

## Nicaragua

# Sandinista-Contras Pact: Revolution in Grave Danger

The cease-fire accord between the radical-nationalist Sandinista government and the U.S.-created terrorist army poses grave dangers to the Nicaraguan Revolution. The loser contras, beaten on the battlefield and their arms pipeline cut off, say they were forced to stop the fighting—and that's a very good thing. But in exchange for recognition of its rule, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) has given dangerous guarantees to the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and its patrons in Washington which could spell the rollback of many of the limited social gains achieved by the overthrow of the Somoza tyranny. The Sandinistas are offering to run Nicaragua within the limits set by Yankee imperialism, with the Democrats rather than Ronald Reagan calling the tune.

The agreement signed March 23 in the Nicaraguan border town of Sapoá provides for a 60-day truce, during which the contras are to regroup (with their weapons) in several zones; the release (in stages) of all contra prisoners, as well as former National Guardsmen of the Somoza dictatorship; contra participation in a "national dialogue"; and a definitive cease-fire to be negotiated in Managua beginning April 6. The pact guarantees amnesty and full political



Contra Cardinal Obando y Bravo signs "peace" accord while Sandinista defense minister Humberto Ortega (seated), Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega (left) and contra leader Adolfo Calero (right) look on.

rights for the counterrevolution. In return, the contras formally accept the legitimacy of the FSLN government and President Daniel Ortega. This is a setback for the Reaganauts, but they are already vindictively retaliating by tight-

ening the trade embargo to cut off a trickle of coffee imports to the U.S.

As we warned of the Arias plan (Esquipulas II) "peace" accords last August, this deal is an attempt to achieve at the bargaining table what the U.S. and the contras were unable to win by force of arms or through economic strangulation of Nicaragua: reversing the spread of revolution in Central America. Already all aid to the Salvadoran leftist insurgents has been banned; *La Prensa*, the U.S.-financed voice of the internal contra, has been reopened; Archbishop Obando y Bravo, the contra Cardinal, has established himself as the rallying point for "national reconciliation." Now the Somozaist butchers are being let loose and contra chiefs would be allowed to organize "peacefully," although they're dragging their feet on completing the deal.

Through seven years of the CIA's contra war and U.S. economic sanctions which have bled the country dry, the Nicaraguan working people have valiantly defended their revolution, refusing to "cry uncle" as Reagan demanded. "The contras have had it," said one U.S. military adviser (*New York Times*, 3 April). That victory was achieved by the prowess of the Sandinista Army, including its latest offensive, which bottled the contras up inside Nicaragua by cutting off their escape route through the Bocay Valley. The cutoff of military aid by a divided U.S. Congress drove the knife in. Now contra leader Adolfo Calero bitterly com-

plains that "once again the United States has abandoned an ally."

### No "Rollback" of the Nicaraguan Revolution!

After the terrible toll of a decade of almost constant war against U.S. puppets—100,000 dead (in a country of three million) plus economic privations that have produced widespread misery—it is understandable that the promise of peace has been greeted with relief by the Nicaraguan masses. Even so, many found the amnesty for the Somozaist killers hard to take: "These people were able to bomb their own hometowns," one woman complained (*Christian Science Monitor*, 29 March). "These Beasts Will Not Return," proclaimed the FSLN's *Barricada* in 1983. But now they are returning. This is a hideous insult to everyone who has lost a son or daughter, mother or father, brother or sister, to Reagan's murderous mercenaries.

Moreover, to allow pathological killers like contra comandantes Attila and Hitler, Mercenario and El Buitre (Vulture) to walk the streets is deadly dangerous. *Barricada* (30 March) reports that "the secretary of the union at FANATEX [Nicaragua's largest textile factory], Bernicia Sanders, announced that relatives of the Somozaists who were amnestied have made death threats against many workers of that enterprise who are fully identified with the Revolution." The organizers of the

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Larry Boyd/Impact Visuals

Managua, September 1987: Nicaraguan mothers, carrying pictures of their children murdered by Somoza's National Guardsmen and Reagan's contra terrorists, march against amnesty for these butchers.

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# PDC Partisan Defense Committee

## CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

### Save the Sharpeville Six! Free Moses Mayekiso!

The scheduled execution of the Sharpeville Six has again focused world attention on the brutal oppression synonymous with apartheid South Africa. Mojalefa Sefatsa, Reid Mokoena, Oupa Diniso, Duma Khumalo, Francis Mokgesi and Therese Ramashamola were sentenced to death by hanging for being present when members of an enraged crowd of black rent strikers killed a collaborator of the apartheid regime in September 1984. International protest compelled the South African court to issue a four-week stay of execution on March 17, citing "new" evidence that police had tortured a key government witness into giving perjured testimony.

None of the Six are alleged to have participated in killing the hated apartheid stooge. Rather, using a Nazi-like principle of collective guilt, the court ruled that their presence in the crowd outside the home of Lekoa township deputy mayor Jacob Dlamini established a "common purpose" with those who doused Dlamini with gasoline and set him ablaze after he fired a gun into the crowd of rent protesters. Four days after the stay of execution, a million South African black workers held a nationwide strike to mark the 28th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre and to protest the crackdown on opponents of apartheid.

The case of the Sharpeville Six has evoked an international outcry of protest, compelling even Reagan, Thatcher and the Pope to appeal for clemency. Demonstrations were held in cities around the world. South African president P.W. Botha's haughty response that he would not pressure the courts was followed the next week by his pardon for six soldiers implicated in the November 1985 assassination of Immanuel Shifidi, a prominent member of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).

The stay of execution was a ploy to quash the protest. The working masses of the world must not let down their guard. Approximately 40 others are scheduled for execution for their opposition to apartheid and its lackeys. On March 18 the bloody apartheid hangman took Tsepo Letsoara, convicted for killing a Port Elizabeth cop informer by using the burning rubber tire "necklace" which has become a favored method of eliminating the hated apartheid collaborators. The racist butchers who run South Africa want to send the Six to the gallows in the dark of night when nobody's watching. The Partisan Defense Committee sent a protest to the South African Embassy demanding the immediate release of the Sharpeville Six, noting: "This pretext



WV Photo

Chicago, March 18: Labor rally demands freedom for black South African trade-union leader Moses Mayekiso.

for legal murder evokes the contempt of millions around the globe for your system of apartheid terror."

Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the 130,000-strong National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), and four of his comrades continue to fight for their freedom. Mayekiso, his brother Mzwanele, Obéd Bapela, Richard Mdakane and Paul Tshabalala are charged with treason, subversion and sedition for their role as leaders of the Alexandra Action Committee. In February 1986 the Committee organized a revolt in the Alexandra township, expelling police and government officials. For years Mayekiso's effectiveness as a trade-union leader and his standing in the township made him a prime target of the vicious apartheid police state at whose hands he has suffered both imprisonment and torture.

In the U.S. the United Auto Workers have taken up his cause, also supported by the United Steelworkers of America. The PDC has actively joined his fight for freedom, protesting his detention to the South African government, and along with the Spartacist League and the sections of the international Spartacist tendency participating in demonstrations on his behalf. In Chicago, a joint contingent of the SL, PDC and Labor Black Struggle League joined in a March 18 demonstration of 300 people.

Unfortunately, Mayekiso's defense is threatened by the poison of sectarianism. At its merger conference last summer Mayekiso's NUMSA restated that while adopting the African National Congress' Freedom Charter, this was only the "first stage" of liberation of the South African masses. The ANC's uncritical support groups outside South Africa have all but ignored (and in

Britain for a time opposed) the campaign to free Mayekiso. We condemn all efforts to sabotage the defense of this courageous leader of a strategic section of South Africa's black working class, in whose hands is the power to bury apartheid once and for all.

As black resistance continues, white South Africa increasingly polarizes. Botha's ruling party lost ground in recent elections to the even more racist Conservative Party while the fascist Afrikaner Resistance Party is ominously growing. Under this pressure the Botha regime has tightened the vise on all opponents of apartheid terror. In Paris on March 29, ANC representative Dulcie September was assassinated as she entered her office. Last month the government banned the main anti-apartheid organizations from "performing any acts whatsoever" and has even shut down the liberal Catholic *New Nation* newspaper. To crush the union power which cost the racist bosses over nine million workdays in strikes last year the government has proposed laws to outlaw "legal" strikes and gut the treasuries of unions for calling illegal work stoppages.

There are increasing cracks in South Africa's white population. Draft resistance among white conscripts has become a problem for the regime. The End Conscription Campaign, an anti-draft group founded in 1983, has a membership of thousands. On March 27, Ivan Toms, a 35-year-old physician, was sentenced to 21 months in prison for resisting continued service as a reserve lieutenant in the South African Defense Force. Toms told the sentencing court on March 3, "I believe South Africa is in a civil war now, and in that situation,

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TROTSKY

#### Soviet Power in the Caucasus

In a work dedicated to the martyred leaders of the 1918 Baku Soviet, headed by the Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shaumyan, Trotsky pointed out that only proletarian revolution was able to overcome the age-old national antagonisms in Transcaucasia. The impact of the Bolshevik Revolution in the Caucasus is directly relevant today to Afghanistan, where only the extension of the social

gains of the October Revolution can prevent a bloodbath by Islamic fanatics and a savage tribalist civil war.

The Soviet power alone has established peace and national intercourse between them [Transcaucasian peoples]. At the elections to the Soviets, the Baku and Tbilisi workers elect a Tartar, an Armenian, or a Georgian, irrespective of their nationality. In Trans-Caucasia, the Moslem, Armenian, Georgian, and Russian Red regiments live side by side. They are imbued with the conviction that they are one army, and no power on earth will make them move against one another. On the other hand, they will defend Soviet Trans-Caucasia against any and every external foe.

The national pacification of Trans-Caucasia, which has been achieved by the Soviet revolution, is in itself a fact of enormous political and cultural significance. In it is expressed a real live internationalism, which we can safely put against the empty pacifist discourses of the heroes of the Second International, which are but a supplement to the chauvinist practices of its national sections.

—Leon Trotsky, *Between Red and White* (1922)



LENIN

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## Courageous Technician Exposed Israeli Nuclear Arsenal

# Mordechai Vanunu Sentenced to 18 Years

In October 1986, the London *Sunday Times* published a bombshell: the small, primitive nuclear cache of 15 or 20 weapons Zionist Israel was considered to own was in fact a mammoth arsenal ten times that size, more than enough to bomb every Arab city and the Soviet Union. By the time this blockbuster hit the newsstands, the man responsible for exposing it to the world had been "disappeared," kidnapped by Israeli intelligence, the Mossad. For nearly 18 months Mordechai Vanunu has been caged in a six-by-nine-foot dungeon in Ashkelon, monitored day and night by a video camera, deprived of even the minimal rights normally accorded prisoners, sealed off from the world and, but for rare brief visits, also from his family. On March 27, Mordechai Vanunu, aged 34, was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment, most likely to be spent in solitary confinement.

So tight was the shroud of secrecy enveloping Vanunu's trial that even the 60-page decision by the three-judge court three days earlier was censored, but for a single sentence: "We decided the defendant is guilty on all three counts." The three charges: gathering information with the intent to harm state security, disseminating information to harm state security, aiding and abetting the enemy in time of war. Who is the enemy? What war? To the Zionist nuclear madmen, it doesn't matter—they are at war with the whole world, everybody is the enemy.

Mordechai Vanunu is treated by the Zionist state terrorists far worse than they treat a Nazi war criminal like John Demjanjuk, known as "Ivan the Terrible" for his sadistic butchery at the Treblinka death camp during World War II. Demjanjuk has been handled with kid gloves in a public trial, while the judges allowed death camp survivors who came to testify against this murderer to be humiliated and harassed. But the Zionist rulers, whose apprenticeship was served in seeking to collaborate with the Nazi Third Reich, are themselves war criminals. The Zionist state deems Vanunu a traitor because he exposed the scope and scale of their terrifying doomsday machine.

Mordechai Vanunu's courageous act was a service to all humanity. He must not be forgotten. There must be an outcry of protest from the international workers movement demanding the release of this man from the clutches of Zionist terror. *Free Mordechai Vanunu!*

### What Are They Doing With 200 A-Bombs?

Israel's possession of atomic weapons has been an open secret for years, a common subject of popular fiction such as Gerald Seymour's *Glory Boys*. As far back as 1974, a CIA memorandum noted that "Israel has already produced nuclear weapons." But these were considered to be a handful of primitive bombs, similar to the 20-kiloton bomb dropped by the U.S. on Nagasaki. Then came the *Sunday Times* (5 October 1986) story:

"However, Mordechai Vanunu's testimony, which has been checked with leading nuclear experts on both sides of the Atlantic, shows that one of the world's worst kept secrets is, in fact, one



Rev. John McKnight

**Mordechai Vanunu (above), bound and gagged by Zionist state terrorists.**

of the best kept confidences of the century. Far from being a nuclear pigmy, the evidence is that Israel must now be regarded a major nuclear power, ranking sixth in the atomic league table, with a stockpile of at least 100 nuclear weapons and with the components and ability to build atomic, neutron or hydrogen bombs."

According to the *Sunday Times*, "as many as 200 nuclear weapons of varying destructive power have been assembled...." Vanunu provided photos as well as detailed information about the Dimona nuclear facility in the Negev desert, where he had worked for nine years, which proved that it produced 40 kilograms of plutonium a year. To shield this massive nuclear arms factory from prying eyes, the Israelis had built an elaborate structure, with false walls hiding access to a six-story underground reactor called Machon 2.

Obviously tiny Israel did not acquire this massive nuclear arsenal on its own. The reactor was first built in 1958 by the French, and passed off as a textile factory. After its discovery by an American U-2 spy plane in 1960, Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion then claimed that it was "a scientific institute for research in problems of arid zones and desert flora and fauna." Later it was billed as a desalination plant. During the 1967 war an Israeli fighter jet, out of control over the Negev, was shot down to avoid a catastrophic collision with the "desalination" project.

The U.S. has been complicit from the get-go. In the mid-1960s, President Lyndon Johnson ordered a cover-up when the Atomic Energy Commission discovered several hundred pounds of enriched uranium missing from the inventory of a Pennsylvania company headed by one Zalman Shapiro. Department of Energy records document a 1963 shipment to Israel of four metric tons of heavy water, a key ingredient in running the nuclear reactor at Dimona. Last year Israel purchased 800 (!) nuclear bomb triggers from an American firm. At the same time Israel successfully tested its Jericho 2 ballistic missile, with a range of 500 miles, and is expected to soon have another version with a range of 900 miles, making the Baku oil fields and strategic Soviet naval installations on the Black Sea accessible.

Several times after retiring as prime



Domenica del Corriere

minister, Ben-Gurion hinted that Israel was prepared for a "preventative war" against the surrounding Arab states and had the "great equalizer" which would offset the fact that three million Israeli Jews faced 100 million Arabs (*Ha'aretz*, 14 November 1980, translated by Israel Shahak). When an Israeli defeat looked imminent in the first days of the 1973 October war, an earlier version of the Jericho armed with nuclear warheads was placed on combat readiness. In response, the Soviet Union was reportedly prepared to ship nuclear warheads to its Egyptian client state and the U.S. put its forces on red alert.

As we wrote in response to the Vanunu revelations:

"A dozen or so A-bombs could nuke every Arab capital and make Hitler's Holocaust look like child's play.... But 200 nukes would mean the warmongers in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem have a much bigger target in mind: *Russia*. Is this a joint operation with Washington in preparation for nuking the Soviets?... The Zionist madmen could very easily—and perhaps deliberately—trip over the trip wire for World War III."

—WV No. 416,  
21 November 1986

Can anyone doubt that the blood-thirsty Zionist rulers, if driven into a

corner, would be prepared to take the whole world with them? The same day Vanunu was convicted, Israeli troops killed two more Palestinian protesters. At least 111 Palestinians have now been gunned down by the Israeli butchers since the start of "The Uprising." When, finally, an Israeli soldier was killed in this one-sided war, the Zionist butchers had the chutzpah to scream, "This is murder." More than 4,000 Palestinians have been rounded up in the last weeks. In preparation for Land Day rallies on March 30, commemorating the murder of six Palestinians protesting Zionist land seizures, the whole of the Occupied Territories was sealed off. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir warned that the Palestinians would be crushed "like grasshoppers": "Anybody who wants to damage this fortress and other fortresses we are establishing will have his head smashed against the boulders and walls" (*New York Times*, 31 March).

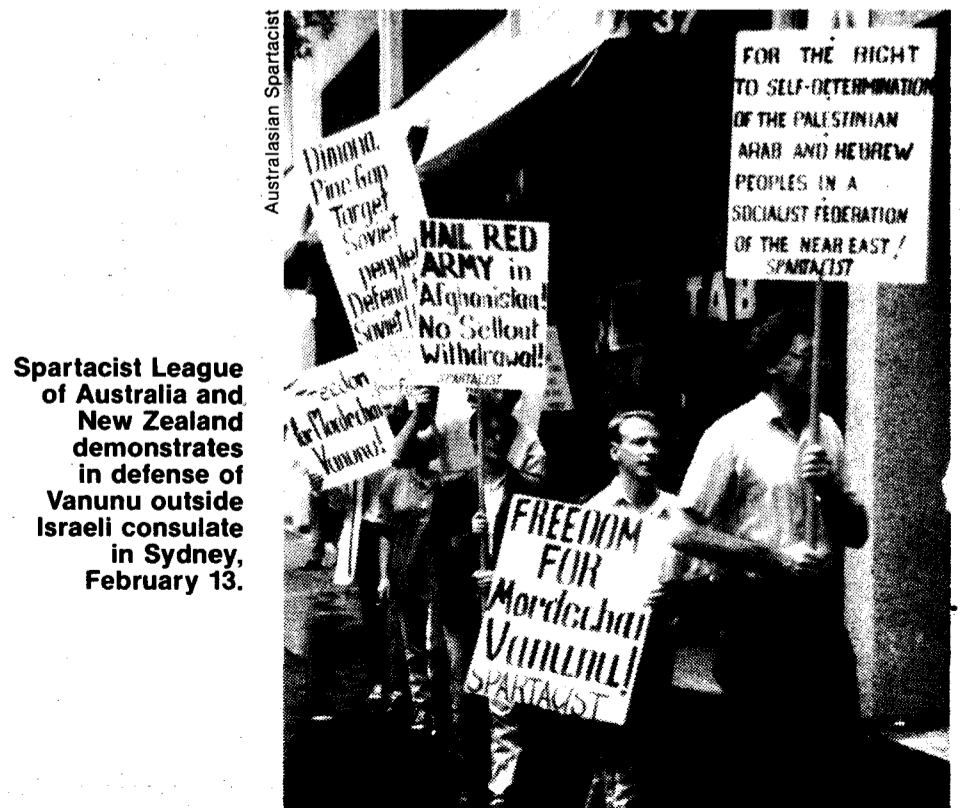
### The Man in the Iron Mask

The Zionist terrorists, in collaboration with their imperialist allies and patrons, claim extraterritorial rights around the world. Even before he got to London, Mordechai Vanunu was being tracked in Australia by ASIO, Australian security. In London, Thatcher's MI6 assisted the Mossad. Lured from there to Rome by the infamous "Cindy the Spy" (Cheryl Bentov, a transplanted American Jew from Orlando, Florida married to Mossad agent Ofer Bentov), Vanunu was drugged and spirited to Israel in a cargo boat, as his brother Meir put it in a CBS *60 Minutes* (27 March) interview, "landed like Kunta Kinte, chained" and held incommunicado.

The Jerusalem court where Vanunu was tried was completely sealed off and surrounded by guards. Vanunu was driven to court in a van with painted windows, led to a sealed courtroom through a special "Vanunu tunnel" and forced to wear a motorcycle helmet to cover his face—all so he could not even be photographed. He became known as "the man in the iron mask." When he tried to remove the suffocating helmet with his manacled hands on the first day of his trial last August 30, security guards beat him viciously.

Israel's pervasive chauvinism permeated the Vanunu trial. A Sephardic Jew who has converted to Christianity, Vanunu was given the treatment the Zionists reserve for all those (like Arabs) they deem "subhuman." His American girlfriend, Judy Zimmet, described how "they have made caricatures of him with crosses" and hate letters have been circulated to the effect that "the religious conversion sort of reinforces that what Motti did was done as a traitor and as a spy." Vanunu's family and supporters

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**Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand demonstrates in defense of Vanunu outside Israeli consulate in Sydney, February 13.**

# U.S. Out of Panama!

As their contra war was running out of steam in Nicaragua, Reagan's raiders struck back in Panama—or maybe struck out. Last week, just as 3,200 troops of the 82nd Airborne and Seventh Infantry were being pulled out of Honduras after an "emergency" deployment against a mythical Sandinista invasion, the Pentagon announced it was sending 1,300 more troops to Panama to "send a message" to General Manuel Noriega, who has the gall to refuse to step down as strongman when the U.S. ambassador and the State Department demand it.

Complaining about Noriega's "heavy-handed tactics," they sent in 26 helicopters, including seven Cobra gunships, canine squads and headquarters teams for a full-scale intervention force. And meanwhile the Marine assault ship

*Okinawa* lurks offshore. Now they're going through a soft-cop, hard-cop routine where Mr. Softee is war minister Carlucci while Secretary of State Shultz wants to kidnap Noriega and launch a CIA-coordinated coup. The U.S.' former pet thug would presumably be brought here to be put on trial by the "Justice" Department headed by arch-Contragater and sleaze king Ed Meese. And the Democrats, including Jesse Jackson, are backing the Reaganauts to the hilt on this one.

One thing has to be said for General Manuel Noriega: "Pineapple Face" hasn't cut and run at the first sign of displeasure from that two-bit Big Liar at Foggy Bottom, Elliott Abrams, unlike Marcos in the Philippines or Haiti's Duvalier. And something else: in nine months of street confrontations, not one

person has been killed in Panama—unlike that "free world democracy" Israel, which has shot down well over 100 unarmed Palestinians in recent months. To be sure, Noriega's no nice guy. But who gives the crooks and hypocrites in Washington a license to topple governments at will?

Noriega was trained at the U.S. Army's "School of the Americas" in the Canal Zone, widely known as the School for Dictators. At one point in his CIA career he was being paid \$200,000 a year, making him the second-highest paid U.S. employee after Reagan. Just pulling himself up by his jackboot straps, so to speak. Noriega's troubles apparently began when he piqued Oliver North by refusing to come on board in a plot to invade Nicaragua (see "Panama: CIA-Contra Drug Connection," *WV* No. 448, 11 March).

Ronald Reagan still thinks he's living in the heyday of the Monroe Doctrine, riding up San Juan Hill like Teddy Roosevelt (or was it Tom Mix?). Not only have they brought World War II

battleships out of mothballs to practice gunboat diplomacy, they send DEA hit squads and Blackhawk helicopters into the Bolivian jungles, indict leaders of foreign countries under American laws, bully the UN, and on and on. The White House gang just can't face the fact that U.S. imperialism's power is in decline, though the Pentagon is naturally nervous about Reagan's blustering, which got 241 Marines blown up in the Beirut fiasco in 1983.

As for Noriega, the Panamanian workers will have their own scores to settle with this former CIA "asset" and his "Doberman" thugs. If the U.S. keeps turning the economic screws, he could call on his Colombian drug pals, who could keep the economy afloat with narco-dollars. Or for that matter, since the U.S. engineered Panama's "independence" from Colombia in 1903 and stole what became the Canal Zone in "the treaty no Panamanian ever signed," he could ask Bogotá to re-annex the country. For our part we say: U.S. troops out of Panama, now, all of 'em! ■

## Nicaragua...

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Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) "are the first ones whose heads we are going to cut off," a contra relative threatened.

The political guarantees to the bourgeoisie also mean that they will demand their property back. The same *Barricada* article quotes union leaders saying, "that would be like returning Coca-Cola to Mr. Adolfo Calero Portocarrero, who is responsible for the murder of so many thousands of Nicaraguans." Yet the Coca-Cola plant is a fitting symbol of the halfway revolution the Sandinistas had begun: the property of this contra leader and CIA agent was not expropriated, only "intervened" (placed under government receivership) because Calero had left the country. So if he returns... As for lands seized from leaders of the businessmen's association COSEP, the government could simply pay the compensation promised.

For the past eight-plus years, it has been clear to U.S. rulers and the Nicaraguan masses that the fate of the revolution was hanging in the balance. Yet the Spartacist tendency has been unique on the left internationally in insisting that the class character of the Nicaraguan Revolution still had not been determined. When the FSLN entered Managua on 19 July 1979, the state machinery of the dynasty which had ruled the country since the first Somoza

was installed by the U.S. Marines 45 years earlier lay in ruins. But contrary to the Reaganauts' talk of "Sandino-Communism," the guerrillas in power did not establish a proletarian state based on collectivized property.

Instead, the Sandinista regime proclaimed its holy trinity of "mixed economy, political pluralism and non-alignment." Like Castro's guerrillas in Cuba initially, the bonapartist petty-bourgeois government was not committed to defending either socialist or

capitalist property forms. In Cuba, U.S. imperialist intransigence, the flight of the local bourgeoisie to Miami and the absence of a proletariat fighting for power meant that a bureaucratically deformed workers state was consolidated. But Nicaragua has not had its "second revolution." On the contrary, we may now be seeing the re-establishment of a Nicaraguan capitalist state.

To be sure, for the past seven years, Reagan has done his best to smash the Sandinistas. But in the aftermath of U.S. imperialism's humiliating defeat in Vietnam, U.S. rulers are hesitant to commit themselves to another Third World military adventure. Meanwhile, key sections of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie have remained in place. Now, following the Reaganauts' Iran/Contragate debacle and with the demise of the contras, the Democrats have taken control of U.S. policy toward Central America. Having no better alternative, they want to take Ortega up on his offers to sell out. And the Sapoá accords may signal the victory of their line of a "peaceful counterrevolution"—which will be anything but peaceful.

To begin with, there are hundreds of thousands of guns in the hands of the Nicaraguan people. This has been the ultimate obstacle to a contra victory, even giving pause to the Pentagon war machine. For the FSLN to administer a capitalist state means *disarming the masses*. In spite of war weariness, that will not be easy. Certainly, workers at the Coca-Cola plant facing the return of Calero, or peasants working lands seized from COSEP leaders, will not readily give up the guns needed to defend their conquests. And already opposition trade unions have led a bit-

ter strike by construction workers (declared illegal), as well as walkouts by auto mechanics, dock workers and sugar plantation workers.

The winding down of the contra war has led to an escalation of the class struggle internally. The workers' actions were provoked by the Sandinista government's IMF-style austerity policy decreed in mid-February. Combined with the introduction of a new currency unit to cut inflation, paying world market prices to companies producing for export, and increasing the price of gasoline by 500 percent, they eliminated virtually all subsidies of food and other basic products. This has led to a big wage cut while the staple foods of rice and beans virtually disappeared from the markets. In response there have been mobilizations by the unions and CDS block committees to uncover hoarded food held by black marketeers.

While the Sandinistas' attempts to pave the way for a reconsolidated dictatorship of the bourgeoisie have divided the working class, they have united the bourgeoisie... against them. In the 1984 elections and as recently as last summer, the capitalist parties were divided between out-and-out contra supporters and those who did not openly seek to reverse the 1979 revolution. But now that Ortega & Co. have agreed to "reintegrate" the counterrevolution, the *entire* bourgeois (and reformist) opposition has joined in presenting a declaration of 14 parties demanding constitutional reforms challenging the FSLN's "party monopoly of the state." Their first target is the Sandinista Army, the linchpin of the present regime.

### For Permanent Revolution!

Appearing on the CBS program *Face the Nation* March 27, Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega was asked why he agreed to negotiate with the contras after vowing for years not to do so. Because they split with Reagan, he replied. Yes, the Reaganauts were upset over the Sapoá accords. But this does not mean the contras have in any way broken with U.S. imperialism. In fact, if they go back to Managua to act as a "civilian" opposition, they will simply be transferred from the CIA and Pentagon accounts in Washington to the "National Endowment for Democracy," which already finances *La Prensa* and various opposition parties and company "unions." They merely switched *patrons* from Ronald Reagan to Jim Wright.

As nationalists, the Sandinistas have always sought a "patriotic" or, as the Stalinists called it, a "national bourgeoisie" that would break with imperialism. But as Leon Trotsky pointed out in formulating the perspective of permanent revolution, in the imperialist



Sandinista troops ferried by Soviet helicopters mopped up contra mercenaries in March offensive.

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## TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA

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epoch there is no independent "national" bourgeoisie in the backward capitalist countries. Their rulers are too closely bound to the imperialist overlords, and too fearful of the huge mass of proletarians and impoverished peasants, to carry out the tasks of even the bourgeois-democratic revolution. To achieve an agrarian revolution, democracy and national independence requires—as in Russia 1917—workers revolution led by a Bolshevik party.

The petty-bourgeois FSLN, however, preaches "national reconciliation." For many Sandinista leaders, this simply means sitting down at the dinner table with their siblings and parents who are leaders of the contras. Once before, the FSLN agreed to a pact such as is now being negotiated: the San José accords of June 1979, setting up a "government" including future contra leaders Robelo, Chamorro and Cruz. What blocked the consolidation of a bourgeois "anti-Somoza" regime then was the mass insurrection, which scared the National Guard into fleeing for their lives. Now the Ortega brothers (president Daniel and defense minister Humberto) are talking of Nicaragua following the "Mexican model."

That would likely produce splits in the FSLN. (Already the head of the militant CDS, Leticia Herrera, has been ousted.) And Sandinista militants should recall that the consolidation of a post-revolution capitalist state in Mexico was done over the dead bodies of Zapata and Villa, along with thousands of peasant and proletarian fighters. But even reputed Sandinista hardliners like Interior Minister Tomás Borge are only looking for a beefed-up version of the present regime, and they have shown through their repression of strikes that they are no partisans of the workers. To defend the Nicaraguan Revolu-

Spartacist demonstrators in San Francisco on March 18 protest U.S. war moves against Nicaragua.



tion it must be completed by expropriating the bourgeoisie and extended internationally.

In a peasant country like Nicaragua where industry consists of a few plants like FANATEX and Coca-Cola, recovering from the imperialist-imposed dire economic conditions might well require giving wide latitude to petty producers and small traders, and even some concessions to a few capitalist producers willing to follow the rules—something akin to Lenin's New Economic Policy—rather than the Sandinistas' failed attempts to impose planning on a capitalist economy. But the indispensable condition is working-class state power—with the firm leadership of a party committed to communism. Forging such a Leninist-Trotskyist party is the key to rescuing the Nicaraguan Rev-

olution from the mortal dangers it faces.

A socialist revolution here would have to be international from the start, spreading throughout the region, from strategic Panama to the militant Salvadoran workers and Mexico with its heavy industry. And with U.S. imperialism breathing down its neck, the revolution must extend above all into the imperialist heartland of the United States (where, contrary to the nationalists' claims, every move by the Reagan regime pointing to U.S. intervention in Nicaragua has met with mass opposition). Here as well, a class-struggle workers party must be built in struggle against the reformists who tag along at the end of the Jesse Jackson "rainbow coalition" popular front while Congressional Democrats vote \$48 million in contra aid.

And the struggles in Central America must be seen clearly in the context of the imperialists' global anti-Soviet war drive. While the idea that Nicaragua is "a base for Soviet and Cuban efforts to penetrate the rest of the Central American isthmus" (Kissinger Commission report) is a Reaganite fantasy, Soviet aid has indeed been vital to the survival of the Nicaraguan Revolution. But lately Gorbachev has been threatening to cut off Sandinista Nicaragua in return for "détente" with the U.S. At the December summit in Washington, the Kremlin leader offered to eliminate heavy weapons deliveries to Managua as a *quid pro quo* for the U.S. stopping military aid to the contras.

Speaking to a group of U.S. Senators, Gorbachev recently remarked that the USSR "does not have any special interest in Central America" (*Clarín* [Buenos Aires], 13 March). But the Soviet Union does have an interest in stopping Washington's export of counterrevolution there and everywhere. For if the U.S. "scores" in Nicaragua, it will only embolden the Cold Warriors in going after Afghanistan, Cuba, Vietnam, Poland, and ultimately the USSR. For however much Stalin and his successors have dreamt of "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialists, the latter have never given up their dream of "rolling back" the October Revolution.

The "solidarity" milieu tries to duck the key "Russian question" in order to tail after the Democrats. Likewise they now hail the Sapoa accords, which endanger the Nicaraguan Revolution. The Trotskyists of the Spartacist League proclaim that the best defense of Nicaragua is revolutionary struggle here. Defend, complete, extend the Nicaraguan Revolution! Anti-imperialism abroad means class struggle at home! ■

## PDC Notes ...

(continued from page 2)

you have got to take sides.... My experiences during my two years in the army as a lieutenant showed me that even as a doctor I was part of that system of oppression" (*New York Times*, 28 March). We sent the embassy a protest demanding Toms' immediate release pointing out:

"Decent people everywhere view your government with contempt. Starving, homeless and tortured masses around the globe see the mirror of their oppression in your racist apartheid system. The PDC salutes Dr. Toms and the increasing number like him reviled by apartheid terror."

Free the Sharpeville Six! Free Moses Mayekiso! Free Ivan Toms! Free Nelson Mandela and all victims of apartheid state repression!

\* \* \*

Issue Number 7 of the PDC *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* is available now, featuring a campaign to save Mumia Abu-Jamal, MOVE supporter and former Black Panther, sitting on Pennsylvania's death row. Also read about a number of successful struggles

against the system of capitalist injustice, and our increasing efforts toward building a mass organization of class-struggle defense. We encourage *WV* readers to continue to support and build the Partisan Defense Committee. We now have over 110 sustainers and 800 additional contributors who have given over \$5. Help us reach 1,000 contributors by the next newsletter. Send a donation of \$5 or more and receive a subscription to *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*. For a single copy send \$1.00 to: Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, New York 10013. Be a PDC sustainer! Build the PDC! ■

## Mordechai Vanunu...

(continued from page 3)

were forbidden to speak about the case at all. When Meir Vanunu talked to Italian government officials and journalists in Britain about his brother's kidnapping, the Israelis charged him with espionage as well. He is currently seeking political asylum in Britain.

When Mordechai Vanunu's lawyer, Avigdor Feldman, challenged the court's jurisdiction on the grounds that Vanunu had been illegally abducted to Israel, the judges contemptuously dismissed his challenge out of hand. Vanunu's lawyer also tried to argue that since Israel's nuclear arsenal is meant to be a deterrent, revealing its existence could not damage state security, even bringing in as defense witnesses Israeli defense minister Shimon Peres and Abba Eban, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. One defense witness, George Quester, a professor of political science at the University of Maryland, testified that Vanunu's disclosures "actually enhanced Israeli security and that in the

academic community it had been generally believed Vanunu's revelations had been a plant."

To be sure, there are elements in the Israeli military and political establishment who argue for cutting back on Israel's enormous arms expenditures by making it clear to the world at large that Israel has and will use a massive nuclear arsenal. But any appeal to the Zionist butchers on the common ground of "national security" could only fall on deaf ears. To them Mordechai Vanunu went beyond the narrowly circumscribed chauvinist pale by which they define a "loyal Jew." But to the peoples of the world he is a hero for revealing the Israeli rulers' demented plans for a thermonuclear holocaust.

It is significant that a number of Israelis, particularly Sephardic Jews—increasingly aware that Zionist Israel is a deathtrap—expressed sympathy for Vanunu. Judy Zimmet told *WV* that when she protested outside the military office in Tel Aviv over being denied permission to visit Vanunu, "There were many people I also saw or who ap-

proached me on the sidewalk, who expressed support. And I got a sense which I think could be summed up by what a female soldier said, 'I may not speak, but I wish you luck'."

Though news about his case has been suppressed, Mordechai Vanunu has clearly served as an inspiration. When 200 people were arrested in Australia last October for demonstrating against the CIA's spy station in Alice Springs, six protesters identified themselves in court by saying, "I am Mordechai Vanunu." On February 13, nearly 40 people joined a protest initiated by the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand outside the Israeli consulate in Sydney to demand "Freedom for Mordechai Vanunu!" The international Spartacist tendency and the Partisan Defense Committee have participated actively in the fight to free this courageous man. International protest must be mobilized now to free Mordechai Vanunu from the Israeli dungeons. Send donations to the Mordechai Vanunu Legal Defense Fund, P.O. Box 45005, Somerville, MA 02145. ■

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# Revolutionary Regroupment in France

*This article is based on material from Le Bolchévik No. 81, March 1988, the newspaper of our French section, which featured an eight-page supplement on the fusion.*

In early February the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), section of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt), held its ninth conference jointly with the Tribune Communiste group. The conference voted the fusion of the two organizations. Tribune Communiste was a product of the "anti-opportunist" milieu around the French Communist Party (PCF). These comrades' long-standing impulse to defend the gains of the October Revolution opened the road to their break with Stalinism—which undermines the defense of these gains—in favor of the program of Trotsky's Fourth International, upheld today uniquely by the iSt.

The lessons of their struggle to return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky have international significance. Tribune Communiste had its origins in the current headed by Michel Pablo which in the early 1950s abandoned Trotskyism, advocating "deep entry" into the mass reformist Stalinist and social-democratic parties. Pablo's most consistent followers, Michèle Mestre and Matthias Corvin, broke organizationally with Pablo to enter the camp of the PCF where they remained as a submerged "loyal opposition" for a quarter century, publishing *Le Communiste*. The comrades of Tribune Communiste began to break out from this "unconditional" support for the CP in 1979-81—standing fast in support of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, opposing Polish Solidarność and opposing the PCF's joining the anti-Soviet Mitterrand popular front. But as Tribune Communiste moved toward opposing the class collaborationism inherent in Stalinism, posing the question of Trotskyism, they found that over Afghanistan, Poland and Mitterrand, all the major ostensibly Trotskyist organizations in France, except the LTF, were firmly and fulsomely in the anti-Soviet popular front.

As the Tribune Communiste group sought to break from the Pabloite liquidationist dead end, their political trajectory brought them face to face with the Ligue Trotskyste and the iSt. Increasingly known in France as "the Trotskyists who defend the Soviet Union" over Poland and Afghanistan, the LTF was also the only group which opposed from the beginning Mitterrand and his program of anti-worker

austerity in the service of the NATO war drive. After breaking with *Le Communiste*, over the next several years Tribune Communiste passed through a number of loose "committees" seeking to pull together the "anti-opportunists" in the CP milieu. But this attempt to act as an external pressure group on the fringe of the PCF was no more successful than Pablo-style "deep entristm." Frustrated with the "circle spirit," they found that the LTF was having some modest success in recruiting militants directly from the CP youth. Entering

the 1970s, in response to "Eurocommunism." The Eurocommunists sought to distance themselves from Moscow and outline a posture of "national Communism" to reassure their own rulers that they would be "responsible" partners in hoped-for new popular-front governmental coalitions—e.g., the attempts to reach an accommodation with the Catholic church in Italy or even with the king of Spain! Thus from the beginning the Eurocommunists' anti-Sovietism, designed to prove to their "own"

sure inaugurated by U.S. imperialism's hypocritical "human rights" crusade (the attempt to overcome America's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese workers and peasants through a "moral" and military rearmament against Russia) led to the once-"loyal" pro-Moscow CPs openly bleeding for pro-Western "dissidents" like Sakharov; while being shamefaced or worse in response to the aggressive international campaign of the social democrats in support of clerical-reactionary Solidarność in Poland. With the imperialist rulers' anti-Soviet crusade heated to fever pitch by the Russian intervention in Afghanistan, the left CPers' "peaceful coexistence" with the



Paris, January 27: Joint contingent of Ligue Trotskyste and Tribune Communiste in protest called by French CP against fascist Le Pen. Banner reads: "Le Pen—Enough is enough! For worker/immigrant mobilizations to crush the fascists! Full citizenship rights for immigrants!"

into political discussions with the Ligue Trotskyste as well as united-front action against racist discrimination, they have in the course of examining the roots of Stalinism come to an understanding of the authentic program of Leninism and Trotskyism. We welcome them to the international Spartacist tendency, in which they will play a leading role, not only in its French section.

## "Eurocommunism" and "Anti-Opportunism"

Oppositional groupings espousing a more or less traditional pro-Moscow Stalinist outlook emerged in and around many West European Com-

bourgeoisies—and to Washington—that they could be entrusted with ministerial portfolios, was intertwined with the appetite for class collaboration at home.

That "left" or "pro-Moscow" currents arose in response within the European CPs is not new or surprising. The bureaucratic Stalinist parties are no stranger to cliques and factions adopting a "critical" stance in response to rightist turns, often animated by the fact that yesterday's opportunism frequently looks pretty indefensible today. So there has been no lack of left critics (especially after the fact) of particularly gross capitulations, who, however, accept the framework of the inviolability of "the Party" and locate their dissatisfactions in questions of "personalities"—e.g., "Browder was a revisionist" or conversely the adulation of the "good old days" of Togliatti or Thorez. To break from Stalinist reformism toward the road of Lenin requires the shattering of the false identification of the Russian Revolution and Communism with the Stalinist "gravediggers of revolution" who physically exterminated the Old Bolsheviks and transformed the Communist International from a world revolutionary party to a reformist prop of the bourgeois order.

At the same time, the growth of Eurocommunism within the traditionally Moscow-loyal CPs prompted considerable restlessness in "left" or so-called "hard" Stalinist milieus. The prostration of the CPs before bourgeois opinion represented an opening for propagandistic intervention by Trotskyists. The intensified anti-Soviet pres-

sellout leaders of their own parties became markedly unstable.

The Soviet Union was forced to intervene in Afghanistan for defensive reasons centered on safeguarding its own borders. But the presence of Soviet troops on "foreign soil," and the necessary democratic and socially progressive measures undertaken from the top down by the Moscow-allied Kabul regime (e.g., the liberation of Afghan women from the medieval confines of illiteracy and the veil), raised the spectre of internationalism or "export of revolution," the quintessential "Trotskyite" heresy. With imperialism screaming for blood—and the U.S. embracing the chance for a proxy war on the Soviet border by arming and financing the Afghan cutthroats to kill Russian soldiers—the Eurocommunists' anti-Sovietism led them into open support to imperialism. They reasserted their loyalty to "democracy" by demanding the withdrawal of the Red Army, prompting the formation of even more significant oppositional tendencies, particularly in the Spanish and Italian parties. The role of Afghanistan in these polarizations is underlined by the sobriquets applied to the left currents by their proponents and detractors: "Afganos" in Spain, "Kabulisti" in Italy and "Tankies" in Britain.

Yet these critics were unable to wage an effective fight against the Eurocommunist traitors because they adhered to the same Stalinist class-collaborationist, popular-frontist politics as the Berlinguers and Carrillos. Smaller groupings, with more leftist impulses, like the Turkish TKP-*Iscinin Sesi* and their British associates of *The*



French Trotskyists (left) call to break with anti-working-class Mitterrand government. At right, Mitterrand with French CP leader Georges Marchais.



**Leninist**, also continued in practice to accept the minimum/maximum "two-stage revolution" framework which is a hallmark of Menshevism and Stalinism, while clinging to the illusion of reforming the "world Communist movement."

At bottom, such tendencies believed that in this period of renewed Cold War, loyalty to the Soviet Union was going to be able to stop "the Party" from engaging in class collaboration and capitulating to social democracy. Gorbachev's détente campaign has dealt such illusions a cruel blow. Not only does Gorbachev project *permanent* "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, but he is acceding to the imperialists' demands to pull the Red Army out of Afghanistan! These oppositional tendencies, which coalesced in support of the Soviet intervention, have necessarily been thrown into disarray now that they can no longer claim that their leftist impulses find support in the Soviet bureaucracy or a section of it. If they do not want to solidarize with the horrifying prospect of abandoning the Afghan peoples to be massacred by Islamic reaction, they must confront the historical roots of "peaceful coexistence" in the Stalinist political counterrevolution in Russia. The objective possibilities for such a fundamental re-examination of Communist history are facilitated as well by the phenomenon of Gorbachev's *glasnost*, which has tended to take the question of Trotsky and the Left Opposition (as well as Bukharin and the Rights) out of the realm of demonology. No longer can Trotsky's fight against the Stalinist usurpers be simply dismissed with slanders about "Mikado agents" and "anti-socialist saboteurs"; thus, even Stalin's successors in the Kremlin bureaucracy acknowledge at last that Trotsky was a historical figure of the Communist movement who waged a fight over policy and program.

The Stalinist bureaucratic caste seeks to defend their position sitting atop the collectivized economy from which their privileges derive by appeasing and conciliating imperialism rather than promoting international revolution. Stalin's Comintern, as a transmission belt for this policy of international class collaboration, became essentially similar to the social democrats of the Second International, who rallied to their "own" bourgeoisies in 1914. The catastrophe of 1933, when Hitler's fascists came to power unopposed by the powerful German workers movement, was not just an "error" or a defeat, even a

social-democratic parties which balance between their proletarian base and the dictates of their bourgeois masters. The CPs, however, have an additional contradiction: they must try to serve two masters, the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy and the "progressive" bourgeoisies of their own countries, which hate and fear the Soviet Union. Their leadership has thus spent decades seeking to resolve each contradiction on the side of reformism: Eurocommunism is an inevitable product of Stalinism.

The Tribune Communiste comrades found that a revolutionary proletarian alternative to reformism cannot be



WV Photo

International Spartacist tendency condemned Polish Solidarność as agent for capitalist rollback—a "union" only the CIA and Western bankers could love. At right, anti-Communist Pope embraces Lech Walesa.

Fabian/Syigma



built within the political framework of Stalinism, which gutted the Communist International of its internationalist content long before its formal liquidation in 1943. This is the basic Marxist perspective encapsulated in the title of the resolution adopted at Tribune Communiste's pre-fusion conference: "From the Illusory Transformation of the PCF to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky."

#### The Heritage of *Le Communiste*

Shared pro-Sovietism did not make the various oppositional tendencies any less nationally heterogeneous than the "world Communist movement" of which they claimed to be part. Lacking a program for world socialist revolution, each such grouping was and remains a prisoner of its specific national terrain.

Tribune Communiste issued from the *Le Communiste* group, whose history is indeed illustrative. For *Le Communiste* originated as a by-product of the Pabloite revision of Trotskyism which destroyed the Fourth International (FI) as the world party of socialist revolution. As Tribune Communiste grappled with its own history in the course of its break from Stalinism, they were confronted with Pabloism, the attempt to find a substitute for the proletariat organized by its conscious vanguard under the banner of Trotskyism in resolving the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The LTF-Tribune Communiste fusion thus based itself on the article "Genesis of Pabloism" (*Spartacist* No. 21, Fall 1972) as well as the documents of the first four Congresses of the Communist International.

Following the Second World War, the Trotskyist movement was thrown into a profound political crisis. The Fourth International was founded in 1938 in the urgent attempt, as the alignments for World War II took shape, to resolve the "crisis of leadership" which had left the international proletariat defenseless before fascism and imperialist carnage. But the small Trotskyist forces were in effect militarily defeated. The physical obliteration of the Left Opposition in Russia by the Moscow Trial blood purges was completed by the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico by a Stalinist agent in 1940. Large numbers of Trotskyist cadre in Europe and Asia were wiped out by fascist terror, by the war and by Stalinist repression. The younger generation of European Trotskyist militants, including its most promising young leaders, was decimated, facilitating the ascendancy of

Michel Pablo, whose major characteristic was his impressionism. The political passivity of the American SWP (which was a relatively strong party due to the roots of James Cannon and other American Trotskyist leaders in the early CP and a subsequent close working collaboration with Trotsky, and which as an American organization was spared the brunt of the carnage in Europe) toward the devastated European movement after the war also assisted Pablo to emerge as a leader of the postwar FI.

The postwar Trotskyist movement was disoriented as well by new developments. Trotsky had predicted that the

war would provoke social convulsion throughout the capitalist world, as the First World War had done, which would necessarily have a profoundly destabilizing effect on the international Stalinist movement. That this prediction was quite correct is shown for example by the Red Army's initial collapse in the face of Hitler's invasion, as well as by the turbulent social conditions in Western Europe at the war's end. In Italy and Greece, naked treachery by the Stalinists was required to militarily and politically disarm the leftist Resistance forces and hand power back to the capitalist class, while in France the Stalinists had to work overtime as proponents of capitalist "national reconstruction" in order to re-establish a stable bourgeois regime. Nonetheless, the Stalinists were successful in deflecting revolutionary struggle and emerged seemingly stronger than before in a number of Western European countries, notably Italy and France, based on their resistance to the Nazis.

An additional, unexpected development was the expansion of Stalinist-ruled states in Eastern Europe. With the military victory of the Red Army over the Nazis and their puppet regimes, the former rulers ran madly for the nearest American headquarters, leaving behind a power vacuum which the Soviet army

quickly filled, setting up "coalition governments." Faced with the intransigence of American imperialism at the onset of the Cold War, the Stalinists found themselves forced to set up deformed workers states. A different process occurred in Yugoslavia (and in China), where peasant-based revolutions took place under Stalinist leadership. Confronted with the restabilization and expansion of Stalinist-ruled states, the impressionistic current associated with Pablo came to believe that Stalinism could play an "objectively revolutionary" role.

Pabloite revisionism emerged as an

attempt to make the FI more "effective" by accommodating it to the existing leaderships of the working class. Michel Pablo, leader of the International Secretariat of the FI, called for a policy of "entrism sui generis" (entrism of its own kind) in which the Trotskyists would enter the mass Stalinist and social-democratic parties with the perspective of staying there for a long period to pressure the reformists to the left. Pablo rationalized this political liquidation theoretically, projecting first "centuries of deformed workers states," then, in his 1951 document, "Where Are We Going?", the imminence of a third world war which would force the Stalinists into "roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation."

The essence of the Pabloite perspective was its objectivism, a "new world reality" in which the tide of revolution is irreversible. Not the Leninist proletarian party, but rather a "blunted instrument" is seen as sufficient for the socialist revolution. This method was not confined to the evaluation of Stalinism; the European Pabloists engaged in deep entrism in the mass reformist parties (both Stalinist and social-democratic) of Western Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, only to shift over to more "mod" targets thereafter: "Algerian socialism"

*continued on page 8*



For the rebirth of the Fourth International, founded by Trotsky in 1938.

defeat of enormous proportions which paved the way directly for world war; it was a crime, generalized and underscored by the Stalin-Laval pact and the adoption at the Comintern's Seventh World Congress of the "People's Front" line which sanctified consistent class collaboration in the name of an "alliance" with the "progressive" imperialist bourgeoisies. The Communist parties had become bourgeois workers parties, reformist props for capitalist rule, fundamentally little different from the

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# Revolutionary Regroupment...

(continued from page 7)

à la Ben Bella, the Cuban Revolution and the petty-bourgeois adventurist efforts to replay Cuba elsewhere in Latin America, infatuation with Vietnamese Stalinism after the American escalation of the war propelled the growth of the student "New Left," the elitist "Red University" radicalism, and so on—endless efforts to find an elusive "new mass vanguard" as a substitute for the Leninist struggle to break the working class programmatically from its traditional reformist leaderships. The essential method of Pabloism is "let the other guys do it," with the candidates for the "other guys" changing rapidly as the impressionists scramble to tail after whatever seems to be "moving." Thus in recent years, Ernest Mandel & Co. became "Eurotrotskyists" tailing the most right-wing sectors of the Western Stalinist parties and the social democrats directly, attempting to broker a lash-up of the "far left" that could act as a pressure group on the popular front. In the service of Cold War social democracy they today hail clerical-nationalist Solidarność and call for the withdrawal of the Red Army from Afghanistan in the face of the CIA-backed Islamic reactionaries.

In the France of 1954, Michèle Mestre and Matthias Corvin, former leaders of the French section of the FI and associated with Pablo, took Pabloism to its logical conclusion by founding *Le Communiste*. They broke openly with Trotskyism and began a quarter-century of semi-clandestine "opposition" as the would-be left conscience of the PCF. As

*Le Communiste* naturally hailed both Khrushchev's 20th Congress speech and the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution later that same year.

Ironically, Mestre herself, in spite of these apologies for Stalinism, was never admitted to membership in the PCF, a party which *Le Communiste* continued to hold was "the party of the working class" even in the face of the PCF's betrayal of a prerevolutionary situation in May 1968.

## The Cornerstone of Stalinism

Against more than 60 years of defeats and betrayals for which Stalinism is responsible, Trotskyism represents the expression of a scientifically grounded historical optimism: the party, bearer of the revolutionary program expressing the historic interests of the working class, can win the proletariat away from its treacherous traditional leaders to undertake the socialist transformation of the world. Conversely, all the apologists for Stalinism share the conception that the bureaucracy is the sole guardian of collectivized property forms, since any popular revolt, even centered on the proletariat, inevitably leads to capitalist counterrevolution. The logic underlying the Stalinist vision is deeply pessimistic and in fact pro-capitalist: a working class which has experienced a Stalinist regime will, according to them, inevitably prefer bourgeois democracy! The social democrats, who aspire to play the role of spearhead of counterrevolution with a "democratic" face in the deformed workers states, have never thought any differently.

It was this Stalinist cornerstone that the comrades who had formed Tribune Communiste a year earlier confronted in 1981, the year of the Polish crisis and the coming to power of the Mitterrand



Pathfinder Press

James P. Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism.

accept such class-collaborationist alliances, the bourgeoisie demands of its labor lieutenants two key guarantees: not to touch capitalist property relations and to support "national defense." As the PCF's support to the Laval-Stalin pact of 1935 (in which Stalin "fully approved" the need for French imperialism's military preparations) was integral to the formation of the popular front, so the PCF support to the anti-Soviet *force de frappe* nuclear strike force (and a joint declaration with the Socialist Party calling for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, in June 1981) was a necessary precondition for its participation in the Mitterrand government.

The positions of the comrades of Tribune Communiste were principled, yet partial and not yet generalized. But the Stalinist methodology which had frozen *Le Communiste* in its sterile and deeply opportunist apologies for betrayal had begun to break down.

## The Confrontation with Trotskyism

The Ligue Trotskyiste de France was alone among the "far left" groups in France in opposing a vote to the "Socialist" Cold Warrior Mitterrand. In the fall of 1980, the LTF raised the possibility of savagely critical support to Marchais of the PCF. The Cold War offensive by the social democracy had pushed the PCF into a "ghetto" of electoral isolation: for defensive reasons Marchais' hypocritical posture of independence from the bourgeoisie involved "self-criticism" of the popular fronts of 1936, 1945 and the 1972 Union of the Left ("three times is enough"). The LTF recognized in the Leninist tactic of critical support a means of exacerbating the contradictions in the PCF's campaign, setting the base of the party against the top. But in December 1980, the PCF mayor of the town of Vitry led a spectacular commando raid on a housing project inhabited by black

African workers in defense of a racist quota for "his" municipality. The PCF not only defended but highlighted this revolting chauvinism in order to refurbish its patriotic credentials. The PCF's racist campaign thus rendered critical support impossible.

At the same time, the iSt's Soviet-defensist line was becoming increasingly known within the ranks of the PCF. Sales of French *Spartacist* with the headline "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" at the 1980 May Day march were booming as one older worker exclaimed, "I didn't know the Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union." In October 1981 a Stalinist security squad was given the job of moving away LTF militants distributing a leaflet, "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution," in front of a meeting with Walesa hosted by the pro-PCF CGT trade-union federation. "I agree with you about Poland, but I have my orders," complained one of them.

Similarly in January 1982, during the wave of anti-Communist hysteria following the blocking of Solidarność' attempted coup, the LTF proposed to the UEC, the Stalinist student organization, at the Paris campus of Tolbiac, a jointly defended debate on the topic "How Should the Social Gains in Poland Be Defended?" after the UEC had been the victim of social-democratic gangsterism. The LTF went ahead with the meeting, with a standing invitation to the UEC—if the UEC bureaucrats didn't dare show up, some of its members did, among them a future member of Tribune Communiste. Anti-communists launched a savage physical assault on the meeting, but the LTF not only successfully defended itself, it ran an aggressive campaign for its right to organize on the campus.

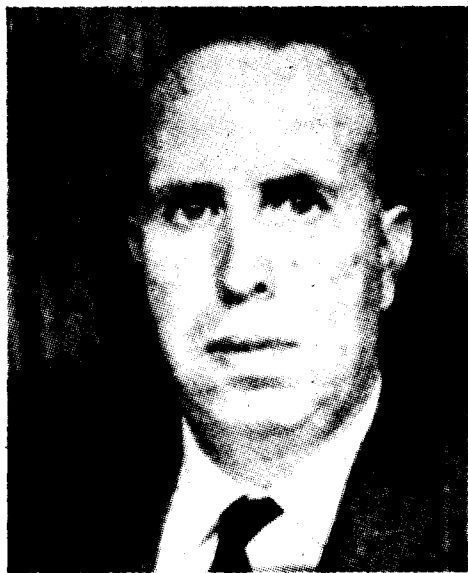
The LTF also sought to polarize what appeared to be, seen from the outside, a heterogeneous "anti-opportunist" milieu, and wrote:

"Whatever criticisms it makes, *Le Communiste* is trying to keep PCF militants inside the rotten reformist corpse of the 'Party' by avoiding any serious confrontation with the real causes of the PCF's reformism. In effect, they say that the working class cannot hope for anything better than its current treacherous leadership. They eliminate the French—and German, Polish and Russian—working classes as agents of revolutionary change by advising them to make do with what they have. In fact, the PCF is no place for a communist and there is an alternative—the revolutionary program with which Lenin and Trotsky led the Russian Revolution."

—*Le Bolchévik* No. 27,  
September 1981

We didn't know it at the time, but the comrades of Tribune Communiste were even then beginning to break with the philistine notion that "the working class has the leadership it deserves."

In November 1982, Tribune Communiste broke with *Le Communiste*. In the next four years it passed through a number of loose "committees" federating a number of local "anti-opportunist" groups. (*Le Communiste* encouraged



La Vérité des Travailleurs



La Vérité

Michel Pablo (left) and Michèle Mestre in 1948.

the comrades of Tribune Communiste wrote:

"As '*Le Communiste*' left, it discovered a 'fundamental error' in the Fourth International, namely that the parties of the Third International had never betrayed the cause of proletarian revolution. In her pamphlet entitled 'In Defense of Communism,' Mestre wrote: 'to the credit of the Trotskyist movement it should be admitted that the error was facilitated by the opportunist course of alliance with the democratic bourgeoisie followed (from 1933 on) by the Communist Party of the USSR as well as by other communist parties.' 'Socialism in one country'; the liquidation of the soviets; the liquidation of the party, reduced to the role of a tool of the bureaucracy; the execution of virtually all of the 1917 Bolshevik Central Committee; the decapitation of the Red Army; the defeat of the German proletariat; the crushing of the Chinese Revolution; the defeat in Spain—all that was reduced to the level of a mere opportunist course which one can undertake to correct."

—From the Illusory Transformation of the PCF..."

What the founding charter of *Le Communiste* termed the "defense of the USSR" was in reality the defense of the Soviet bureaucracy. A "process of regeneration" was substituted for proletarian political revolution and

popular front. In December 1981, two initiators of Tribune Communiste—the comrades Emile Fabrol, then a member of the *Le Communiste* leadership, and Yannick—correctly gave military support to Jaruzelski's counter-coup d'état, a counter to the real attempt to take power by the counterrevolutionary forces of Solidarność. But at the same time, they fought, with others, against the position of also giving political support to the Polish bureaucracy. They wrote of the state of siege, "these measures will not settle anything basic as long as the lines are not called into question: political line of capitulating to nationalist, petty-bourgeois and reactionary forces, economic line consisting of ever increasing subordination of the economy to imperialist capitalist countries."

At the same time, they were among those who convinced the editorial board majority of *Le Communiste* to refuse, for the first time, to vote for the PCF in the legislative elections of June 1981, in opposition to the entry of the PCF into an anti-working-class, anti-Soviet popular front. Their factional opponents called for "a vote in principle for the party of the working class."

This was the intersection of the Russian question and the popular front. To



Workers in Budapest topple statue of Stalin during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.



the multiplication of such local groups—as a purely literary, external pressure group on the PCF. The “anti-opportunist” current, which Tribune Communiste correctly notes was a “hybrid concept” in between “revolutionary” and “opportunist,” was incapable of Leninist functioning.)

They ended up in the “United Communist Regroupment” (RCU) which proposed to go back to the traditions of the Communist International without any analysis of how or why the International had been destroyed! In September 1986 they were expelled from the RCU for the heresy of proposing to actually recruit militants *out of* the PCF. Tribune Communiste was frustrated with the “anti-opportunist” “circle spirit”; they wanted to intervene into reality armed with a program. They began to notice that it was the LTF with its forthright declaration that “the PCF is no place for a communist!” which was having some modest success in recruiting militants from the PCF. It was indicative of their break from the sclerosis of the whole *Le Communiste* tradition that shortly before entering into political discussions with the LTF, they proposed a united-front action in Paris in the context of a campaign initiated by the LTF against the racist discrimination practiced by the “Flunch” cafeteria in Rouen.

### Reforge the Fourth International!

These comrades described their quandary after being expelled from the RCU as follows: “At first, it seemed to us that we had to rethink *everything*, which, given our forces, could make one despair. For us, the continuity of the revolutionary struggle had been broken by Stalinism in 1935: there was a gap of fifty years of experience of the workers movement to be bridged.”

In their evolution to the left, they were repulsed by the pro-social-democratic anti-Sovietism of the entire fake-Trotskyist left: the gangsters of Lambert's PCI, the economist philistines of Lutte Ouvrière, and the Pabloite LCR, which found the pro-Mitterrand, anti-Soviet “Rénovateur” Pierre Juquin (who led a recent rightist split out of the PCF) more to its taste. Indeed, more than once, the comrades of Tribune

Communiste found themselves intervening against the popular front, against Solidarność, for the Red Army in Afghanistan, in parallel with the LTF against the pseudo-Trotskyists.

When they began discussing with the LTF in the summer of 1987, two central questions remained to be resolved. The first was the nature of the bureaucracy as shown particularly over the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. As they write: “We conceived the question of revitaliz-

taught by Corvin that Trotsky's analyses—*The Revolution Betrayed*, for example—were even correct, but now irrelevant. The real question was the continuing grip of the dogma of the PCF as “the party of the working class” and the heritage of the decades of Stalinist slander.

As late as October 1987 they put out a petition which was their last attempt at trying to influence and pressure PCF militants as PCF militants, a petition



Rouen, June 1987: United-front protest by LTF and Tribune Communiste against racist segregation at Flunch cafeteria.

ing the soviets in the USSR and the deformed workers states abstractly and inconsistently. Our view that the intervention of Soviet troops [in Hungary] against the workers councils was an act in defense of the gains of October; that the workers councils were a kind of Solidarność, did not stand up to an analysis of the facts and historic documents. Hungary 1956 was in fact an attempt to build a real dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers democracy and the power of the soviets. We would have been on the same side of the barricades as the insurgents.”

The second was the question of “Trotskyism.” They had accepted the declaration by Mestre of the Fourth International's “bankruptcy” and comrade Fabrol in particular had been

calling on the PCF not to withdraw in the second round of the upcoming presidential elections in favor of Mitterrand. But a vote to the PCF would not have been and is not even a deformed expression of opposition to the popular front, and the PCF candidate had just “debated” the fascist Le Pen on television!

However, these comrades were won to the need for programmatic clarity and the conception that, as Trotsky said, “In politics the ‘label’ is also the ‘banner,’” breaking with the essentially Pabloite notion that generalizes the surreptitious smuggling in of “Trotskyist ideas.” On the eve of the fusion they participated in a joint contingent with the LTF, marching with the LTF under the slogans of “Worker/Immigrant

Mobilizations to Smash the Fascists!” and “Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrants!” in the anti-fascist demonstration of January 27 organized by the PCF.

In their fusion resolution Tribune Communiste declared the international Spartacist tendency to be the continuity of Trotskyism. The fight against Pablo, essentially carried out by the American and British sections and the majority of the French, resulting in the 1953 split, although partial, belated and thereby weakened, was a necessary one, one which defended the Trotskyist program against liquidationism. It made possible the continuity of Trotskyism today represented by our tendency, which arose as an opposition within the American SWP to that party's embrace, a decade after the ascendancy of Pabloist revisionism in Europe, of Pabloist objectivism expressed in uncritical adulation of a new “new world reality” as represented by Castro's revolution in Cuba. Rejecting the demoralization and historical pessimism that Pabloism made into a revisionist political system, the international Spartacist tendency today fights to *reforge* the world party of socialist revolution on the basis of the authentic internationalist program of Lenin and Trotsky.

The regroupment with Tribune Communiste takes place on the firm foundation of the defense of the gains of the October Revolution against the increasingly discredited stream of Cold War II anti-Sovietism. Therefore, it could have a powerful impact on those left Stalinists like *The Leninist* in Britain who, despite their political disorientation on other questions, retain an impulse to defend the Soviet Union against their own NATO-loving bourgeoisie and its servile Labourite agents within the workers movement. Tribune Communiste's struggle to come to grips with its history in the course of seeking to rediscover a Leninist orientation in effect ran the film of Pabloite liquidationism backward: from Stalinism to Pabloism and back to authentic Trotskyism. As a consequence, not only have valuable cadre been won for the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, but our international tendency carries on that struggle with deepened experience and understanding. ■

## Armenia...

(continued from page 12)

internally a bureaucracy imbued with Great Russian chauvinism lorded it over the minority nationalities. Ethnic rivalries were suppressed. Yet as soon as the heavy Stalinist hand was lifted a bit, national antagonisms burst forth.

With Crimean Tatars seeking to return to a homeland from which they were driven by Stalin, Armenian nationalists wanting to recover a separated region, and Baltic nationalists yearning for the bourgeois republics of the interwar years, the national question in the Soviet Union is exceedingly complex. And looming in the background is nativist Russian fascism (see “Pamyat: Russian Fascists Raise Their Heads,” *WV* No. 434, 7 August 1987). As we wrote in “Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky!” (*Spartacist* No. 41-42, Winter 1987-88): “...until political revolution restores Leninist internationalism to the Kremlin, the nationalities question will remain a time bomb.” The bomb has now exploded in the Caucasus.

### Caucasian Circle of National Hatred

The craggy Caucasus Mountains, where every valley speaks a different dialect, are a crazy quilt of a dozen interspersed nationalities. For centuries the Caucasus had been synonymous with ethnic feuding and massacres. The Turkic-speaking Azeris,

traditionally Shi'ite Muslims, and traditionally Christian Armenians have a bloody history of enmity, while the Georgians have long sought to dominate the region. The tsar's knout superficially suppressed national rivalries during the 19th century, but in 1905 anti-Armenian pogroms broke out in Azerbaijan.

Surrounded by hostile peoples on all sides, Armenians have been called the Jews of the Caucasus. Of all the nationalities in the region, Armenians have traditionally been among the most pro-Russian and pro-Soviet. French anti-

Sovietologist Alexandre Bennigsen wrote recently: “At present, Armenians are probably the most Russophilic of all Soviet minorities” (Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire* [1986]). For Armenian nationalists, the mortal enemy is Turkey not Russia.

The first massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the 1890s caused Armenians to look to tsarist Russia, an Orthodox Christian power, as their protector against the Turks. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Armenian nationalist Dashnak party organized volunteer regiments to fight

for the tsarist empire against Turkey. In response, the nationalist Young Turk regime moved to expel the entire Armenian people from Asia Minor (Anatolia). More than a million Armenians were killed—over half their population in the Ottoman Empire.

The survivors fled to the Russian Caucasus. The 1915 massacre also inflamed the already tense relations between Armenians and neighboring Azeris, whose sympathies were generally pro-Turkish in the war. Under the impact of the February and October revolutions of 1917, the Russian empire disintegrated. With the establishment in the southern borderlands of bourgeois republics under the protection of Germany, Turkey and later Britain, there was an explosion of national strife in the Caucasus.

Amid the anarchic conditions of the Russian Civil War, Armenia achieved a short-lived independence under the nationalist Dashnaks, who collaborated closely with the White Russian general Denikin. During its brief existence Dashnak Armenia engaged in mutual communalist massacres with Azerbaijan, fought a border war with Georgia and launched a suicidal irredentist war against Turkey. As Kemal Atatürk's forces were marching on Yerevan in late 1920, to save themselves the Dashnaks negotiated an agreement that de facto incorporated Armenia into the Soviet state.

From mid-1918 until early 1921 there had existed a Georgian republic, headed



Lenin called for measures against Stalin (third from left) and his lieutenant Ordzhonikidze (at right), shown here in 1925, for trampling on the Soviet principle of national equality.

# Armenia...

(continued from page 9)

by the Menshevik N. Jordania, under the protection first of Germany and then of Britain. But while the Second International prattled about "democratic Georgia," its protectors were mainly interested in Baku oil and Caucasian manganese, and the Menshevik government drove Armenians from the Georgian capital Tbilisi. In February 1921, the local Communists rose up and the Red Army invaded, conquering Tbilisi in less than ten days. In response to the social-democratic hue and cry over Georgia, Trotsky, then head of the Red Army, wrote:

"We do not only recognise, but we also give full support to the principle of self-determination, wherever it is directed against feudal, capitalist and imperialist states. But wherever the fiction of self-determination, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, becomes a weapon directed against the proletarian revolution, we have no occasion to treat this fiction differently from the other 'principles' of democracy perverted by capitalism."

—Leon Trotsky,  
Between Red and White (1922)

During the 1920s, national peace and rapid economic growth enhanced the popular authority of Soviet power in Armenia. Armenian students and young workers flocked into the Communist Party. However, in the 1930s Stalin's forced collectivization of agriculture, forced Russification and mass terror—among whose countless victims were respected Armenian Communists—produced a resurgence of Armenian nationalism. Intellectuals nurtured a preoccupation with Armenian history that extends throughout society. And it is a history of great suffering.

During the Cold War the Kremlin tops have to a degree encouraged Armenian nationalism, seeking to direct it against Turkey, a front line NATO state. New towns and villages in the Armenian Soviet Republic were named after former Armenian lands in Anatolia. Western Cold War propagandists have even accused Moscow of sponsoring Armenian revanchist terrorism against Turkey. As if Armenians needed any outside encouragement on that score! However, recent events have demonstrated that Armenian nationalism is not solely directed against Turkey, as the Kremlin chiefs would like.

## Perestroika Fuels Armenian Nationalism

The Armenian republic is in many respects a success story of Soviet nationalities policy. It is a prosperous region and one of the centers of high-tech industry and scientific research in the USSR. The local bureaucratic elite is solidly Armenian ethnically, intellectual life has flourished, and by all accounts Armenia is the Soviet republic where the national (non-Russian) language is most pervasive. A moderate Armenian nationalist living in the West,



National conflict erupts in Soviet Caucasus (at right) over demands for transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region from the Azerbaijani to the Armenian republic.

Mary Matossian, wrote 20 years ago:

"Although their political, economic, and educational institutions have been formed in the Soviet mold, the Armenians have used these institutions to produce wealth, discover truth, and create beauty that bring credit to themselves."

—Erich Goldhagen, ed.,  
Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union (1965)

Why then should massive nationalist protest erupt in this favored Caucasian republic?

Most striking in the recent events is the disparity between the scale of protest and communalist violence, and the declared object: the status of a mountainous region of 150,000 inhabitants. The Soviet Caucasus is after all not like Northern Ireland or Lebanon: there is no recent history of national blood feuds, or cycle of communalist atrocities. The last serious fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis occurred almost 70 years ago. A major nationalist study of Soviet Armenia, Mary Matossian's *The Impact of Soviet Policies on Armenia* (1962), does not mention Nagorno-Karabakh.

Clearly far deeper causes are at work here. The protests were not spontaneous nor were they led by semi-underground nationalist groupings. The main spokesmen for the protests were prominent Armenian intellectuals, such as the poet Silva Kaputikyan and *Literaturnaya Gazeta* correspondent Zori Balayan, who had a friendly meeting with Gorbachev. The London *Guardian's* well-informed man in Moscow, Martin Walker, noted the view of NATO diplomats that "demonstrations do not continue for several days in the Soviet Union without the tacit backing of the local party leadership."

The impetus came from the powerful and well-entrenched Armenian Stalinists. When Moscow declared invalid the request of the Nagorno-Karabakh Soviet to join with Armenia, the local bureaucracy publicly defied Moscow by printing the resolution in the region's newspaper. The protests quickly spread to Yerevan with the connivance of the Armenian CP leader Karen Demircian, under sharp attack by Gorbachev for the last 18 months. When the Soviet party chief appealed for calm, the Armenian CP challenged him by calling for a commission to discuss the future of Karabakh.

Why have the Armenian Stalinist bureaucrats become so assertive in pushing their national claims? Because they believe that Gorbachev's policies will strengthen their standing, that Armenians are the favored children of *perestroika*. A march to mourn the Armenian victims of the communalist riots in Sumgait carried signs saying "the pogroms at Sumgait were carried out by the enemies of *perestroika*." And the main intellectual architect of *perestroika*, Armenian economist Abel Abanbegyan, pushed a government commission which recommended that Karabakh rejoin Armenia.

The climate of Gorbachev's Russia, with its emphasis on rewarding economic competitiveness and individual enterprise, has encouraged the most developed parts of the Soviet Union to seize the advantage. Not only is Armenia a center of advanced technology, its wheeler-dealers dominate a petty-capitalist black market that has now been legalized. So the Armenian bureaucracy and intelligentsia are pushing themselves forward at the expense of poorer, more culturally backward Azerbaijan. An Azeri writer, Velayat Kuliyeu, observed:

"Lately the Armenian nationalists, including some quite influential people, have started talking again about 'greater Armenia.' It's not just Azerbaijan. They want to annex parts of Georgia, Iran and Turkey."

—*New York Times*, 11 March

What we are beginning to see in the Soviet Caucasus is the same explosive combination of economic decentralization and resurgent nationalism which now threatens to tear apart Yugoslavia (see "The Bankruptcy of the Yugoslav Model," *WV* No. 444, 15 January). The main force for ever greater economic decentralization in Yugoslavia has been the Stalinist bureaucracies in the most developed regions, Slovenia and Croatia. This, in turn, has produced a violent

nationalist backlash among the impoverished Albanians. The Albanians, traditionally Muslim, resent the wealthier and better-educated Slavs, especially the politically dominant Serbs.

The Yerevan bigwigs are exploiting Gorbachev's *glasnost* for their own purposes. But hundreds of thousands of people do not come out to demonstrate day after day and workers do not walk out in a general strike simply because the local authorities encourage them to do so. (In fact, the scale of the protests surprised and unsettled even the nationalist intellectuals who led them. "When you see crowds of 50,000 grow to 300,000, 500,000, 700,000, it's frightening," one exclaimed.) Nor can sympathy for their brethren in Karabakh account for a protest movement of this magnitude.

Behind the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian masses were expressing a desire to control the political life of their country. For those few days in February they had a taste of social power and freedom to express their views. The Yerevan protests demonstrate that any rift within the Stalinist bureaucracy can create an opening for explosive social struggle. But they also show that the democratic, economic and social aspirations of the masses can be misdirected into a potentially murderous and suicidal nationalism.

## Stalinism Cannot Solve the National Question

The new program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, adopted in 1986, declared in a classic example of bureaucratic blindness that "the nationalities question inherited from the past has been successfully solved in the Soviet Union" (emphasis in original). Hardly! In contrast, Western Cold War think-tankers, usually funded by the CIA, see in the nationalities question the main chance to destroy Soviet power from within.

In particular, Cold War ideologists are looking forward to an Islamic *jihad* erupting in Soviet Central Asia.



Jerome Davis



Planeta Publishers

Bolshevik Revolution burst chains of tsarist prison house of peoples: Soviet newspapers distributed in Turkistan in early 1920s (left); Red Army brings Soviet power to Georgia, 1921.



A few years ago two French anti-Sovietologists, Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, wrote in their book, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*, that "since the war the demographic development of the Soviet Union has been a race between the Slavs and the Moslems, with the Slavs steadily losing out." And a recent novel by the Pentagon's favorite, Tom Clancy (*Red Storm Rising*), begins with a fanatic Muslim oil worker blowing up a key refinery.

The notion that all the non-Russian peoples are about to revolt against Moscow is imperialist fantasizing. To begin with, their nationalism is often directed against one another. The Armenians and Azerbaijanis are only the currently most striking case. Ukrainian nationalism is virulently anti-Semitic. And Soviet Jews, even the most ardent Zionists among them, are hardly likely to support Ukrainian separatism. Nor are relations among the various so-called Islamic peoples of Soviet Central Asia all that brotherly. During the Russian Civil War of 1918-21 the Bashkirs, then a semi-nomadic people, fought a savage war with Tatar peasants who coveted their land.

We say "so-called Islamic peoples" because they have become basically secularized. In Tashkent and Alma Ata there are almost no women in veils and relatively few mosque-goers, most of them aged. A recent *New York Times* (12 February) account of Soviet Central Asia reports: "Signs of religious fervor are rare, especially in the cities, where young people seem more inclined to congregate at video parlors and discotheques than at mosques. Among the men gathered for midday prayers at mosques in Tashkent and Dushanbe, the capital of Tadzhikistan, the average age appeared to be over 50."

It is true, however, that national/ethnic conflict can be a mortal danger to the Soviet state as it is presently constituted and bureaucratically governed. Stalinist nationalism can produce a fracturing of the ruling bureaucratic caste along national/ethnic lines as in Yugoslavia. This was manifest in the last major outbreak of nationalist protest in the Soviet Union—in Kazakhstan in December 1986. When long-time Kazakh party boss Dinmukhamed Kunaev was ousted by Moscow and replaced with an ethnic Russian, thousands of angry Kazakh student-youth took to the streets of Alma Ata; two demonstrators were killed by police.

National frictions at the top of the bureaucratic oligarchy can produce mass nationalist unrest at the base of Soviet society. And the imperialists want to exploit these national antagonisms to bring about the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Whatever the rights and wrongs in specific instances, the fundamental responsibility for nationalist conflict in the Soviet Union lies with the predominantly Great Russian bureaucracy forged under the Russifier Joseph Stalin.

It was over the national question—moreover, in the Caucasus—that Lenin broke with Stalin in late 1922. When Stalin tried to force the Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian republics into a Transcaucasian federation, Lenin accused him of waging a "truly Great-Russian nationalist campaign."

"It would be unpardonable opportunism if, on the eve of the debut of the East, just as it is awakening, we undermined our prestige with its peoples, even if only by the slightest crudity or injustice towards our own non-Russian nationalities."

—V.I. Lenin, "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'" (December 1922)

Lenin was especially incensed that Stalin's lieutenant Sergo Ordzhonikidze physically assaulted Georgian Communist leader Budu Mdivani. He proposed that Stalin be removed from his post as general secretary and Ordzhonikidze be expelled from the party for at least two years.



Turkic-speaking students, including young women, attending college in Soviet Central Asia (left); in Khomeini's Iran, women remain shrouded under the veil.



The so-called Georgian affair was *not an episodic dispute* within the Bolshevik leadership. It was the first battle against the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution. Stalin's campaign for a single, Moscow-dominated apparatus, which Lenin likened to the old tsarist conception of Russia "one and indivisible," foreshadowed the doctrine of "socialism in one country" which he proclaimed after Lenin died in 1924. Standing on the program of proletarian internationalism, Lenin intransigently defended the rights of the national minorities in the Soviet state. Semi-paralyzed by a stroke, Lenin turned to Trotsky as his main ally in this, his last fight.

Lenin's notes on the Georgian question were intended, in his words, as a "bombshell" to destroy Stalin politically at the upcoming Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923. He expressly warned Trotsky against a rotten compromise with the wily "Gensek." However, in early March Lenin suffered another stroke which left him paralyzed and speechless until he died ten months later. Trotsky, excessively concerned about disrupting the unity of the Bolshevik leadership, pulled back at this critical juncture from a hard fight against Stalin, who agreed to accept Lenin and Trotsky's position on the national question provided he retain his position of power.

Lenin's fight with Stalin on the national question was originally precipitated over the drafting of a constitution for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Lenin thought that the "union" was premature except in military and diplomatic affairs. The founding constitution of the USSR, although adopted in 1924 when Stalin was already in the ascendant, nonetheless formally granted the constituent republics wide internal autonomy and equal standing in the higher bodies of the Soviet state. Furthermore, the constitution declares: "Each one of the member Republics retains the right to freely withdraw from the union."

Such constitutional guarantees did not of course prevent Stalin from later trampling all national rights, expelling entire peoples from their ancestral lands and exterminating the Communist leaderships of practically every Soviet republic. The post-Stalin era has seen the disappearance of mass terror in the USSR and the restoration of a degree of national autonomy within the republics. However, in the framework of the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state of today there is *no democratic means* for resolving national disputes, claims and aspirations.

### Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky!

Except where it serves as a cover for capitalist counterrevolution, we support the right of national self-determination for the various Soviet peoples—i.e., the right to secede and form a separate state. And we do not

regard as sacrosanct the internal national boundaries of the USSR, which the Kremlin bureaucracy has arbitrarily fixed. Nagorno-Karabakh was separated from Armenia in 1923 under Stalin, at the height of his attempts as People's Commissar for Nationalities to impose a Transcaucasian federation, riding roughshod over the local Communists.

The borders of the various republics and autonomous regions should be adjusted in light of changing demographic conditions and the democratic will of the peoples involved. Since a majority of inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh are Armenians who want to be part of the Armenian republic, that is their democratic right. The Kremlin's flat refusal to consider changing the status inflamed Armenian nationalism and is ultimately responsible for the mass protests in Yerevan and the bloody communalist riots in Sumgait.

Gorbachev is trying to pass the buck



Novosti

Martyred Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shaumyan, leader of the 1918 Baku Soviet.

for the Armenian crisis backward to his predecessors. As usual he is blaming everything that goes wrong in the Soviet Union on the unprotesting corpse of Leonid Brezhnev. Visiting Yugoslavia in mid-March, he stated that problems in the Caucasus had been "neglected for a long time" and were "out of the reach of the party leadership." But this alibi is not going to stand up. It is clear to everyone that the turmoil in Armenia/Azerbaijan is directly linked to Gorbachev's policies with their explosive and contradictory mixture of economic decentralization and political liberalization.

In fact, the mass nationalist unrest and communalist violence in the Caucasus poses the biggest crisis yet for the Gorbachev regime. As *Business Week* (28 March) wrote:

"The danger for Gorbachev is not a serious attempt at a breakaway by any Soviet republic but the risk that nationalist agitation could stir a political backlash against his reforms."

Conservative elements in the bureaucracy will exploit the Armenia crisis to push for cracking down on *all* political dissent and popular protest. But it will

not be easy to clamp the lid back on and return to the complacent police-state atmosphere of the last Brezhnev years.

Today, *Pravda* (21 March) calls for "forging a class approach" to the nationalities question and educating the workers in the spirit of "socialist internationalism." That requires more than scolding the Azerbaijani and Armenian bureaucrats for national egoism. If the Soviet leadership had been pursuing a genuinely internationalist policy, the attention of the Azerbaijani population would have been focused on encouraging socialist revolution among its fellow Azeris in Iran, suffering under the dictatorship first of the bloody shah and then of the Persian-chauvinist mullahs. Soviet Central Asia would have been mobilized in a gigantic effort to extend the gains of the October Revolution to Afghanistan.

Instead the Kremlin conciliated Khomeini, and after halfheartedly fighting the CIA-backed Islamic *mujahedin*, Gorbachev is now pulling out of Afghanistan, setting the stage for a bloody massacre by the feudalists. So it's no surprise, after decades of Stalinist anti-internationalism in the USSR, that the non-Russian nationalities become enmeshed in local squabbling. Despite Gorbachev's often scathing criticism of the country's economic stagnation and rampant corruption, and despite the hopes for a better and freer life it has awakened among Soviet workers, collective farmers and intellectuals, liberal Stalinism cannot meet these democratic and socialist aspirations.

It is necessary to return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky, to oust the bureaucratic parasites in the Kremlin and to restore soviet democracy. The power to rule society, usurped by Stalin and his successors, must be restored to the working people through proletarian political revolution.

Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh—focus of the recent bloody nationalist turmoil—was named in honor of Stepan Shaumyan, an Armenian Bolshevik who was one of Lenin's close comrades-in-arms. Shaumyan was head of the 1918 Baku Soviet, then the center of Bolshevik power in the Caucasus, based on Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian and Russian oil workers. The Baku Soviet was overthrown by a British expeditionary force in league with local Armenian and Georgian nationalists, while Azerbaijani nationalists were supporting a Turkish assault on the city from without.

Trotsky dedicates his book *Between Red and White* to Shaumyan and his 25 comrades who were executed by the British. Among them were the Azerbaijani Communist Meshadi Azizbekov, the Georgian Alexei Dzhaparidze and the Russian Ivan Fioletov. Only when the internationalist traditions of Bolshevism, embodied in the Baku Soviet and its martyred leaders, are restored to the Soviet Union can the national question be solved in a just and egalitarian way. ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Nationalist Violence Flares in Gorbachev's Russia

# Behind the Armenia Crisis

In mid-February Mikhail Gorbachev told his fellow Kremlin bureaucrats that policy toward the diverse nationalities making up the Soviet Union was "the most fundamental, vital issue of our society." Within days this warning was borne out in the most dramatic way possible. A massive outburst of nationalist fervor in Armenia was followed by anti-Armenian pogroms in neighboring Azerbaijan.

Day after day in late February and early March, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of Yerevan, capital of Soviet Armenia. On February 26 a million gathered in the Theater Square, almost a third of the entire population of the USSR's smallest republic. Schools were closed, factories stopped working. It was the biggest outpouring of popular protest in the Soviet Union in more than half a century.

The immediate demand of the protests was the transfer of the mountainous Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region from the jurisdiction of the Azerbaijani republic to that of the Armenian republic. Karabakh is an overwhelmingly (85 percent) Armenian enclave inside Azerbaijan. After a petition was signed by virtually every Armenian adult in the region (over 70,000 signatures), the local government formally requested the transfer—an unprecedented show of independence.

As the protests in Yerevan escalated, Gorbachev personally appealed to Armenians to "return to normal life and work, and observe social order." While promising reforms, he left open the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Whether in response to Gorbachev's appeal or fearing military repression, the Armenian nationalist leaders agreed on February 27 to suspend the demonstrations for a month. Yet no sooner had the Armenian capital quieted down than it was reported that two Azerbaijanis had been killed in Karabakh.

This news triggered bloody communal rioting in the Azerbaijan city of Sumgait, near Baku, as Azeri mobs rampaged through the streets randomly attacking Armenians. Scenes of horrendous savagery are reported, including grisly attacks on Armenian women in a maternity ward, children thrown out of windows. The deputy public prosecutor of the USSR described it as "a pogrom." The Soviet news agency TASS reported that 32 people were killed. Unofficial sources put the death toll in the hundreds.

The Soviet army had to be brought in to restore social order and protect the Armenian community. "The losses would have been greater if local residents hadn't helped us," reported General V. Kraev. Azerbaijani families protected Armenians in their homes, a bus driver evacuated a dozen Armenians to another city, workmates were sheltered from enraged mobs. In the aftermath, Communists from the region formed squads to aid the militia (police) in keeping order.

But the crisis was by no means over. On March 21, the official Communist Party newspaper, *Pravda*, denounced the movement to transfer Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, declaring "the



Hundreds of thousands demonstrate in Armenian capital of Yerevan, largest outpouring of popular protest in the Soviet Union in over half a century.

'noble' ideal of 'reunification' carries an obvious anti-socialist stench." Two days later the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a resolution declaring it "inadmissible... for all sorts of self-proclaimed groups to call for the redrawing of state and administrative borders" (*London Independent*, 24 March).

TASS lashed out at the Armenian nationalist agitators for seeking to "exploit people's emotions for provocative aims so as to reverse society's development." However, the Soviet ruling elite is far from united over how to handle the Armenia crisis. The newspaper of the Communist Party youth organization, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, published an account of the Yerevan protests somewhat sympathetic—at any rate, not hostile—to the Armenian standpoint.

The Soviet government decree, coming a few days before the protests were set to resume, ordered local authorities to "take every necessary measure to ensure public order" and prevent further nationalist disturbances in the Caucasian republics. At the same time, the CPSU Politburo approved a series of measures to pump almost half a billion rubles into backward Karabakh, and to increase Armenian-language schools,

books and television in the region.

In the face of this policy of the carrot and the stick, in Yerevan March 26 passed relatively quietly. But Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, was paralyzed by a general strike which continues as we go to press.

### Stalinist Nationalism Undermines the Soviet Union

As the Western media has repeatedly pointed out, the events in the Caucasus mark the most serious nationalist disturbances since the official formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the end of 1922. Questions abound. Why Armenia and why now? Will similar nationalist outbreaks spread throughout the Soviet Union? How will the Armenia crisis affect the future course of Gorbachev's reforms?

Amid all the uncertainties one thing is clear: the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy, permeated with nationalism, cannot solve the complex nationalities question. Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* (openness) has merely brought the suppressed but powerful nationalist currents to the surface of Soviet political life. At the same time, economic decentralization under the rubric of *perestroika* (restructuring) will intensify

national divisions and rivalries within the USSR.

Anti-Soviet Cold Warriors have for years seen the nationalities question as the Achilles' heel of the USSR. They dream of a non-Russian majority of the Soviet Union rising up to throw off a "Soviet imperial yoke." Yet the recent protests in Armenia were neither anti-Russian nor anti-Soviet. To emphasize the point, many demonstrators carried portraits of Gorbachev and signs reading "Karabakh is a test of *perestroika*." Even the head of the Armenian church, Catholicos Vasken I, declared:

"Our people and we are always true to the fraternity of nationalities of the Soviet Union on the basis of the historically proved unbreakable friendship with the Russian people."

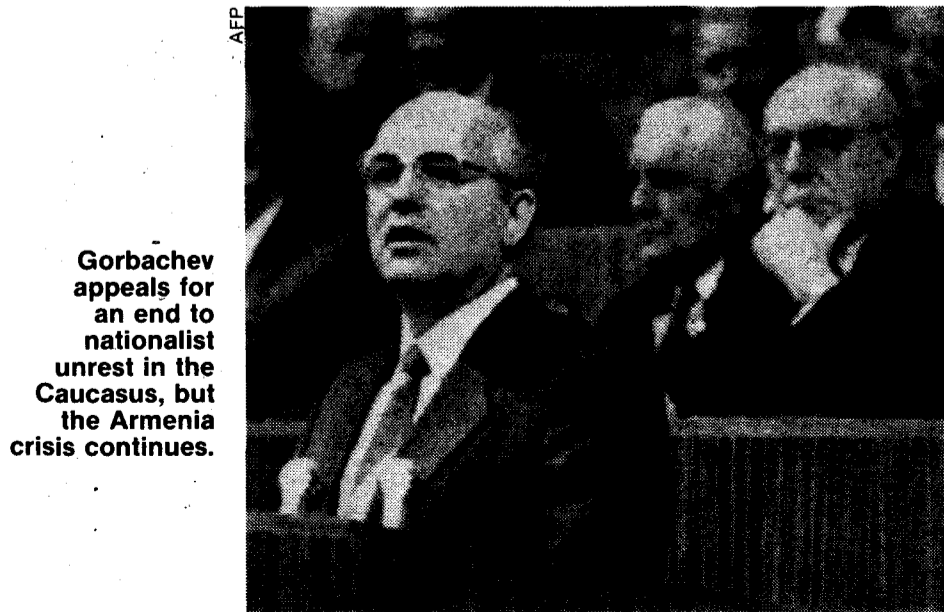
—*Le Monde*, 1 March

From Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus and Sri Lanka to Northern Ireland and Spain's Basque country, the bourgeoisies have no solution to national conflict but bloody domination by the stronger power. As with Alsace-Lorraine and Serbia in WWI, national grievances are used as a cynical pretext for imperialist slaughter. Already at the birth of Soviet power, both the warring imperialist coalitions sought to weaken the October Revolution by stirring up fratricidal wars in the Caucasus.

But the proletarian revolution led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky broke the chains of the tsarist prison house of peoples, raising for the first time the vista of harmonious national development on the basis of genuine equality. Made up of 15 national republics and a score of autonomous republics, with more than 100 officially recognized languages, the Soviet Union, born of workers revolution, is unique among modern states in being *internationalist* in its very foundations.

As the revolution was subsequently bureaucratically deformed under Stalin, while the forms of Leninist internationalism were preserved they were filled with nationalism. Externally this was expressed in the Stalinist dogma of "socialism in one country," while

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Gorbachev appeals for an end to nationalist unrest in the Caucasus, but the Armenia crisis continues.