autonomous whole or part of another state. However, if the Macedonians are oppressed by the bourgeois government, or feel that they are oppressed, we must give them support."

—Leon Trotsky, "A Discussion on Greece,"  
Spring 1932, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky*  
*Supplement (1929-33)* (Pathfinder, 1979)

The split inside the group in Greece came to a head over Spiros' refusal to recognize and fight against the national oppression of the Arvanites—an Orthodox Christian minority of Albanian descent who migrated to what is now Greece during the Middle Ages. The Arvanites have been forcibly Hellenized and face hideous discrimination and punishments even for speaking their own language in public.

To simply mention that national minorities exist in Greece is not merely taboo, it carries the risk of prosecution. In 2001, Vlach activist Sotiris Bletsas was dragged through the courts for distributing a leaflet that stated there are five linguistic minorities in Greece. Bletsas' acquittal after an appeal is regarded as a landmark legal decision because it tacitly accepts that Arvanitika, Vlach, Macedonian, Turkish and Pomak are spoken on Greek soil. We defended Bletsas against the Greek bourgeois state in our intervention during the Polytechnic demonstrations in 2001.

Under capitalist rule, anti-Roma [Gypsy] racism has been

rife throughout the Balkans. In Greece, 137 Roma were forced to move from their houses which were located in the vicinity of the Olympic Stadium construction site. Roma, along with Albanian immigrants, have increasingly been the victims of brutal police violence. One Albanian was murdered and around 100 injured after a football match between Greece and Albania in early September, and racist mobs attacked Albanians in several cities, including Athens and Thessaloniki. Albanian immigrants in Greece number around one million people. Immigrants are not merely victims of racist terror but an integral part of the proletariat, which confirms the importance of our call for the workers movement to defend immigrants and to fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. The defense of the rights of oppressed nationalities and immigrants is the only means by which the proletariat, consisting of workers of different ethnicities, can be united in the struggle for socialist revolution.

Another key question for revolutionaries in Greece is combatting anti-Turkish Greek chauvinism in regard to Cyprus, as we state in the "Agreement for Common Work." Any proletarian, internationalist perspective for Cyprus needs to begin with the call for the immediate withdrawal of all the Greek troops from Cyprus, as well as the Turkish army, the British troops and bases and the UN contingent!

The Greek Orthodox church is a central pillar of the Greek capitalist order and fuels national chauvinism, directed particularly against Turkish people and against all Muslims, enforcing the ties between the Greek working class and its exploiters. An example of the sinister, chauvinist role of the Church was seen in 2000, when proposals by the then-PASOK government that would have removed the documenting of a person's religion on national identity cards were met with reactionary mobilizations led by the Orthodox clergy. We are for the separation of church and state!

## For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The main institution for the oppression of women is the family. For the ruling class, the family serves as the vehicle for transmitting private property from one generation to the next while serving in general as a mechanism for regimenting the population through the inculcation of conservative social values. Thus, the liberation of women cannot be achieved without the abolition of the system of private property. The expropriation of the bourgeoisie through proletarian revolution and the extension of that revolution to the more advanced industrial countries, establishing the material foundations for a socialist society of material abundance, will lay the basis for the replacement of the family.

In Greece, women did not have the right to vote until 1956, while the dowry was only formally abolished in 1986 and in reality still exists. Although abortion was legalized (with severe restrictions) in 1986, it is difficult to obtain, particularly for teenagers and poor women. We are for free abortion on demand!

Following the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe, women workers in Greece, as elsewhere, have been those most affected by the capitalists' attacks on the working masses. Working mothers have faced the closure of public nurseries and kindergartens. We fight for free, quality health care and for free, 24-hour childcare.

Greek society is extremely homophobic, as was demonstrated recently by the case of the Mega Channel TV broadcaster, which was fined €100,000 for showing a gay kiss in its *Close Your Eyes* series. In counterposition to the homophobic Greek left, we seek to act as a Leninist tribune of the oppressed and defend the democratic rights of homosexuals, including their right to marriage and to have children. All consensual forms of sexuality should be private, and the state or church must not intervene. We call for "state and church out of the bedroom."

### For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The Greek Communist Party (KKE) is a mass reformist party with major influence and roots in the working class. Unlike the Stalinophobic Greek fake Trotskyists, we do not ignore the KKE, but seek to win its working-class base to the genuine communism of Lenin and Trotsky. As we wrote in *Workers Vanguard* No. 565 (11 December 1992):

"The KKE is the historic mass party of the Greek working class. Its partisan struggle against the Nazi wartime occupation and in the civil war that broke out in 1944 gave it great authority. That authority was duly abused to block the seizure of power by the working class at the end of the war, when the Communist Party, as in France and Italy, made peace with the bourgeoisie, disarmed the working class and entered into a popular-front capitalist government to rebuild the Greek capitalist state machine. This 1945 betrayal did not prevent the bourgeoisie, aided and abetted by British and U.S. imperialism, from turning on the Communists, renewing the civil war and slaughtering thousands in a campaign designed to break the potential for working-class revolution.

"The defeat of the KKE-led forces in 1949, conforming to Stalin's postwar settlement with Churchill that gave Greece to imperialism, paved the way for a series of rightist regimes culminating in the infamous colonels' dictatorship of 1967-74. Despite this history, the goal of the KKE has remained to find its way back into the corridors of capitalist power."

While the KKE is a mass reformist workers party, the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) is a bourgeois-populist formation and has been so from its foundation. In contrast to elements on the Greek left, such as the Cliffites, we reject on principle any political support to this party of the class enemy.

The Greek comrades worked together with comrades from the ICL long before the section was founded. In this collaboration we produced a number of leaflets, translating key articles—e.g., "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program," "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class' Theories," "Women's Liberation and the Struggle Against Imperialist Subjugation" and others. We wrote a statement in defense of the arrested anarchists and other protesters in Thessaloniki in 2003 against state repression. We defend and call for the immediate release of all those jailed in the roundup of the ELA and "17 November" groups [two groups that grew out of opposition to the rule of the military junta in Greece from 1967-74; they generally targeted representatives of the bourgeois state and imperialism]. When the oppressed act against the bourgeoisie and its state, we defend them against capitalist repression; however, we oppose the desperate petty-bourgeois strategy of individual terrorism, which is antithetical to the task of rendering the proletariat conscious that it is the only class with the historic interest and social force to smash capitalist exploitation.

The comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece, section of the ICL, are committed to building a party that represents the interests of the multiethnic working class and champions the rights of all the oppressed—women, homosexuals, youth, immigrants and ethnic minorities. It is necessary to fight for the political independence of the proletariat in order to overthrow the capitalist order by successful proletarian revolution.

## Agreement for Common Work Between Greek Comrades and the ICL (FI)

1. The current group in Greece originated from a split within a group that had been having discussions with the ICL since 1999. The reason for the split was a months-long fight over the national question—the defense of the rights of national minorities in Greece and opposition to Greek national chauvinism. There were previously fights with others in the original group about the Russian question, the centrality of the woman question in Greece, the general strike question and the party question. As an excuse for breaking with the ICL over these questions, a minority of the group cynically accused the ICL of "centrism" and "chauvinism" when the bombing against Afghanistan began in October 2001 (*International Internal Bulletin* No. 54).

2. Comrades of the Greek group came to the politics of the ICL through fights and subsequent splits centered on the Russian question. Two members had split from the [ex-Morenoite] Communist League/Workers Power group over the defense of the Chinese deformed workers state, while another comrade of the original group wrote a document supporting the intervention of the ICL into the DDR in 1989-90. Another comrade of the current group came from

the Greek Communist Party. Given the influence that the CP has in the Greek working class, it is the main obstacle, so it is very important for the future of the group that an ex-member of the CP is one of the Greek comrades. The group stands for the unconditional military defense of the deformed workers states—China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba—and for proletarian political revolution against the bureaucracy. We came to agree with the ICL's analysis of the collapse of Stalinism in East Europe through studying the "Documents and Discussion on the Collapse of Stalinism" by Seymour and St. John in *Spartacist* No. 45-46 (Winter 1990-91), on which a comrade of the ICL gave a presentation. The Greek group agrees with the position of the ICL on Afghanistan, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan." There is initial agreement with the ICL's position on Poland, although it has not been discussed in the current group. We reject the Stalinophobia of the anti-communist Greek pseudo-Trotskyists who refuse to intervene into the Greek Communist Party—a mass pro-Soviet Stalinist party that has the support of the most advanced sections of the Greek working class and youth.

3. Greece is a Balkan country, and it is the only Balkan country to which the October Revolution did not extend. And the Greek capitalist state is the only one in the Balkans that does not recognize any national minority. A Trotskyist group in Greece must fight against Greek chauvinism and defend the rights of national minorities—which are forcibly Hellenized—the Macedonians, Vlachs, Pomaks, Turks, Cham (Muslim) Albanians and the Arvanites, etc., including the right of self-determination, especially for the Macedonian and Albanian minorities. It is also important to defend the rights of the persecuted Roma people. The comrades fight against Greek chauvinist poison inside the working class. The resolution of the myriad national questions in the Balkans requires a socialist federation of the Balkans.

4. A Trotskyist group must be a Leninist “tribune of the people.” And for Greece, where the ultra-reactionary Orthodox church has enormous influence, the oppression of women is extreme. The Greek “holy trinity” of “homeland-religion-family” which the capitalist state promotes is strongly connected with the national and the woman questions. A central issue for Trotskyists must be the fight for the liberation of women through socialist revolution and opposition to women’s oppression. We fight for full democratic rights for homosexuals, in opposition to the male-chauvinist, homophobic Greek society and the Greek left. We are for the separation of church and state.

5. The Greek comrades stand for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. They have already carried out many interventions, both in common work with comrades of the ICL and by themselves, into immigrant demonstrations. Immigrants—Albanian, Kurd, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Russian, Iraqi, Palestinian, etc.—have become a key component of the proletariat in Greece and the Greek group has to fight for the unity of the proletariat against any kind of racism.

6. The group agrees with the position of the ICL on the recent war on Iraq and the Afghanistan war in 2001. The Greek group fought under the slogans: Defend Iraq against the imperialist attack of the U.S. and its allies! Down with the colonial occupation of Iraq! All American and allied troops out of the Near East now! We called for class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home in counterposition to the Greek left, which had a very parochial position: “No Greek participation in the Iraq war” and also against the pacifism of the antiwar movement “Stop the War.” We supported the blockade of the American Souda base and we intervened in the workers strikes against the war. We called for Greek troops out of Cyprus.

7. A key question confronting Trotskyists in Greece is the question of Cyprus and our internationalist, class-struggle opposition to the anti-Turkish chauvinism of the Greek bourgeoisie. We call for the immediate withdrawal of all Greek troops from the island. We also demand the withdrawal of the Turkish army, the UN contingent and the British troops and bases. Our fight is for a proletarian solution to the national question, which of necessity requires the revolutionary overthrow of the nationalist bourgeoisies in Nicosia/Lefkosa, Athens and Ankara.

8. The group agrees on the ICL’s analysis and thesis on Pabloism. We want to fight to forge a Greek section of the ICL. We have been contributing our monthly payment since May 2002. We accept the discipline of a democratic-centralist international. The International, according to Lenin and

Trotsky, is the necessary tool for the fight against capitalism, for new October Revolutions and for the protection of national sections from alien class pressures. We fight against the pretenders to Trotskyism—the SWP, Taaffeites, etc.—who are an obstacle to the reforging of a Trotskyist party. We seek to build the party through splits and fusions, including from among the CP youth and the anarchist milieu.

9. Unlike the Stalinist Communist Party, which is a reformist party based on the industrial proletariat, PASOK is a bourgeois-populist political formation. While it has influence in the main trade-union federations in Greece (which are generally craft unions), PASOK’s existence is not dependent on the labor movement. PASOK’s origins are in the bourgeois Centre Party of George Papandreou—the father of PASOK founder Andreas—whose social base the party inherited. PASOK’s ideological underpinnings are illustrated by the party’s seminal 3 September [1974] founding Declaration, which combined hawkish Greek nationalism over the Cyprus issue with characteristic populist claims to represent all “dispossessed” Greek people, defined to include peasants, small businessmen, managers, etc. The 3 September Declaration is moreover one of the more leftist expressions of PASOK’s politics, as it is liberally spiced with some quasi-Marxist verbiage. This “left” face was, however, jettisoned within a few years of the party’s founding and any would-be “leftists” were soon expelled from the party. In contrast to elements of the Greek left, such as the Cliffites, we reject on principle any political support—including electoral support—to this party of the class enemy.

10. An important task is the reading of *Workers Vanguard* and other ICL propaganda and continuing the reading of Marxist classics for cadre development. We should study and learn from the long and complex history of the Greek Trotskyist movement (e.g., the Greek Archio-Marxists and the Communist League of America’s Greek newspaper) and make it available to the rest of the ICL. As Trotskyists in Greece, we have to study about the Greek Civil War/national question/Cyprus, as well as the Trotskyist movement and its split during World War II on the Nazi occupation. The comrades need to study the ICL’s statement on the imperialist bombing of Serbia and the Balkan slaughter and, with the help of the ICL, the national minorities in Greece as a part of the Balkans.

11. In order to accommodate this common work it is necessary to study the English language. It’s also necessary for comrades of the ICL to study Greek.

12. As a task we have to project some modest public work in interventions through regular sales to the student milieu. In opponent meetings and in demonstrations we have already participated in common work with the ICL in Greece and in London.

13. Until it is realistic for a comrade to be able to transfer to Greece, it would be helpful for the Greek group to get more frequent visits, of longer duration. As soon as possible we need a comrade to transfer to help in the building of the section and the organizing of our political work.

14. We look forward to producing propaganda related to the class struggle in Greek society in order to intervene to give flesh to the ICL program.

— approved at a joint meeting of the TGG and representatives of the International Executive Committee of the ICL, 23 September 2004



# International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

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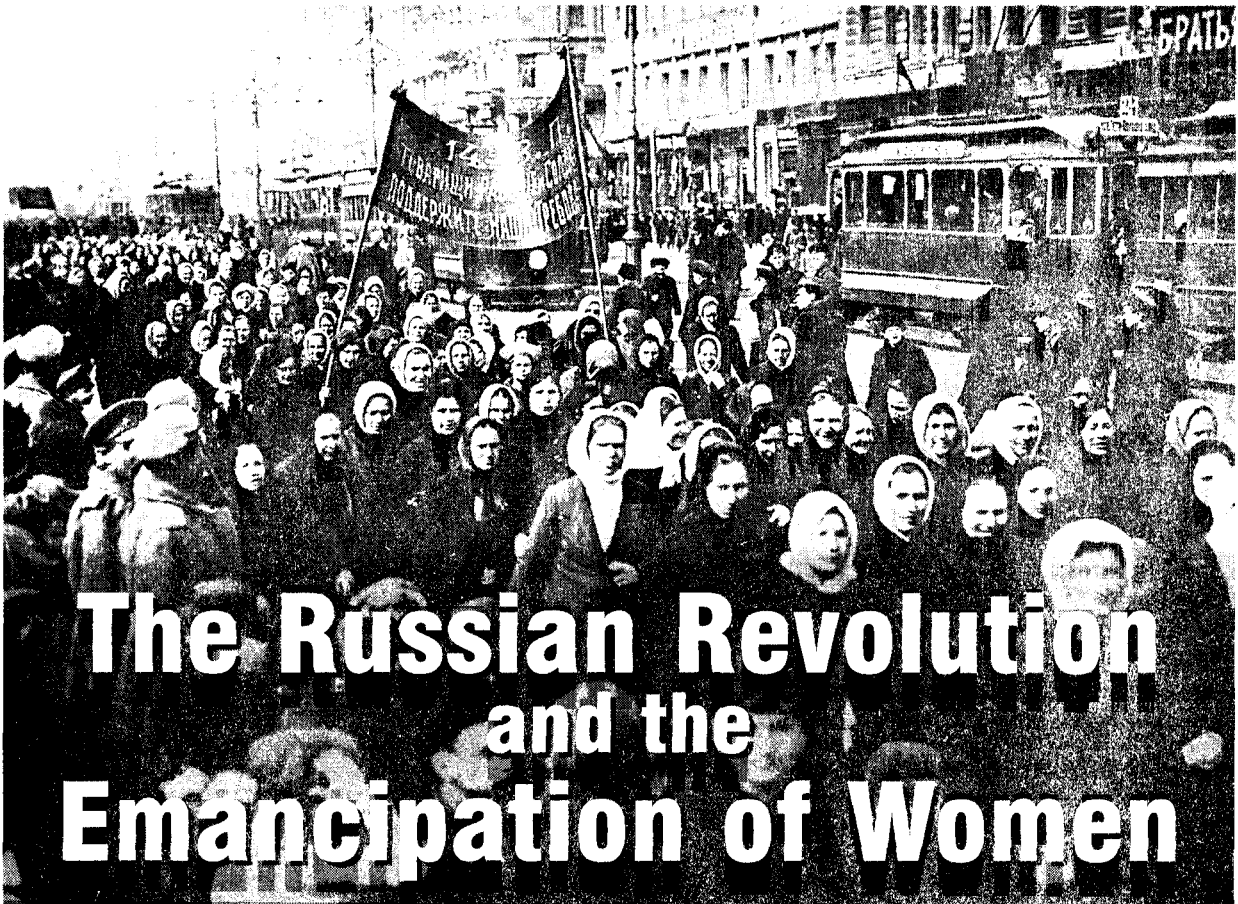
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# Women and Revolution



## The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women

Viktor Bulla

**Women workers demonstrate in Petrograd, March 1917. Banner reads: "Comrade Workers and Soldiers, Support Our Demands."**

"'Liberation' is an historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse."

—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels,  
*The German Ideology* (1846)

Today, millions of women even in the advanced capitalist "democracies" endure nasty and brutish lives of misery and drudgery. In the United States, to name just two instances of anti-woman bigotry, abortion rights are under increasing attack and quality childcare is scarce and too costly for most working women. Conditions for women in the Third World are worse by orders of magnitude. But even 15 years ago women in the Soviet Union enjoyed many advantages, such as state-supported childcare institutions, full abortion rights,

access to a wide range of trades and professions, and a large degree of economic equality with their male co-workers—in short, a status in some ways far in advance of capitalist societies today.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution made these gains possible. No mere cosmetic gloss on the surface, the Russian Revolution was, in the words of historian Richard Stites, a

"classical social revolution—a process not an event, a phenomenon that cannot be fused, triggered, or set off by a mere turnover of power which confines itself to the center and confines its efforts to decrees and laws enunciating the principles of equality. True social revolution in an underdeveloped society does not end with the reshuffling of property any more than it does with the reshuffling of portfolios; it is the result of social mobilization. Put in plain terms, it means bodies moving out among the people with well-laid plans, skills, and revolutionary euphoria; it means teaching, pushing, prodding, cajoling the stubborn, the ignorant, and the backward by means of the supreme component of all radical propaganda: the message and the conviction that revolution is relevant to everyday life."

—Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)

This thoroughgoing effort to remake society was made possible by the smashing of tsarist/capitalist rule and the Bolshevik-led seizure of power by the soviets—workers and peasants councils—in October 1917. The estates of the

*continued on page 34*

